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Introduction

On Friday, August 12, 2017, dozens of white nationalist "Alt-right" supporters gathered in the small town of Charlottesville, VA to protest the removal of confederate statues. While marching, the predominantly upper-middle-class crowd carried tiki torches and chanted the Nazi slogan "blood and soil" (Lane and Rupp 1978; Wagner 2017). Although the phrase "blood and soil" was immediately associated by media and marchers with the Nazi movement, its roots go back even further, to historical linkages with rural peasantry (Brassley, Segers, and Molle 2012; Lane and Rupp 1978). The slogan originated in the late 19th century with the work of German agrarian romantics, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Ernst Moritz Arndt, and Wilhelm Riehl who argued that the soil, and thus those closest to it-- rural peasants--should be the foundation of the German nation (Brassley, Segers, and Molle 2012). In other words, due to the connection the peasants had with the land, their very blood *was* nation. As Wimborne points out, "Fichte, Riehl and Arndt looked back to a simplistic agrarian utopia that had never existed; it was an imaginary landscape where purity of blood was combined with German soil to produce a Teutonic paradise that could be compared to the purgatory of urban civilization" (Wimborne 2012). Nazi author, Richard Walther Darre, appropriated this conceptualization of blood and soil to create the idea of "pure" Aryanhood--or the master race--which, by definition, did not include Jewish individuals or others, such as homosexuals and Roma, with impure blood (Lane and Rupp 1978). Through incorporation of Jews and other 'impure' groups into the body of the nation, Germany had become sick; thus, the Nazis embarked upon a program of expulsion and execution in order to purify the nation's blood and restore it to health.

The irony of this *historically rural* mantra being utilized by upper middle-class protesters was lost not only on the protesters but the larger audience as well who fixated on its modern relationship to Nazism. It is to this irony that we turn, the appropriation of images and ideas associated with rurality by people who live outside of rural areas and lack knowledge of its lived experiences. Through the aforementioned example, we begin to see the ways in which rurality has been constructed historically as mythical nation, and may be deployed by authoritarian populist leaders and sub-national groups, such as the Alt-right, against undesirable "Others". Imagined nation is no new concept and authors such as Anderson (1983) have elucidated the ways in which nations become imagined historically (Anderson 1983). Our paper seeks to understand how rurality is constructed contemporarily as an imagined nation, and how these discourses are mobilized by authoritarian leaders for political purposes. Further we ask, in what ways does this discourse deviate from the lived experiences of people residing in rural areas.

For the purposes of this paper we define two key concepts which are in tension with one another: the 'lived rural' encompassing the experiences of people living in rural territory and the 'mythical rural' the discursive construction of rurality and the ideal US/French citizen. Of note, both 'rurals' are in fact social constructs--with neither representing objective truth in opposition to falsehood. However, 'lived' rural comprises actual experiences of individuals residing in rural areas; thus, it is essential for contextualizing the 'mythical' rural mobilized by Trump and Le Pen. The tension between lived rural and mythical rural has erupted in new forms of sub-state organizing, such as the Alt-right. Further, this contestation offers insights into populist leaders' interest in political power and nationalist, right-wing groups' desire for political representation. By examining the successful rise of the Alt-Right in the US and the rise of the Front National in France, our research analyzes how populist leaders seek to reframe national identities and restructure the international system.

Literature Review

Rurality is a manifestation of place that is attached to ideals, politics, and identities. However, it is an imagined community (Anderson 1983)—a mythos of space that exists both within and beyond the nation as a cultural connection to biophysical place. As such, scholarship of the rural bridges culture/identity with land/place, intersecting agrarian and environmental studies with rural studies scholarship (Edelman and Borras 2016; Tweeten 2008; Bernstein 2009, 2004; Agarwal 1997; Jones 2012; El Ghonemy 2007; Agarwal 2003; Food and Agriculture Organization 2008; Levien 2012). Thus, place cannot be separated from identity (Pini, Brandth, and Little 2015; Borras Jr and Saturnino M 2013; Cloke, Marsden, and Mooney 2006; Scoones et al. 2017; Scott 2009). This is the crux of our research as we investigate the ways in which identity of place/region intermingles with identity of nation, and how differing constructions of rurality, i.e. 'lived' versus 'mythical' can simultaneously support or reject regressive nationalism.

Our research ties rurality to nation through the incorporation of scholarship on political regionalism--a concept that emerged out of political science in the 1970s. Initially, political regionalism was termed "ethnoregionalism," claiming that subnational territories within states form separatist movements, based on ethnicity, within regions to contest state sovereignty (Cooke 1984). However, Cooke (1984) argues that ethnoregionalism is a limiting concept that obscures "complex politico-social and spatial processes" (ibid 549). Political regionalism recognizes that within the sovereign territorial space of a state, polarized identities can (and do) emerge. This is based on cultures of place and "regional modes of production" (ibid 552). For instance, in his study on Wales' separatist agrarian movement, Cooke illustrates that agrarian modes of production pitted against increasing support of industrialization created fractures in the Liberal party, resulting in fragmentation and separation of agrarian workers into a radical political party (ibid). Thus, political regionalism examines how "the material basis of socio-economic life" varies across space (Cooke 1984, 557). In sum, place impacts the material basis of society and production, thus impacting political self-interest, leading to subnational separation that is geographically emplaced.

