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Navigating De- and Re-Peasantisation: Potential Limitations of a Universal Food Sovereignty Approach for Polish Smallholders

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Abstract

Characterizing food sovereignty and neoliberal food production ideologies as dichotomous and oppositional, the first as positive and enriching and the second as negative and impoverishing, has given the food sovereignty movement some heuristic heft. However, presenting these two approaches as universal ideal types may overlook the diverse contexts they engage. Moreover, an emphasis primarily on the differences between these two models with respect to economic transitions may also overlook significant issues of culture and identity that inform the adoption of or resistance to food sovereignty principles. I use an example of peasant organic agriculture in Poland to explore the importance of cultural contextualization and identity in considering how FS principles will be operationalized among ideologically divergent communities. Situated at an historical crossroads, since Poland joined the E.U. in 2004, Polish agriculture is experiencing a host of transitions, including what has been termed "de-peasantisation." Simultaneously, other E.U. policy initiatives foster a kind of neo or re-peasantisation, in which non-peasants or former peasants reconfigure forms of traditional production characterized by “pluri-activity” and “multifunctional” farms (e.g. see Van der Ploeg 2011). The causes and impacts of these transitions will significantly influence the degree to which Polish peasant smallholders are able to achieve food sovereignty.

I argue that rather than facilitating collaborative dialogue around policy initiatives that might benefit Polish peasant farmers engaged in these transitions, *universal* models for food sovereignty risk retrenching and accentuating existing dualisms between the “cosmopolitan” Western E.U. and many Polish smallholders. I suggest that this may unintentionally strengthen previously suppressed, far-right nationalistic aims and visions of small but influential subsectors of Polish peasant farming. This is particularly problematic when considering the cultural legacies of communism and long- standing entrenched mistrust of social movements associated with grand, universal schemes. I conclude by arguing that if the food sovereignty movement is to be relevant for Polish smallholders navigating current transitions, it must acknowledge the limitations of universal approaches and carefully parse out the ideologically uneven terrain of Polish peasant agriculture.

Introduction

The international food sovereignty movement has coalesced around a core set of laudable and ostensibly universal guiding principles, including

> …the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; [and] to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant…”
>
> *Statement on Peoples' Food Sovereignty* by Via Campesina, et al.

As articulated most succinctly in the Declaration of Nyeleni in 2007, the food sovereignty movement's goals are to enable people to produce “healthy and culturally appropriate food...through ecologically sound and sustainable methods” and to foster new “social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.” Furthermore, the food sovereignty movement generally positions itself in direct opposition to the neoliberal model for agriculture and economic development, as well as “imperialism ...neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources, and eco-systems” (Nyelini Declaration 2007).

As with most movements advocating large-scale, far-reaching and fundamental societal changes, the so-called devil of unintended consequences may be in the details of implementation—specifically, how the ideals and prescriptions for food sovereignty will be taken up and operationalized in specific spaces, places, cultures, and contexts. And the FS movement is indeed exploring this specificity in many regions, as Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe (2010) note:

> …idea of food sovereignty has gained significant momentum as numerous local, national and international social movements and NGOs have embraces it…[and that]…some of these initiatives involve recognizing the specific implications of food sovereignty for specific local and regional populations... (Wittman et al 2010, 5).

Given those explorations, how, specifically, can the food sovereignty movement contribute to the transformation of the structural injustices perpetuated by global industrial agriculture, and what barriers might impede those contributions? This paper explores several key potential challenges to realizing the changes to and opportunities for agriculture advocated by the food sovereignty (FS) movement by employing one specific sector—smallholder organic/ecological farming in Poland—as a lens with which to explore a few particular issues that may merit

clearer articulation in FS discourse.

Drawing from a larger study of agricultural transitions in the Polish organic farming sector, this paper leaves aside the critically important question of global agricultural production and food security taken up by many authors and does not presume to speculate on Polish smallholder production capacity. Rather, I pose a few questions of identity, culture and ideology especially relevant to the Polish context that may also speak to other contexts. I conclude by exploring possibilities for the FS movement to help Polish peasant communities navigate various challenges and opportunities with respect to the State (in particular, European Union (EU) and Common Agricultural Polic[ies] (CAP) concerning organics). By raising questions specific to the Polish case, I suggest ways in which the FS movement might be a bit clearer in the way it articulates its visions and communicates its relevance for increasingly diverse international peasant communities on the ground.

For, as I will argue, without adequately considering the particularities (in addition to a host of shared priorities) of peasant communities in many cultures and nations, the FS movement risks championing the cause of a "universal," essentialized peasantry, rather than specific peasantries in specific socio-cultural and economic contexts. Relatedly, an assumption undergirding this analysis is that while examinations of political economic transitions in agriculture may find some heuristic utility in characterizing food sovereignty and neoliberal food production ideologies as dichotomous and oppositional, the first as positive and enriching and the second as negative and impoverishing, the experiences of peasant communities in context will prove far more complex, diverse and textured.

Indeed, while analysts engage in an ongoing effort to define and characterize what *constitutes* the peasantry, a range of smallholders—from those reproducing subsistence livelihoods to petty commodity producers to (even) organic farm entrepreneurs—actively shapes the global agricultural and social landscape in increasingly diverse and interconnected ways. As Araghi aptly noted in 2000, and is increasingly important today, discussions of the "agrarian question" or "peasant question" that focus on the "differentiation of the peasantry" as merely "whether the peasantry of an 'underdeveloped nation' will differentiate into a rural proletariat and bourgeoisie…or whether peasants will always resist differentiation…ha[ve] become increasingly irrelevant" (Araghi 2000, 153). Instead, as he detailed, the peasant question has diversified and a host of interrelated questions have become far more relevant to the overall "agrarian question."[1] In that vein, this paper takes up some key issues related to identity and explores

[1] Araghi (2000, 153-157) lists seven questions, including "the housing/homelessness question, the informal workers question, the refugee/migrant question, the 'identity' question, the question of global hunger, the 'green' question, and the indigenous/landless question. I will be emphasizing a modified version of his 'identity' question herein.

factors that may prove to be equally determinative to the future of the Polish peasantry as traditional issues of class and economic transitions, particularly in light of food sovereignty principles.

This paper is structured thusly: first, I will provide a description of the Polish case, in order to place my argument in context. Second, employing the Polish organic farm sector as a lens, I offer two key questions/issues for consideration that may challenge the implementation of food sovereignty movement aims, including: issues of changing cultural identities alongside longstanding historical legacies, followed by an examination of the closely related issue of what I will term "organic nationalism" in Poland. I conclude by briefly speculating on ways that, if the situation of Polish smallholders is adequately contextualized, the FS movement might function as a useful intermediary between the State/EU-CAP policies and Polish peasant smallholders.

