MY YEAR POOPING IN A BUCKET: LIFESTYLE, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS IN THE “NODE” AT DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE

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ZACH RUBIN

Dr. Victoria Johnson, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Associate Vice Chancellor of the Office of Research
and Graduate Studies, have examined the dissertation entitled:

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presented by Zach Rubin, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and
hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Abstract

What happens between the most visible aspects of social movements? When protestors put down their signs, petitioners hang up their clipboards, and movement organizations contract, there are several theories about what happens to the social and political currents that made them possible in the first place. Theories of social movements often rely on an understanding of political cycles, resource availability, or social strain. Often, movement actors are portrayed as “activated” for a given campaign, only to return to inactivity after it concludes. Beyond those observations lie permanent communities of activists whose forms of political engagement are not inherently tied to shifting winds of political opportunity and are deeply embedded in the everyday practices of lifestyle.

This dissertation profiles one such group, Dancing Rabbit ecovillage, as a social movement “node,” containing hallmarks of cultural, lifestyle, and social movements. Members of a node, like the one portrayed in this work, follow a different path towards being activated that offers a different account of how political work is drawn from personal consciousness. The concept of the social movement node is developed as an alternative explanation for the persistence of activism, one which helps to develop and elaborate a long-developing understanding of personal and political spheres as overlapping and immutably connected rather than separate and opposed. I detail the village’s claim to the nature and future of society through an ethnographic explanation

that moves through its own cycles based on a seasonal metaphor, rather than on the terms of national trends.

Chapter 1 - Dancing Rabbit and the Case for a Social Movement

Node

Introduction

Facing a friendly crowd of Rabbits¹ in their village, I explained to them the results of the research I had done there the previous year: This place, these people, I explained to them, are part of a social movement. “But of course we are!” exclaimed Harlequin² at the end of the presentation. “I would not be here if I didn’t think I could live the way I wanted and change the world in doing so. I could go be poor and farm anywhere, but I chose to do it here because I feel like I’m making a difference.” With her words, I also received a room full of nods and mumbles of agreement. Why would anyone doubt their village is part of a social movement?

Too often, though, scholars of social movements would cast such an assertion aside and label the people of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (henceforth DR) too broadly as a subculture, or too narrowly as a commune looking to retreat from mainstream society. People there are politically engaged, albeit at the margins of society in many of their

¹ “Rabbits” is the term my respondents use for themselves based on the community they live in, and a moniker I’ve decided to carry over into my writing about them as well.

² Some of the names of individuals in this work are changed out of respect for privacy.

Only respondents who gave explicit permission are described using their real names.

norms and geographically removed from the centers of power with their location in rural northeast Missouri. They irregularly participate in direct action confrontations against elected officials, corporations, or the like, and it's not easy to discern who their antagonist is in a way that, say, the environmentalist movement could point to an evil Big Oil. Yet an increasing number of people have started to re-examine the role of groups like DR as though they are part of larger social movements (Roberts 1971, Schehr 1997, Ergas 2010).

Villages like these have taken many forms throughout US history, perhaps most iconically as the Commune movement of the 1960s and 70s. But beyond their association in the popular mind lies a deep, rich history of communitarian projects spanning the ideological spectrum from left to right, religious to secular, isolationist to activist, and a host of other motivations. Some are forgotten to the obscurities of time, while others are famous in their effects and through their prolific writings. The sum of these, though, is a complex tapestry of social experiments called *Intentional Communities* (henceforth ICs). ICs tend to reflect the major social, economic, and political concerns of their day, laying claim to what the problems of contemporary society are and how they should be addressed. Whereas social movements have relied on direct action as a means of motivating social change, ICs have historically favored the option of creating an alternative lifestyle in which to practice their more perfected, ideal way of living – many of whom then use that lifestyle as a means of creating political challenge. The careful observer of politics, though, would not paint these two approaches as at odds with each other.

