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**The Pro-State, Anti-State and Stateless Interplay: Rural Protest  
against Industrial Agriculture**

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# The Pro-State, Anti-State and Stateless Interplay: Rural Protest against Industrial Agriculture

*Loka Ashwood*

## **Abstract**

*Understood through the anti-state, pro-state and stateless positions, I argue that certain politics of the rural, sometimes mislabeled as simply conservative or liberal, offer ample possibilities for rural emancipation. I detail alliances of farmers and rural residents who work to stop the proliferation of corporate hog facilities in Illinois, which is one of the largest hog producing states in the U.S. Drawing on a combination of interviews, archival documents, observations, and experiences, I present a series of political strategies that allow rural people to work together, primarily in an effort to counter the state's unjust support of large, corporate agribusiness. I pay careful attention to the ways in which mainstream party lines collapse as antistatist and stateless perspectives conjoin, in defense of rural rights in the countryside.*

## Introduction

The current political and scholarly moment in the United States remains wedded to the notion that the rural is largely conservative. Whether talk of guns, morality, or voting patterns (Klas 2018; Monnat and Brown 2017; Sherman 2009), rural people appear straight-line conservatives, and more-so, Republicans. While it is undeniable that most rural people in the United States vote Republican, and have for some time (Monnat and Brown 2017), scholarly adoption of the rural-conservative marriage can be problematic. Namely, rural possibilities are narrowed to votes cast and views stated *within* current political hegemony. And the current political hegemony is at least comparatively not good for rural people. Rural people by most available indexes, like income, health, education, sanitation, clean water, or legal access, are doing markedly worse than their urban counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2017; UNDP 2016; IFAD 2016; Pruitt 2014). The trend, while certainly not universal, even persists across countries typically distinguished relative to development and global positioning (ERS 2017a; 2017b).

Rural people wanting less of a government that has given them comparatively less, thus, to some extent has a reasonable empirical basis. Yet rather than exploring rural politics from a theoretical frame that takes the state to task, rural politics in the American context are mostly understood as misinformed (Hochschild 2016), stymied in a culture of complicity (Vance 2016), resentful of urbanites (Walsh 2016), and fodder for the extremists of the world (Stock 1996). To better understand rural politics, as well as the potential for rural emancipation to end relative deprivation, requires (1) identifying and taking seriously state exploitation of rural people; and (2) pinpointing the on-the-ground interaction of stateless, anti-state, and pro-state positions that enable rural people to successfully conjoin and affront major agents of exploitation against the prevailing tide.

To do so, I use pro-state, anti-state, and stateless frames to understand rural political action in the context of industrial animal production. These frames reconceptualize politics from classical theoretical orientations of conservatism, liberalism, neoliberalism, and radicalism by explicitly bringing into the discussion anarchism, and thus the possibility of a stateless position. I use this framework to understand what enables two rural grassroots group to stall the expansion of corporate industrial hog production, and further, markedly change the stakes of the debate over what counts as farming and agriculture in their localities. Specifically, I identify five subthemes within the overall pro-state, anti-state, and stateless framework that develop academic and pragmatic understandings of successful rural political action: the collapse of party-line politics, the clarity of corporate involvement, the breaking of ranks by agricultural insiders, working around and within the law, and outside help with inside roots.

## Pro-State, Anti-State and Stateless Positions

To understand the potential for protest in the countryside, I focus on the role of the state in shaping action and ideology (Ashwood forthcoming). Unlike prevailing accounts of rural politics (Hochschild 2016), this framework takes the state to task by exploring its role in the problems rural people face, as well as their potential remediation. My three part division of pro-state, anti-state, and stateless (see Table 1) is meant to capture the multiplicity of political stances in the rural that relate to statism. Due to an absence of anarchist theory in mainstream political theory, and often in rural and agrarian studies, the stateless position is largely overlooked. Traditional sociological and theoretical understandings of politics primarily use the frames of radical, conservative, neoliberal, and liberal (Nisbet 2002) – all of which are predicated upon being pro some sort of state (either in action or rhetoric), ranging from communist to democratic (see again Table 1). I call this the pro-state position, which captures political ideologies that call for state construction, regulation, and mediation of life according to issues of morality, social welfare, and the market economy. This captures rural support of traditional moral norms, resistance to social welfare, and outright support of corporate agribusiness. Often this is where political theory ends, as well as analyses of rural politics.

I propose the stateless and anti-state positions, with the help of anarchist theory, to complicate understandings of politics especially in rural contexts. The stateless position captures the rural centric pagan and agrarian ideologies that there is no need for a state of centralized authority, powers, and cities. This premise folds into what I call the anti-state position, the defensive version of the stateless position, which is held by those who have been wronged by the state, through, for example, natural resource extraction or industrial agricultural production. What is crucial to understand is that the stateless position never goes away in anarchism (Table 1), but is simply articulated in different ways by those who live in state dominated societies. For practical purposes, those who live within states often take some anti-statist view to work in some way toward a stateless ideal.

The anti-stateless approach to the stateless ideal can lead to marked conflict. I see those of an anti-statist position as falling into two camps, what I call reformers and retractors. Reformers temporarily advocate a pro-statist view as a just means to a stateless end; while retractors, like libertarians, seek to reduce the power of the state without attention to intermediate issues of justice.

As political frames, the pro-state, stateless, and anti-state (retractor and reformer) positions provide a theoretical framework to conceptualize rural politics. In this paper, I seek to explore the ways that rural political action can combine these positions to actively thwart extractive industries in the countryside. I turn to a case-study of two grassroots organizations that effectively channel statelessness, anti-statism, and pro-statism into action.