Studies of scale (i.e. region) can also serve as "an effort to make sense of the asymmetries, conflicts and confrontations of the globalizing world" (Paasi 2004, 536) in which particular sub-national spaces are impacted by the international system in differing ways. Here, regionalism has moved outside the framework of subnational units within a nation state to multiple scalar units from within the state into the international system. Place and region are now understood as internal to states, as well as combinations of states, and furthermore, international combinations of subnational units within states (as in political parties that share ideologies across state boundaries) (ibid). Furthermore, scholars such as Sack point to the human tendency of "place-making" as "place is a humanly constructed instrument that works much like a loom, helping us weave together elements of nature, meaning, and social relations to create projects and thus change reality into a new one" (Sack 2001, 107). Places do not merely exist but rather are actively constructed by individuals and societies.

Scholarship on political regionalism shifted at the end of the 20th century with "new" political regionalism being defined as "a comprehensive, multidimensional, political phenomenon including economics, security, environment and other issues which challenge nation states today" (Hettne et al. 1999, 17). Further, political regionalism has moved beyond traditional dichotomies (for example agrarian vs industrial, urban vs rural) to understand the tensions and shared meanings between these places (Gimpel and Schuknecht 2002). Given the fluidity of the concept of "region", key research questions must be employed to operationalize and contextualize its contemporary meaning.

For Paasi, region is inherently a social construction, and as such, one must continually ask who or what constructs it (Paasi 2010). "Spatial entities" *become* regions "in a plethora of practices, discourses, relations, and connections that can have wider origins in space and time" (Paasi 2010, 2298). By asking "who" or "what" forms the construct of region, one is engaging with the concept of "banal nationalism" which posits that nationalism is ideologically reproduced through the discourses of leaders, practices of institutions, and responses of civil society within specific political moments

(Billig 1995; Paasi 2016). In essence, contemporary political regionalism is centered around the power dynamics of human interaction and the politics of place. The context of our research is to ask *how rurality becomes region* and, further, how this region is utilized by powerful individuals (in this case authoritarian populist leaders) to inform or reshape discourses of nationalism. The next section of our paper will discuss how social movement theory is utilized to understand the top-down and bottom-up creation of rural identity, i.e. rural as mythos developed through populist discourse and rural as lived, as envisioned through rural advocacy organizations.

Social movement theory emerged in the 1960s United States, when protest movements dominated the social and political scene. Researchers initially sought to explain this phenomenon through individuals' cost/benefit calculations for protesting, e.g. worker's strike (Granovetter 1978). The more people participating in an event the more likely an individual would be to join because the stakes were lower as number of participants grew. However, this did not explain why social movements arose in the first place. Political process theory attempted to answer this puzzle by suggesting that social movements were rational entities responding to political openings by the state (as discussed in Goodwin and Jasper 2009). However, this still failed to explain 1) how movements persisted over time and 2) how social movements occurred in the absence of a political opening. Additionally, implicit in the literature on social movements was a focus on urban centers--casting cities as the site of political contestation—and eliding the rural.

During the 1980s, culturalist explanations took prominence, emphasizing social movements based in framing, emotions, symbols, and solidarities which unite to form a collective identity (Goodwin and Jasper 2009). It is this collective identity that serves to both 1) unify individuals into a coherent body and 2) sustain action over long-term. Thus, in order to maintain a social movement over the long-term amongst rural populations, a collective identity of "the rural" needs to be constructed. The creation of a collective identity is not a one-way process but rather a dialectical occurrence between movement leaders and followers (internal) *and* movement and society (external) (Beinin and Vairel 2011). Our research emphasizes the latter process looking at identity construction vis-à-vis the dialectic between 'lived rural' and Trump/Le Pen's discourse 'mythical rural' (ibid). The creation of a collective identity is further embedded in a particular locality with its own power dynamics determining who has the ability to impact identity (ibid).

From this historical background, we arrive at "new" social movements, conceptualized as forms of contentious action, i.e. ordinary people confronting the state, based on "underlying social networks, resonant collective action frames, and on the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (Tarrow 2011, 7) regarding *contests over identity and meaning* (Durac 2015). While this definition does not inherently link social movements to particular physical spaces, social movement theory tends to focus on urban-based movements (Edelman and Borras 2016). This is due in part to practicality but also to an implicit belief within the literature that urban spaces are where the "real" political battles are fought.

Social movements do not occur out of nowhere but require *perceived* political openings (or threats) in order to arise (Kurzman 2003; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). These perceived political openings can arise from above, that is, crisis/divisions within the domestic elite or international pressure or below, i.e. through growing civil society. Scott points to the political opening from below through his concept of "everyday acts of resistance" which describes contentious actions by peasant populations living in rural areas (Scott 1985). This is especially relevant to our paper's focus on rural areas. Although peasants may lack political and social power they can force change through everyday actions such as "foot dragging" and work slow-downs. However, these everyday acts of resistance—even when performed en masse--would not be considered social movements in the formal sense because they do not exist within a framework of social network with shared collective identity as detailed above.

Asef Bayat attempts to bridge this gap between formal and informal social movements with his concept of "social nonmovements" (Bayat 2010). Although the two states discussed in our research,

US and France, allow for open protest, this literature is useful in understanding social movements amongst communities that lack social power. Bayat poses that through the consistent and *active* use of public spaces in neo-liberal cities, i.e. selling items on the street, streets become the spaces in which grievances are expressed and collective identity is forged. Passive networks with a shared collective identity are established through "large numbers of ordinary people whose fragmented but similar activities trigger much social change" (Bayat 2010, 15). Bayat differentiates his argument from Scott's by suggesting that while political gains take place through individuals' actions, the defense of gains (when threatened by the state) will take place collectively, i.e. through a true social movement. However, these passive networks are forged by simultaneous participation on the streets of neoliberal cities—leaving out the possibility of social nonmovements in rural communities.