Yet Harlequin's motivations for being a poor farmer may be overlooked as participation in a social movement because they are not imbued by observers with the same political meaning as a protest or a boycott. Often domestic work, self-improvement, or subcultural norms are cast in an opposing "personal" sphere to the work of political and structural change. This is an increasingly outdated model, as movement since the 1960s have increasingly adopted the feminist mantra of "the personal is political" to a wide variety of causes and activating the political consciousness of many individuals previously personal problems. Snow (2004) recognized this trend in social movements, and put forward a proposition that "since not all social movements fall within the political domain of social life, we need to broaden our conceptualization of movements to include collective challenges to systems or structures of authority beyond the government and state" (p. 19) in to the realm of the society and culture of which they are a part. ICs like DR, and their members' alternative lifestyles, present unique challenges to the prevailing sociopolitical order not readily captured in existing social movement models because they too often rest on a premise of separate personal and political spheres of life. I argue, rather, that they represent important agents in modern political challenges because they incorporate both.

The present era is one in which lifestyle plays an increasingly important role in defining social movement activity (Pichardo 1997). Among other impacts, this means that where many ICs were formerly a more retreatist phenomenon, today that tendency is being supplanted by forms of direct action. Where many of the communes of the

1960s and 70s were associated with “dropping out,” ICs today are forming at an increasing rate, around a multitude of emergent public issues including environmentalism, religious or spiritual practice, LGBTQI safe spaces, and sustainable agriculture, among others. Their reality is no coincidence to the issues of the day. Since lifestyle is increasingly used as a means of identification and recruitment for involvement with social movements, institutions like ICs more readily and frequently enter the fold of larger movement activity. The forms of activism found in contemporary ICs are often strange to the casual observer of social movements, and so not readily defined as such. Yet in these some ICs, like the case of the one presented in this dissertation, their lifestyles are actively and consciously designed to call in to question authority and power just as use of direct confrontation of most social movements does.

At first glance, this may seem like an odd assertion. How can a lifestyle, albeit a strange and often misunderstood one, be a form of political engagement? It is easier to see how lifestyle might be otherwise leveraged towards action – that existing networks of people with shared behaviors and everyday practices will likely share a grievance and be similarly rallied to combat it as they deem necessary. Scholars of social movements have for decades noted the importance of lifestyle to the rise of movements, and many social movements are built on just such a dynamic. But too often, we focus only on the most visually impactful parts, like protest, and ignore the processes that underlie the creation of a collective identity which orients people towards that action.

This dissertation is part of a gathering litany that attempts an answer Snow's call for a broader conceptualization of collective challenges (see Armstrong and Bernstein 2008, and Haenfler, et. al. 2012, for example), through the case study of activists building alternative lifestyles aimed at challenging, rather than retreating from or complying with, prevailing sociopolitical structures. I will explore the ways in which constructing one's daily practices around these challenges contributes to an activist identity through the construction of a collective identity, participation in alternative power structures, and in promoting the use of direct action as part of the lifestyle.

Can one small village of about 50 people in rural northeast Missouri itself constitute a social movement? Despite the well-tread adage that only a small group of people ever really change the world, it would be folly to make the case for one group, in one geographic hinterland, comprised of people who take political action on a wide variety of issues is itself constitutive of a social movement. Instead, a mix of change-oriented forms – the social movement, lifestyle movement, and cultural movement – coalesce in the village to form what I call a social movement “node” where lifestyle and activism intermix and constitute a unique, connected form of their own. The node, as described throughout the dissertation, is an attempt to formulate a model for understanding the connections of personal and political spheres of life, and represents further step in dismantling their unnecessary representation as distinct and separate.

What are the Origins of Social Movements?

Social movements have taken different forms throughout their observed history, which makes them subject to shifting and often amorphous definitions given that they tend to reflect the cultural milieu from which they emerge, and therefore change in tandem with over time. They have typically been demarcated through at least several common factors. Each of these aspects has been explored and expounded in myriad ways, but it is their common focus on how disaffected and disempowered groups attempt to make political change that brings them together under the common moniker of “social movement.” How do those cultural and political connections operate within a small group to support activism?

