Social Exclusion in an Organic Farming Community in Sao Paulo

by

Tobias Timm

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Name: **Tobias Timm**

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Supervisory Committee:

        Chair: **Dr. John Harriss**
Professor

Jeffrey T. Checkel
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Morten Jerven
Supervisor
Assistant Professor

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Abstract

I have carried out an exploratory study about the labour conditions on organic farms in the developing world. Using qualitative methods, I conducted three months of research in an organic farming community in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I observed disharmony between the ambitions of educated workers from middle-class backgrounds and the 'local' workers. Those workers who were of middle-class descent had political and spiritual goals that failed to resonate with local workers. Middle-class workers were able to embrace their frugal living conditions, using it as a means to enhance their 'moral identity' by having sacrificed the privileges they had access to throughout their lives. Local workers, who were relatively disadvantaged in their economic opportunities, were not able to benefit from their work in the same way as workers of middle-class descent, resulting in local workers being discontent and terminating their employment at an unusually high rate.

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Introduction

Research Question and Argument

In this paper I am questioning to what extent owners of organic farms in developing countries are able to meet the needs of their workers. While the organic farming movement has been analyzed from a variety of perspectives that address the reduced impact of organic farms on the environment, as well as the health benefits of organic food, little attention has been paid to the circumstances of labourers on organic farms. In my examination of a community of organic farmers in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil, I identify dissonance between the ideals of the educated workers of middle-class descent who carry the initiative of the farming movement, and the aspirations of the local workers. Middle-class workers are quick to draw attention to the personal sacrifices that they make in working on an organic farm. Their frugal living conditions are a means to express what they forfeit – conventional class privileges, and the material comforts that go along with such privileges. In contrast, local workers do not see their own involvement as one of sacrifice, for they have nothing *to* sacrifice, but see their work as merely incidental – a result of seeking an improvement in living conditions. I argue that these differing perspectives culminate in dissatisfaction and ultimately departure from the farm for local workers, who, unlike the educated and mostly European workers are not able to 'build their morality' by claiming that their humble salary is of their own agency and sacrifice.

The central premise of my argument assumes that individual aspirations, ideologies, and the justifications for what constitutes a 'good life' are largely contingent on economic circumstances. It is the material condition of a person's existence that makes some ideas

resonate more than others. There may be situations in which ideas transcend material boundaries; in this context, however, due to the nature of the values in question, it appears that we are dealing with a situation in which the relationship is inversed. That is, it is the presence of material wealth that allows the rejection of such affluence to have meaning. I found that the experiences of workers were filtered through the concepts they held in common - the cultural ideas that they had had access to throughout their lives. In terms of finding their work meaningful, important was the degree to which workers could view their circumstances as being either determined by or a result of their own choice - the selection of either option hinged on their economic background.

The "Estancia Demetria", the farm where I conducted my research, is located in the city of Botucatu, roughly 250km west of the city of Sao Paulo. The farm was founded in 1975 by a group of pioneers/investors from Holland and Germany who were trained at Emerson College in England, an adult education institute based on the principles of anthroposophy (a philosophy that includes teachings about organic farming). One such pioneer has written an autobiographical account of his venture entitled *"Zwischen Ideal und Realitat: Lebensbericht eines Anthroposophischen Unternehmers in Brasilien"* (Between Ideal and Reality: The Autobiographical Account of an Anthroposophical Endeavour in Brazil) (Schmidt, 2005). In a section of his book, Pedro Schmidt describes the task of integrating local Brazilian workers into the way of life that he and his colleagues hoped would disseminate throughout the region. The pioneers of the farm assigned enough importance to "spreading the social impulse" of the organic farming movement to the local workers that it was adopted as a formal goal of the organization (Schmidt, 2005, 54). While my hope that reading Schmidt's book might give me further insight into the discrepancy

between the hopes of the pioneers and the lives of the locals was not fully rewarded, I was still able to glean from his work that the cultural gap between local workers and the utopian dreams of those who carried the initiative had been recognized from the very beginning.

The Organization of the Paper

I begin the First Chapter by reviewing the literature on organic farming, and draw attention to the scarce amount of research that has addressed the lives of workers on organic farms. I specify that my focus will be on biodynamic farming, a branch of the organic farming movement that has a strong spiritual component, and I take note of a study that has drawn attention to the ascetic lives that biodynamic farmers take pride in. I build on previous studies by making use of two ideas I came across within the literature on organic farming: the notion that workers might rather prefer to work on conventional farms with familiar benefits than be employed on organic farms, and the knowledge that the organic farming movement is inspired by counterculture ideals that promote frugal lifestyles as desirable. It is the combined effects of these two realities within the context of the developing world that I am interested in.

The Second Chapter outlines my methodology - how I came to understand the patterns I observed during my fieldwork. It is divided into three sections. The first specifies my ontological position as adhering to the tenets of social constructivism, referencing the need for an appropriate tool to understand the different 'cultural realities' I observed within the community. In the second section I describe my informants and explain how I made distinctions between the "local" workers and those "central" workers who carried the initiative of developing an organic farming community. I conclude the chapter by describing

the technique I used to measure the disharmony I claim existed between these groups, with regard to their hopes for the future.

I begin the Third Chapter with a detailed description of the farming community, attempting to historicize the beliefs of community members. I locate the 'social project' of community members as being similar to the aims of many New Social Movements (NSMs), in particular the New Age movement. I outline what members of the community hope to achieve through their involvement with the farm, and identify two points of importance: the desire of members to establish a legitimately alternative way of life as compared to mainstream culture, and as I discuss in Chapter Four, the hope to have proper egalitarian relations amongst themselves.

Workers on the farm earn between 800 and 1000 Reals per month (roughly $500-600 US). While this salary is higher than the minimum wage in Brazil of 500 Reals per month, it still creates living conditions that are trying. As my time in the field elapsed, the question that gave me greater pause was not why local workers left the farm so quickly after arriving, but why central workers, who earned the same salaries and carried the same responsibilities as local workers, remained so dedicated. In Chapter Four I argue that central workers and members of the wider community unknowingly carry ontological biases. Inspired by counterculture ideals that promote doubt of a culture that encourages people to define themselves by their ownership of material goods, it is their commitment to the notion of a "true self" - a self that is only revealed after the milieu of material distractions has been stripped away - that is a source of tension between themselves and the local workers. I explain in this chapter the philosophical foundations that are necessary to understand central workers' willingness to forfeit material comforts.

As the broader ontological conceptions of the community are discussed within Chapter Four, the next chapter must address the implications of such a worldview. In Chapter Five I confirm what has been written on biodynamic farming - that those at the core of the movement take pride in poverty, and I elaborate how this pride gives strength to the 'moral identity' of those in the community. I deconstruct the beliefs about morality held by community members and central workers, showing that these convictions have not been acquired through accurate recognition of something that is intrinsic to us: "we can cease to think of morality as the voice of the divine part of ourselves and instead think of it as the voice of ourselves as members of a community, speakers of a common language" (Rorty, 1989, 59).The content of this chapter will contrast starkly with what I describe in the next, the Sixth Chapter in which I present the hopes of local workers as being thoroughly different from the aspirations of central workers.

Local workers fail to identify with the counterculture ideals of frugality that the central workers embrace, and seek primarily economic stability through their employment on the farm. Of the 23 local workers who were employed (mostly full-time) on the farm, only 7 had been employed for over 1 year, and only 4 had been employed for more than 2 years. With these data as a backdrop, in Chapter Six I offer a positive example of two local workers who found their work satisfactory, and whose tenure on the farm was unusually long. I argue that this occurred not because these individuals accepted and affirmed the philosophy of community members, but because they had been allowed to 'step up' into positions that afforded them a salary high enough to raise their quality of life.

In the final chapter I draw a link between the ability of central workers to 'build their morality' through their work and the agency they presume to have over the direction of their

lives. Conversely, I also argue that the feelings of ambivalence held by local workers is partly due to their inability to see their work on the farm as being one of positive choice. Unlike those workers of middle-class descent who find meaning in having sacrificed the privileges associated with their economic class to engage in organic farming, local workers are not inclined to believe the work they are doing is one of sacrifice, and see their involvement on the farm as merely another attempt among many to improve the life chances of their children.

Chapter 1: A Review of the Literature

In the first section of this chapter I assess the literature on organic farming, bringing attention to the 'gaps in our knowledge', and explaining how I will make use of existing ideas that relate to the argument of my paper. In the second section I discuss how I will contribute to what should be an ongoing discussion about the opportunities for workers on organic farms in the developing world. I discuss the practical benefits that might arise from future studies, and I justify my decision to conduct an in-depth study of a farm rather than attempt to discern a general pattern by studying a group of organic farms representative of something larger.

A significant body of literature on organic farming has focused on how counterculture ideals have been co-opted due to market forces. Here, the environmental promises of the organic farming movement have received significant attention (Best, 2010; Shreck et al, 2006). Numerous studies have also examined the obstacles that conventional farmers face in transitioning to the production of organic food (Canavari and Olson, 2007). The organic food industry has also been analyzed at length where there is an interest in changing patterns of consumption (Brunori et al., 2008; Fromartz, 2006). Yet the labour relations on organic farms have received inadequate attention, and very little research has been conducted that examines such issues as they occur in the developing world.

In their focus on the lives of migrant workers in the United States, Patricia Allen and Martin Kovach come closest to addressing the issue I am interested in, as they have explored the appeal for workers to become employed on organic farms in California (2000). Their research has indicated that a significant proportion of farm workers have demonstrated a

preference to work on larger conventional farms rather than on relatively smaller organic farms, due to the higher wages and benefits that are available to them when employed in conventional agricultural enterprises (Allen and Kovach, 2000).