The field research informing this discussion was part of a larger study, an in-depth extended case investigation into post-EU unification transitions taking place in Poland's national certified organic farm sector. The foundation of this study includes a set of approximately 140 qualitative in-depth interviews—over 100 of which were certified organic farmers. The majority of the farmers in the study were smallholders, with some representation from larger organic farms. The interview sample was stratified to include representation from the six main cultural and geographic regions in Poland, as well as a mix of crops grown and capital intensification at various farm sizes. Additionally, interviews were conducted with 40 expert informants directly involved with the certified organic agriculture sector. These people included members of certifying agencies, agricultural inspectors, key government officials, ecological shopkeepers, leaders of non-governmental organizations, and the operators of processing facilities.

At the outset I offer an important caveat for readers: the majority of the fieldwork was conducted in Poland in 2006. As such, and given the rapid changes taking place in Polish organic agriculture today, some aspects of the field data will benefit from updating through the next set of longitudinal field studies, planned for 2014 in Poland. Nevertheless, my hope is that this in-progress working paper may contribute to the overall larger conversation around peasant food sovereignty by raising questions relevant to a number of contexts, in agreement with Masioli and Nicholson (2010) who suggest that

> … a great diversity of philosophical and strategic thinking and debate is necessary to enhance and enliven food sovereignty. As well, the practical and political expressions of food sovereignty are, and will continue to be, diverse because they emerge out of, and are integrated into, a wide variation of local conditions

(Masioli and Nicholson 2010, 33).

Polish Context: De-Peasantisation

When Poland joined the European Union (EU) in 2004, most Poles—70% of whom had voted for the accession—were jubilant. Unification with the EU meant open borders, increased trade, opportunities for education and work in the West, and—many hoped—economic revitalization. Aleksander Kwasniewski, Poland's president at the time, described unification as "our dream becoming a reality—Poland is joining her European family." But a vocal majority—mainly Polish agricultural smallholders and peasants—remained skeptical, with groups of them engaging in vocal, public protests opposing accession with the EU. Protesters were branded "agrarian fundamentalists" and "Euroskeptics" as they filled roadways, pelting trucks that carried agricultural imports with rotten vegetables, and hurling insults at pro-EU government officials they derogatorily described as "Europhiles" (Juska and Edwards 2005, 188; Gorlach 2000; Gorlach and Mooney 1998).

The protests were not surprising. Following Solidarity in 1989, many of these same peasant farmers had endured market reforms, under the guise of the "creative destruction" policies of economists such as Jeffrey Sachs and Leszeck Balcerowicz, that precipitated the dumping of subsidized Western products onto their national market. This process accelerated throughout the 1990's. Economic reforms under "shock therapy" policies resulted in steady economic growth in much of Poland, and a rise in the national GDP, but agriculture remained the sore thumb in this scenario. Thus national economic growth occurred alongside what Gorlach termed "the massive pauperization of the Polish countryside" (Gorlach and Serega 1993, Gorlach 1995). Like many nations experiencing economic transitions, the structure of Polish national agriculture shifted as thousands of peasant smallholders were dispossessed of their lands and livelihoods.

Since unification in 2004, Polish farmers wishing to participate in the transformed marketplace have faced new EU sanitary and veterinary regulations designed to modernize the agriculture of new member states, which has often necessitated costly infrastructure investments, further dispossessing many smallholders of access to their livelihoods. A host of policymakers and neoliberal economists continue to view Poland's small farm sizes, fragmented land holdings, low-input extensive agricultural methods, and lack of access to extra-local markets problematic. Much pre-accession rhetoric about Poland's farm sector detailed the need for drastic changes to Poland's "backwards" agriculture. Common Agricultural Policy documents described the expectation that "the greatest challenge to [the] EU policy of the future will be to bring the ten new member states up to existing…standards" (Axelrod, et al 1997, emphasis mine) and depicted Polish peasant farmers, in particular, as "laggards."

In advance of Poland joining the EU, policies were set in motion to continue to shrink the agricultural sector, as analysts decried its inefficiencies, describing it as "a sector that contracts as GDP expands" (Holzhacker 2004, 7) and claiming that it is "a myth that Poland has a huge agricultural sector. The only thing big about it is the number of people working in the sector…farms are generally small and not competitive" (Holzhacker 2004, 8). These policies prompted Julian Rose, co-director of the peasant advocacy group International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside (ICPPC), to claim.

> Poland is under attack from three directions: the EU, the WTO and the transnational corporate invader. These three share one thing in common. They all believe that Poland is a country in need of 'developing' and 'modernising' to conform to standards enjoyed by U.S. and Western European societies. It is a familiar story. Thinly disguised neo-colonialist ambitions move in under the pretext of bringing much needed investment; but in reality, establishing profitable outposts for self-serving corporate interests (The Ecologist 2002, 61).

Rose also described a meeting with the European Commission (EC) in 2000, during which ICPPC was told:

> 'I don't think you understand what EU policy is. Our objective is to ensure that farmers receive the same salary parity as white-collar workers in the cities. The only way to achieve this is by restructuring and modernising old-fashioned Polish farms to enable them to compete with other countries' agricultural economies and the global market. To do this it will be necessary to shift around one million farmers off the land and encourage them to take city and service industry jobs to improve their economic position. The remaining farms will be made competitive with their counterparts in Western Europe' (Julian Rose and Institute of Science in Society, 2008).

Whether the EU policies are the intentional "attack" Rose describes, evidence of bureaucratic banality, or the result of a more complex set of interrelated economic and cultural factors, the impact of this modernizing vision seems clear. Many analysts have predicted that transformations now taking place in Polish agriculture will achieve what communism and the command economy could not, precipitating the "last, and this time complete, de-peasantisation of Polish society in the near future" (Gorlach and Starosta 2001, 62), and leaving

perhaps hundreds of thousands of Poland's approximately 2 million agricultural producers in its wake.

As much as the analysis of this de-peasantisation can be tied primarily to structural shifts associated with economic transitions within Poland and the EU, modernization efforts also involve critical cultural aspects that must not be overlooked, particularly in light of how expressions of food sovereignty will manifest in the Polish cultural and social context. For example, the image of a "laggard" peasant remains a common trope within many contemporary European societies, and derogatory attitudes toward peasants are a "universal feature of modern Europe," with societies often treating the European peasantry as a "passive… unreflexive mass" (Granberg, Kovach, and Tovey 2001). In much of Poland, persistent assumptions and stereotypes about agrarian communities and smallholder practices are frequently assumed to be self-evident and have helped to fuel justifications for modernizing policies. At the same time, peasant communities in Poland are themselves fragmented, reflecting some drastically divergent cultural values and ideological positions. These cultural and ideological factors merit consideration if the nobler principles expressed in food sovereignty discourse are to be realized.