It is to this gap, understanding how rural identity is created and maintained by both populist authoritarian actors and individuals living in rural areas, that our research turns. It is important to note that, by definition, social movements operate outside of formal institutions and lack state resources. Thus, the attempted mobilization of rural social movements by populist leaders who go on to gain formal power must lead to a fundamental shift in the movement's identity and existence. However, as our paper focuses on campaign trail rhetoric we do not have to deal with this essential shift.

In sum, our paper addresses the empirical gaps of both documentation of lived experiences of the rural, i.e. lived rural, and analysis of populist leaders' discursive creation of rural as nation, i.e. mythical rural. These constructions (lived rural and mythical rural) do not exist separately from one another but rather are constructed and sustained in a dialectical process which will be explored at length through discourse analysis. Further, this discursive exploration is cross-national in approach, enabling us to understand the similarities and differences of what is perceived to be global movement towards right-wing populism. As noted above, rurality as nation is not a new concept. It has been utilized in multiple historical periods and thus must be understood as embedded in this particular moment, i.e. a moment characterized by the perceived global shift towards right-wing populism. In addition to empirical contributions, our paper adds to the fields of political regionalism and social movement theory by developing an understanding of how "rural" exists as place, identity, and influence within and upon states. Further, we add to rural studies an analysis of how rurality fits into larger dialogues of geospatial power configurations and nationalism.

Methods

We collected data from two sources: 1) presidential campaign trail speeches of Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen and 2) mission statements from organizations that purportedly support 'rural interests' (see below for further details). Discourse analysis was utilized to unpack the narrative creation of the 'lived' and 'mythical' rural and, further, to understand how these identities support and contradict one another (Yanow 2000). See appendix for descriptive tables.

Campaign Trail Discourse

The speeches utilized for Trump's discourse span from his acceptance of the Republican nomination (July 21, 2016) until election day (November 8, 2016). In total, 50 speeches were coded for analysis. Although the choice of speeches was in part the result of convenience sampling (transcripts were accessible online) thematic saturation was felt to have occurred mid-way through the coding process (n~20) suggesting that this sample was more than adequate to understand nodal points.

The speeches utilized for the discourse of Marine Le Pen span from the announcement of her campaign (February 5, 2017) to her concession speech (May 7, 2017), with N of 22[1]. However, thematic saturation was clear by N ~ 5, with most speeches afterward quoting these first talks.

[1] French interviews and speeches translated by co-author Limeberry

Mission Statements and Organizational Documents

Mission statements from organizations that purport to support 'rural interests' are also utilized for analysis. US organizations include: American Farm Bureau Federation (n~33), and the Highlander Center. French organizations include: French General Commission for Regional Equality (n~21) and National Federation of Farmers' Unions (n~9). These organizations span the political spectrum, united in their self-proclaimed support of 'rural interests'.

Discursive Interpretation

Discourse building is a dialectical process at both internal (between movement leaders and followers) and external (between movement and greater society) levels. Our discursive interpretation will follow Laclau and Mouffe's technique looking specifically for antagonistic or agonistic framing within the discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). In essence, we are examining four discourses which are simultaneously separate while informing one another: Trump, Le Pen, national rural advocacy organizations, and grassroots/local rural organizations in the US and France. We expect all discourses to be antagonistic in form as identity construction necessitates use of "us against them" or in-vs-out-group dynamics inherent in antagonistic framing. We are particularly interested in the tensions between lived and mythic rural discourses as we expect these to serve as sources of insight and investigation (Yanow 2000, 8).

Nodal Point Construction: Living Rural—Who Counts, What Do They Need?

We find that the center of discourse on rurality is the way in which place is constructed, fomenting the questions: who has the sociopolitical power to create the conceptual "rural", when is "rural" rendered visible to political actors, and how do the tensions between owning discourses of rurality and building movement for "the rural" intersect? In this section we analyze Trump and Le Pen's discourses juxtaposed against two organizations from both the US and France that are explicitly "pro-rural" and working to empower rural communities and build rural social movement. In claiming such goals, these organizations are inherently claiming some form of ownership over the definition of "rural." Returning to Paasi and Billig's conceptualizations of space and "banal nationalism", we seek to uncover not only the ways in which nation is ideologically reproduced, but the way in which rurality is ideologically reproduced through practices and discourses of civil society (Paasi 2009; Billig 1995). The lived rural, in effect, becomes not only actual experience of place, but rather how one fits into place---in other words, how place becomes identity.

In our analysis of pro-rural US and French organizations, we find that subject positioning is a key element for constructing "solidarity" within the organization. In other words, specific identities (workers, farmers, women, etc.) are deployed politically to create cohesion and foster social movement within organizational goals. However, it cannot be said that all organizations are antagonistic in nature (creating an us vs them approach); yet many are. Finally, most of the analyzed organizations use a logic of equivalence, wherein a member of one identity group inherently cannot be a member of another. Specifically, pro-rural organizations often foster discourses that maintain strict separation between rural/urban identities; in other words, to be rural is to *not* be urban.

Given the discursive use of rurality and the ways in which rural identities are deployed within pro-rural organizational space, we have uncovered three nodal points around which discourses of rurality are positioned: 1) construction of rural identity, 2) defining needs of rural peoples, 3) determining who can enact/implement these needs. Below is a table depicting an overall analysis of these nodal points; however, below we analyze Trump/Le Pen's discourse and each organization to compare and contrast the way in which they individually frame these discursive elements. It is important to note that while the below table captures the overall discursive findings of Trump/Le Pen's speeches and rural advocacy organizational documents, there are important fissures, tensions, and divergences between

the organizations themselves. These will be discussed as we analyze the organizations' discourse within each nodal point.