Research that illuminates the origins of the organic farming movement has emphasized the connections that associate organic farming to the counterculture movement of the 1960's. According to Clark, the principle that guided the growing interest in organic farming was that human wellness and environmental health should not be sacrificed for greater productivity (Clark, 2007). That is, the pioneers of the movement rallied against patterns of needless overconsumption in society, promoting thrift and frugality as a desired objective (Fromartz, 2006, 45).

Within my study I have tried to juxtapose two ideas that I found significant within the literature on organic farming. First, the idea conveyed by Allen and Kovach (2000) that workers might rather pursue the more predictable benefits that are available to them on farms featuring familiar organizational structures than be attracted by the opportunities to work on an organic farm. The second idea I have integrated into my work is the mantra of farm owners inspired by an alternative ideology that embraces a romantic "return to the land", where simplicity and purity in one's work are given more merit than the pursuit of profit. These two perspectives presented in the literature - providing insight into the lives of workers, and casting light on the cultural framework in which farm owners pursue their ideals - should result in an uncomfortable union within the context I have studied. It is precisely this context that I will now highlight and further explore.

The farming community I studied practices a distinctive form of organic agriculture - that of *biodynamics*. While the organic farming movement in the United States and Europe has its origins in the counterculture movement of the 1960's, the biodynamic method of agriculture has much earlier origins. In 1924 the Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner gave a series of lectures in which the principles of biodynamic farming were laid out (Steiner, 1970). Steiner believed that all material objects are manifestations of the spiritual world, and thus in contrast to most conventional organic agriculture initiatives, the biodynamic method has as its key characteristic a spiritual, mystical component, where the farm is seen as being a spiritual organism.

Biodynamic farming is often stereotyped as being dogmatic in its reluctance to embrace aspects of modern science and technology. In her examination of biodynamic farming in Ireland, McMahon has chosen to phrase the dilemma of biodynamic farming with reference to the conflicting ambitions farmers have to preserve the integrity of their work but also transform society in their own image (McMahon, 2005, 109). Accomplishing the first task requires isolationist tendencies, whereas a successful social movement needs a well-communicated, extroverted effort. McMahon also places emphasis on the similarities that biodynamic farming has to religious life, elaborating on the features of "asceticism, repetition, sacrifice, and an emphasis on spiritualism and purity" (McMahon, 2005, 102).

Like McMahon I discerned, in my research, patterns of asceticism, the importance of sacrifice, and the dedication to spiritualism, but unlike McMahon I have not made an effort to connect these attributes to religious life. Yet I do not doubt that a link exists, in particular where self-realization has been tied to sacrifice through service to community. I also took

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note of the repetitious elements in the lives of farmers, in particular where rituals where carried out during the production and distribution of the biodynamic "preparations". Yet I did not feel the need to elaborate on these features in order to carry out my argument.

Contributing to a Conversation about Organic Farming

There are significant practical reasons to begin a conversation about the labour conditions on organic farms in the developing world. In contrast to the highly mechanized practices of conventional agriculture, organic agriculture is relatively labour intensive (Alroe and Noe, 2008, 5). This has implications for local labour markets due to the abundance of unskilled workers in many parts of the developing world. A further reason is the ever-increasing linkages between non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local governments, and organic farming projects in the developing world (Pattanapant et al., 2009, 126; Valkila, 2009, 310). Thus, an in-depth analysis of workplace inequality on organic farms and the identification of conditions that might coincide with or contradict the organizational goals of NGOs is of crucial importance.

Hunt has argued that there are two major projects in anthropology: "the first the effort to 'get the local reality right', and the second a set of comparative questions that use the data from the local reality studies" (Hunt, 2007, 155). I have carried out this project with awareness of 'sociology's uncertainty principle': "The closer you get to measurement on some dimensions – intensity and depth – the further you recede from others – objectivity and validity" (Buraway et al., 1991, 2). In this case, the intensity and depth of my study has limited the possibility of generalization. I see two ways that this problem can be reconciled.

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One could for instance argue, as many classical anthropologists convincingly have, that the aim of ethnographic inquiry is the explanation of particular features within a culture rather than the attempt to uncover general principles (Benedict, 1934, 45; Herskovitz, 1972, 14; Kluckhohn, 1939, 342; Rosaldo, 1989). Proponents of this stance are often sceptical of taking knowledge out of its context for fear that this would violate the main tenet of cultural relativism – resulting in ethnocentric conclusions (Besteman and Gusterson, 2005). Here, what ethnographers do in transposing knowledge from one context to another is merely metaphorical.

Alternatively, one could focus on considerations of chronology, thus contemplating the manner in which knowledge is produced in social sciences. This is my preferred approach and explains why I have chosen, for my study, intensity and depth over objectivity and validity. With this method, ethnographers play the role of scouts – they are often the first to explore a topic, and do so by deeply immersing themselves in the field and then reporting back what variables might be important for researchers to consider when generalizing a pattern is the objective. Thus, the role of the anthropologist is not merely to produce facts, but to 'play around' with new ideas. This justification also allows the ethnographer to study a group of people as they are encountered rather than prematurely de-contextualizing individuals and focusing only on the traits that a researcher assumes might be important.

Rooted in these two justifications for favouring depth over the ability to generalize, my study will explain both the mechanisms by which a seemingly neutral ideology of egalitarianism reproduces traditional class inequalities, and also, more importantly, identify a 'blind spot' in the organization of organic farming projects throughout the developing world.

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I hope that the results of this study will make us aware that if we pursue a more equal society through a grand expansion of not only the material standards of the middle-class but the middle class ideas and lifestyles, then these modes of living deserve far more critical scrutiny than they have been given. The latter point is one that future research might test for breadth – establishing the prevalence of ideological tensions between 'local workers' and founding members of organic initiatives.

Although I have sympathy for the common conclusions of Fabian (1983), Berry (2011, 166), Anderson (1999, 454), and VanMaanen (1988, xv) – namely, that we must ultimately concede that what we create as anthropologists are objects of our own studies – I still feel confident that I have produced something worth discussing. Churchill and Christian have argued that in order to clarify what occurs between the collection of data and its use by the researcher, the mind of the ethnographer ought to be seen as a "transitional space", where data are translated into a coherent text (2005, 3). If this is considered a valid interpretation of what ethnographers do, the manner in which I have produced knowledge is not unusual, and as David Crandall observes, it is perhaps the most intuitive way to do anthropology (Halstead et al., 2008, 38). What I have done is to congeal the "individualized knowledge of many different persons into a single intellectual object", and have then placed that object within an ongoing discussion of my own choosing (Crandell, in Halstead et al, 2008, 38). I have chosen as a grid to superimpose on the expressions of my informants issues of identity, and a case of cultural exclusion versus cultural cohesion.

I have not assumed that there is a natural form of community with egalitarian relations amongst members and that any deviation away from this deserves the attention of

academics. A community does not require homogeneity, neither of social class, nor of any other characteristic. It is possible to have a community composed of diverse, congruent parts that are linked together to create predictable patterns. But yet, a study of inequality can only logically be carried out in relation to a conception of perfect equality. This notion of equality is not derived from the mind of the researcher, but from the expressed desires of those within the community. This approach is a barrier to criticism that the researcher is being judgmental rather than academic.

Finally, in undertaking this project I have not tried to 'stand on the shoulders' of anyone in particular, and I do not deny that my sources are rather heterogeneous. I believe this is as it should be − the more diversity the better. Yet despite my varied sources, I have tried to provide some sense of order to ensure that the final product of research is not simply the contingent result of encounters with various books that I happened to come across while writing. I realize the importance of ensuring that the outcome of my work will mark an ascent to a new body of knowledge, and is not merely fulfilling the desire for self-education. Thus, the Hegelian attempts to synthesize dissimilar ideas into a coherent line of reasoning have value only so far as they provide substance to the overall argument. Yet by creating 'new knowledge' I merely hope that my work is able to make a humble contribution to an ongoing conversation about the social implications of organic farming in the developing world.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Through three sections, I explain in this chapter how I came to understand the lives of individuals in the community. I begin by describing what I did while in the field – giving justification for my epistemology (what knowledge I considered to be valid), and describing the techniques I used to collect data. I then discuss the ethical considerations I made towards my informants. In the second section of this chapter I outline the advantages and pitfalls of my choosing to label my informants as being either "local workers", "central workers" or "community members". In the final section of this chapter I describe the strategy I used to detect discord between the hopes of central workers and the outcomes anticipated by the local workers.

My Time in the Field

I have produced knowledge through adherence to social-constructivism. I found this ontological stance to be virtually necessitated by the argument of my study - that each cultural group collaboratively creates its own reality. Here, the "truths" that were taken as self-evident by the pioneers of the farm were seen as futile by the local workers they employed. Using social-constructivism I saw the process by which my informants made their lives meaningful to be entirely contingent upon the socio-economic context in which they were raised. Under such a scheme, the hope to reconcile the contradictory ideas that groups held will not be found in an attempt to make one group 'see the world as it is'. Rather, one can only anticipate that a synthesis of disparate ideas will create a new context in which truth can be assembled.

I conducted three months of ethnographic work in a community of roughly 400 people – combining data from participant observation and 65 unstructured interviews with farm workers and community members. I conducted roughly two-thirds of the interviews in either English or German, and required the assistance of a translator for the interviews with local workers who spoke only Portuguese. The shortest interview was 20 minutes in length, while the longest was 1 hour. I recorded all interviews, and rather than transcribe each interview in its entirety to be attached in an appendix, I have presented those sections of interviews that were crucial to my understanding of a particular pattern. As part of the interviews I obtained what might be called an 'abbreviated life-history' of each interviewee, with the aim of understanding what paths the individuals had taken prior to their involvement with the farm. I began by interviewing those individuals directly employed on the farm (including those who were once employed), and then expanded my radius to also include those within the wider community.