Polish certified organic production and re-peasantisation

A number of scholars (e.g. see McMichael 2011, Granberg, Kovach, and Tovey 2001; Ploeg et al 2000, 2003, 2008) have noted the global trend toward re-peasantisation in some regions, particularly in Europe. Typically this trend in much of the EU has involved not the complete disengagement from the market, but rather a movement toward greater diversification in which single-commodity producers shift production in such a way that they reduce overall imports to the farm while also producing a range of outputs. These "re-peasantised" farms may elect to "opt out" of the marketplace at times, making their overall operations more flexible and resilient in a neo-Chayanovian sense.

Ploeg (2008) estimates that "some 80 per cent of European farmers are actively applying one or more of the…[characteristics] that together compose the European process of re-peasanitsation" (Ploeg 2008, 157).He suggests that these characteristics include "diversification… farming more economically… regrounding farming upon nature… pluriactivity … new forms of local cooperation … and improving efficiency of I/O conversion" (Ploeg 2008, 153). Moreover, he explains that in Europe, re-peasantisation involves "an alternative route the centres on the strengthening and further unfolding of multifunctionality" (Ploeg 2008, 151, also OECD, 2000; Huylenbroeck and Durand, 2003; Groot et al, 2007a).

In Poland, re-peasantisation reflects a curious syncretism between a re-engagement with traditional agriculture alongside smallholder multifunctional rural development initiatives, often supported by EU-CAP Pillar 2 subsidy supports, and often existing in within a milieu of increasing rural entrepreneurship. The latter multifunctional initiatives have the dual intent of supporting so-called marginal agriculture while also fostering rural entrepreneurship through primarily ecologically modern enterprises. Thus it is a fascinating paradox that most Polish smallholders, 80% of whom resisted communist collectivization (and thereby had little access to petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides), have been engaged in what is essentially diversified "organic-by-default" production for generations. Yet, as EU rural development initiatives encourage transitions to certified organic production, those same Polish peasant smallholders join the larger re-peasantisation trend seen primarily in the Western EU. Thus Poland, on the verge of much greater de-peasantisation, has begun to capitalize simultaneously on re-peasantisation, a dual process that Gilarek, et al. 2003 term "backwards modernization."

While arguments characterizing certified organic/ecological agriculture within the EU as increasingly capitalized and corporatized enterprises have considerable merit, the support and promotion of certified organic farming through EU rural development incentives in Poland is a particularly interesting case. Though targeted subsidies and rural development efforts encourage a variety of CAP Second Pillar initiatives with perceived environmental and social benefits, including the preservation of domestic heritage breeds, the development of regional products and geographic indications, and the restoration of native grasslands, certified organic farming is unique. Particularly, organic farming is said to have a high degree of "jointness" and "synergy" (Van der Ploeg and Roep 2003, 40)—theoretically fostering a type of rural cohesion that amplifies the many social, environmental, economic, and rural community benefits and reflecting a more diverse "re-peasantised" mode of production. Van der Ploeg and Roep (2003, 40) also contrast organic farming's ability to achieve multifunctional benefits with those of the "modernization paradigm" that fosters an "ongoing specialization in agricultural production and…segreg[ates] agriculture from other rural activities" (Van der Ploeg and Roep 2003, 40).

In the years before Poland joined the European Union, there was considerable speculation about the enormous potential for Poland to develop a thriving and prosperous organic agriculture sector. While the nascent certified organic farming sector that got its start around the time of the fall of communism in Poland had only several thousand farmers certified by 2003 (in a nation of 2 million agricultural producers), many assumed that conditions were nevertheless ideal for the vigorous expansion of this sector. Particularly, with the assistance of generous EU Second Pillar subsidies that would immediately double, and in some cases triple, Poland's national subsidy for organic farming (Metera 2005, IJHARS 2006), agricultural policymakers saw fertile opportunities that uniquely positioned Poland to capitalize on and serve the growing consumer demand in Western Europe for organic products.

Poland's natural ecological conditions, for example, gave the nation immediate comparative advantages. As mentioned, during the communist era, the 80% of farmers who resisted collectivization had severely limited access to petrochemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer inputs that were priced by the state at prohibitively expensive levels (e.g. see Gorlach 1995, Gorlach and Serega 1993). As a result, Poland—unlike most other Eastern bloc nations—used chemical pesticides at a rate "seven times less than the OECD average" and mineral fertilizers at a rate "two to three times less than the OECD average" (Gilarek, et al. 2003, 124). Such a trend has led to a generalized assumption that, as an organic agriculture certifier in Poland explained it to me, "all Polish agriculture is ecological" (Author interview 2006). While most of Poland's national organic farm certifiers vigorously argue against this assumption, clarifying the many ways in which organic farming techniques go beyond a simple eschewing of petrochemical inputs, from the perspective of EU agriculture policy experts, Poland was well-situated to immediately benefit from organic farm programs, without standard three-year conversion periods from conventional to organic agriculture (Metera 2005). With overall soil and water pollutant levels in most rural regions lower than many Western European nations, and with relatively low labor costs in rural areas, Polish ecological agriculture appeared poised for continued growth (Stolyhwo 2004).

In addition to its natural assets and external market potential, Poland's abundance of knowledgeable, highly skilled farmers, as well as its rampant underemployment in rural communities, positions the country's agriculture sector particularly well for the introduction on a national scale of the labor-intensive techniques and extensive agricultural methods that characterize smallholder organic farming. Culturally, at a national level, Poland's devotion to agrarian-peasant ideals is reflected in numerous holidays celebrating farming and harvests, as well as customs that involve urban professionals "returning" to their rural village "homes" for rest and recreation. And, Poland's numerous private, small landholdings—with farms averaging only 8 hectares in size—reflect a largely horizontally organized agriculture with well-established social networks supporting the smallholder agrarian structure.

Joost Platje, who synthesizes a number of studies in his 2004 analysis on the potential for the development of sustainable agriculture in Poland, sums it up nicely:

> Opportunities for ecological farming in Poland exist because of the following factors: a large and cheap labour force, strong family relations and local identity in many areas, good natural conditions and unpolluted environment, favourable climate and soil conditions (Solek and Bembenek, 2003), a growth of consumer interest in healthier food, close contacts of farmers with local markets (Kociszewska and Nowak, 2003), low intensity

> of production, low fertiliser use, (Kociszewska and Nowak, 2003; Nesterov, 2003), low production costs and market demand in EU countries (Hasinski and Grykien 2003).

The campaign to encourage participation in the agri-environmental programs by supporting transitions to certified organic farming for Polish farmers was successful in convincing many to participate in the initiatives. For example, while the growth of certified organic farming in Poland was steady since its fledgling national beginnings, with 27 certified farms in 1989 growing to nearly 2000 farms by 2001, the precipitous growth—growth that would mean four-fold increase in the number of organic farms—occurred in anticipation of and following Poland's entry into the European Union. Since the 2004 accession, ecological farm numbers have leapt forward—from 3760 certified farms in 2004 to 7183 farms in 2005 to 9187 farms in 2006, accompanied by a growth in certified organic land holdings from 49,928 hectares to over 250,000 hectares in 2007 (IJHARS 2007), and the growth—and re-peasantisation in this respect—shows no signs of slowing.