Table 1: Nodal Points in Discursive Construction of Rurality

Nodal Point	Trump/Le Pen	Nationally based rural organizations	Grassroots rural organizations
1. Who is Rural? *Rural identity*	Rural defined primarily through occupation and citizenship	Rural identified through occupational status, e.g. farmer	Rural identity defined as more than occupation and citizenship status. Appreciation that people living in rural areas cross ethnic, racial, class, and occupation lines
2. What do rural people need? *Rural Needs*	Jobs, secure borders, dignity	Jobs and influence over policy	Voice, capacity, empowerment
3. Who can implement rural needs? *Implementation*	Trump/Le Pen only ones able to implement	The organization vis-à-vis political power	Rural people themselves vis-à-vis grassroots organizing

Situating Our Analysis Within Existing Literature

The organizational construction of identity exists within the theoretical space of social movement theory and political regionalism. Pro-Rural organizations inherently espouse a particular ideology: to support the efforts, needs, and movements of rural peoples. In their analysis on social movement uprising in the Middle East, Hoffman and Konig claim that the "movement's significance derives from its attempts to push the boundaries in the discursive sphere, where transformations are less obvious and more difficult to detect for outside observers than in the material sphere of institutionalized politics," (Hoffmann and König 2013, 2). Organizations that purport to support rural peoples often do not present themselves as radical social movements or organizations that are attempting to restructure society. Despite the fact that many of the mission statements and documents that are analyzed below claim to foster societal change, it appears that this change derives from discursive transformation, i.e. reclaiming "the rural" from the assumed control of urban/state elites.

Furthermore, Durac argues that social movements deploy frames as "discursive weapons" to "assign meaning to relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents, attract support, and demobilize opponents" (Durac 2015, 240). Herein, rurality is deployed as a discursive weapon to mobilize particular identities (i.e. farmers), to politicize rurality, attract support, and discursively demobilize the would-be opponents of the urban elite. These frames invoke political regionalism, wherein place impacts not only the material basis of needs (Cooke 1984) but also micro-scalar spaces which foster shared identities and meaning (Paasi 2004). Through the lens of these organizations, region is enacted as a frame through which political identities can be reproduced and deployed against perceived sites of power (such as urban centers and the state). The below analysis examines the ways in which frames are constructed to determine rural identity, rural needs, and agents who can enact these needs.

Nodal Point Analysis

In what ways does "rural" become an identity? Who counts as rural and when? This section explores the ways in which Trump, Le Pen, and rural advocacy organizations define and determine who gets to

count as "rural". Furthermore, we explore the ways in which these varying actors determine rural needs and the agents who can legitimately implement these needs.

Trump Discourse

In Trump's America, rural identity is crafted through his vision of the ideal American citizen. The ideal American is linked not to a particular physical space but rather in contrast to where they do not reside—inner cities (i.e. sites of violence for people of color), sanctuary cities (i.e. havens for illegal immigrants), and political cities (i.e. urban spaces which house political elites). The ideal American is identified as being "middle-class," a legal citizen, and, importantly, a forgotten victim who has been stripped of his "good job" and dignity through the political elites' decision to open the US up to the world economy.

Trump's vision of rural needs maps directly on to his identification of their forgotten victim status. In Trump's view, the needs of these ideal citizens are to obtain "good jobs" that have been stolen by various forces (e.g. globalization and immigration). Thus, Trump supports closed borders which keep out immigrants (to privilege ideal citizens) and curtailing international trade. Less concretely, Trump's rhetoric suggests a further rural need—dignity. These ideal citizens not only lack "good jobs" but have had these *stolen* from them through the rigged system created by elites. They have been repeatedly overlooked by political forces both within and outside the US and through loss of "good jobs" have been stripped both of the ability to care for their families (ideal citizen as patriarchal figure) and, most importantly, their identity as American worker/ideal citizen.

In terms of implementation, Trump's rhetoric clearly suggests only one person able to fulfill these rural needs: himself. It is through voting for Trump that ideal citizens can take back America from elites and immigrants whom he suggests have stolen it from them. Further, Trump states that Clinton not only cannot support the needs of true Americans but is actively working against their interests—favoring globalism over the needs of the American people. In contrast to organizations such as the Highlander Center, Trump believes that power to change comes from the top—himself, personally—to be enacted downwards through policy related to "bringing back good jobs." The only power held by the ideal citizens he purportedly represents is in the voting booth to elect Trump to office.

Le Pen Discourse

Similarly to Trump, and in fact intentionally crafted to mimic Trump (Bell, Vandorne, and Jones 2016), Marine Le Pen fosters a discourse of rurality that identifies rural people as the forgotten workers of France. She pits both the elites of Paris and Brussels and immigrants against the "true" French citizen, who lives and works in rural areas. Her rhetoric heavily relies on a construction of urban areas as sites of corruption and co-optation; places where the EU and political elites have created policies to open borders and harm the real French farmers and factory workers who do not have access to these elite spaces. For Le Pen, a true French citizen is encapsulated by their desire for secure, closed borders; protected "jobs" (farms and factories); and distrust of city elites.

Based upon this constructed identity, Le Pen argues that policies to protect the "real" citizen's jobs are the needs of rural people. French rural citizens need strong anti-immigrant and anti-EU policies, a welfare system that enables them to continue their "honest" work (as farmers and factory workers), and policies that strip urban elites from their power. In her campaign, Le Pen promises that her and the Front National are the best way to foster and implement these needs.

American Farm Bureau Association

The Farm Bureau's discourse is antagonistic in nature meaning that it represents an us against them mentality. The AFBF pits groups against one another both internally (i.e. communities within the US) and externally (i.e. the US and "the UN") in order to construct the ideal American identity of the "farmer". The AFBF decisively defines this identity as the "unified voice of the American farmer"

("American Farm Bureau Federation", 2017.). The AFBF also utilizes a logic of equivalence to make binary distinctions between said groups—a member of one is, by definition, not a member of the other. Lastly, the AFBF appeals to subject positions, i.e. identities such as women and working class, which are mobilized for political purposes.