As I conducted most of my interviews late in the evening - after the workers had completed their day of work - I spent a considerable portion of my time in the library of the community, participating in the rituals that are part of the biodynamic method of farming, and attending seminars about biodynamic methods of agriculture. These seminars were continuously offered throughout the year by the Biodynamic Institute (IBD) - the organization responsible for certifying biodynamic and organic farms throughout all of Latin America. The IBD is located within the community I studied, and contains an extensive library of literature documenting the history of the farm, and the increasing popularity of organic farming in general.

I first entered the field site one year prior to beginning my research, and arrived with the hopeful but not yet confirmed notion of returning one day to do an academic study. Before beginning my study I spent roughly 12 months volunteering at the IBD. My initial encounter with the farming community is worth noting for a variety of reasons. Because of the familiarity I had with the field site I was spared much of the 'culture shock' that many researchers feel when beginning their investigation. In addition, my prior engagement with the community afforded me some of the benefits that are usually had by researchers conducting long-term studies. Fowler and Hardesty observe that "a long-term view allows the anthropologist to sort out the permanent from the transitory, and to better understand the directions of, and reasons for, change in that culture" (1994, 4). Upon returning I was able to see the direction that lives had taken over the period where I was absent. This allowed me to better understand how people's lives were structured by the opportunities they had.

There are potential drawbacks of returning to a field site that ought to be considered as well. Simon Ottenberg has acknowledged the dilemma that researchers have in deciding which interpretation of an event ought to be considered 'real' – the version of events constructed by the researcher upon the initial encounter, or the interpretation upon returning (Ottenberg, 1989, 16). I feel fortunate to have avoided such dilemmas. That is, because there was less than one year between visits, my reading of events did not differ greatly between the first and second time in the field. Nor do I feel that my first trip to the field site restricted my ability to see things clearly the second time.

The accumulated time I spent at the field site also influenced my ethical considerations. Heightened reflexivity has been encouraged by anthropologists who felt

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perturbed by the similarities between their work and the patterns of neo-colonialism. Here, researchers are seen to arrive in the field with wealth and power, extract information from local populations, and then leave. While I observed the disparity of wealth between myself and the local workers, I never interpreted my actions to be exploitative, and more importantly I do not believe that they perceived my presence in such terms. As I have indicated, I had developed connections with many in the community before beginning my research, and as a result I was treated by members as more of an 'insider' than an 'outsider'. I observed that any power that I had as a researcher over my informants seemed to dissipate the more time I spent in the field. This is what Ottenberg has called an "equalizing of relationships" that occurs during long-term field work (in Fowler and Hardesty, 1994, 99).

Finally, a problem all ethnographers must contend with is the decision to set a termination date for the inquiry. I have favoured the idea of Hugh Gusterson, who suggested that the collection of data should come to an end at the point when the researcher detects a pattern of repetition and has no good reason to believe that further inquiry will reveal different results (1993). Yet I believe that a strict adherent to social constructivism would have to concede that we cannot ever reach the end of inquiry, for this assumes the existence of an underlying reality, the essence of which has been revealed through successively pealing back layers of interpretation. The constructivist, rather than talk about the end of inquiry and the truth that has been uncovered, will find it more useful to speak of the justifications one has for believing that the contingent and evolving discourses within the field site have been monitored closely enough for the researcher to detect a change. I hope such an interpretation allows me to make use of Gusterson's stance while preserving my standing as a social constructivist.

My Informants: Central Workers, Local Workers and Community Members

To succeed in my argument I have had to create distinctions between individuals, creating three categories of people. Such schemes of classification can be debilitating to the researcher if done offhand, the recognition of which has led some anthropologists to become altogether uncomfortable with the idea of cultural generalization. Abu-Lughod has demanded that anthropologists forget about culture, with its implications of coherence and homogeneity, and write simply about the lives of individuals (Abu-Lughod, 1991, 137 in Amit and Dyck, 2006, 5). Yet in this case I believe the distinction I made between *community members* and *local* and *central workers* of the farm was justified. While categories do create assumptions, there are still severe constraints that people have in common, based on social class. I have found that the most fruitful approach is to acknowledge categories when they emerge, but to try not to start with them.

Cultural processes are at the centre of my analysis of social stratification. Here, culture is a resource – one that can provide access to rewards, and can be transmitted from one generation to the next. The *central workers* of the farm might be described as middle-class – not for their level of income, but for their level of education, the economic opportunities they had had in their lives, and their abundant possession of what Bourdieu has famously called "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1984). The lifestyle choices of this group were fairly coherent and easy to distinguish from the routines of the local workers. I will offer a thorough description of the belief system of central members in Chapter Three, but for now I wish only to note that there were visible identifiers that central members of the farm had. Clothing style, household furnishings and consumption preferences of central workers were all held in common, and remarkably distinct from the local workers.

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The lives of people identified by me as 'local workers' had taken different trajectories than those lives of the central workers - through lower levels of education and generally diminished opportunities to advance their economic position. Unlike the central workers, most of whom were university educated, none of the local workers had higher than a secondary school education. On the far end of the 'spectrum of life opportunities' were those local workers who were illiterate in their own language and had since their early teens been employed in some form of farm work.

I have not attempted to provide a "thick description" of the culture of the local workers, as it is not my aim to provide an intriguing map of their belief system as would be accomplished by using Clifford Geertz's approach (1973). Since my ultimate aim in this paper is to show that a peculiar collection of ideas resonate with one group but not another, I have defined the culture of local workers in negative terms – emphasizing mainly the ideas that are missing from their "intellectual vocabulary" and then offering reasons for why this might be. On this note, the term 'local' should not be interpreted for its colonialist implications. I have not chosen the term to indicate the suppression of Brazilians by Europeans, and I hope to avoid unintentionally contributing to the 'West vs. the Rest' dichotomy that has plagued much recent anthropological work. Nor should the word 'local' be associated with geographical boundaries – many 'local workers' were previously employed in different cities and had no particular attachment to the area surrounding the community. I have merely adopted the word from the vocabulary of community members.

Yet, while writing my field notes after each day of interviews, I became concerned that my portrayal of the local workers might appear unrefined to the reader. To describe the needs

of the local workers using simple language while elaborating extensively on the sophisticated desires of the middle-class seemed to me to carry a prejudice. I had made an effort to arrive in the field without the impulse to organize my thoughts by means of fitting people into categories I had established beforehand. In this respect, I feel I succeeded. That is, the distinction between "local" workers and the middle-class workers is justified by the clear educational differences and life opportunities that I found to exist between people. Yet, I was worried that my greater familiarity and identification with the habits of the middle-class were leading me to write with greater depth on something I knew, while casting the lives of the local workers as being shallow and obvious and therefore not worth spending much time on.

Thus I strived to be mindful of this concern when interviewing my informants. Rather than assume from the start that individuals ought to be asked certain questions based on the nature of their involvement with the farm, I decided it would be best to use more or less the same approach for each interview in terms of the topics I wanted to cover. This would, I hoped, eliminate any bias I had in treating individuals differently and thus receiving responses that varied not according to the characteristics of the respondent but due to the questions I asked.

While such an approach made theoretical sense to me, the limitations soon became apparent. It was my translator who both 'put me in my place' and gave me confidence that my original description of the local workers was apt. We had just finished an interview with a local worker when my translator bluntly demanded to know why I had made him ask "those silly questions about biodynamics and spirituality". In his words, local workers were "simple people", and could not be expected to know much about the philosophy of biodynamics. It

was my translator's embarrassment at having to ask certain questions that gave me reassurance that the distinctions I was observing between local workers and the rest of the community were accurate.

The final group that I have distinguished as being relevant to the current project are those individuals who are not employed on the farm, but who live in the condominiums within the geographical boundaries of the community, and whose lives were still considered by themselves and others to be inevitably intertwined with the farm. These individuals carry the same ideals as the central workers, and are driven to succeed in the same social project. Unlike central workers, who are employed on the farm and receive meagre wages, those who live in the condominiums hold considerable wealth, even by the standards of the 'first-world'. I have simply termed these people as 'community members'.

Issues of Measurement

In showing disharmony between the values of central and local workers, I will need to demonstrate my ability to locate and measure the values that I have claimed to be disparate. My definition of values implies nothing pretentious, as I borrow the scheme of Dumont who has said that values are simply a determination of elements of culture (ideas, beliefs etc), and their relative importance (Dumont, 1986, 249). When examining values, the complementary term that comes to mind is 'norms'. Here, I have taken my cue from Heintz who tells us that "values lead to the elaboration of social norms and norms in return shape values" (2009, 4). Heintz distinguishes between norms and values by noting that the former are socially enforced – they are values that are implemented. I found the most useful way to measure the values of a group (both the content and the strength of attachment people have)

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was to pay attention to the instances of transgression - where people reacted strongly to norms being broken.

At the heart of this technique are questions of freedom – how much liberty is afforded to individuals before they encounter resistance from those within the community. I have interpreted Laidlaw as echoing this point, as he invokes Nietzsche's idea that morality frustrates basic human desires and places individuals in a dilemma where following societal norms and fulfilling private desires are in conflict (2002, 316). I used this idea as a framework to synthesize my experience of how community members attempted to meet the demands of the customs they wished to fulfill, yet also strove for individual autonomy beyond the constraints that their norms imposed on them. In Chapter Three I acknowledge the significance that achieving an alternative identity had for central workers by examining cases where this expectation had clearly not been met, and by focusing on the reaction of those within the community. I use the same approach in Chapter Six to show that local workers reacted most strongly to the lack of opportunity that their involvement on the farm brought, and I saw this as indicative of what it was that they valued: financial stability.