**Table 1: The Pro-State, Anti-State and Stateless Positions: Rhetoric and Action in Politics** \*From Ashwood (Forthcoming).

	<b>Rhetoric</b>						<b>Action</b>					
	Pro-State			Anti-state		State-less	Pro-State			Anti-state		State-less
	Social Welfare	Market Economy	Morality	Reform	Retract		Social Welfare	Market Economy	Morality	Reform	Retract	
<b>Anarchism</b>				X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
<b>Conservatism</b>			X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
<b>Liberalism</b>	X		X	X			X	X	X			
<b>Neoliberalism</b>					X	X		X		X	X	
<b>Radicalism</b>	X		X				X		X			

## Methods

I focus my study predominantly on two groups: Rural Residents for Responsible Agriculture (RRRA), and Clean and Safe Tomorrow (CST). In 2012, RRRA won the first publicly wrought battle to stop a large-scale hog confinement in Illinois. The percentage of hog and pig sales during that time period had risen by over 30% in some Illinois counties (USDA 2014). In addition, Illinois had become the second largest pork producing state in the U.S., according to *Farm Journal* (Potter 2015), and according to the USDA, the fourth (USDA 2014). Since RRRA's earlier success, their strategies for action spread from its birthplace in McDonough County, the third poorest county in the state, to a group across the state. CST built upon and expanded RRRA's methods of protest to effectively stall (and perhaps stop, although it is pending) the siting of two 20,000 head hog facilities.

I study how these groups were able to protest corporate hog facilities through a combination of interviews, archival, observational and experiential evidence that pertain to CST and RRRA members, as well as those who have made unsuccessful attempts to stall industrial facilities, and key organizing and political figures. I completed 20 interviews in summer and October 2017. My archival evidence includes siting documents and hearing transcripts from the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Meeting observations come from my participation in CST and RRRA meetings, in addition to interviewee accounts of events. The first group, RRRA, is named, at their request. RRRA group members' actual names, though, have been replaced with pseudonyms, in accordance with IRB protocol. I use the pseudonym CST to protect the second group's identity, at their request, as well as pseudonyms for group members. In some cases, I further protect CST member identities through plausible deniability.

## The State and Stateless interplay

I identify five factors that innovatively conjoin a range of statist perspectives to stop corporate hog facilities. I study efforts to stop the siting of industrial hog facilities that succeeded, and also those that did not – some leveled by RRRA and CST members, and others by additional participants I interviewed. I find that when one of these five factors that bridge pro-statism, anti-statism, and statelessness are absent, local protest falters, movements splinter, and corporate agriculture encroaches further upon rural rights.

### *Statelessness: The Collapse of Party-Line Politics*

Leaving one's party politics at the door, but not a political commitment to rural prosperity, is a crucial element of rural protest. Win-or-lose, in-or-out party lines mask the many activities and people necessary to complete community-based development and action for social change by boiling it down to a candidate (Graeber 2013). It is nothing short of modest revolution for communities amidst such structural constraints to shed their party-line divisiveness in favor of shared ideals of reciprocity, home, health, and environment. I find that (1) community driven rural protest absorbs elements of statelessness by explicitly minimizing the party affiliations of fellow members. And relatedly, (2) when party politics infiltrate protest of corporate agriculture production, they can splinter participants according to pro-state and anti-state positions, resulting in disengagement rather than engagement.

The stateless position crosses political lines by openly identifying governance as playing a role in exploitation. Erin, a key organizer with Illinois Citizens for Clean Air and Water (ICCAW), explained that before a Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) was cited nearby her family's farm, that she did not consider herself a "political person." She was neither a Republican or a Democrat. Today, she finds herself aligned with Democrats because she sees them as more likely to represent her groups' platform on a broader political stage. Still, she said, "It's all money," at the nearby capital of

Springfield, despite Democrat or Republican affiliations. Illinois typically is controlled by Democrats in the state legislature – in large part due to Chicago – yet Erin said that the state has the laxest regulations on industrial animal facilities in the country. Based on her twenty years of experience, she described the best-case scenario for successful protest against CAFOs as the following: “So if you had a recipe, I would say non-farmers and farmers, young and old, people with children, people without, no matter if you’re a Democrat or a Republican or neither.” Successful community participation thus collapses party lines, while money-based structural politics in the capital demand it.

Shedding party lines, and thus bending toward a stateless position, comes with the recognition that there are broader forces at work, primarily corporate accumulation of profit and the dispossession of many. Jake, a grain farmer and CST member, explained as much:

Loka: “And with the hogs, does it make a difference? Do you feel like if the representatives you talked to were Democrat or Republican, did that make a difference?”

Jake: “No, I think what made a difference between Republican and Democrat concerning the hog situation is if Farm Bureau was in their back pocket. I don't think it made any difference if you were Democrat or Republican.”

Jake further explained that Farm Bureau had the money, so it therefore had the voice in Springfield and elsewhere in the nation. Shared recognition of money as the culprit and human, farm family sustenance, and environmental rights as a shared platform, ensured rural grassroots protest, even during the contentious time of the Trump election, in which CST became most active. Sophia, for example, is known as one of the staunchest Republicans in her group. While she supported Trump, by the time I interviewed her in fall 2017, she found herself disenchanted with both parties. In describing her county, she said:

Sophia: “I think around here, I think it’s more Democrat, but I’m Republican. So, you know, we all get our little, you know, we’ll mention something, or ... but we don't get like at each others’ throats over anything.”