While this impressive growth reflects the apparent success of multifunctional rural development initiatives supporting certified organic farming, my research also revealed a number unintended consequences, as well as various contradictions, that have become associated with the implementation of the multifunctional rural development incentives. In several instances those consequences are the result of clashes of culture and identity, demonstrating that the processes of de and re-peasantisation involve profound cultural shifts with significant implications that go far beyond rural development, on-farm pluri-activity and production diversification. How shall the FS movement navigate the tensions catalyzed by the de-and-re-peasantisation process in Poland? These culture and identify clashes may raise important challenges for the overall efficacy of the FS movement and converge on two primary themes that I will explore here.

First, tensions surround the efforts of the EU to construct and inculcate an overall cosmopolitan identity among its citizenry and the national and cultural identity of Polish organic farmers. Efforts to construct a distinctly "European" identity are layered upon long, entrenched social and cultural legacies that frequently conflict with the notion of identifying as modern Europeans. And in relation to farming practice, there exist inherent contradictions between the EU's primarily ecological modernization discourse around organic farming (often linked to re-peasantisation) and the way Polish organic farm practice is framed as "backwards" and "antiquated." In this conceptualization, the so-called professional, expert approach to agricultural knowledge of the European Union is contrasted with Polish organic producer local knowledge and practice. At times, the intersection of these identities fosters a range of

responses, from passive opposition to active resistance; the Polish peasantry has a long-standing legacy of resistance to "grand schemes."

For the food sovereignty movement, this resistance is especially important to consider, insofar as the FS movement must determine how it will deal with the centrality of the issue of identity among Polish peasant smallholders specifically and the changing identities of other peasantries in myriad places. While a *universal* "peasant" identity, and an identity of resistance, might seem to accord directly with FS social movements that position themselves in direct opposition to neoliberal economic policies, this matter is far thornier than it appears at the surface. For many of the ostensibly universal foundational principles of the FS movement—including and especially principles embracing diversity and even gender equity—stand a good chance in many Polish smallholder communities to be interpreted akin to the grand modernizing schemes aiming to construct a widespread cosmopolitan identity in the EU. Thus the FS movement must consider its role in fostering/inculcating a *particular* identity among subsectors of Polish peasant smallholders who may actively or passively resist or even subvert some of those central principles in practice.

This "thorniness" links to a closely related second theme—that of entrenched nationalisms within the Polish peasantry generally and the organic farming sector specifically. This is a particularly important consideration with respect to the FS movement's interest in fostering "social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations" (Nyelini 2007). Underlying this consideration is an important question: how shall the FS inculcate these principles, in specific places, spaces, and cultures, particularly among sub-cultures of smallholders who may be enthusiastic defenders of peasant sovereignty but also may adhere to positions ideologically decidedly antithetical to FS principles? How shall the FS movement address the myriad ideological challenges among significant subsectors of communities for whom it advocates at an international scale? And how will these challenges affect the shape and character of the movement itself, in radically diverse contexts? As I elucidate some of these challenges, I will elaborate on these two themes as they emerged from my research and discuss ways that issues of identity, cultural legacies, and entrenched nationalisms raise important questions for consideration within the international FS movement.

Identity Constructions and EU Cosmopolitanism

The overall construction of the European Union's collective identity occurs at multiple points of intersection as various national and supranational actors—policymakers, government officials, powerful entrepreneurs, and economists—make decisions that directly impact the everyday life of European citizen. Bourdieu explains this kind of process in this way:

> Culture is unifying: the state contributes to the unification of the cultural market by unifying all codes, linguistic and juridical, and by effecting a homogenization of all forms of communication, including bureaucratic communication (through forms, official notices, etc). Through classification systems (especially according to sex and age) inscribed in law, through bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals…the state molds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division, forms of thinking that are to the civilized mind what the primitive forms of classification described by Mauss and Durkheim were to the "savage mind." And it thereby contributes to the construction of what is commonly designated as national identity (or, in a more traditional language, national character).
>
> By universally imposing and inculcating (within the limits of its authority) a dominant culture… thus constituted as legitimate national culture…[the State] inculcates the foundations of a true "civic religion" and more precisely, the fundamental presuppositions of the national self image (Bourdieu 1998, 45-46).

Manuel Castells frames the construction of that national self-image as part of a negotiation of power between social actors. He argues that "who constructs collective identity, and for what, largely determines the symbolic content of this identity, and it's meaning, for those identifying with it or placing themselves outside it" (Castells 1997, 7). For Polish organic farmers, as transition-related agricultural policies shape their daily farm practices through the "unification of [agricultural] codes…and bureaucratic procedures," this overlaps with individual visions of their identity and citizenship and aims to shift once again—as was done during the Soviet era as well—the shape of the "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) to which they belong.

Yet this shift itself is fraught with uneven power relations, particularly the context of new member states and rural populations, and has fostered dualisms between the Western EU and urban loci of power and peasant communities in new members states. For the "Europeanization" process is often framed, as it is for many Eastern European countries, as akin to evolutionary advancement. As Merje Kuus describes,

> Enlargement is underpinned by a broadly orientalist discourse that assumes essential difference between Europe and Eastern Europe and frames difference from Western Europe as a distance from a lack of Europeanness…on the one hand, these

> enlargements are said to finally make Europe 'whole and free'…on the other hand, the same accounts betray a tacit distinction between Europe and Eastern Europe [with]…EU accession countries…striving to become fully European (Kuus 2004, 472).

As the European Union inculcates a distinct identity through the introduction of new agricultural policies and regulations into the Polish organic farm sector, these same policies and regulations intersect with both informal and formal principles that have guided organic farmer practices and informed farmers' identities, in some cases for generations. Once again, de-peasantisation appears to intersect with re-peasantisation.

Yet though EU-style organic farming and Polish smallholder organic farming may ostensibly appear to share many ecological similarities, and thereby imply a relatively seamless implementation of regulations and policies, these two approaches reveal important cultural contradictions. In my conversations with Polish organic farmers, it became clear that a primary contradiction was the way that the "ecologically modern" approach to organic farming taken by the European Union has important characteristics that inform an identity different from the more historically-informed and geographically specific approach to organic farm practice with which many Polish organic farmers identify.