Where I assessed the values of central workers and community members I am pointing not only to specific instances where individuals acted against norms, but also examine the way members interpreted a broader conflict between their ideals and the values they saw to be prevalent in mainstream society. In Chapter Five I examine the high merit that central workers and community members assign to living a frugal life, as they define themselves in opposition to the vulgar trends of overconsumption they saw as existing in conventional society. Speaking on the factors that shape a group's identity, Zygmunt Bauman

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notes that "the friends/enemies opposition sets apart truth from falsity, good from evil, beauty from ugliness. It also sets apart proper and improper, right and wrong, tasteful and unbecoming" (Bauman, 1990, 144). Scott Brown tells us that "disagreement does not necessarily have to be overcome. It may remain an important and constitutive part of one's relations to others" (Brown, 1984, 209). I interpreted both Bauman and Brown as saying that for a group of people, such as those within the community that I studied, conflict with the outside world is not detrimental to their aim, but is in fact necessary to create solidarity. As confirmed by Randall Collins, conflict and solidarity should not be thought of as opposites, but should be seen as 'two sides of the coin' (1992, 28).

As a final comment for this section I would like to revisit my collection of life histories from my informants, and the effect of these narratives on my conclusions. Jarret Zigon has commented that collecting life histories is a well-suited technique for discovering the moral conceptions of individuals (in Heintz, 2002, 46). My analysis of the information I collected confirms this stance, and in Chapter Seven I focus on how central and local workers reflected back on the trajectories their lives took prior to becoming involved on the farm. The former group was able to create feelings of 'good morality' amongst themselves by framing their participation as an outcome of a moral dilemma they faced, having turned down various conventional opportunities. The latter group was unable to 'break the influence of the world', as they did not see their choice to work on the farm as marking a 'moral milestone' in their lives, but saw their work only as a hopeful opportunity to advance their economic position in life. I interpreted Heintz as speaking on a similar point when he states: "The individual reinterprets his past choices and actions so that they can be accepted by the society in which

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he lives…the way in which the individual presents his past actions reflects his views of a meaningful life" (Heintz, 2002, 9).

Chapter 3: Locating the Community in History

My aim in writing this chapter is to identity what members of the farming community hope to achieve (beyond producing organic food), and I do this by placing the beliefs and aims of my informants within a broad history of ideas. This chapter holds an important place in the construction of my argument, for it is here that I uncover the ideas that have inspired central workers to use organic farming as an instrument to promote social change – and it is these ideas that I later claim to be failing to inspire the local workers. In the first section I describe consistency between New Social Movements (NSMs) and the social project of the farming community in the emphasis on culture rather than on capital – where individuals expressed a greater concern for values, beliefs, and alternative modes of living than for the politics of economic redistribution. I also consider the relevance that the category of "New Age" has to understand the deeply personal spirituality of those I studied. Finally, I appreciate the usefulness of Margaret Lynn's term "orthodox communitarianism", and I use it to conceptualize my experience of informants as having a romantic interpretation of past ways of life – the simplicity, and purity they sought to regain. In the second section of this chapter I discuss the importance that central workers and community members assign to establishing an 'alternative' community distinct from the crude and unrefined characteristics of conventional agricultural projects.

The 'social impulse' of the farming community is carried by the preferences of the educated middle-class, and attention is given to cultural rather than material concerns. These demographic traits and areas of concern are common among NSMs (Offe, 1985, 832). Importantly, the central workers I interviewed rejected association with any economic class,

and placed emphasis on cultural differences between themselves and the local workers – such as differing access to education. This trait is also confirmed by Cohen to be a characteristic of NSMs: "...movement participants do not view themselves in terms of a socio-economic class, and tend to focus on grassroots politics, creating participatory democratic associations, and targeting the social domain of civil society rather than the economy or state (Cohen 1985: 667). As confirmed by Buraway of NSMs: "Their conflicts concern not problems of distribution, but the grammar in forms of life, arising in areas of cultural reproduction, and social integration" (Buraway et al., 1991, 38).

The term 'New Age' is an appropriate label to describe the spirituality of central workers. As David Riches has noted, 'New Age' carries with it characteristics such as "...highly personal, inner spirituality, that typically evoke utopian anticipations relating to some sort of holistic cosmos" (Riches, 2003, 120). I found this attribute to exist in abundance in the community I studied. As Bryan (all names are pseudonyms), the manager of the farm remarked to me during an interview: *"what we are trying to do here is find out what is the role of the earth in the cosmic symphony"*. The characteristics that I took to be emblematic of what might be considered New Age were an emphasis on the spiritual as opposed to the material, community as opposed to individualism, a desire for solidarity rather than for competition, and egalitarianism of outcome rather than that of opportunity.

I was able to discern differing opinions voiced by central workers and community members with regard to what direction relations in the community should progress. The dominant view fits well with what Margaret Lynn has called "orthodox communitarianism" (2006, 112). Proponents of orthodox communitarianism maintain that community traditions

have become lost in the throngs of modernity, and thus there is a desire to regain or strengthen the values that are seen to have sustained such traditions (Crow, 2002; Little, 2002). Within academic discussions on community, a distinctive discourse describes community to be under threat from the contemporary freedom and mobility that prevails in the free-market system. This is what Jurgen Habermas has called the "colonization of the lifework by the system" (Habermas, 1987). Here, due to the commodification caused by money, everyday life loses its purpose and shared meaning. In this sense, community is seen not only as a place to live, but a solution to many contemporary social problems. I found this idea applicable to central workers, who, as I describe later, hoped to transcend the shallow, materialistic impulses of a consumer society by establishing an alternative set of relations.

The frank accounts of members, the broader scope of literature on biodynamics, and also the rituals that members carry out confirmed thought patterns that I identified as being indicative of orthodox communitarianism. To illustrate, I will briefly describe a ritual that is fundamental to all biodynamic farms, and variations of which occurred roughly once a month in the community. This description will shed light on the broader belief system of community members. The ritual is that of creating and distributing "preparations" over the crops.

The biodynamic preparations are available in nine forms and are applied to enhance the quality of the soil. These preparations consist of various combinations of animal parts, minerals, and plants, and are applied either directly onto the plants, or into the compost or soil. The preparations are used in homeopathic doses – meaning that the actual substances are extremely diluted. During my participation in numerous events it was routinely emphasized that we were not working with the substances themselves, but only with the "essence" of the

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substances. This exemplifies one of the fundamental tenets of anthroposophy - that every material object has a spiritual counterpart. The preparations are applied not only to *physically* moderate the biological processes of the soil, but to endow them with spiritual ("etheric") forces. The less adulterated/processed a material is, the more connected it is to the spiritual world (Steiner, 1970, 22).

While conventional farm machinery is available on the farm, it is only used with some reluctance, and during the mixing of the preparations it was routinely emphasized by the leader of the ritual that no technology be used. That is, the mixing of ingredients must be done by hand, using a wooden stir stick in a wooden barrel. I inquired about the importance of using human labour rather than allowing technological aids in creating the preparations, and found the concern over using technology was that it was unable to capture/transmit the right spiritual forces from the substances being used in the preparations.

It is important to note that I perceived both unwillingness by members to adopt modern conveniences where they are not essential, and a desire to preserve the traditions of the past. I argue that abstaining from using modern appliances was not an exclusive rejection of technology, as the wooden barrel and stir stick were just as technological as any other mechanism that may have been used. What I interpreted was not a fear of modernity, but a tendency to romanticize a past, where the use of such "natural" methods of making the preparations was the norm. Using the tools of a previous era made the ritual seem authentic rather than contrived. Harold Fromm argues in the same vein: "Technophobes may praise the Amish for their simplicity, but what distinguishes the Amish derives not from eschewing technology but from fixation upon its earlier stages. Why should any particular phase of

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technology – or of evolution, for that matter – be thought of as more "natural" than any other? Are animals bred by humans to pull wagons more natural than any machines to do the same thing?" (Fromm, 2009, 110).

When I addressed community members directly, inquiring about 'orthodox communitarianism' and whether they would describe themselves in such terms, most were in denial. Most central workers, who were well educated by the standards of the region, were wary of the term 'orthodox' due to its close association with closed-mindedness and dogmatism. Yet, despite the reluctance of community members to embrace the term, I found that a romantic view of the past was a remarkable trait of members. Here, I find myself doing what Silverman has warned not to do: "ethnography should not substitute the members' accounts for theoretical analysis" (1989 in Grills, 1998, 15). Yet, I feel a greater obligation to remain loyal to a duty on the part of the researcher to avoid what Mitchell Duneier has called 'ethnographic fallacy', where the expressions of participants are taken at face value (2006). In light of this, I have been convinced that 'ideological participants' are not suitable analysts of their own involvement, and that the term "orthodox communitarianism" is an appropriate description of the beliefs of community members.

In this section I have described the belief system of community members as tied to the philosophy of biodynamics; yet, I believe that the wariness of modern science existing in this particular community is a feature commonly shared by the organic farming movement. DeGregori has traced the origins of the organic farming movement to nineteenth century romanticism in Europe, critically calling the movement an "anti-science system" (2004, 5). DeGregori also emphasizes the moral component of the movement, examining the virtues those in the movement see themselves to have (2004, 5). "Today it is the greens who claim to

have an unchallengeable claim on all the gaps in our knowledge about dangers not provable and expertise on that which we are ignorant" (DeGregori, 2004, 91).

Creating an Alternative Identity

In this section I will describe the aspirations of central workers and community members – in terms of the type of a world they were trying to create for themselves through their daily work. I will emphasize their general hope that what they constructed was a true alternative to conventional ways of life. Constructing an identity that was notably distinct from the perceived crudeness of conventional society was vital to central workers and community members, as this is where members gained their 'morality'. That is, members judged the worth of their actions and ideas with reference to whether they were truly alternative. Morality, in this relativistic sense of the word, means nothing more than local systems of social control. Initiatives that would either bring the farm closer into line with the principles of biodynamics, or had ingenuity in how they challenged conventional methods of production were valued. The inverse was true as well, as means of organizing activities that were considered conventional were rebuked and devalued.