Loka: “Has [the hog CAFO] changed your opinion of Republicans or Democrats?”

Sophia: “Uh, they’re all the same, pretty much. There’s a few good ones on both sides.”

Loka: “And is that what you thought before or...”

Sophia: “Uh, no. I really thought, you know, I mean, even the election, the Trump election, I really thought that the Republicans were out to help people. But then, you know, they’re all in it for the money and the power.”

Jake further explained that he had visited legislators in Springfield, to try to convince them that they should change the regulatory apparatuses for CAFOs in Illinois. He currently is at the forefront CST’s efforts to keep a 20,000 gestation hog facility from being built nearby where his family lives and farms. ICCAW and aligned organizations pushing for regulatory changes thought that Jake’s position as a farmer could make a marked difference in convincing legislators to promote change. Jake, who provided his support, none-the-less saw the changes the group proposed, like increasing the setbacks and the notification period, as in a sense “pathetic,” because they were so slight. But it was of no matter. IICAW still has yet to make tangible legislative progress. Jake, like other CST farmers interviewed for this paper, saw Farm Bureau as mainly to blame – a daunting political force working against them, one enabled by the state.



Shedding a nationalist orientation toward politics in favor of a local one is not always easy. In fact, ideas about truth, honor, and decency that come attached to party lines can serve to veil the actual diversity of formal political party affiliations that are discarded locally, when groups are able to stall industrial animal expansion. A RRRR leader who worked tirelessly to try to convince local politicians to not support industrial scale hog facilities, was unaware that some of the politicians her group successfully solicited for support were Democrats. When Ashwood asked her specifically about the county board members who voted against siting the facility in favor of RRRR, the RRRR leader was surprised to learn some Republicans were amongst them. Such a view can stall local autonomy, and the capacity to deliberate to achieve direct democracy (Graeber 2013). Further, nationalism can charge the local political climate, even when everyone generally agrees that stalling the penetration of industrial agriculture is vital for their community. Bob, a Democrat and CST member, explained, when speaking of the building where his groups meetings were held: “That’s the one thing I’ve learned. As soon as you walk through that door, you leave your politics outside the door. We had one guy. He’s diehard Republican, super nice guy, but he would always want to bring it up in the middle of a meeting, and I said, ‘Jeremy, leave that shit outside the door.’” And Jeremy did end up “leaving that shit” outside the door. But Bob lamented that sometimes another group member, who he called of the “diehard Republican Tea Party,” would tell him, “Well, you’re one of the good Democrats,” without understanding that there were many good Democrats. In the case of the RRRR member whom assumed that party affiliations of supporting politicians were Democrat, *even though* a few were in reality Republicans, none-the-less she knew some of her fellow RRRR members were Republicans. The inability to recognizing decency across party lines can collapse collective potential, and so too can support of divisive political leaders.

In other words, the stateless ideal can sometimes splinter according to retractor and reformer politics, especially if what is of local concern becomes subsumed by what is of national concern. Retractor politics, today, are more familiar to Republicans, and reformer more so to Democrats. A key early organizer, James, tired of the retractor Republican politics that he saw Trump as most enabling, simply quit. “I just dropped off the board a couple of weeks ago because probably on our board three-fourths is Republicans. And they think Trump is the second coming of Christ. And I am like, I don’t even want to associate with you guys anymore.”

The identification of party-line politics as a barrier to grassroots rural action-oriented change is not meant to depoliticize this work. In fact, it is the opposite. Doing so reclaims community autonomy from a distant state structure that often operates without knowledge, or interest, in the concerns of those positioned marginally in reelections and campaigns. Either or, in or out party politics holds the capacity to collapse shared recognition of injustice and the collective pushback against it. Linking locally for change requires a mind open to rural progress, regardless of the party line.

### *Anti-Statism: Clarity of corporate involvement*

Community recognition of profit-seeking as a key factor driving rural exploitation across party-lines benefits from clear identification of corporate involvement. This galvanizes into a shared call-to-collectivize, where the corporation aided by the state is seen as explicitly corrupt. This form of anti-statism recognizes the wrongdoing of the state taking over governance, while simultaneously allowing a sort of pro-statism to flourish – ‘the state ought to do better’ simultaneous to ‘shame on you lining the pocket books of the rich at the expense of us.’

Communities, though, face substantial barriers in clarifying corporate involvement to achieve the masterful pro-state and anti-state bridge. This is in large part due to state bureaucracy. RRRR, which formed in 2011, first broke the bureaucratic barrier by requesting that the Illinois Department of Agriculture release important documents relating to an application to build an over 18,000 hog facility in McDonough County. While they used the Freedom of Information Act to solicit the facility’s application, the documents they received lacked key information – like facility blueprints. The IDOA

denied the request, and in return, RRRRA group member Jennifer sued and won. From 2012 forward, the IDOA now has to release such documents.

The application documents that are required and now provided through Freedom-of-Information Act requests none-the-less eschew the identity of capital holders that fund CAFOs. In essence, this makes corporations seem local and benevolent, collapsing capacity for the anti-statist fold into pro-statism. That is, unless community members do intricate, time consuming, and innovative detective work. RRRRA found in application documents that the proposed facility, called Shamrock Acres Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), had Bill Hollis, a representative of Carthage Veterinary Service, listed as a contact. An RRRRA group member rang Carthage Veterinary Service, to try to find out any further details. But it was to no avail. Only by scouring news articles, and finding connections between a series of corporations – Carthage Veterinary Service, Prairieland Investment Group, Innovative Swine Solutions, and Professional Swine Management (PSM) – did the group finally realize that the benign Shamrock Acres was a subsidiary of what is more broadly known as the Carthage Management Group (Ashwood, Diamond and Thu 2014). But it was thanks to local networks of knowledge and expertise, not a forthcoming and transparent government.