The idea of what comprises a social movement has not been static over time, and in recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the study of lifestyles, social networks, and personal grievances as part of what dictates the claims and membership of movements. The shifting sociopolitical landscape, with its prevailing constraints and concerns, shapes the forms social movements will take. In the following sections, I describe two major changes in the sociopolitical milieu, and from those the three major aspects of defining social movements today, as well as note the larger historical changes that have occurred which reinforce their significance.

Finding Movements Through Two Key Indicators

The earliest definitions of social movements focused on group pathology and strain as the foundation of social movements, that things happened to the group and

they developed a social illness which caused them to lash out. Smelser (2011 [1962]), in his development Value Added Theory, predicted that “mass” movements were the result of structural strain and rapid changes in society that threw the whole system out of balance. If these “precipitating factors” gave way to a generalized belief about the nature of the problem, then people would mobilize in to collective action.

Definitions like Smelser’s take the tack, to an extent, that movements *happen to* an aggrieved population, that when conditions get bad enough movements might just arise spontaneously out of the discontent. Looking at such assumptions from the present day, this way of thinking is problematic: social movements don’t just appear under the right conditions, and they certainly don’t happen in discrete steps. Nor is it always clear what the “crisis” is that precipitates the rise of a movement, as there is no widespread agreement that any particular crisis is a crisis *in illo tempore*. Rather, diverse conditions dictate the forms and constraints of ongoing waves social movement activity, and activists should be seen with at least a modicum of agency to in initiate and participate in social movement activities. They also build networks that lay the foundation for later movement activity between the more visible moments of activism. Therefore, there are two key indicators of social movements that represent this need to view their memberships as having agency: their recruitment to formal organizations (SMOs), and their forms of engagement with authority (direct action).

Popular perspectives like Resource Mobilization emphasize that, yes, popular discontent is a part of the equation. But, they also conclude that there must also be some level of existing social organization within the aggrieved population in order for

them to be roused to action by “issue entrepreneurs” – those leaders pushing grievances in to the limelight (McCarthy and Zald 1977, Piven and Cloward 1979).

These perspectives also note that a proliferation of formal Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) is a necessary indicator of a social movement, since they are a key means of organizing people and participation. SMOs, according to Lofland (1996) are “associations of persons making idealistic and moralistic claims about how human personal or group life ought to be organized that, *at the time of their claims making*, are marginal or excluded from mainstream society – the then dominant constructions of what is realistic, reasonable, and moral.” (p. 2-3, italics original) Often, this definition has been tied to organizations that use direct action as a central tactic, though that need not be a prerequisite for defining SMOs since many are entangled with the production of political research and knowledge rather than organizing. Lofland continues that they must be collective, idealistic or moralistic; representative of a marginal population or idea, and small in scale with a high degree of continuity and organization.

However, formal organizations like SMOs are not enough, because they are beholden to the constraints of the system which social movements seek to resist and change. For example, the Political Process Model of social movements assumes that there must be some existing level of organization among a population for them to then be roused in to participation in social movements. McAdam (2010), for example, argues that these groups’ goals must come in to alignment with the larger political environment. Indeed, groups cannot make claims to which there is no ready political

answer, lest they make the jump from social movement to become revolutionary in nature. Tilly and Wood (2009) add to this the need for a sustained campaign by SMOs that includes the use of WUNC (worthiness, unity, need, and commitment) displays by those involved, which are usually achieved through forms of direct action.