As mentioned in the section on methodology, the norms of the community became most discernible when they were broken, as people reacted strongly when things were not as they ought to be. In the case of *Paul* and *Sally*, the vivid contrast between their ideal to create an alternative way of relating to people and reality was enough to make them leave their positions as administrators of the farm and return to their conventional occupations. I first met *Paul* and *Sally* one year before I commenced my fieldwork. Prior to their employment on the farm they had both been students of law in Sao Paulo. *Sally* had just completed her

degree before she met the manager of the farm at the weekly farmer's market in Sao Paulo where she and *Paul* were regular customers. It was as patrons of the farmer's market that *Paul* and *Sally* became aware of the community in which they later chose to live.

I interviewed *Paul* and *Sally* and asked them to speak of the expectations they brought to their work on the farm, and later, about their reasons for leaving.

Sally: "We had a dream about community, but we didn't find that. I guess we found capitalism inside the farm, I guess you could say. And we understood that, that it is necessary to survive, but we were expecting another thing. I think the problem was our expectations...

Paul: (Interrupting) No, no, no. What we were looking for was pretty simple, it was a biodynamic farm. But there is nothing biodynamic here. This is what we believe, and most of the people who come to the farm don't really believe there is biodynamic there.

Timm: So what was missing? Or, what would you need to have to make it biodynamic?

Paul: First of all, the way to live with the people, and the lack of respect, basic spiritual things we need. And the way to live with people and the animals- it was always a commercial relationship, and always worrying about the income, and not really worrying about the people and the land and the animals...

Sally: (Interrupting) Well, there is a worry about it, but it is not the principle.

Paul: Yeah, I think maybe the worry about the money overcame the worry over the spiritual or idealistic part of it. It's not that the people here are very bad, and they only think about the money, but if you look at the money system in the world that exists outside the farm,

this is what we have here, and it is really different from what we would have expected from a

biodynamic farm.

Timm: And the salaries of the workers?

Paul: It was not the money that was the problem- it was the way people were with each

other. But the problem is that Bryan doesn't realize that the farm has failed. I mean, just

look, everyone is leaving. Joao left because of lack of opportunity, and Christiano and Saskia

as well. And the thing is, even the most successful conventional companies know what you

have to do, you have to make people feel like they are part of something, you have to share

this with them.

Sally: And the local workers here, they do not eat the biodynamic food, because they

cannot pay for it. So they do not have a chance to learn anything. But it is not the money you

know, it is about respect.

For Paul and Sally, their reasons for leaving the farm were in part because 'community', in the sense that they were hoping for, did not exist. In terms of conventional privileges and opportunity for status, they had perhaps sacrificed more than anyone else in the community, yet their relinquishment of such opportunities was not rewarded with the benefits of community membership that they were expecting. One can reasonably assume that in order for people to decline the entitlements that being a member of a certain social class affords them, there must be belief that there will be compensation in another sphere of their lives. For Paul and Sally, the chance to 'build their morality' through the excitement of

being a part of an alternative project was lost when they interpreted the structure of the farm and the resulting relations between people to be fairly conventional.

What made the farm conventional in their eyes was not expressed with reference to the pay structure that workers were subjected to, for such concerns were seen by them to be superficial and unimportant. They perceived a failure of community in the way how people related to each other – not on a formal bureaucratic stage, but on a personal level. Evaluated through this lens, their expectation of community living was disappointed.

Chapter 4: Counterculture Ideals and Egalitarianism

As my aim in Chapter Five is to demonstrate the value that central workers and community members give to living a frugal lifestyle, this chapter serves as a 'springboard' for me to demonstrate how the idea of spiritual growth through self-denial from material comforts appeals to central workers. My hope is that the content of this chapter and the following chapter will stand in contrast to what I describe in Chapter Six, where I present the desires of local workers to be incommensurable with ideas of virtuous frugality. In this chapter I will discuss two commitments that give central workers a coherent identity – an identity that, I will later argue, is unobtainable to local workers. First, the scepticism of the capacity for 'material things' to provide any meaningful comfort to people's lives, and the related idea that egalitarianism will create the conditions where authentic relations between people will dispel the confused state in which people blindly pursue material wealth.

I identified central workers' views as anti-materialistic. The stance that our lives today are inundated with more and more material things, and that this has negative repercussions in our lives is a common notion in Western cultures, and is not unique to the community I studied (Miller, 2008). Yet, the degree to which such a concern was articulated by community members was remarkable, and they tended to believe that the modern obsession with material goods implied two things: First, people are more superficial today than they were in the past, and second, people's relationships to each other suffer because of their attachment to objects.

I drew such conclusions not only from the interviews and observations of community members' lifestyle choices, but also from the literature that I studied in the community

library. I took note of the following quotation pinned on a bulletin board at the entrance to the library – a quote that I felt accurately captured the heightened awareness of spirituality and the threat of an unquestioned attachment to material things as it was perceived by those in the community. The quote was attributed to Rudolph Steiner, the founder of biodynamic methods of agriculture.

Seek the truly practical material life,

But seek it so that it does not numb you to the spirit that is in it

Seek the spirit, but seek it not in passion for the super-sensible ego,

But seek it because you wish to apply it selflessly in the practical world in the practical life.

Turn to the ancient principle: Matter is never without spirit and spirit is never without

matter, in such a way that you say: We will do all things in the light of the spirit and we will

seek the light of the spirit that it evokes warmth for us in our practical activities.

Rudolph Steiner, Stuttgart, 1919

The general world views of members of the community were very much apolitical, in the sense that they were against authority figures, insisting that title and occupational status were meaningless. Each individual was seen to have unique qualities that were essential to his or her identity, and it was these intrinsic virtues rather than their formal title that members claimed was important. Attempting to find a link between the apolitical attitude of members and their broader ideas of anti-materialism is an ambitious task. The causal relationship between these two characteristics of the members need not be confirmed to validate the argument of this paper. Yet, the association becomes more plausible when one considers the

existence of what Daniel Miller has called a "depth ontology" that is prevalent in Western societies (Miller, 1995, 25). Put simply, depth ontology fosters a belief that what is located below the surface is more real than what is visible on the surface. To illustrate, where there is a surplus of attention given to a person's clothing or appearance, such an emphasis is seen as merely superficial, while the true or authentic identity of the individual is located in some mysterious place deep inside the person. As I have said, central workers believed that characteristics such as social class, or income level were trivial classifications, and represented only superficial differences between people.

At this point the work of David Riches is worth introducing, for he has written at length on the conception of the 'holistic person' that is found within branches of New Age movements. For Riches, the idea of holism as it relates to the individual person ought to be understood as part of an ideology that reflects the structure of egalitarianism (Riches, 2000, 670). That is, the idea of a 'holistic person' should be seen as originating from the preference of New Agers to promote egalitarian values (Riches, 2000, 670).

Riches is willing to generalize when he states that a transformation has taken place in the West, where a preference for egalitarianism of opportunity has been replaced by egalitarianism of outcome. Riches identifies a notable contradiction within this new brand of egalitarianism, one that is reconciled through the construction of the 'holistic person'. The shortened and simplified version of the argument is as follows: Egalitarianism of outcome as it is practiced today within New Age movements is opposed to the formation of political authority of any kind. This state of weakened political authority leaves individuals relatively autonomous, with no levelling-out mechanisms to promote equality. "In short, egalitarianism

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legitimates autonomy, which subverts egalitarianism" (Riches, 2000, 671). As I illustrate later, the 'holistic person', then, functions to mediate between these two elements, allowing both to exist side by side.

In the following section I make use of Riches' idea and describe the connection I found between the hope for egalitarianism and the heightened spirituality of members of the community. I describe my experience of a "discussion circle" – an event that was frequently held as a means for community members to reconcile their differences. I detected the aspiration of community members to achieve egalitarian relations through the substantive issue that members conversed about during the event I attended, and I found evidence for a deep spirituality through the form and structure of the discussion circle itself.

The Discussion Circle

Central workers routinely attempted to resolve their disagreements by gathering in a circle and allowing each attendee to freely express his or her feelings. The points of contention varied, but the conflicts were always personalized, and in this process, they were de-politicized as well. That is, rather than seeing a conflict as marked by relations of power between individuals, where one individual had the leverage to impose his or her will on others, disagreements were seen to be rooted deeply in the individual's psychology. Since social status and job title were trivial markers of an individual's character, they were perceived as superfluous in any dispute. Accordingly, the only hope to resolve a disagreement was seen to come from an in-depth analysis of the person's disposition.

I observed one such circle where, due to the encroachment of conventional businesses near the entrance of the farm, the topic of conversation centred on the threat of change faced

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by the community. One of the owners of such a business was Sherylynn. Sherylynn had lived in the community for most of her adult life; five years prior to my arrival she had opened a luxurious pizzeria alongside the road that led to the farm. Before opening her restaurant she had baked the pizza in her backyard, which gained a reputation for being a hub of entertainment for the community.

The conversations that took place in this discussion circle were at times unrestrained and emotional, as members of the community were acutely aware of the difficulties associated with preserving the purity of their geographic space – staving off the emergence of conventional (inorganic) enterprises. Members regarded the motivations of Sherylynn as suspect, and when I later interviewed Sherylynn she spoke of the resentment that she felt was directed against her by her members of the community for turning her hobby into a profitable venture.

Sherylynn: What worried people the most was that the business would attract people from the city, they would come here with their cars, music and throw their money around, and this was not good. People were also mad about the prices, which I understand, but it is expensive to run this (the restaurant).

What I learned from the content of this discussion circle was that members evaluated the success of the community by the willingness of people to contribute to the common good as opposed to exclusively pursuing their own interests. This was evident where such obligations were neglected. In the case of Sherylynn, community members disapproved of her attempt to secure her own welfare through entrepreneurship, as it caused her to transgress the ideal of egalitarianism, as she gained considerable wealth relative to others.