Discourse of representation emerges continually throughout the AFBF's documents. The tagline for AFBF is "the unified voice of the American farmer", immediately creating a distinction between who the American farmer is and everyone else. Importantly, the American farmer has a "unified" voice, and any divergence from this voice indicates an identity of an Other: "them". The primary identity group the AFBF claims to represent hinges on a coded identity of whiteness, and an explicit identity of Christian. The AFBF repeatedly appeals to removal of support for minority farmers and first nations' farmers while also clearly stating its adherence to Christian values (such as heterosexual marriage). Importantly, "real" farmers are those who farm for profit—not smallholder farmers who are interested in sustainable integration of business and environment. The AFBF repeatedly mentions organic farmers as an "Other" group, which they do not represent. Finally, the AFBF clearly believes that urban elites are pitted against farm needs, and continually appeal to increasing farmer voice in urban policy.

Here, the AFBF has situated "the rural" as the "American farmer," but specifically the white, Christian American farmer, who is trying to "honestly earn a dollar". Importantly, the AFBF bills themselves as a grassroots movement, despite being one of the largest American lobbies. Their primary claim is that urban elites have co-opted control of land and farm policy in the US, and it's up to the "voice of the American farmer" to regain this control and independence.

Highlander Center

While Trump/Le Pen and nationally based rural organizations highlight the needs of *rural people,* the Highlander Center moves away from this essentializing rhetoric and focuses on "organizing and movement building in Appalachia and the South" ("Mission & Methodologies – Highlander Research and Education Center" n.d.). This is not merely a difference in language but shows the differing conceptualization of rurality that the Highlander Center maintains. For the center, rurality is based on who lives within a particular physical space. They recognize that these regions contain a multiplicity of overlapping identities—racial, ethnic, class, occupation--that cannot be covered by a single "rural identity" and thus cannot be supported by a singular overarching agenda of "rural" needs.

With acknowledgment of differing rural identities comes a commensurate push for fulfilling *diverse* needs of *diverse* peoples. This is why the Highlander Center focuses not on specific issues, e.g. factory jobs or farming, but rather supports efforts aimed at "collective action [that] shapes [people's] own destiny" ("Mission & Methodologies – Highlander Research and Education Center" n.d.) The center seeks to empower individuals and groups at a local level, influencing change across the domains of justice, equality, and sustainability through bottom-up methods. In doing so, they expand the definition of "rural needs" to include all areas that people living in Appalachia and the South believe must be changed in order to benefit their everyday lives.

This links to the final point: implementation of rural needs must be done by individuals and groups living within rural areas. This is in direct contrast to Trump and Le Pen who paint themselves as the sole implementers of rural needs and to nationally based rural organizations who seek to leverage state and federal political power in a top-down approach for implementation. The Highlander Center's approach recognizes that a multiplicity of actors with divergent needs cannot all be subsumed under existent political structures; rather, they work to empower actors themselves to define and fulfill their needs as people living in the South and Appalachia.

Commissariat General a l'egalite des territories (CGET)

The mission statement of CGET claims to "support the government in the struggle against territorial inequalities while supporting territorial dynamics, by designing and animating city and regional planning policies with local actors and citizens" ("Ruralités | CGET" n.d.). Furthermore, "its fields of intervention are inter-ministerial: access to employment, care and services to the public, social cohesion, digital inclusion, assistance to mobility, economic attractiveness, ecological and digital transitions, revitalization of fragile territories and city centers in abandonment" ("Ruralités | CGET" n.d.). CGET explicitly includes rurality and rural areas as a key goal to foster territorial equality, arguing that rural people often feel invisible or left out of policy dialogue, hence, French national policy needs to focus on expanding infrastructure and service delivery to rural territories. Importantly, a goal of CGET is to create campaigns that "are areas of opportunity" for rural people to "participate fully in the development of France" (ibid).

While CGET fosters an urban vs rural discursive dynamic, it does so to advocate for bridging this divide. For CGET, rurality is defined by lack of access to urban center services, lack of job opportunities, and lack of voice in policy. Hence, for CGET, rurality is often equated as "lacking" in some facet, and needs to be supported, rebuilt, or integrated. Importantly, the mission statement argues that rural people need the opportunity to participate in France's development; this statement implies that rural people are not already part of French development. This assumption fosters an idea of rural development that integrates rural people into urbanization discourse and bases rural needs on the "achievements" (ibid) of the urban. In other words, CGET seeks to bring the urban to the rural, claiming this goal as a form of advocacy for rural peoples' needs.

National Federation of Farmers' Unions

FNSEA operates at the national level to represent the interests and voices of rural farmers' unions across France. A primary goal of FNSEA is to "contribute to the employment and well-being of rural France" ("Bienvenue Sur Le Site de La FNSEA" n.d.). They seek to do this by providing "wholesome" products to consumers while "conserving" the natural landscape of France. While they do not specify identity markers of who "rural France" is, they do argue that "a demographically well-balanced" (ibid) rural society is central to conserving French well-being and natural resources. While the FNSEA operates at the national level, it argues that it seeks "administration without oppression" (ibid) and focuses on goals that protect voices of the "weak" (ibid). Finally, while the emphasis of FNSEA is on creating a viable and sustainable agricultural sector, it also has internal bodies and representatives of environmental groups and rural community associations. Hence, while rurality for FNSEA is defined primarily through occupational identity (farmers), this is acknowledged as only one facet of a "demographically well-balanced" rural identity.