RRRA's connection of Shamrock Acres to a larger, corporate management group momentarily combined retractor and reformer anti-statism. Those who wanted less of the state (retractors) could combine with those who wanted more of a different kind of state (reformers) to together work to stop the construction of the facility. Group members continued to probe for information about the corporate ringleader, Professional Swine Management (PSM), through a combination of researching campaign contributions to local politicians and contacting farmland managers with insider knowledge. Farmers in RRRRA learned details at local coffee shops about who contracted for PSM, or waving down neighbors for on-the-side-of-the-road conversations. Jennifer, who was a former legal aide, went to the Schuyler County courthouse and dug up litigation information on PSM, while a former confinement worker shared his insights at a group meeting. They found out that the innocuous sounding Shamrock Acres LLC was posited by corporate leaders to join the ranks of other PSM operated facilities charged by the Illinois Attorney General with a litany of pollution violations. Charges included a "nauseating odor" leaking from a pile of dead, composting hogs into a nearby stream at Little Timber LLC, and a purple colored liquid from another facility from composting hog and discharging into Sugar Creek. The Eagle Point LLC facility in Fulton County left a nearby lake smelling of livestock waste (People v. PSM et al. 2010). PSM's Hilltop View LLC in Schuyler County was being sued by neighbors as a nuisance (Ward et al. v PSM 2008). Altogether, the group used the information in interviews with media outlets and letters to the editor, as well as personal phone calls to political representatives. Together, RRRRA put PSM on the map as more than the family oriented, corporate firm that it claimed to be on its website. A top, google hit pertaining to PSM became an RRRRA member's letter-to-the editor. While this letter no longer appears on google searches, in 2017, the *Chicago Tribune* also covered the firm's history of pollution and animal rights violations, which now comes up as a top hit for PSM.

RRRA won, and Shamrock Acres LLC withdrew their application to construct. Withdrawal is the closest grassroots groups can get to winning, as the Illinois Department of Agriculture never denies an application to construct a facility under its Livestock Management Facilities to Act. In fact, it was the first time that an organized rural group had defeated a hog facility in the state (rather than in court), according to ICCAW leaders who have knowledge dating back over two decades. RRRRA's diligent work gave CST in 2016 and other eastern Illinois groups a head start when they later found themselves squaring up against other PSM facilities. They, to a lesser extent, had to educate the public on PSM, and further, they had a formal and informal manual, based on word of mouth, but also painstaking development of documents refuting the legality of PSM facilities, to build their own protest. They built upon strategies that worked.

Yet in a climate of pervasive corporate encroachment on rural rights, the victory stands, but is paired with defeat. The conjoining of those of different political perspectives has yet to on the aggregate stop the proliferation of corporate hog production in the state, in essence further flaming antistatism of the

retractor variety. Jennifer tethered the momentous, and unprecedented defeat of the PSM facility, to the continued infiltration of hog facilities.

Jennifer: “There’s a much smaller one that’s sited near our farm now, and they got that in through a loophole in the law. They put two hog confinements right next to each other and claimed they belong to different owners. And as soon as they were built they built a walkway between them and they were taken over by a family corporation. So they were able to skirt the manure plan requirement and the public information hearing requirement. I mean they claimed uncommon ownership, when in fact it was all owned by the same family.”

Loka: “Mm-hmm.”

Jennifer: “So we’ve got problems now. I’m not sure I can live much longer in the country because of the dust and the hog confinements. We’re now surrounded by three of them. It makes a perfect triangle around us.”

By three, Jennifer was referring to existing PSM facilities over the county line in Schuyler County, Hilltop View LLC and Timberline LLC, which despite being sued by the Attorney General for pollution violations seven years earlier, remain in operation. The other operation came in after PSM’s application, when a neighbor, which has long farmed in the area, decided to build what initially was explained to Jennifer and her neighbors as one finishing house. Jennifer explained that the family made the hog facility appear locally owned and operated, without corporate ties. But more recently, RRRRA members have discovered that the facility is tied to TriOak, a corporation that has yet to receive the sort of sustained scrutiny that PSM has received. A farmer (who was patently opposed to protest against PSM earlier) and an active member of the Republican party, called TriOak a “good neighbor” and PSM “a bad neighbor” – signaling that even local elites and supporters of industrial agriculture had turned against PSM in McDonough County, thanks to RRRRA’s hard work. PSM, unlike TriOak, has been unable to claim farm family status, as their biggest growth sector is in gestating, or sow facilities, which by virtue of biosecurity concerns have scaled up substantially. Between 2015 and 2016, PSM’s number of sows grew by 17%, and so too does their need to cite expansive facilities that each house around 20,000 hogs, including sows and piglets (Freese 2016). TriOak now receives a warm welcome, and PSM more of a cold shoulder, at least in the county.