I previously introduced the idea of Riches: that the belief in a 'holistic person' allows a separation between facets of people's lives; egalitarianism is manifest at the level of social reality (social values, cosmology) whereas self-centred actions are linked to individual strategy. Riches persuades us that New Age narratives concerning the success of an individual that transgresses the hope for egalitarianism are the near reversal of the discourse that surrounds the idea of the holistic person. Within the narratives on egalitarianism, the individual is held morally responsible for whatever outcome he or she produce. Yet within the discourse on the holistic person, which sees humans as vulnerable to having the different components of their lives fall out of place, the individual is easily absolved of responsibility for any wrongdoing (in the case of Sherylynn), the accumulation of wealth beyond the egalitarian standard) (Riches, 2000, 679). "Inevitable loss of balance (holistic person discourse) functions so that a moral edict (distributive equality) and consequences relating to its antithesis (autonomy) may be acknowledged simultaneously" (Riches, 2000, 680). As evidenced in my description of the discussion circles, I have interpreted members' view of individuals as being fundamentally unique spiritual beings whose external status or position in the hierarchy is inconsequential, as an attribute of the holistic person discourse.

For Sherylynn, her ambition for autonomy was rewarded by financial success, and even a local award for entrepreneurship of her pizza parlour. Yet, her actions were reprimanded by community members who felt that the benefits of her skills were not rightly shared amongst the community. In such an instance, the gap between the hope for egalitarianism and the reality of individual autonomy was too vast to be bridged by the holistic-person-concept. That is, the perception of the individual person as a morally frail being, whose rightful

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holistic balance can easily be skewed in selfish ways, was unable to provide justification for what was perceived to be neglect for the interests of others.

Finally, the use by community members of a discussion circle was itself indicative of both an aspiration for equality amongst members, and a form of spirituality where individuals were in fact seen as fundamentally equal, after the superficial status differences were ignored. Such an interpretation is supported by James Cambell, who has explored the significance of the circle for its symbolism of spiritual unity (1988). Despite Bryan having noteworthy status within the community, his formal title became irrelevant when he was seated in a circle – the circle served to 'level out' any inequalities that may have existed between members. Seated in the circle myself, I felt I was an equal contributor to the process – even as a relative outsider taking the role of a passive observer. The circle enabled feelings of solidarity amongst members, as visually there was no clear leader of the discussions.

In this section, as within this paper, I have treated the beliefs of central workers to be independent of the business practices of the farm. That is, I have not attempted to find evidence that the spiritual sensitivity of central workers I have described in this chapter or the comfort with poverty I will describe in the next, lead to inefficient and unprofitable farming operations. My general aim in this paper is to elaborate a context where one group of workers are able to thrive and find fulfilment, while another group of workers is disenchanted. This chapter has contributed to this goal by outlining the conceptions of personhood that I have deemed a necessary attribute of individuals to achieve satisfactory self-realization in the absence of material prosperity. The following chapter serves to continue the conversation,

giving emphasis to the frugal living conditions that central workers not only endured, but embraced.

Chapter 5: Pride in Poverty

Where there is wariness of the patterns of overconsumption in modern society, it follows that frugality will be a virtue that will be highly regarded. Writing of the biodynamic farming movement in Ireland, McMahon observes of the farmers that "poverty is seen as preferable to environmental destruction and this is very like religious asceticism. The farmers reiterate their lack of interest in material things, and see purity in poverty. Certainly, the degree of asceticism varies, and some people choose to get a second income, but in general, all of them sacrifice material wants to farm biodynamically" (McMahon, 2005, 102). It is such patterns of asceticism that I will describe in this chapter.

I did not interpret the ascetic qualities of the lives of central workers and community members as being merely a case of what Hana Librova has identified as a trend of high socio-economic households in affluent countries reducing their consumption as a form of environmental awareness (1999, 369). And unlike traditional religious asceticism, where conditions of human existence where so low that people were compelled to seek a better form of existence in the afterlife (Ashbrook, 1980, 2), this asceticism appears at first to have different origins: it arises out of a milieu in which overconsumption and material excess are perceived to lead to a spiritual deprivation. Writing during the early 20th century, Bataille has characterized the post-industrial, capitalist, information society as "reversing Protestant modernity's ascetic emphasis on frugality and self-denial, and placing emphasis instead on an excremental ethic of obese consumption and non-utilitarian expenditure" (Bataille, 1985 in Larsen, 2001, 65). The recognition by community members of this detrimental 'seachange' is likely what inspired an alternative movement where proper relations between

people and objects, and people to each other are the norm. The community I studied seems to practice a secular version of asceticism, where the aim is not to deprive oneself of worldly luxuries to find the 'kingdom of god', but to sacrifice privilege to achieve a community in this world.

While workers in a conventional organization might see profit increases or pay raises as signs of the success of the organization, members' attitudes were the near inverse of this. My invitations into the homes of central workers showed that even those who were well-positioned in the hierarchy were struggling to get by. Where it was not self-evident, workers were quick to draw attention to the instability of the living conditions they were in. As noted by Hagman, "ultimately the ascetic strives to become a message of the possibility of a different way of living" (2010, 213).

The following conversation with a central worker illustrates this point quite well. During my stay, a frequent topic of conservation among members was the break-ins that were occurring in the condominiums of the community. Few people were surprised at the robberies, as the wealth of the home-owners, the relative openness and lack of security features of the homes, and the stark pockets of poverty in the surrounding areas all combined to make theft a profitable venture. What had community members concerned was that homeowners would react to such threats in a way that destroyed the communal atmosphere so unique to this area.

Gabriela had emigrated from Switzerland with her husband and children, and had been working on the farm for five years when I interviewed her. When I asked whether she felt safe at home, she laughed, and claimed with satisfaction that she had nothing to worry about

because everyone here knew her and saw what kind of a car she drove. She noted that people were welcome to come into her house and look for something of value, but the only thing she would miss was her laptop which she claimed would not be such a tragedy to lose since it was dreadfully slow anyway.

From *Gabriela*'s perspective, the measures contemplated by the community to address the issue of crime (buying guard dogs, having armed security guards patrol at night) would not deal effectively with the root of the problem. There was a touch of resentment in her tone directed towards owners of the condominiums, as the wealth they brought to the community also brought problems with it. The source of the problem, in her opinion, was the considerable gap between the rich and poor in the area; also, if people chose to live in a community that was so 'open', and chose to live such a decadent lifestyle, then it was inevitable that problems would ensue.

Such affirmations of the merits of frugality were not unique, and I observed them in many different contexts. What surprised me was that this sentiment was not restricted to those members of the community who were employed directly by the farm. Members of the wider community who lived in the condominiums, most of whom earned a comfortable living in the city of Sao Paulo (roughly a 3 hour drive from the community), expressed the same feeling of unease with regards to material wealth. When the topic of conversation during an interview inevitably veered towards the vast gap between the rich and the poor in Brazil, a common response of homeowners was to quickly point out that *they* were not rich, but had instead culture and education, and it was *these* characteristics that separated them from the poor of the country.

The following excerpt from an interview helps to solidify the point. Hans was employed on the farm as a maker of jams and ice cream. He had arrived in the community three years prior as a volunteer, and from the time he departed Holland had intended to start a new life in Brazil by seeking permanent employment in the community. After I enquired about the reasons why he left Holland to live in this community, the conversation took the following form:

Timm: For Europeans such as yourself who came here with certain expectations about living in a community like this, has your experience lived up to what you expected? Did you find what you were looking for?

Hans: Yes, for me it has really been very good. I don't need to have a lot of money – if I have a nice place, a nice job then I'm already very happy. So, yeah, for me I think there is stability – for Carla (his wife) definitely, and for Yanna (his daughter) for sure. To have a house, and the discount (at the farm store), these things are important to us. I think it was the organic part of it mainly, and the animals (working with them), and the less capitalistic part. The food is too expensive though, I mean, it is still capitalism here. They (pointing to the workers' homes) work for the rich people in the condominiums. We work for the rich people basically - they buy the food, you know?

In his broad examination of the organic food movement in the United States, Fromartz has identified a theme that has relevance to the current discussion (2006, 1). Fromartz observes a tension within the organic industry where due to the inspiration from counterculture ideals, thrift through a reduced impact on the earth is preached. Yet, in order for the movement to gain momentum, the consumption of organic products must be

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encouraged, and encouraging greater consumption of any kind is associated with conventionality and capitalism.

Taking this into consideration, I interpreted the commentary of Hans as follows. The wary attitude of Hans towards the condominium owners who purchased the goods few could afford fit well with the dominant discourse in the community of shopping as being materialistic, self-centred, and individualistic. Roughly 20% of the income of the farm came from produce being sold directly to the local community, while the other 80% came from selling goods bi-weekly on the farmers' markets of Sao Paulo. The relatively high price of biodynamic produce made it difficult for the workers themselves to afford the goods they produced. This created tension among central workers who realized that they were dependent on the wealth of the surrounding community to buy their goods, but also saw the wealth of these people as proof of a certain excess that they themselves strived to eliminate from their own lives.

As mentioned in my opening description of the community, central workers gained their pride from believing that they were doing something alternative, and the awkward feeling they had towards the condominium owners was likely linked to the sentiment that the homeowners were not alternative enough. If the central workers of the farm expressed their disagreement with excess and materialism through an uneasy relation with the condominium owners, the homeowners in turn preserved their identity by directing the same sentiment upwards towards the uncultured wealth and abundance that they saw as infiltrating the community from the city nearby. Yet, all members were well aware of the disparity between those of wealth and those of poverty within Brazil – they simply refused to see themselves as

holding a place on this continuum. In line with their desire to have an alternative identity, they saw their lives in the community as being fundamentally unique.