The language of the CAP policy documents reflects the paradoxes embodied by ecological modernization. For example, within the policy documents, the belief in the preeminence of western EU approaches to ecological agriculture can be traced to the policy discourse that promotes the EU as a champion of environmental protection. Fostering an environmentally conscious identity in its citizens appears to be a central component of the policy discourse. The EU is described as "[having] created the most comprehensive regional environmental protection regime in the world" (Axelrod, et al., 1997, 202). With specific reference to agriculture, European Commission documents describe Europe's CAP guidelines as "environmentally friendly…geared to efficient and sustainable farming" and delineate a "green evolution in agricultural policy."

Yet the language of these policy documents also builds on the assumption that ecology and particular visions of modernity—including efficiency, cleanliness, and market orientation—go hand in hand. Within European Union agriculture and environment policy documents, for example, the EU's environmental identity is often associated with qualifying descriptors such as "efficiency" (e.g. European Commission 2003, 1, 3, 8, 21…) and "modernising" (e.g. European Commission 2003, 21, 22, 32…). Care is also given to link environmental protection with "market-oriented" and "profitable" development strategies (e.g. European Commission 2003, 1, 4, 6, 21), and environmental protection measures are oriented toward notions of

"cleanliness" (e.g. European Commission 2003, 3, 17…) and "food safety" (e.g. European Commission 2003, 1, 3, 8, 17, 22…). Clearly, the notion that ecological protection per se is necessarily linked to efficiency, modernization, cleanliness, technological sophistication and particular, narrow visions of food safety is based in false assumptions; but this belief fits an export-focused and market-driven model of organic production that exemplifies the global trend toward what some scholars term the "disciplining of organics" (e.g. Campbell and Stuart 2005).

As CAP descriptions of environmental policy contribute to the construction of an EU ecologically modern identity as one component of the larger EU identity construction project, it is assumed that smallholders in places like Poland must adopt these presumed superior ecological approaches, rather than the other way around. Indeed, for Polish organic farmers, part of "becom[ing] fully European" (Kus 2004, 272) has meant, practically, embracing the ecological modernization process of the Common Agricultural Policy. This posture assumes, of course that Polish organic farmers are learners not only with respect to EU procedures but also in relation to ecology, an irony that is not lost on Polish organic farmers with knowledge of organic farming's origins in Europe. Such a posture is not unusual. As Jan Douwe van der Ploeg explains, "Normally, it is assumed that the peasantry and peasant farming belong to the past, while entrepreneurial and corporate farming represents the future" (van der Ploeg 2008, pages 1, 2).

But for Polish organic farmers, whose identity-forming history has been very different, moving forward with ecology does not necessarily involve going backward, and this is at the heart of the contradiction between the EU policies and Polish organic farmers. Rather, for these farmers who practice ecologically-based agriculture, in the main this is a continual refining of long-standing techniques, traditional practices, and local knowledge that now must be adapted to a European Union that has only relatively recently rediscovered its roots. For many of the Polish organic farmers I spoke with, identifying as an ecological farmer meant, in most cases, continuing the practices of the preceding generations. As one organic farmer told me, "I'm an organic farmer because (long pause)…it is inherited from the past times." Another farmer explained, "This is simply, our actions are deeply rooted in our heads, long before they started to call it ecology, normally" (Author interviews 2006).

In my conversations with farmers, nearly 70% of those interviewed discussed the fact that they were essentially farming organically anyway as a primary motivation for registering as certified organic, and that obtaining a subsidy for what they were already doing "normally" was sensible. Many said that though they had heard about organic agriculture being something "new," when they investigated it, as one farmer explained, "Then I saw that it was normal." Another farmer

who asked about the size of some of the small organic farms in the United States exclaimed with surprise, when learning that some farms were only 5-6 hectares, "I see, oh! It's normal!!"

Often these same farmers would deride the decisions made in "offices in Brussels" where people "never saw a farm." Some of them found the inspections and protocols required by EU regulations positively humorous—one organic farmer explained while laughing heartily (but ruefully), what an "inspection" or "control" looked like—in his mind, an absurd exercise that reflected a lack of agricultural expertise:

> When they come, the check whether, for example, the pig house has been whitened, whether there are runs for the animals, according to how it is later by writing a protocol, for example when we buy more fodder. And how much! And they count whether we don't overdose or, or something. And THEN there are these after-control/ additional inspections. And it depends because there are such experts that they go into fields and they can see: Oh, yes, there should be such a weed in this place, or such a thistle, or something, or some other…[but] they can [plainly] see that nothing was used here…that we didn't, that there were no pesticides used here (Author interview 2006)

Overall, this contributed significantly to the widely shared sense that the ecologically modern identity the European Union is attempting to foster has little day-to-day beneficial relevance for Polish organic farmers. While many were happy to identify as Europeans, and while a significant majority of the certified organic farmers I spoke with claimed that they voted for the EU accession, the contradictions generated by the regulations leave them feeling disconnected from the ecological identity the EU wants to promote—even though they, more than many EU citizens, exemplify an environmental identity—just not a thoroughly modern one.

As often as those in power forge identity, identity is also forged in resistance *to* those in power: to their ideas, their norms, and their actions. In cases when the EU message and policies prove irrelevant, Polish smallholders appear to be resisting, both passively and actively. Historical examples of this resistance character abound in Poland, and in contemporary history resistance to state socialist collectivization by the Poland's peasantry has been well documented. Multiple strategies enabled Polish smallholders to mount an effective resistance and maintain their private land holdings. When I asked a former prominent member of the Solidarity movement, who was also an organic farmer, how peasant farmers managed during the communist era he explained,

> How? There was a simple way. People behaved passively. Whatever the communists said, they answered "yes." And then they went home and did something opposite. There was also this solidarity among neighbors. Another thing was that they had faith in God. They stood by their Church and had this connection [And somehow…] that they met each other, they went to Częstochowa, to church fairs. And the communists were annoyed with the fact that they believed in Somebody else than the Communistic Party. And this was how it was. Some joined the party, became members, some… Because there was this farmers' party…(Author interviews 2006)

Other resistance adaptations related to land use, as this farmer went on to explain,

> Simply they were trying to put the individual farmers out of the game. They wanted to communize everything…But there were different [strategies for this]… The farmers cooperated with each other. They rented land from these who had less land… If they didn't want to sell it…And this was how they survived (Author interview 2006).

As Adamski and Turkski (1990, 148) note, such resistance to communist collectivization and unwavering commitment to maintaining private landholdings, "result[ed]…in strengthening attitudes towards the land as a kind of heritage and ultimate value." This characteristic is another key consideration informing the context of the overall relationship Polish peasants have with their land. Another adaptation pertained to the informal exchange between Polish farmers and their customers. During the communist era, resistance meant an underground economy in which peasant farmers sold produce and other food out of the trunks of cars in the middle of the night. This galvanized a resistance identity about peasant farmers identified as a cultural norm: "Polish man can." This norm embodied the idea that in the face of seemingly more powerful forces, Polish farmers will resist and overcome, through passive or active means.