Yet gestation houses where piglets are bred are of no need if the piglets can’t be sent out for fattening somewhere else, and eventual slaughter. Thus the one-nail corporate identification can miss the many other corporate nails holding the industrial hog production house together. While McDonough County now is spared arguably the worst pollution from the most massive PSM gestation facilities, RRRRA members and others in the county find themselves now regularly subjected to TriOak facilities. Known farm families, which typically have grain operations and little experience with hogs, build TriOak facilities that by contract use their grain, according to one source, or buy grain from other farmers uninvolved with hog production at Bushnell, Illinois (Tri Oaks Foods 2018a). TriOak typically hires the laborers, which includes titles such as “Individual Pig Care Field Person” and “Swine Technical – Farrowing/Breeding” (Tri Oaks Foods 2018b). Even though TriOak, like PSM, also has been sued by an attorney general for pollution (Jackson 2016), their claim to family, rather than corporate, status remains unchallenged. Local elites have been able to keep their names mostly disjointed from TriOak by, as in the case of the facility by Jennifer’s, building multiple, smaller facilities that skirt very limited regulatory requirements, and claiming family farm status. The claim of family farm is especially powerful to those of an anti-statist (retractor) and stateless perspective, most classically agrarianists (Sklar 1988). In contrast, identifying such players as corporate panhandlers forces their hand, and then enables the conjoining of anti-state perspectives even with those who are pro a state of the people, rather than corporations.

*Statelessness: Breaking of ranks by agricultural insiders*

The ideal of statelessness rests on the notion that life is possible based on reciprocity and mutuality (Polanyi 1944). That goodwill exists, rather than a survival of the fittest mantra advocated by Bentham and Hobbes to justify the state. Further, the stateless ideal offers an everyday communalism that binds people together *without* the prompting of higher, and supposedly greater, powers (Graeber 2015). The enactment of everyday communalism requires a promotion of ties locally, even when that means going against larger networks of corporate agribusiness power. For RRRRA and CST, agricultural insiders played a pivotal role in giving the broader community early notice and a legitimate voice of protest.

Two insiders – one a cattle and grain farmer, as well as former hog farmer; the other, a trader and farmer – both learned about proposed gestation facilities in the case of RRRRA and CST *well before* the state gave any formal notice. The RRRRA farmer was approached by a neighbor who sported the land for Shamrock Acres LLC, asking if he would accept manure from it. The farmer became curious about the amount of hogs that would be on the site, and with the help of his family, filed the first FOIA request with the IDOA. Once he found out the magnitude of the operation – over 18,000 hogs – he went door-to-door in his neighborhood, letting each family know of what Shamrock Acres meant based on his 30 years of hog farming. This same farmer wrote the first letter to the editor in opposition to the facility that appeared in a local newspaper. With this information in hand, residents then learned about the state regulatory framework, the Livestock Management Facilities Act, which required the collection of signatures to request a public hearing. They did so, and in the meantime, become well-organized, visible, and vocal.

The second farmer, integral for CST, was approached by PSM to see if he would provide a site for one of their large-scale gestation units. Edward refused, recounting his experience with a PSM official:

“I met with Sam, and we drove all over the place. We got back up to the place, and I said, ‘you are with Professional Swine Management. You’re looking for a hog facility.’ He said, ‘yeah, that’s what I’m doing.’ I said, ‘well, I was told by Gene that you are looking for like a boar station. And it would be a small facility for like 250 boars. And he goes, ‘yeah, that’s what we’re looking at. But we are also looking for some other things.’ I said, ‘whoah, whoah, whoah. That is why I am straight up with you, and I want you to be straight up with me. If you are talking like those places [nearby], I appreciate your honesty and I appreciate meeting with you. But, I wouldn’t do that to my neighbors out here.’”

But Edward kept his ear close to the ground to find out if any of his neighbors provided PSM the site it sought. Eventually he met a neighbor outside the Dollar General, who asked him casually: “What do you think of the hog farm coming in?” Edward, in a state of shock, quizzed his neighbor, found out where the proposed site was, and immediately called and visited neighbors who lived or owned land next to the proposed site. In doing so, CST, like RRRRA, gained months of prior notice, and learned of the opportunity to request a public hearing. CST even prevented the facility from progressing to the public hearing stage, a feat RRRRA did not achieve. CST gained unparalleled community and farmer support to prevent the construction of the facility, in no small part because residents like Edward already had experience living next to two PSM facilities, which although miles away, had a stench that made life outside their farmhouse difficult: “All of my life I have been around livestock,” he said. “But to me, it is not a manure smell. It is a chemical smell.” Edward said he could no longer sit in the yard or grill out for years in the first years a facility was in operation.

From these key CST and RRRRA strongholds, group members kept a close eye on the IDOA website that has recent notices of intent to construct or expand industrial animal facilities. Applications to construct must be posted, but most of the public has no idea that the webpage exists, nor do they closely monitor it. Currently, 118 entries are listed – with all of them either having an approval, inactive, or pending status, as it is state policy never to reject an application (Illinois Department of

Agriculture 2018). RRRRA, as well as CST, began to monitor the website closely while they were actively engaged in the protest process – eagerly awaiting any change in status, such as “withdrawn” or “inactive.” While doing so, RRRRA found out that another facility was proposed in their county. RRRRA group member Mary traveled an hour to the other side of the county, and went door-to-door, informing residents of an application to construct South Morgan Acres LLC, another over 18,000 gestation hog facility. PSM would eventually withdraw the South Morgan Acres LLC application to construct in 2012, due again to dogged protest.