To implement the needs of rural communities, which according to FNSEA are: supporting the viability of agriculture while conserving natural resources and biodiversity in diverse rural communities, FNSEA argues that multiple local-level voices must come together. They work with 18 organizations representing rural communities, 20,000 local farmers unions, and 36 economically specialized production unions. While they advocate for these voices at the national level, the fundamental aspect of their organization is to prevent "oppression" by silencing the diversity of rural voices. Hence, they contend that rural people's must represent themselves in diverse ways, and that only through building large national-level movement of these voices can rural voice be heard.

Bridging Analysis: The Mythos *vs* the Lived Rural

The above discursive constructions highlight varying forms of identity formation and contestation over rurality as mythos and rurality as lived experience. What is at stake is identity imposition, self-sovereignty, and co-optation. In their seminal analysis on the ways in which development discourse constructs identities without basis in lived experience, James Ferguson and Larry Lohmann argue that the World Bank and similar organizations rearrange identities of the poor to fit the goals of their

donors, rather than fitting the lived realities of the poor to goals (Ferguson 2007). The tool by which this is possible is a discourse infused with the power of the international system and control over funding; specifically, Ferguson and Lohmann argue that the World Bank is able to ignore the reality (for instance, that the majority of workers in Lesotho are wage laborers across the border in South Africa) and isolate specific identities (such as peasant farmer) in order to frame development as "agricultural aid" to "help" these individuals (ibid). What is critical is that despite continual failure of these development schemes, the identity of the poor peasant farmer becomes so entrenched that it begins to shape the construction of the state apparatus in Lesotho (i.e., the government begins to create policies to support agricultural development even though this is not in reality a key issue area for poor workers). Here, we see the tangible impact of identity co-optation and construction through selecting and isolating specific identities and rearranging reality to fit the needs of elites and power holders.

In the context of framing and imposing identities, Foucault theorized social movements as "engaged in struggles against the imposition of identity" (Foucault 2000 as cited in Tarrow 2011, 26). Further, movements work against the "construction of subjectivity" by those in positions of authority who "tell use the 'truth' of who we are" (ibid 26). Hence, social movements—such as the organizations that support rural needs—often directly respond to perceived imposition of identities from state elites and power. However, populists such as Trump and Le Pen, who construct themselves as "with the people," often derive their political power from the very discourses of resistance (against imposition) that social movements have fostered. Herein we begin to see the fissures between the mythos of rurality and the agency of rurality through lived experience. In this section we analyze the fissures, tensions, and interactions of social movement/organizational discourses and the discourse of Trump and Le Pen.

First, we turn to the nationalist rural organization American Farm Bureau Federation to illustrate the ways in which lived experience co-mingles narrative to help foster populist leaders' rhetoric, but simultaneously challenge it. The "Farm Bureau gained power as a political force in the late 1890s" and "emerged as an alternative to more traditional politics" (Berlage 2001, 432). By invoking rural moral values and including women as homemakers and children who were part of the "family farm", AFBF could speak not only to the need for farmers to be included in the project of modernization, but the desire for rural communities to maintain their "moral" identities (Berlage 2001; Saloutos 1947). This combined with AFBF's attempts to "scientize" agriculture in an oppositional dialectic to the "big money" industries of the railroad etc., encouraged a new political identity to emerge (Berlage 2001; Pierson 1993). As AFBF organized farmers in rural areas, the "old [political] party identity tied to religion, ethnicity, or Civil War issues receded, and occupational identity as a basis for political action assumed more importance" (Berlage 2001, 433).

Thus, the growth of AFBF membership over time led to the emergence of a newly unified agricultural movement with an identity forged out of occupation. Farmers now had a rallying cry and a political agenda, moving forward from the original reformist goals of the populist People's Poplulist Party. The AFBF, with this political support, would become the primary voice of agriculture on the national political stage. However, The Farm Bureau's discourse resembles that of authoritarian populist leaders, on one hand, and grassroots movements on the other. The AFBF decisively defines its identity as the "unified voice of the American farmer". Yet, the AFBF utilizes a logic of equivalence to make binary distinctions between identity groups—a member of one is, by definition, not a member of the other. Herein, it becomes evident that the lived experience of SOME rural people informs the organizing platform of one of the nation's wealthiest, largest lobbying organizations, which in turn perpetuates narratives of rurality to legitimate the needs of those who hold SOME voice in rural America. Populist leaders such as Trump pick up on these discourses, which emerge out of contested spaces within rural organizing, and deploy them for political gain.

Similarly, the nationalist rural organization CGET, a government-sponsored program in France for territorial equality and rural improvement, shares a paternalistic "we know what's best" narrative. As Wendeln points out, the discourse of territorial equality within CGET emerged from the French 1950s "golden era" of postwar growth and modernization. However, much like discourses of development today, the golden era ignored rural France, producing uneven development. Wendeln argues that "even

as Paris, large provincial cities, and a handful of manufacturing regions experienced record growth, the majority of the national territory was menaced by economic decline. In this context, a generation of national leaders considered that steering part of France's growth to struggling areas was not just a good social policy, but also necessary for maintaining the nation's economic growth and their own political fortunes,"(Wendeln 2014). Hence, reproducing rurality as a goal within nation (banal rurality, to appropriate Billig's terminology), became essential for politicians to remain in power. However, as history shows, while the discourse of "developing" the French rural alongside its cities increased, actual development practices remained inequitable and unevenly distributed.