The initial puzzlement I felt upon observing the seemingly contradictory collision of bourgeois wealth and egalitarian, communal values might also be a contradiction that needs no reconciliation. Richard Rorty has used Yeats to illustrate that we often have a questionable desire to "hold reality and justice in a single vision" (Rorty, 1999, 13). *Reality,* in this case corresponds to the private, particular, asocial hobbies of the cultured elite, while *justice* represents the abstract desire of these people to achieve freedom from inequality. Rather than trying to reconcile these two visions within a unifying theory we should try to treat the desire for self-creation and the demand for human solidarity as "equally valid, but forever incommensurable" (Rorty, 1989, xv). Rorty elaborates that "one should try to abjure the temptation to tie in one's moral responsibilities to other people with one's relation to whatever idiosyncratic things or persons one loves with all one's heart...The two will, for some people, coincide – as they do in those lucky Christians for whom the love of God and of other human beings is inseparable...But they need not coincide, and one should not try too hard to make them do so" (Rorty, 1999, 13).

In this chapter I confirmed and described how central workers embrace the ascetic qualities of their work, and how community members, despite their relative wealth, share the same ideals. Ultimately, it does not matter whether such ideas originate from theology or metaphysics. In different sections throughout this paper I have shown how the pursuit of spiritual fulfilment and the desire for a sense of community are connected – that a belief in both necessitates belief in an essential human nature – we are told that what should be most

important to us is what we have in common with others. In this chapter I showed that central workers believe we can most easily see our shared humanity in the absence of material things – that solidarity will be achieved once we 'lift the veil' of the material world and see ourselves as we really are. In the next two chapters I 'put my social constructivism to work' and show that the 'veil' cannot be lifted, that there is nothing important that lies beneath how we have been socialized that we can make reference to in hope of achieving solidarity. The beliefs of local workers, like the beliefs of central workers, are merely 'habits of action' - acquired to solve concrete problems. I describe the problems of local workers to be of a different nature than the contradictions central workers attempt to reconcile.

Chapter 6: The Dilemma of the Local Workers

In Chapter Four I brought forward Daniel Miller's discussion of a Western ontological bias that casts surface appearances as tricky disguises to a more authentic essence. I did this so that the reader might see the link between this philosophical stance and the preference of central workers and community members to shun the pursuit of material wealth in the hope of achieving a more transcendent, spiritual type of development. In this chapter I will retrieve this thread and rely on Miller once again, this time to offer a brief sketch of an alternative scenario – one in which people carry a belief system that is the near inverse of the one previously described. I do not suggest that the findings of Miller can be transposed seamlessly into the context of the local workers, although I hope once again that such a connection will appear plausible. My principle aim is to demonstrate, by means of an example that 'does not fit the model', that the seemingly universal beliefs held by community members are in fact merely contingent, reality can be constructed differently, where the assumptions of the 'Western depth metaphor' are reversed (Miller, 1994). I will suggest that local workers do not value the same ideas of frugality and self-sacrifice for community that central workers embrace.

The Foundations of Discontent among Local Workers

As is my aim, Miller has understood ontological differences as having significant implications for our understanding of relations of power (2005, 26). In his work on style and fashion in Trinidad, Miller concentrates on a form of prejudice directed against black people who, because of the importance they assign to looking fashionable are perceived by white people as lacking depth and seriousness (1994, 71). For educated whites who interpret the

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attention to clothing as a case of conspicuous consumption, a large expenditure into fashion by people with low incomes will appear irrational – these people fail to understand their correct priorities (1994, 72).

Yet for local Trinidadians, Miller argues, it is style rather than content that counts. The real person is considered to be visible on the surface, while that which is held deep inside is seen as false and best hidden from scrutiny by the public. "This is because the surface is precisely where 'being' is located..." (Miller, 1994, 90). And in his later work Miller says: "If you strip away the clothing, you find no such "thing" as society or social relations lurking inside. The clothing did not stand for the person; rather, there was an integral phenomenon which was the clothing/person. They may regard the reality of the person as on the surface where it can be seen and kept "honest" because it is where the person is revealed. By contrast, our depth ontology is viewed as false, since for them it is obvious that deep inside is the place of deception" (Miller, 32, 2005).

I will now attempt to 'create a bridge' between recognition of such competing ontologies and my observation that local workers do not feel the same impulse as central workers to create an alternative set of social relations that stand in contrast to those in conventional society. I interpreted the various attitudes towards shopping as being an epiphenomenon of a greater division in worldviews between local and central workers. I saw the small, local store where the farm sold its goods to the community as objectifying the middle-class ideal, where the face-to-face relationship between consumer and producer was a desirable model that contrasted to the crass and impersonal relations seen to prevail in supermarkets. Yet local workers did not carry this negative image of supermarkets –

favouring them to the farm store not only for their lower prices, but for the wider variety of goods that were sold there.

Local workers did not see those who worked at supermarkets as mere appendages to a corporate machine, for they had friends and relatives who worked at the supermarket, and in one case they had worked there themselves prior to working on the farm. I interpreted the hope for "community" to be mainly a middle-class obsession. I will not argue that local workers would not value living in an environment where sociality is easily extended beyond merely pragmatic relations to coworkers, but I was convinced that local workers did not see conventional society as lacking this trait of community.

The life histories of local workers that I collected differed greatly from those members of the community that I have described somewhat crudely as being "middle-class". I first met *Edlee* in the year prior to doing my fieldwork. At the time of our first meeting, *Edlee* had been working on the farm for two months, after being hired by Bryan for general labour jobs. He had spent the first months laying brick – first re-doing the walls of the pig stall, and later constructing the foundation for a new silo. At the time of my fieldwork *Edlee* was no longer employed on the farm, having found work in a neighbouring town where his extended family lived.

Timm: Where did you work before you started at the farm?

Edlee: I worked here (in the city), but before that we (his wife and sons) were on a Japanese farm. When Joao was born I needed a new job, we wanted a place we could both

work and be close. My wife worked in the kitchen, and I did what you saw me do on your

farm, more or less.

Timm: When did you move to the Demetria? And why?

Edlee: My sister knew someone at the school, and there was a free house, so we moved.

Timm: And?

Edlee: It went well, we had a house and the kids went to school, but we weren't

earning. We weren't moving forward. And I was working a lot. We both were. It became

hard.

I selected the case of *Edlee* because his story was typical of those of other workers

employed on the farm. The specific characteristics that I found to be common to the

experiences of the local workers were the need they had for a secure job, with an income that

could support their family. In short, the material needs of the local workers were the most

pressing concerns that I interpreted from the discussions that I held with them.

The 'cultural division' between the central workers and the locals was acknowledged

by Bryan, who, as a manager, confessed to having difficulty keeping local workers

committed to their roles on the farm.

Bryan: The salaries we pay them (the local workers) have mainly to do with the

conditions here. If we do not have better conditions to pay better salaries then we cannot pay

better salaries. But what is not very clear for them are the other values that they receive

here. Because around here there are lots of conventional farms that - in one way or another

they might receive a little bit more - but they are working with things that are not healthy for their lives. And then they spend these things on things that are not helpful for their lives. And the principles that are ruling these other farms are not principles that have to do with social and cultural development - it's only in a materialistic way that they work.

There are two points that I have abstracted from such accounts. First, local workers did not have an attachment to the community that was more important than their hope to achieve economic stability. Second, local workers lacked the cultural resources to 'utilize' poverty in the same way as middle class members were able to. That is, the economic background of the local workers acted as a barrier to finding value in a frugal lifestyle.

In the next section I offer a positive example of two local workers who found fulfilment in their work, and I argue that this occurred not because these individuals had become attuned to the philosophical views held by the community, but because they had been allowed to grow into positions that demanded a salary high enough to raise their quality of life.

Finding a Reason to Stay

There were rare cases where local workers, having grown into positions that merited financial reward, were able to earn a comfortable living. Yet I will show that obtaining financial stability did not bring local workers into a position of high status within the community, and they remained on the perimeter, still largely excluded from communal activities.

Gordinho the delivery driver, who drove back and forth to Sao Paulo twice per week to assist with the setup of the farmers' market, and *Adelaide* who was in charge of the cheese production on the farm, were two people who had managed to 'carve out a niche' for themselves and earn a decent salary relative to other local workers. Both had been a part of the farm since 1975 when it was founded.

During an interview, *Jorge,* who was one the pioneers who founded the farm alongside *Pedro Schmidt* (mentioned in the introduction), commented on the different managerial styles practiced by *Bryan* and himself, and made reference to the situations of *Gordinho* and *Adelaide* to emphasize his point.

*Jorge: At that time when I was there it was a totally different principle then it is now. It was totally different. The way we worked with our employees, or, I shouldn't say employees, our **co-workers**, because they felt they were owners of their business – their activity. I had seven responsible ones who were running the farm; it wasn't me running the farm it was them running the farm. A good example is Adelaide who now runs the cheesery for Bryan. When I first met her she had no idea about numbers or how to organize things, but she came with the time conscious of the situation, then she could help decide "no, I think it is better if we use the money for this, or for that." Because the money was a result of her initiative, her work and her dedication. And these responsible ones earned really very reasonable wages. I mean compared to today they earned maybe 2000 Reals per month, and on top of this they had a free house with free water and electricity.*

Timm: And if you had to compare the situation of the workers today to what it was?

*Jorge: You know I don't want to criticize, because it might be misunderstood when I criticize what Bryan does. Because he runs the farm now, and I don't want to run the Demetria anymore. I left at that time, after 23 years, and I was needing to make a change you know? So I'm not going to criticize, but I know because I employ people now, and it's a different way of acting with people. So, Bryan has a tendency to fix himself on small details - he doesn't want to pay his workers one cent more than he absolutely has to. And he thinks he gains with that, but he just loses heaps because the people don't grow by him, nobody grows. Except, the only person who grows by him, but actually doesn't grow more than he was, is Gordinho – the delivery driver. He has a good wage, and Adelaide too. But they were **my** employees. They had developed through our working together, and through the responsibility we passed to them. So, these people he has to pay well, otherwise he will go conk (bankrupt). So he pays them well, but at that time (before Bryan) they got at least as much, if not more. And they don't live anymore on the Demetria, I mean, this is also something. They are the real strong pillars of the Demetria, but they don't even live on the Demetria anymore. They live in the city.*

In this brief section, with my description of two local workers, who, through their employment on the farm had their needs met, I want to illustrate that for local workers the 'independent variable' is money. Neither *Gordinho* nor *Adelaide* was motivated to fulfil an abstract ideal of community, as was evidenced by their decision not to live in one. Both remained on the perimeter of the community – their involvement limited to their working lives. When asked of their preference for working on the farm, both workers made reference to the quality of life that their work afforded their families.