The breaking of ranks by insiders, though, is far from easy. The RRRRA farmer who first did so had twenty of his hay bales burned to the ground in the middle of January, on snow covered ground. Both the CST and RRRRA farmers who first informed the community about the CAFOs faced verbal assault from other agricultural insiders in various contexts: sale barns, land sales, restaurants, and community events. Another CST member, and well-known Republican, tried unsuccessfully to stop a smaller scale PSM facility that neighbors her family farm before the CST group had formed. She described, as she sat with Ashwood in a restaurant, the threats she received: “They were sitting here and were soliciting people. They were asking if they would come do me harm.” By they, she explained that she meant representatives of Illinois hog industry. One of Ashley’s daughter’s childhood friends, sitting in an adjacent booth, heard the comments, and called her daughter immediately. From then on, Ashley said she had a security system installed in her house and her mother’s home. She no longer walks in the woods unarmed. She said, “I thought at the time, this is sad. I’m on my own property, and I feel like I need to carry a gun, on my own property.” She optimistically, though, looks to the future, now that CST has formed, and successful protest has taken place.

When agricultural insiders do not step up and out and exert their shared community values – everyday communalism – their neighbors, like Ashley, face what seems to be an insurmountable barrier: the powerful rhetoric that they are anti-agriculture, anti-farm families, or anti the local economy. Even when their families are longstanding pillars of the community, like in Ashley’s case, or when they were formerly poor farmers, like in Melissa’s, rural residents often fail to penetrate the impenetrable, ideological vice of industrial agriculture. According to state law, if residents are within ¼ of a mile, or 1,320 feet of an industrial animal facility, they must be notified at the time of the facility application in writing. Sometimes, such people’s homes are bought by interested parties ahead of times. Other times, there are no residents with 1,320 feet. In other cases, a resident is notified, and then contacts other neighbors that live in close proximity, like Melissa’s family. Even though they received notification before the public hearing, the notification came too late for Melissa, leaving her scrambling only days before the public meeting to organize against another gestation facility. In Melissa’s case, no agricultural or business insiders stepped forward to lend support to her group’s cause. She said, after having learned just weeks before our interview that the facility’s application was approved by the IDOA, that “What’s upsetting is I found out tons of people knew about it even last fall and never said a word.”

The siting of an industrial hog facility has yet to be prevented in Melissa’s county, at least a facility that is publicly protested – even though her county arguably holds the most evidence of pollution cause by hog production, including pollution lawsuits filed by against corporate operators by the attorney general and a nuisance lawsuit filed by neighbors of hog facilities. A dense network intertwines political elites, major agricultural operators, old family blood, and business interests in the county. No insider has yet to use their status, like farming or business owner, to push back against corporate hog production. Melissa sees the situation starkly: “Farming has turned into only people that were handed everything.” Still reeling after her group’s defeat, Melissa attended a meeting hosted by another group fighting a hog facility, where they discussed what had happened to Melissa. Jeremiah, interacting with another group member – Ellen, found it hard to condemn the facility Melissa was protesting because he knew the family constructing the buildings.

**Jeremiah:** “One thing you’ve got there is a person who has just entered the construction business. He is very well know, and he is very well liked, he is a very nice person. And this is Richard Jones. And he laid out his livelihood to buy this equipment. And

you're not going to find a lot of resistance because a lot of people there don't want to go against him. Nobody wants to see him go broke. I do not want to see him go broke. They are going to support him. I would say that is why there is not a lot of push back in [town]. And everybody sits around and says, 'there is not a lot you can do about it.'"

Ellen: "I know you have heard that quite a few times."

Melissa: "Yeah, and that's why they say they cannot do anything."

Jerimiah: "I know your road commissioner. And Richard and him worked together, Richard worked for his dad when he was in the spray business. They are all close friends. And I am just saying."

Ellen: "It is neighbor against neighbor."

Melissa: "And that's the problem. They are letting them do construction on the roads for free. And they are fine with that. So it's like, 'okay, does he have insurance for that? Liability protection? There was someone who could not even get to their property because he had just slung mud all over at the end of their lane.'"

Jerimiah: "The Company has taken over. From my understanding, the road commissioner has given them permission to take over that part of the road, it's kind of a dead end land. They made some kind of agreement, as I understand it..."

Melissa: "There is no agreement," she said, interrupting Jerimiah. "It is just verbal," she said with a slight laugh. "They are just letting him do it."

At that stage, another group member changed the direction of the conversation, by redirecting and praising Melissa's tremendous organizing skills. The member explained to me that later she could see the conversation was shutting down Melissa, and she did not want that to happen. When debate and discussion of hog facilities settles back on local benefits and ties – however negligible, and regardless of the expense born by the dozens, even hundreds of property owners around a facility – the benefits of a privileged few can eclipse the costs of the many. Avoiding this end requires those with ideological primacy, like agricultural insiders, to lend their voices to everyday communalism. Otherwise, those with the high investment costs of business prevail, even if their success comes at the even higher expense of the collective other.

The stigma, animosity, and bullying that agricultural insiders face when breaking ranks with industrial powerholders, and even their peers, is undeniably daunting. The lives and networks of those who do change markedly. While an unfair ideological primacy belongs to those who call farming their full-time occupation, or own a business, simultaneously an unfair severing of social network ties is born by agricultural insiders who break the ranks. But not all is that which is lost. Community is rebuilt, and as every person involved in CST or RRRRA interviewed for this piece said, their ties to their neighbors grew markedly thanks to their activities. A husband and wife farming duo explained the situation as follows:

Bob: "Right now this community is a lot more banded together, and, know one another, and are together on something, than what they have been in I would say 25, 30 years. Your rural communities, they're becoming more diverse and people moving to the country. It's not farm..."

Nancy: "Farmers, it's not all farmers anymore."