It is within this context of the French government pursuing a "contradictory mix of polarizing and equalizing logics—correcting some disparities while aggravating others" (Wendeln 2014) that CGET emerged. In the 1930s, prior to the golden era, French right-wing leaders pursued a rigorous anti-urban, pro-rural agenda to highlight the "corruption" that urban centered wealth in Paris produced (ibid). Into the golden era, political movements continued to challenge France's pro-urban development policies, leading political elites to realize that "letting territorial inequalities fester had an electoral cost as well as an economic one" (ibid). Hence, despite the failure of these political leaders to gain sufficient votes, their discourse impacted the ability of future politicians to gain rural support; thus, territorial management emerged in France as a discourse of power that at least espoused to render the rural visible. The economic crises of the early 2000s spurred a return to similar movements and concerns in France, and CGET's mission on rural equality was officially designated in 2014 ("Ruralités | CGET" n.d.).

The increasing threat of pro-rural, anti-urban political parties (such as the Front National) spurred the French government to focus on rural equity through modernization and development—discourses that are strikingly similar to the early 1950s-1960s response to the 1930s anti-urban movements. The particular mission of CGET is to "combat the feeling of relegation expressed in rural areas, respond to challenges of new ruralities, and show that the countryside is an area of opportunity and can participate fully in the development of France" (ibid). This mission statement acknowledges the French political elite's fears that rural workers and citizens feel forgotten, that lack of jobs and increasingly diverse identities can foster divisions and contestations (hence loss of political support bases), and that rural areas can be integrated into an overall France. Behind these assumptions are deep implications for who originally counted as French and who is normally "seen" vis-à-vis state politics.

Given the historical development, context, and mission statement of CGET, their goals are to ensure adequate service delivery to rural areas (based on the example of urban infrastructure) and to assist "social facilitation" wherein rural residents can experience urban settings. The goals of telling rural citizens what services they need and how they can "participate" in France emerge from CGET's top-down structure and embeddedness in the politics of urban leaders. This paternalistic structure in part gives strength to populist politicians' rhetoric; for example, when Marine Le Pen claims that the rural are forgotten and that urban development has left them behind, rural French citizens can imagine this through the goals and history of organizations such as CGET. However, CGET has been successful in fostering rural political bases, and in attempting to render the rural visible, especially through economic "growth", they gain credibility for elite rural voters (such as entrepreneurs, etc.). What emerges is a tension between the forgotten rural and the rural-in-need-of-development. What is lost in this discourse are the lived rural experiences of a multiplicity of rural identities, actors, and needs.

Thus, nationalist rural organizations such as the American Farm Bureau Association and CGET foster discourses of rurality that empower a vision of the rural from a top-down perspective. Rural elites gain political voice, yet, these paternalistic discourses begin to shape national imagery in ways that allow populist leaders such as Trump and Le Pen to pick up on particular rural political bases and fissures in discourses of governmental service delivery to the "needy rural". The liminal space between a "backwards rural" that needs integration and development and a rural elite political power base fosters a discursive opening ripe for political undertaking by observant populist leaders. As in the case of France, this discursive fissure has historically been associated with far-right movements; hence, that current far right campaigns would re-integrate into their rhetoric for political power is not unexpected.

What is new, however, are the multiplicity of rural identities, goals, and grassroots organizations that have institutionalized new and divergent definitions of rurality to contest the above paternalistic discourses. The following section of this paper turns to the Highlander Center and FNSEA to examine the ways in which this occurs.

In contrast to national organizations that define rural identity as a singular experience based on employment (i.e. agriculture and manufacturing), the Highlander Center seeks to represent the multiplicity of 'rural identities' and their correspondingly divergent needs. In essence, the role of the Highlander Center is to enable individuals and communities within the South and Appalachia to re-take control over the narrative of rurality, define their own needs, and organize around said needs in order to develop 'real' change. As opposed to a monolithic rural identity defined by employment, the Highlander Center seeks to frame a lived rural identity through the occupation of physical space. It is individuals who happen to take up particular physical spaces that are 'rural' (i.e. the lived rural) in opposition to the mythical identity of rurality (i.e. the mythical rural). In fact, the center explicitly stays away from the term "rural" in their mission statement—favoring the identification of specific physical spaces, i.e. Appalachia and the South—in order to emphasize the lived experiences of people as opposed to the mythological construct associated with 'rurality.'

In order to construct a successful social movement, the Highlander Center must define a shared grievance framed by "collective action frames that dignify claims, connect them to others, and help to produce a collective identity (Tarrow 2011, 144). That is, first, a shared grievance highlighting the injustice faced by individuals living in the South and Appalachia must be defined. This assertion of injustice is essential as it has been found to be the "key" in producing mobilization (Tarrow 2011, 145). For the Highlander Center, this shared grievance is essentially the *injustice* of being "forgotten" within political discourse both by Trump/Le Pen/the government *and* by national farmers' organizations who--in defining rurality as employment--render invisible the diversity of individuals and communities living within rural spaces.

The Highlander Center utilizes multiple divergent methods to build this *collective* identity of 'lived rural' which simultaneously allows for the *diversity of lived rural experiences*. Their focus on education--especially with regards to self-organizing and "movement building"--allows individuals and groups within rural communities to proactively assert their own interests without needing to go through an intermediary of national organization or government. Further, the needs are self-defined by those who require them—keeping the Center from being co-opted by particular interest groups or institutionalized in local, state, or national bodies in ways that limit their ability to resist—as is the case with national rural organizations such as the American Farm Bureau. The Center's stated goal of "supporting [rural peoples'] efforts to take collective action to shape their own destiny" ("Mission & Methodologies – Highlander Research and Education Center" n.d.) points not only towards a means for groups to assert their material and psychological needs but for a re-working of power relationships in society; thus, empowering rural movement*s* (as opposed to a singular rural identity) to fight for the resources that have been denied them.