In many cases, that resistance proved painful enough that they remain fresh in the minds of many Polish organic farmers. They carry memories of specific places where wounds were inflicted, both on them and their family and on the land. One peasant smallholder I spoke with in the southeast part of the country who managed to resist collectivization showed me the place in his fields where "the communists" would dump chemicals on his land:

> We did not want to join in the consolidation. I had a brother who worked at the PGR [in Wielkopolska]. We had the quotas, but they [state officials] also picked up the milk from us—it was fine for awhile. But this [not joining the consolidation] made them angry, so they punished us and I think that is why they dumped the poisons from the planes…over here. Nothing would grow in that place...(Author interview 2006)

Like the poisoned organic farmer's field, today some of Poland's landscapes remain scarred with the aging, haunting hulks of the state-run farms that managed to make inroads into Poland's private kinship-based agriculture, with their distinctive plaster-covered long barns and aging Soviet-modern apparatus: enormous greenhouses with countless panes of broken glass and rusting machinery.

And these relatively recent memories of communist era suffering are stacked upon earlier and potentially even darker ones, like mulches diffusing into the soil year after year. At the edges of potato and wheat fields, for example, graves—unmarked as well as well as marked—hold the bones of Polish resistance fighters killed by Nazis during World War II. Others hold burial sites for Polish soldiers killed by Soviets soon after the nation was brokered in a backroom deal between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union at the end of the war.

Still others hold the dead of Poland's once thriving Jewish population. In the southwest part of the country, near Auschwitz and Birkenau, fields long ago fertilized with the ashes of concentration camp victims lie freshly plowed. At the edge of grazing pastures in Tycochin stands a monument in a forest glade, a memorial to the Jewish victims of a mass slaughter. Other burial sites may be lost to contemporary memory, but reminders of the past emerge frequently, like glacial scree appearing yearly in newly tilled soil.

To be sure, all lands carry dark memories—some recent and others ancient. But Poland's soil, the same soil and land where organic farmers now cultivate raspberries, raise green-legged chickens, and milk dun-colored cows, has swallowed more than its share of blood, hosted more battles, and born more scars of conflict than many lands in the European Union.

This knowledge, these memories, and these individual and collective stories—of resistance, of suffering, and of enduring in the face of suppressing and oppressing powers inside and outside of Poland—informs a complex, richly textured identity for Polish organic farmers. That identity is clearly neither trifling nor easily sublimated. It is a palpable, hard-won living reality, one galvanized in resistance and tied closely to place, agrarian practice, kinship, socio-cultural

practices, religious networks and a host of traditions carried out over hundreds of years, in the context of profoundly disruptive social events. And while it has become commonplace to speak of identities as being contingent and constantly constructed, to make casual assumptions regarding the constructed nature of identities in the context of such long and storied shared social histories would be an error. As Rogers Brubaker found in his exploration of "everyday ethnicity" in a Transylvanian town in Romania,

> Talk about the fluidity, contingency, and perpetual negotiation and renegotiation of identity can appear frivolous or naïve in this [Eastern European] context…[where] ethnic and national boundaries are harder, more durable, and more constraining…than in the United States… (Brubaker et al., 2006: 9).

In the Polish case, then, rather than speaking of the contingent and renegotiated nature of identities (which also implies, at least, an emphasis on individual action and choice), it may be more appropriate to speak of the layering of identities. Or, as sociologist Piotr Sztompka describes it, "[collective identity] is created not so much as a result of individual biography, but rather in the course of societal history. In a way, collective identity can be seen as sedimentary rock built up of layers of social practices and traditions…" (Sztompka 2004: 4).

And as Polish smallholder organic farmers face shifts to their farming practices, entering new markets and engaging new EU CAP harmonized regulations, another layer is being added to their identity. That this layering of identities is occurring for Polish organic farmers simultaneous with the European Union's overall project of constructing and galvanizing a more collective European identity contributes to even more complicated socio-cultural and political dynamics.

When I spoke with organic certification inspectors and farmers on my farm visits, I would sometimes remark at how the changes must be difficult for some farmers, and a threat to their identities. Frequently I would be told, "We could withstand communism—we will withstand Brussels" (Author interviews 2006). Or, a peasant farmer might glance away and then say "Yes, but we will manage, as we have done" (Author interview 2006). On one farm visit I asked an inspector how, in fact, farmers will manage. He smiled, and refused to give details, but explained, "Polish man can. Polish man can!" (Author interview 2006).

In light of these issues of identity construction, as well as cultural and historical legacies fostering resistance, it is clear that the FS movement will need to give careful consideration to

how it imagines a community of international peasantry with shared aims. Any universal prescriptions that fail to be contextually relevant to smallholders on the ground will no doubt be met with resistance. Will social movements be perceived a part of an overall internationalization (and inadvertently modernization) paradigm that is actively resisted in a variety of smallholder sectors? Also importantly, without careful contextualization and a nuanced understanding of the ways that the Polish smallholder identity is being shaped "from above," introductions of new layers of identity for Polish smallholders may also risk retrenching and accentuating existing dualisms between the "cosmopolitan" Western E.U. and many Polish peasants.

Organic nationalism

As the European Union attempts to foster a cosmopolitan, modern identity among Polish organic farmers, in some cases it intersects with forms of resistance so strong that they can only be characterized as entrenched nationalisms. They are a special case of smallholder resistance in Poland, representing approximately 10% of those I interviewed. Yet if that percentage is small, it is nevertheless significant. For this group of organic farmers, resistance to the overall European Union project is closely linked to fear of outsiders, strong resistance to cosmopolitanism, and threats felt concerning the stability of their religion, values, and families. For these farmers, some of whom continue to be branded "agrarian fundamentalists," extreme "Euroskeptics," and nationalists, the idea of Europe and a pan-European identity threaten their identities on multiple levels, some of which well-meaning European Union officials may be unaware—or, more problematically, blithely ignorant.

When I refer to blithe ignorance, I mean to underscore a central theme in this work: that specificities matter—that culture, history, and identity strongly influence the ways that policies are embraced or rejected, as well as ways that policy mechanisms affect the lives of individual farmers. For example, do the EU officials crafting agri-environmental policies understand, for instance, the ways that meeting afforestation goals on Polish agricultural land—in an effort to curb global warming or to make "productive" use of land as the agricultural sector contracts—might echo eerily the goals of Nazi landscapers a little over 60 years earlier?

Given these embedded histories, it should not surprise that so-called "backwards" or "lagging" Polish peasant agriculturalists might resist schemes to Europeanize their identities, making them more cosmopolitan, especially when such socialization efforts involve, as Schimmelfennig notes, "a kind of graduation from Eastern Europe to Europe, a process in which the accession countries must prove they are 'willing and able' to internalize Western norms" (Schimmelfennig, 2000, 111, in Kuus 2004,477). However, as Tony Judt similarly explains, "At a

time when Euro-chat has turned to the happy topic of disappearing customs barriers, the frontiers of memory remain solidly in place" (Judt 2000, 317).