This need for direct action has been a second criteria for defining social movements: the use of public, disruptive events by social movement participants that fall outside previously legitimated means for appealing grievances. Such events can include, but are not limited to: protests, sit-ins, strikes, occupations, and marches; but do not include such acts as voting or lobbying since those are officially sanctioned and therefore legitimated. Direct action is the will of the aggrieved group expressed as a form collective action in confrontation with authority. Even though direct actions can be performed by individuals – and many famously have been – in social movements they carry the weight of the aggrieved group, and are typically carried out with resources provided by a concomitant SMO. Most often, the direct action of social movements organizes masses of people to perform acts of civil disobedience, not the least because there is safety in numbers, but also that large crowds satisfy much of what is needed for a WUNC display (Tilly and Wood 2009).

Direct action is not a part of Lofland's (1996) basic definition of SMOs, and for good reason: both SMOs and the use of direct action are symptoms rather than the causes. SMOs, as a more formal element of social movements, are a means to an end, as is direct action. Their commonality is an insurgent claim to the nature of reality (ibid., p. 12) in the context of a given time and society, much in the way that ICs present

alternative claims about the nature of reality based on their collective ideals³. To the extent that ICs leverage their moral claims toward engagement with, over retreat from, society, and take unconventional or unsanctioned route to the achievement of those claims, their social role is indistinguishable from SMOs. But they are a distinct category of social phenomena, as will be further discussed below, because regardless of retreat or engagement they share a close geographic proximity and a shared lifestyle. The most distinguishing characteristic between an IC and an SMO, then, is the former will always be geographically clustered as a prerequisite to its existence. Their visions for the future of society, too, tend to be far more all-encompassing than SMOs, which often form to address one or a handful of issue grievances.

Adopting SMOs and direct action as the *only* defining traits adds up to a rather mechanistic view of social movements, but nonetheless provides for easy delineation. In such a paradigm one need just a simple formula for understanding them: under the right conditions of oppression, when things are aligned in the larger political milieu, an aggrieved population may be organized in to mass direct action that heralds progress towards resolving their concerns. Such a view does make sense when examining many historical movements, like Union movements, the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and others that affect indigenously organized populations whose achievement of moral claims is easily measured. Smelser was indeed right in his observations that social

³ See Hall 1978, for example, for an explanation of how ICs present “revolutions of time.” (p.17) This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

movements are triggered by structural strains from rapid social transformation, but only inasmuch as their rise is measured by the presence of SMOs and the use of direct actions. The social currents that give rise to participation in those more formal measures are often, if not typically, present in the alternative orientations and lifestyles of potential social movement participants.

Such a view also supports the notion popular in the study of social movements that movement activity happens in “cycles” or “waves.” These are times of heightened conflict for movements, wherein new SMOs are formed, new forms of direct action contention emerge at a more rapid pace and are more rapidly diffused across the landscape, and interaction intensifies between challengers and authority (Tarrow 1989, Tarrow 1994, Freeman and Johnson 1999). Various explanations have been offered for this phenomenon, but there is a general consensus that social movement activity in the United States (and elsewhere) is a rolling landscape of dips and starts as SMOs and constituencies react to the pressing issues of the day.

These metaphors, while useful, can obscure interstitial moments and spaces of movement building that are potentially just as informative to the processes of building collective identity as the more visible element of protest. Acts of civil disobedience are rather easily quantified for interpretation, yet studying movements, their SMOs, and their activists *not* in the throes of direct action will yield insights to the in-betweens of social movements: the not-so-social-movement forms of organization and activities where the origins and effects of movements lay. Some observers have tried to do this –

to elevate the study of activists outside of direct action and SMOs and push inquiry in to the realm of lifestyle, where the origins of movement participation often reside.

Taylor (1989), for example, has posited that the first wave of the Women's Movement was in "abeyance" between 1920 and the 1960s: not dead, but faced with a holding pattern in which a small, core group of feminist activists persisted in the face of narrowed political opportunity structures. Staggenborg and Taylor (2005) picked up this line of thought and similarly questioned the ways the second wave of the Women's Movement was conceptualized as over and dead, arguing that metaphors about "cycles" and "waves" have obscured the in-between moments of activism because they neglect the political implications of cultural and discursive endeavors by feminists. In their estimation, for example, the Women's Movement of the 1960s and 70s never died, but rather activists dispersed to fight for women's equality as it intersected with participation other movements. The absence of straightforwardly measurable direct action by SMOs on behalf of women's rights should not equal the absence of a social movement they argue, because the ideas, thoughts, tendencies, and potentialities remain for another wave to crest at a later time.