In France, the Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles (FNSEA) emerged out of contentious political organizing against inequitable development and threats of rural erasure in the early 1950s-1960s. Farmers organizations during France's "golden era"—when modernization and development exponentially grew urban centers along with their infrastructure and wealth—responded to new developments by collectively organizing around their rural "peasant" identities (Paxton 1997). While left-wing French political parties tried to co-opt peasant movements to emphasize workers rights and unionization, right-wing political parties attempted to co-opt the movement to embed an anti-urban, pro-nationalistic political base. What emerged from these contentious maneuvers between 'peasants' (rural people organizing under this collective identity), and the attempted co-optation by the left and right-wing parties was a strong assembly of localized agrarian unions. The socialist Minister of Agriculture, Francois Tanguy-Prigent, officially recognized agrarian organizations in 1944, as the General Confederation of Agriculture (ibid); however, in 1946 the name changed to FNSEA. Notably,

many of the leaders of the French peasant movement became leaders within their local FNSEA unions (ibid).

Hence, the FNSEA emerged from a complicated political role in France's historical contention over rural-urban politics. Critically, FNSEA is the embodiment of an organization that has its roots in grassroots collective action around identity-formation led by rural peoples themselves. Contemporarily, the FNSEA espouses the goals of fostering "sustainable agriculture" to protect rural land along with future opportunities for agricultural business; and to support farmers from diverse identities and backgrounds. Instead of offering national-level policy, FNSEA has multiple local level policies and multiple venues for farmers to engage with each other. This has often led to splits and internal conflicts within the organization; however, the organization upholds its decentralized, localized organizational structure to foster empowered rural voices. Unlike the Highlander Center, FNSEA is focused on agrarian rural identities, yet it also intentionally integrates rural coalitions outside of the agricultural base to inform its policy leanings as well. Importantly, the goal of the FNSEA is to protect rural landscapes for the livelihoods of rural peoples, and they believe that only rural peoples themselves can accomplish this. Like Highlander Center, FNSEA seeks to embody the needs of a collective rural identity while also supporting and integrating the reality of a diversity of rural voices and peoples.

As noted above, the grievance constructed by both national and grassroots rural organizations is rooted in notions of "forgottenness" that are subsequently exploited and mobilized for voting and political power by Trump and Le Pen. However, whereas the national rural organizations have (arguably) been co-opted by political elites and institutionalized, the grassroots organizations have not. This is an essential point because through co-optation of nationalist groups' rhetoric, Trump and Le Pen are able to gain legitimacy for their discourses on rural needs. As discussed by Ferguson and Lohmann, the *needs* of groups are crafted in ways that privilege their own interests over the interests of those they purport to serve. That is, nationalist rural organizations have crafted rural needs around employment (in particular, agriculture) in order to gain political and economic power for themselves vis-à-vis the state and agricultural sector. After crafting the discourse in such a manner, Trump and Le Pen are able to co-opt this language—promising to "remember" the forgotten rural communities represented solely by the agricultural constituency. This rhetoric gains legitimacy because it arises from nationalist rural organizations; however, the discourses still neglect the lived experiences of many (if not most) individuals and communities living in Appalachia and the South. In sum, the nationalist organizations no longer serve the needs of people on the ground but of their donors/state goals. Their institutionalization gives legitimacy to political actors to be seen as acting in rural interest while giving economic and political power to the nationalist rural organizations.

Ultimately, Trump and Le Pen also discursively shape the needs of rural people to meet their political goals. Where they differ from nationalist organizations is that they do not purport to be members of the rural community; rather, they cast themselves as outside champions—all powerful saviors who are the only ones that can resurrect rural communities. Institutionalized national organizations also represent themselves as rural saviors but, claim to be members of said community equally suffering from their forgotteneness. It is only the grassroots organizations that refuse to define the needs of people living in rural areas but rather work to support their bottom-up endeavors in defining, shaping, and achieving their own needs. In doing so, it is not just material changes that take place but a re-structuring of power relations between people living in rural areas, the institutionalized organizations that purport to represent them, and the political leaders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that the discursive construction of rurality itself is (and has historically been) a site of political contention. Control over the physical space of rural areas to embed specific political ideas of "nation" has shaped much of the history of both the US and France. Importantly, the construction of who is rural/what is rural identity, what does "the rural" need, and who can implement these goals has established a discursive framework of contention that either 1) opens space for

authoritarian populist co-optation or 2) forecloses opportunities for co-optation vis-à-vis strong, diverse, yet collective rural voices. We find that grassroots movements may not always contest state power or seek national policy change, but may operate by reclaiming concepts of rurality—and thus "engage in struggles against the imposition of identity" (Foucault 2000 as cited in Tarrow 2011, 26) from above. The liminal space between employing discursive framing as a weapon of power spurs contestations over control of rural identity, while also offering viable alternatives to preventing co-optation by political elites and populist leaders. Much like banal nationalism, which finds reproduction through everyday re-presentations of national identity practices, banal rurality emphasizes the ways in which "the rural" is re-produced through discursive framing and contestations between political leaders and rural people themselves. The rural-as-mythos of nation emerges in stark contrast against rural-as-lived, and the struggle for self-sovereignty of rural peoples manifests within the dialectic tension between these ideals and practices. Moving forward, it is necessary to continue tracing discursive practices of organizations, grassroots movements, and political elites to understand the ways in which rurality is a central site of power-grabbing, especially in an era of rising authoritarian populism. Furthermore, it is even more critical to highlight the ways in which reclamation of rurality by rural peoples offers insights into discursive practices that foment collective action, and in themselves prevent co-optation and imposition of identity from above.

Appendix:

Tables of quotes and references for Trump and Le-Pen (forthcoming)

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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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