Bob: “You get away from the tightness of the small little community because everybody’s doing their own thing. But this is really, it’s pulled a little community together. I mean, I know people now in the community that I had no idea who they were, you know.”

### *Pro-State and Anti-State: Working Around and Within the Law*

RRRA and CST straddle a curious combination of outright anti-statist disregard for a corrupt state with spurious laws, and painstaking pro-state adherence to the law in an effort to stop hog facilities. The distinct difference between, but combination of, these elements is innovative and remarkable. In essence, these groups successfully combine a key element of rural politics – the ideal of statelessness, with a key element of reform – using the law for a just purpose – without alienating or losing group members more likely to sympathize with one approach than the other. Certainly, the collapse of party lines plays a crucial role in achieving this end, but is also crucial to understand the practical art through which this happens.

RRRA and CST creatively used, not simply disregarded, the law to achieve their purposes. In effect, this required combing over the Livestock Management Facilities Act, which lists eight requirements that must be met in the event a facility is built. Since an application is never denied, group members are keenly aware that the IDOA does not take these criteria seriously, treating it as a bureaucratic requirement, but not binding criteria. Regardless, RRRA set the stage for future groups to do careful research to refute the legitimacy of the application based on the criteria, which include waste management, environmental impact, setback requirements, and environmentally sensitive areas. Jennifer said:

“The thing that I found most important for my own actions was to learn what the law said. We used the law to fight the citing of Shamrock Acres, and we were successful at it. And Memory Lane Acres is using some of the same methods we used. We found a loophole in the law, to be quite honest, that allowed us to come up with a defense that they couldn’t get around.”

CST member Jane, who traveled to Springfield to try to meet with representatives, simply thought that if the existing laws were actually enforced, the hog CAFOs would not be a problem: She said at a CST meeting:

“When citizens can show that the siting criteria is not met, the department of ag needs to go by what the law says. I know the people I have talked to, they’re like, ‘you’re not going to change minds or anything.’ But it comes down to, we have to follow the laws.”

Ashley, like Jane, thought the best method for reform was simply enforcement of existing standards: “I want the rules to be adhered too. That’s totally all I want. They have a set of rules, adhere to them. Stop, stop skating around them, stop pretending they don’t exist, they’re there for a reason, and I know ICCAW thinks they are not working but, and it may be because I’m not into this enough to understand all of it. It’s very possible.”

While the painstaking legal work done by Jane, Jennifer, Ashley and others can prove vital in stopping hog facilities, it also runs the risk of stalling purposeful community organizing by treating existing laws as sufficient. It also assumes the legitimacy of such facilities in the first place, in the event they were to adhere to criteria. The broader problems of the industrial food system, and the role that state policies play in forcing smaller farmers out of business to the detriment of rural communities, can become lost in legal trivialities. In a sense, RRRA’s victory and CST cautious optimism by virtue of RRRA’s victory afforded the groups the luxury of seeing the law as legitimate. For those hundreds, perhaps even thousands of hog facilities that have been approved (the specific number cannot be

known, as the IDOA or Illinois Environmental Protection Agency do not keep a list), and those many thousands more who live beside them, existing laws are anything but enough.

In the early days of RRRRA, before their successful defeat of Shamrock Acres LLC, members shared rumors about attempts to infect confinement herds with diseases, release hogs into the wild from their cages, and questioned whether the burning-to-death of thousands of hogs in Schuyler County at a PSM facility may have been orchestrated. Such ponderings were not out of scope, as RRRRA faced a political climate where *never* before had an industrial hog facility been stopped in the state through public organizing. While not condoned by the group, these discussions marked a different aim or end – one rendered against a state that took no notice of the concerns of those most burdened, and forced to sacrifice for the benefit of urban and international consumers. Men were explicitly the ones who engaged in such conversations, particularly farmers and workers who knew hog production well. Men too, as this paper has presented, use legal means for reform. But when the odds of success through legal means appears low, the appeal of rebellion heightens. This parallels other documented acts of rebellion or resistance in the rural context, like poaching, against all powerful corporate-state alliances (Ashwood 2018).

Remarkably, though, the focus on the destructive end – the imposition of a hog confinement that threatens the health, land, and sustenance of a neighborhood – enables rural people to work together, whether from a pro-state or anti-state position. In a sense, this is ideal. People who prefer no heavy-handed government with too much authority, can wed their ideology with methods for improvement in the short run. In the context of grassroots industrial hog production, communities understand the immediate impacts of the grievance at hand and its impact on their homes and livelihoods – an empathy that the state, with all its divisive politics, can extinguish on a larger scale. Chomsky 1976 [2005], while recognizing the folly of a hierarchical state that limits community autonomy, none-the-less sees changes for the better, rather than the outright elimination of the state, as central in the interim. Change, thus, comes with community, empathy, and recognition of immediate impacts, all of which prosper in the RRRRA and CST cases.

### *Pro-Statism: Forging a better state through outside help with inside roots*

The startling imposition of a CAFO, and the dramatic rush to try to stop it, was, in Jake’s words, “very chaotic.” In the height of the protest, Jake set aside any farm work he could and devoted his time exclusively to the cause: “Because I mean, the pressure was on. We didn’t know what we was doing, and so we had to learn very, very fast.” The steep learning curve requires first, coming to terms with the environmental, health, and animal repercussions of an industrial hog operation that produces more fecal waste than the humans in a combination of two, even three, counties. Access to credible, peer-reviewed studies about the impacts and structure of corporate hog facilities plays a key role in grassroots groups understanding and convincing others about CAFO’s impacts.