Ironically, it was when sociologists started to downplay strain theories like Smelser's, and embrace more fully the development of more recent theories still in use today that they also embraced an ongoing engagement of social movement theory with the personal/political divide. The Framing Perspective, for example, explicitly calls for measuring the rise of social movements through "...the mobilization of an unmobilized constituency," (Gamson 1990, p. 16) which clearly implies an understanding of social

movements where participants transition from one sphere of non-engagement to another of engagement. Any theoretical basis for generating knowledge about movements whose basis is the most visible parts of movement activity, like participation in protest or membership to an SMO, inherently relies on that divide as a heuristic crutch. The presence of SMOs and direct action, then, offer us simply the most visible and quantifiable parts of the “cycle,” or the crest of the “wave,” and don’t encapsulate the whole of a movement’s cycle even though they often persist after the wave troughs. SMOs and direct action are merely a starting point, to situate the reader within the ongoing discussion about how change takes place through social movements. In periods of abeyance, Buechler (1990) and Staggenborg (1998) each note that there persists “social movement communities” through the troughs of social movement activity, where the former claims of an active social movement become embedded in the everyday interactions of members.

Another reason to shift our focus to the interstitial moments of social movement activity is that, since social movements are invariably part of the society they wish to affect, they themselves are subject to changing forms and definitions. For example, Juris (2008) presents a challenge to centrality of enduring SMOs to social movements. He notes that the anti-corporate globalization movement has largely been comprised of networks of activists who connect through email threads, internet forums, and social media, coming together and organizing for specific events only to disappear back in to their local pockets after they happened. This sort of “ephemerality” (as he puts it) is indicative of how the shifting shape of society has made possible new forms of

organization for movements: digital networks have replaced phone trees, and activism has gone global just as capitalist oppression has. SMOs still play a major role, but are no longer intrinsically linked to campaigns of direct action by a permanent collectivity, as digital networking has made possible momentary, evanescent alliances between activists.

Similarly, while direct action is a hallmark of social movement activity, it need not always be a central trait. Taylor (1989) argues that, “the limited conceptualization of movement organizations in the literature has perpetuated classical conceptions of social movements as numerically large and mass-based” (p. 772) while Schehr (1997) contends that “[t]o frame and define social movement activity as overt and confrontational...is to ignore the multifarious modes of resistance persisting between the poles of direct action and acquiescence” (p. 163) Likewise, Haenfler, et. al. (2012) note that “equating movement activity with public protest” (p.4) fails to capture the ways in which movements can “encourage participants to integrate movement principles in to a holistic way of life, creating a more perpetual obligation to movement action” (p. 7). Staggenborg and Taylor (2005) add that such an approach is “limited by its theoretical and methodological bias toward the study of public tactics and events, often at the national level, and its neglect of cultural and discursive tactics.” (p. 38)

While they are significant features, any definition that emphasizes the presence of SMOs and the use of direct action to the exclusion of activist networks and lifestyle practices will inevitably fail to capture collective pursuits with the same aims but who do not contain those two measures. Some social movement scholars have recognized this

and called for an expanded agenda in the study of social movements that more readily captures how political meaning rests in everyday life, like Snow (2004), quoted above. Zald (2000) similarly argues that we should redefine social movements as Ideologically Structured Action, because it “opens up an agenda that extends the reach of social movement analysis” (p. 1) in an attempt to incorporate existing theoretical traditions under the umbrella concern of ideology, where each of them are concerned about it different ways. Thus far, he says, social movement literature has been concerned with mobilized action made visible, rather than variations in levels of mobilization or outcomes. In contrast, ideology “both emerges and from and manifests itself in practice.” (p. 4) In other words, action (*direct* action) is recursive with socialization (in to cultural practices), yet the latter is not often the object of analysis in social movement research. Socialization takes place within the lived experiences of both individual and group, as every day habits are carried out through lifestyle – or, in the case study presented here, constructed as an intentional alternative that questions mainstream norms through moral claims about the future of humanity.