In my interviews with Polish organic farmers, the legacies of those "frontiers of memory" revealed themselves from time to time in conversations, initially perplexing interactions, and in both veiled and unveiled references to various "outsider" groups and cosmopolitan ideas. Along the eastern border of the country, for example, a group of peasant women living in a town where their Jewish and "Gypsy" (Roma) neighbors had been rounded up by the Nazis and shot told me that they were young girls at the time, but their Jewish and Gypsy neighbors "deserved what they got…they were always stealing chickens" (Author interview, 2006). When I expressed what these women assumed was naïve Western shock at such a statement, one of them narrowed her eyes slyly and retorted "But don't you live in a country where you allowed your black people to drown in the hurricane [Katrina]?" (Author interview 2006).

As with these peasant women, I found in other cases and in other conversations with Polish organic farmers, expressions of Polish nationalism would emerge, often mingled with strongly anti-Semitic views. Indeed, it is worth underscoring when discussing layers of identity in Poland that not *all* resistance identities emerge from legacies of communist oppression or even globalization and the destruction of boundaries. When speaking with some Polish organic farmers who expressed strong nationalist sentiments and mistrust of the European Union, an old canard—"zydokomuna" or "Judeo-Communism," the belief that Jewish communities propagated communism—emerged from time to time. In these interviews, some organic farmers framed the EU as part of the global "Jewish lobby" and expressed suspicion about the intentions of European Union officials, convinced that various EU policies and regulations were designed to "get their land" (Author interviews 2006).

Many of those organic farmers spoke of listening to and supporting "Radio Maryja," a far-right leaning Catholic radio station in Poland especially popular among rural residents. The station, though criticized both nationally and at an international level (including by many Polish Catholic leaders and the Vatican) for its anti-Semitic leanings, blatant homophobia, hard right conservative political positions and for propagating various conspiracy theories, remains a powerful influence in Polish nationalist discourse. While perhaps only 10 percent of the organic farmers I interviewed admitted listening to Radio Maryja regularly, some of those who did expressed strong support for the anti-EU ideas propagated by the station patriarch, or "Father Director" Tadeusz Rydzyk. Some farmers mentioned the program "Unfinished Talks"—a political program aired in the evenings and the target of much of the criticism against Radio Maryja—enthusiastically. Notably, support for this program, expressions of anti-Semitism, and belief in conspiracy theories about the EU spanned age, education level, and

geographic/cultural regions. I met highly educated organic farmers who listened to and supported Radio Maryja, rebuffing the stereotype that those with nationalist or anti-EU leanings were only among the lesser-educated or poorer members of Polish society. One organic farming couple that ran an agri-tourism inn, for example, both former teachers at the university level, spoke with me at length on a range of topics, including their optimistic view that we were entering an age of a "global village" as predicted by Marshall McLuhan. Yet they also expressed ardent views about the European Union and globalization, leaning at times toward conspiracy thinking:

> …We listen to Radio Maryja and support it wholeheartedly, but we don't have much time. So simply…we only listen to some selected programs [i.e. "Unfinished Talks"] since sometimes there is not too much…we listen to everything. We like to be interested in politics…we fought against communism, yes!...against this Bolshevik indoctrination. (Author interview 2006).

For this couple, who had lived through Soviet oppression and who found ardently against communism, globalization and the European Union brought potential threats—mainly from agri-business corporations and regulations—but also from a perceived loss of choice and from threats to their identities, and for them elements of "zydokommuna' emerged from time to time in their interpretations of the world and history. Yet in spite of their apparent support for Radio Maryja, with its anti-Semitic leanings and anti-EU rhetoric, this couple was also conflicted, as I found many Polish farmers to be, about the potential benefits of the European Union. When I pressed them to share more with me about their views toward EU accession, they explained,

> Woman: "We didn't want it…we didn't want it. But not because we didn't want it in general but we were afraid that after joining the EU they would organize such chemicalized, mechanized, big farms, like in the EU. This was the main reason."
> Man: "Suma sumarum this Union is not that bad."
> Woman: "No, now it is already…"
> Man: "These ecological trends develop in the EU."
> Woman: "No! The EU is bad because it imposes GMO on us! The EU imposes GMO on us!"

At other times farmers would discuss with me that they liked to listen to Radio Maryja, but only to hear "mass on the radio," preferring to keep politics and religion separate. Of course, some

farmers appeared wary of answering questions about connections they might have to their parish or their political views (particularly in the case of nationalism); accessing the full depth of these kinds of feelings would entail a much longer, in-depth ethnographic investigation.

In order to probe this theme, however, I elected to spend additional time with some families who were reluctant to express their political views but who appeared to have extremely ardent faith commitments, coupled with a mistrust of the European Union. One family I interviewed several times, at length. Highly religious and politically nationalistic, on my initial visit they revealed that they did not support the EU accession, but they declined to elaborate. On a subsequent visit they shared a bit more about their political views and left a television program on during dinner that was broadcast from a Radio Maryja visit. On a final visit they shared with me brochures and pamphlets that linked their Catholic faith, their political positions, and their support of organic farming in an uneasy syncretism.

Not surprisingly, I often found that many families spoke in very nuanced terms about nationalism and the European Union. At times, as with the highly educated couple above, farmers would recognize the paradoxes inherent within the EU policy, noting something positive about the European Union, only to settle after a long conversation on a vigorous critique, filled with mistrust and sometimes conspiracy thinking. Similarly, at other times, they might begin with a strong critique of the EU, only to end a narrative or conversation with the sense that overall, the European Union was a good thing for Poland. It was also not unusual for these conflicted views to emerge between family members, and farmers freely spoke of brothers, sisters, husbands, and wives who voted for the EU, while they voted against it, and vice versa. In a typical scenario or conversation, a farmer might discuss all the hardships brought on by the European Union paperwork and increased costs of farming. They might explore the situation for a while in their conversation, expressing their political frustrations. Yet often, they would then explain that now their daughters or sons could travel freely to work or study, and they felt that was good and represented a future for Poland.

In some interviews, however, black and white nationalistic thinking and postures of mistrust replaced a stance reflecting nuance and recognizing paradoxes. Typical of this kind of response, for example, was one organic farmer who was furious with the European Union because of the potential intrusion of a new EU-funded highway through his land. He spoke bitterly, with venom, against the policies of the EU and was quick to generalize. Demanding that my translator listen to his situation, he exploded in a tirade against the EU officials but said

> Do not translate this. Do not translate it. They do not understand—these Jews, these Europeans, the [scoffing]

> Americans. They do not understand what we have experienced. I am telling you, they do not understand what it means for we Poles—for you [to translator] and your family. Your father…. (Author interview 2006).