I came to see the two cases I have presented here as being an anomalous instance where local workers were given a chance to grow into roles that justified unusually high salaries. In such instances, the principles of egalitarianism were transgressed without much attention by community members – the importance of their positions apparently enough justification for higher wages. In the following chapter I will examine how under similar economic circumstances central and local workers differ greatly in their ability to find meaning in their work.

Chapter 7: Claiming Agency over Structure

In order for an action to be considered moral, individual responsibility must be its cause. That is, an action cannot be moral if it has been carried out incidentally. This is where I have found the distinction between *agency* and *structure* to be relevant for understanding how one group of people is able to 'gain morality' from their work on the farm, while another group is excluded from realizing this potential. The involvement of local workers is not seen by themselves or by other community members to be remarkable, as their presence on the farm is interpreted as a result of economic structures beyond anyone's control. Local workers are not able to convincingly portray themselves as having turned down profitable ventures in order to contribute to the community, thus they are unable to claim agency in their actions that would warrant a description of moral growth on their part. Instead, the involvement of local workers on the farm is seen by community members to be bred out of their self-interest in improving their economic standing. In short, claiming ownership over one's conditions can form a coherent and admirable identity, whereas being placed in a context of poverty due to external structures leaves no room to imagine that one has had agency to live differently.

I arrived at such an interpretation after an interview I conducted with Hans. I found that this particular interview had a theme of 'structure and agency' that pertained to many of the interviews I carried out. After I had asked Hans whether he felt he had security in his job he responded as follows:

Hans: For me it's not a problem, but since I've been here all the workers have changed two, three times maybe, so for Bryan it's a problem, but Bryan doesn't fire us people very

fast, but people leave usually quite fast. But that's more the Brazilian workers, and the Brazilian workers don't really come here I think for the biodynamic part, but just the working part – to make money, and then it becomes difficult I think because you have to put in your heart also, it's not just making money to survive, but you need to be dedicated to the farm. Because it's not a big paying job, you won't get rich working here.

For central workers such as *Hans*, if he is to gain from his work, he must see his involvement on the farm and the resulting living conditions as being positively induced rather than see himself as victim of structural forces beyond his control. This feeling of control, sometimes justified, but often imagined, is crucial to finding fulfillment. Where members present their interests as being subdued for the betterment of the community, they are seen by themselves and others to have contributed to the community in a manner that is remarkable. As there is a prevalent belief that a person's true identity is most easily found in the absence of material distractions, a person must endure deprivation to have integrity. It is for this reason that central workers are eager to discuss how much they are struggling to 'make ends meet', as this shows the depth of their will to continue contributing to the community. Frugality, then, is not a virtue in itself, but is a means to express a virtue – that of self-sacrifice for the betterment of the community.

It could, of course, be argued that choosing to work on a farm in the developing world will inevitably lead one to poverty, and to cast members' reluctance to engage in conspicuous patterns of consumption as being willingly chosen might appear too generous in the amount of agency ascribed. For despite most central workers of the farm being university educated (many in disciplines such as agronomy), many had struggled to find work in a conventional

organization in a capacity related to their field of study. Yet, I will argue that what is important is not to adjudicate between whether the meagre monetary gains were incurred by members with complete prior knowledge or whether romantic imaginations were later let down, but to emphasize that central workers were able to convince themselves that they were making a personal sacrifice to serve a greater goal.

The idea that an individual's well-being is tied to the opportunities he or she has to 'create and recreate' him or herself has been re-iterated in various way. I have simply transposed existing ideas into a particular context with the hope that this will provide an explanatory framework for the patterns I observed. As an example, Joseph Raz has put forward a moral theory of liberty where personal autonomy is the essential component of a 'good life' (Raz, 1986, 400). According to Raz, a person's life can only be considered truly autonomous if it is 'of his own creation', and this in turn is only possible if this person has had a sufficient variety of options to choose from. Robert Nozick has argued that by shaping their lives according to a plan of their own, individuals create meaning in their lives (Nozick, 1974, 48). Yet, the most well known edict on the centrality of autonomy and choice in allowing for authentic self-development is perhaps also the most persuasive – that of John Stuart Mill. For Mill, well-being in life comes into form where there is the free development of character and individuality. As Mill writes, a person has character only if his "desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature..." (Mill, 1972, 115).

In this closing chapter I have emphasized the centrality of agency in determining the degree to which individuals' involvement on the farm created feelings of 'good morality'. A life that is devoid of material comforts will appear as failure and misery to someone who sees

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such conditions as being unintentional. But where financial stability is seen to be forfeited, and humble living conditions are positively induced, such abstinence is viewed in moral terms. I gained further evidence for the validity of this understanding when I discussed with local and central workers how they would feel about their children growing up to work on the farm. A common response of all workers was that they wished their children to have the chance to have other experiences first, so that they might decide the course of their lives with proper knowledge of other ways of life. Interpreted through the lens I have advocated for, I took this to mean that a simple deterministic fall by their children into the same line of work as their parents would leave no chance for the youth to assess other opportunities – the benefits of moral deliberation would only be possible if they consciously recognized and rejected other prospects. I found this sentiment to be as valid for central workers as for the local workers.

Conclusion

It has not been my intention to portray the local workers as entirely lacking spiritual sensitivity. Nor have I argued that economic wealth must precede spirituality. Clearly, there is much historical evidence to the contrary (Bhrigupati, 2010; Bronkhorst, 2001). I have also hoped to avoid producing an account that fits too comfortably into the dichotomy that labels Western, modern people as *individualistic* while 'traditional' people are *relational* (Ortner, 1995, 369; see also Guisinger, 1994, 104). Instead I have argued that the form of spirituality that I have described - where personal growth is believed to be most easily recognized in the absence of material possessions - had little significance where the lack of material success was seen to be an inevitable result of economic structures rather than something accomplished through the agency of individuals.

I have offered my perception of how reality is constructed by community members, and I do not wish to give an authoritative interpretation that I claim has a closer correspondence to reality than that of my informants. I maintain that there would be no neutral ground from which to adjudicate such a conflict. Yet, some constructions of reality are more useful than others in achieving certain ends, and where the goal is to achieve harmonious egalitarian relations "where curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy is the norm" it would appear that merely 'willing away' inequalities by casting issues of money as mere distractions is not helpful in meeting such ends (Nabokov, 1957, 314). Writing on the common outcomes of New Age Movements, Melucci has claimed that these are more likely to "produce defensive enclaves of identity than challenge dominant expressions of power", and such a conclusion is warranted here (Melucci, 1996).

The broader philosophical debate is whether it is possible to have a community without exclusion, or whether some form of external conflict is needed to create a sense of solidarity amongst a group. Here, solidarity amongst central workers and community members was formed by creating boundaries between their own way of life and the lifestyles they perceived as being detrimental to a person's well-being. The description I have given offers strong evidence that any definition of community requires the exclusion of others, since community members have strongly defined themselves as embracing certain traits, while distancing themselves from others. Thus, although I have given emphasis in this paper to exploring how local workers are unable to identify with the aims of central workers and community members, I have also been convinced that community members do not want to have a community inclusive of the values that are incidentally held by the local workers. That is, the consumption of conventional products by local workers and their pursuit of individual autonomy is behaviour that community members oppose. As McMahon has noted, "People farming biodynamically are not doing so for financial reasons, they want to fulfil the 'organic ethos'. They only want people who have been converted to the 'ethos' of organics; those who have internalised this knowledge and have the right mindset to farm organically. This is certainly a purist view" (McMahon, 2005, 105).

In the case I have presented, the motives that induce a specific type of behaviour can be described as aiming to fulfil not only basic human needs, but cultural needs as well. Here, the needs of the local workers have not been transformed or refined by exposure to the cultural values of central members of the community. Where my interpretations have been mediated heavily by the relativistic ideas inherent in cultural anthropology, a natural inclination has been to describe conflicts between groups as being due to differing cultural

values (Boas, 1966; Brown, 2008, 363). I have preserved the tenet of cultural relativism that claims "what we consider progress is not progress at all in the eyes of other people who have been raised with different cultural preferences" (Hatch, 1983, 2), but would be hesitant to assume that divergent values are always what should be observed. I believe that Redfield was correct when he wrote that systems of morality around the world tend to have some basic similarities, but he did not go far enough in specifying what the commonalities were (Redfield, 1953, 159). I will stress here the importance of common values by emphasizing differing beliefs.

I cautiously propose that the social exclusion I observed between central and local workers was not caused by dissimilar values, but by different beliefs in how to achieve common values (see Rachels, 2003, 31). Despite the warning from Chabal and Daloz that we should "stop operating on the assumption that observable diversity is but a veil over fundamentally similar processes", I feel confident to say that both social groups sought refuge from the external insecurities that existed in the 'outside world', and valued conditions of personal and familial stability in the face of such conditions (Chabal and Daloz, 2006, 327). Yet, the central workers of the farm believed with conviction that the best solution to personal economic insecurity was to establish proper communal relations – withdrawing their participation from 'the system' and creating conditions where interdependence amongst individuals could provide the stability that was lacking in the modern world. In contrast, local workers sought personal economic stability, but did not see the external world as lacking 'community' and saw no need to 'give up on the system'. Where a pragmatic stance is taken, it might be suggested that in order for frustrations of those who enter the community to be

reduced, what is important is not which idea 'gets it right', but whether the various ideas can be made to cohere with each other.

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