The literature on social movements is replete with attempts to find theoretical bases for understanding the connection between personal life and political engagement, with only moderate, recent success at dismantling the artifact of a personal-political divide. On these bases, we must look beyond simple, quantifiable measures to detect the presence of social movements. The everyday practices and consumption patterns of lifestyle are informed by an ideological lens, and under the same umbrella of social movements that lead to the formation of SMOs and the use of direct action, but put to

different means in engaging social change. Such a shift also comes with a need to expand the ways in which observers characterize social movements, beyond the two traditionally-important indicators of SMOs and direct action.

Social Currents and the Rising Importance of Lifestyle to Movements

Social movements, like many other social phenomena, are shifting targets in our dynamic, postmodern world. The reasons for, and the means by which, people engage in efforts to address their grievances through social and political change are highly varied and often difficult to detect, based on how they go about making claims. Yet, if measured by the simple above criteria of SMOs and direct action, social movements are arguably more prevalent than ever. Meyer and Tarrow (1998) support this by describing the rise of a “social movement society,” through a rapid proliferation of SMOs in recent decades. More than the increasing numbers of and roles for SMOs, though, they also note that protest has become an ever more frequent phenomenon⁴. Aggrieved groups more readily take to the streets than ever before to express their discontent, with a hope towards influencing political outcomes in their favor. Social movements have not

⁴ An antidote to this assumption is offered by Biggs (2015), who concludes that an increase in the use of protests and boycotts since the 1970s is more than offset by the decline of strikes. So, while there is some doubt as to the total number of direct actions being on the rise, we can still easily conclude that their forms are more highly varied, as are the SMOs that support them.

so much changed dramatically in their nature – the goal is still political change in some form - as they have increased in complexity and become more deeply embedded in the fabric of previously unpolitical realms of social life.

At the same time that SMOs and the use of direct action are increasing, the collective urge for social change has grown beyond their bounds and spilled over – not just between movements (Meyer and Whittier 1994) but in to other realms of social life like lifestyle⁵. This is not new, but newly significant, as lifestyle has always been a site for possible political contention (see, for example, Taylor 1989) but is increasingly more so today. There are two major developments in the recent history of social movement scholarship that illustrate this new significance of lifestyle: the emergence of the “new” social movements, and the rising influence of neoliberalism.

Scholars of social movements have, since the early 1980s, begun to distinguish what they call the “new” social movements (NSMs) as an emergent form of collective

⁵ Lifestyle can be constituted by many different things, but sociologists tend to define it through the lens of social action. In Weber’s (1978) writings, it has been posited that he defined “lifestyles” (*lebensstil*) as the life conduct (*lebensführung*) made within the constraints of socially contextual restraints of life chances (*lebenschancen*) (Abel and Cockerham 1993). Featherstone (1987) describes it as the “consumption of signs” (p. 57), while Giddens (1991) describes it as “a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such a practices fulfills utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.” (p. 81)

action. Among the first to formulate this difference was Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1980), who proposed that we consider the ability of someone to appropriate social as well as economic resources in the interpretation of movements – that there are biological and interpersonal identities at stake in addition to the economic and political ones of the so-called “old” social movements. Out of the emerging importance of these relations are born newly cohesive “groups struggling to appropriate and orient social production.” (p. 212) We in the West moved, he and others argued, from a place where social movements were invariably based in some way on how participants related to the *means of production* in the classic Marxist sense, to an era where *social production of identity* holds significance. Old economic movement organizations that operated primarily through action in the public sphere (like unions) did not disappear, but rather new ones appeared that sought to address the fulfillment private sphere, individualistic concerns through processes of the public sphere. NSMs, then, are attuned to emergent groups and the production of newly significant public identities as an active process of social movements, rather than activating indigenous networks within existing populations, as the “old” movements have. For example, the sexual liberation of the 1960s and Stonewall Riots brought bedroom behavior out in to the streets, and SMOs like ACT UP⁶ used dramatic forms of direct action to turn the social shaming of the AIDS