Other postures of mistrust and strong resistance identities among Polish organic farmers seemed informed both by legacies of communism and nationalist sentiments. Commonly, for example, farmers perceived my identity as an American researcher to be a guise—a cover-up for my true identity as a secret European Union inspector. In fact, many Polish organic farmers throughout the country were frequently surprised when I expressed only a passing interest in inspecting their paperwork or passports for their animals, and the relief these farmers experienced upon being finally convinced that I was an American researching organic farming was palpable. Such postures of mistrust represent both a legacy of communism and apprehension about the European Union. The fears are substantial; some organic farmers feel that any time an EU official or inspector might sweep through the gates of their farm to do a "control" and fine them, take away their land, find something missing in their paperwork and take away freedoms, possibilities, and opportunities. These apprehensions contribute for some organic farmers to more general mistrust of the European Union's perceived cosmopolitanism and a tendency to entrench themselves in nationalistic ideas and in fundamentalist religious ideologies.

My perceptions of the fear of outsiders among some organic farmers, and a tendency to hold firmly to familiar belief systems or nationalisms in the face of rapid change, was repeatedly confirmed by leaders in the organic sector who met many farmers through the course of their work, as well as Polish agricultural inspectors who experienced these fears regularly, in spite of what appeared to be a shared desire to help farmers meet regulatory standards. One prominent national leader in the organic farm sector, for example, spoke of his concern that accession with the European Union was problematic, as he said

> Leader: Well... Personally, privately... I wasn't really for it [for the EU]. It involves lots of dangers too... certain unification...
> Kathy: dangers?
> Leader: A danger of annihilation of a certain uniqueness of societies, nations and regions. They talk a lot about regions but in fact, in fact this policy for today is a unifying one.
> Kathy: I understand
> Leader: Still, I must admit that one can notice some changes in the attitude of many European Commissions. I mean that we start

> appreciate regions, all these issues involving some social, regional differences but it's not like this, not like this to the end.
> Kathy: This unification?
> Leader: Well, I think that knowing our – a little bit perverse – nature [laughing], Polish nature ... that to some degree we... that [this policy] to some degree will activate these tendencies which emphasize individuality. In all of this. So I think that this will motivate us to define our identity, to define that. But this can also give birth to some kind of a nationalism even. You can notice it in the European, even in the old Union countries. That some nationalisms start coming back to life, that they start playing quite a significant role...some very strong nationalisms (Author interview 2006).

Though most of the leaders within the organic farm sector that I spoke with supported the European Union, some extremely influential leaders opposed it vigorously and were (and are) actively promoting a resistance identity in Polish organic farmers. The International Coalition to Protect the Polish Countryside (ICPPC), for example, frequently spoke out against accession to the European Union prior to unification. Following accession, the ICPPC held meetings with organic farmers aimed at generating opposition to EU policies, particularly ones that allowed agri-business corporations (and especially companies promoting GMOs) easy access to Polish agriculture. In my experience with the ICPPC, it seemed that they did not hope to encourage nationalistic ideas. Nevertheless, they expressed such disdain for the EU, European agriculture, and, especially, the chemical corporations and companies that they at times suggested that farmers refrain from accepting EU subsidies and direct payments, as a protest of deleterious policies. Promoting traditional forms of organic farming, ICPPC apparently views its role as one of preserving quickly dying methods, techniques, and communities, and I found their aims laudable, in the main. Nevertheless, their fierce opposition and black and white thinking about the EU reminded me of the reactionary nationalisms of some farmers.

The nationalistic identity expressed by a small percentage of organic farmers is problematic, particularly when that identity is based in prejudices about Jewish conspiracies and venom directed at outsiders, people of non-Catholic faiths, homosexuals, and so-called "Jewish communists." These expressions of "resistance" to EU (and global) cosmopolitanism can foster impulses clearly harmful to Polish and EU society. At its worst, these nationalisms reflect a continuation of dangerous, murderous prejudices long held and too slowly discarded. And in its perhaps most benign form, these nationalisms some Polish organic farmers harbor impede communication with fellow EU citizens.

Conclusions and recommendations

As radically problematic as Polish nationalisms are, so too are the ways in which the EU frames itself as embracing of diversity, of "unity in diversity," but engages in policies that aim to homogenize and harmonize identities. That tensions and dualisms emerge is not surprising. The questions for the FS movement in light of these issues include: how will the FS navigate these tensions and dualisms? Will the FS movement capitalize on the resistance identity of Polish peasant farmers to State policies increasingly informed by market liberalization, potentially accentuating the problematic dualisms, and thereby inadvertently aligning with far-right nationalist sub-sectors with ideologies untenable to the FS movement's embrace of diversity? Or will the FS movement seek ways to help Polish smallholders benefit from organic incentives, and helping to mitigate the contradictions inherent in re-peasantisation initiatives by fostering collaborative dialogue?

It is critically important in light of the issues of identity, culture, and entrenched nationalisms I have discussed herein, that if the food sovereignty movement is to be relevant for Polish smallholders navigating current transitions, it must acknowledge the limitations of approaches that do not carefully parse out the ideologically uneven terrain of Polish peasant agriculture. And as Polish smallholders experience radical transitions, dual processes of de and re-peasantisation, as well as being the recipients of the EU identity construction project, the FS movement has a unique opportunity to help foster that dialogue. Currently, for example, while the organic farming sector has been institutionalized into the EU and Polish national farm structure, no significant social movements supporting organic farming exist to give farmers a voice or assist them in the articulation of their interests. If organic farming in Poland is to contribute meaningfully to a more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable agriculture in the Europe Union, some routes must develop to involve farmers in a mutual process to create that agriculture, *in conversation* with the EU. These routes for farmer voice cannot be imposed or assumed to be universal, but rather situated in specific contexts.

Many of the Polish organic smallholders, while acknowledging those tensions and contradictions, were welcoming of the opportunity to parse out those uneven ideologies themselves, and to foster collaborative dialogue with the EU, and to embrace elements of cosmopolitanism. As one woman who had been an organic farmer since the early 1990s in Poland described to me,

> Still, there is another really important thing: There is an unbelievable feeling of freedom awakening, I can see that because I'm meeting lots of young people, they simply happen to

be all around me. If somebody really wants something now, they can really get it. And before we could want things, but we couldn't get them. The world was closed for us. In spite of everything. When it comes to the world. The attitude towards the world was different but the world was closed. And at the moment the world is open. And this is a very important thing (Author interview 2006).

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Food Sovereignty:
A Critical Dialogue

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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES

A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has — as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework — barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University and the Journal of Peasant Studies, and co-organized by Food First, Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies (ICAS) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute (TNI), the conference "Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue" will be held at Yale University on September 14–15, 2013. The event will bring together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an "intellectual future" in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

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