Often, such studies and support comes from organizations that are explicitly of the state, like universities or non-profit organizations, whose aims often are to reform the government in service of their cause. At CST’s request, the John Hopkins School of Health, Center for a Livable Future, sent a letter to their County Board and the Illinois Department of Agriculture summarizing the major impacts of industrial production on the spread of pathogens in surrounding communities; contamination of ground and surface water; and release of air pollutants and odors. Such direct involvement in the concerns of rural people helps gain them legitimacy, support, and hope in face of daunting opponents, who claim in the RRRRA member’s words that, “poop doesn’t smell.” More to the point, epidemiological and health studies show exposure to ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, methane, and endotoxins can facilitate asthma, severe coughs, loss of smell, respiratory impairment, aerobic metabolism, headaches, fatigue, weakness, chest tightness, and the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria (Bullers 2005; Wing et al. 2008; Rule et al. 2008). Steve Wing, an epidemiologist who did groundbreaking research on CAFO exposures and community health, personally shared papers via email with RRRRA. Research is one of the most important and crucial elements of the organizational



process, as community members go to the internet to find out information about the dangers associated with such facilities.

Further, clinical and non-profit aid makes a marked difference for rural communities. RRRA in 2012 attained free legal representation from the Washington University Environmental Law Clinic. In the event that the IDOA approved the Shamrock Acres LLC permit, the Environmental Law Clinic was prepared to sue the agency for not upholding the Livestock Management Facility Act. Further, the university at the time had an Intellectual Property and Nonprofit Organizations Law Clinic, which helped RRRA formally incorporate, so it could handle donations, fundraising money, and group expenses. As another example of research that has direct implications for rural people, Ashwood, Diamond and Thu's (2014) paper came out of the trio's research on the organizational structure of the Professional Swine Management system, when peer reviewed research at the time provided limited insights into the corporate hog structure RRRA encountered. The paper has helped other Midwest groups trying to grapple with the subsidiary corporate structure of expanding industrial hog production.

Non-profit organizations focused mainly on organizing, lobbying, and educating, prove vital for rural communities. Unfortunately, rural communities largely are underrepresented in terms of such support (Pender 2015). ICCAW was mentioned by group leaders as playing a key role in their success. ICCAW helped RRRA, CST, and other groups across the state find access to peer-reviewed studies and resources to collectivize. ICCAW, the only state group that works to help communities facing CAFOs, came in at key moments of crisis when community members found themselves overwhelmed. Jake said that, "Emily's been a big help," referring to an ICCAW representative, and Melissa put it more poignantly:

"It's so funny, I was just like a moth to a flame. Everybody was unorganized and here comes Emily, and Emily is so, she is just like a tornado, you know?" she said, laughing. "And she just sucks everything in. You just gravitate toward her, because I could tell she was a lady that knew, and I went straight to her."

Emily warned groups when deadlines were fast approaching in the current regulatory apparatus, deadlines that often scrambling groups did not realize existed. ICCAW is the only group working explicitly to challenge existing livestock regulations, and regularly uses its experience with group members to change the law. While overburdened in a state invaded by corporate hog production, the group continues to guide communities overwhelmed with a regulatory framework that works against them.

## Conclusion

CST and RRRA group members combine elements of pro-statism, anti-statism, and statelessness to effectively achieve meaningful change in their communities. They do so by rendering party affiliations tertiary, even contrary, to their goals. They revealed the powerholders behind what seemed innocuous and harmless facilities, and tied them to a broader system of exploitative industrial animal production. Agricultural insiders who knew of the daily drudgery of living next to large-scale, corporate hog facilities denied demands of complicity, and rang the critical, early alarm for communities. Group members conjoined anti-government with pro-governmental ideologies, working within the law, and even teasing with strategies outside of it. Even more importantly than ensuring successful protest, such open-mindedness enabled those with very different perspectives toward the state to stay involved because reciprocity and shared humanity were clear. Abstract research, as well as close ties to legal clinics and academics themselves, provided grassroots protesters with broader legitimacy. Peer-reviewed research enabled them to defend their rights by empowering their claims against counterintuitive ones like "poop doesn't smell", but claims that none-the-less are backed by corporate powerhouses. In moments of confusion that could have led to inaction, a broader umbrella nonprofit provided key guidance.

There is much hope for better understanding rural collective possibilities by being sure to include the anti-state and stateless perspectives, along with pro-statism. This study calls for more work to better understand what makes these five elements of rural protest works. It calls for a better understanding of why the collapse of party-lines, and working across them, is not necessarily a moderate end, but actually a radical one. It calls for more empowering of agricultural insiders by inclusion in alternative collectives, and more documentation of the community rewards in store for them when they do, even when they certainly face condemnation in circles they've otherwise known all their lives. Embracing, or at least understanding, anti-governmental perspectives in light of regulatory apparatuses that explicitly dispossess rural people equips groups with a powerful diversity of ideologies, and relative toolkits to address the most surprising of challenges that may arise. Without the aid of outside institutions, whether nonprofits or universities, rural residents can languish in times when there seem no possible pathways forward, nor outside power that provides for solidarity. We need more of each of these elements to help rural people on a broader stage to achieve a fairer, more just society.

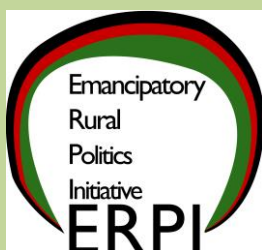
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**The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI)** is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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