⁶ A group most active in the 1980s and 90s that used direct actions tactics to bring awareness of the problems people living with AIDS face, and to push for legislation relevant to their protection and the development of a cure.

crisis and erstwhile private concerns of an individual's chronic illness, sexual orientation, and previously secreted bedroom behavior in to talking points for direct action events. This confirmed, at least to some, that new era of activism had emerged which focused on self over class, quality of life concerns over economic redistribution (Pichardo 1997), and from which lifestyle became a more significant source of recruitment in to conventional movement activity.

Yet, to others NSMs are not "new," because their forms are not as novel as their observers have suggested (Plotke 1990). d'Anieri, et. al. (1990) argue that the "old" social movements did include aspects ascribed to the newness of NSMs, most notably the egalitarian community building, self-actualization, and autonomy found in historical ICs. Perhaps this is because historical ICs like the Oneida community of the mid-19th century have often been left out of the study of social movements, for if they had not, the "newness" of NSMs would not seem so new. Calhoun (1993) similarly observed the presence of NSM characteristics like lifestyle and identity concerns in mid-19th century Owenite socialist movements and their creation of ICs like New Harmony. He argues that we need not explain why NSMs are "new," but rather that why they were so absent in the intervening period between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries when the popularity of ICs peaked.

Without wading deeper in to the debate as to whether NSMs are actually "new," the point here is that others have interpreted the presence of ICs through the same lens as many look at the NSMs of recent years. Whether or not NSMs are authentically new or not, their concerns of self-actualization and interest in personal identities previously

excluded from the public realm (and political claims-making) are newly important since the 1960s. Their growth has reflected the increasing importance of personal identity, everyday practice, and therefore *lifestyle* to the world of movement activity. That a large wave of ICs formed in the late 1960s and early 1970s is no coincidence to the wave of activism that was taking place at that time (Kanter 1972, Roberts 1971, Lockwood 1979, Smith 2002). Likewise, the lifestyle concerns characteristic of present-day ICs are not a new tactic for organizing or conceptualizing movement activity, nor for creating challenges to authority. They are, rather, important and significant today due to the shifting winds of political opportunity.

The other feature we must look to as influential in shaping contemporary social movements is neoliberalism – a somewhat nebulous yet omnipresent feature of the present sociopolitical milieu. According to Harvey (2005), it is actually the result of its own idealistic claim to the nature of society where such ideals as individual freedoms, identity politics, and multiculturalism joined with rampant consumerism “in pursuit of social justice through the conquest of state power.” (p. 40) The term itself is somewhat of a rhetorical football, yet nonetheless symbolizes real material changes in everyday lives. Neoliberalism is strongly associated with a general social trend towards prioritizing the individual, and typically also associated with a rise in both rhetoric and action geared towards individual liberty over concerns of class. Neoliberalism’s effect on the study of social movements is twofold. On the one hand, movements have arisen in resistance to economic policies that are the result of neoliberal philosophies, like free

trade (Smith 2002, Juris 2008), austerity (Stahler-Stolk, et. al 2007), and the right to access public spaces (Mitchell 2003).

On the other, neoliberalism's reach is something that can be examined in the way that movements operate. Just like the "new" social movements mirror in many ways the self-actualization concerns of the movements of the mid-19th century, so too does neoliberalism reflect, at least in some ways, the laissez-faire liberal economics that predominated throughout the same general time period. The rise of neoliberalism has come with the political wish to take almost all roles of the public sphere, government, and return them to the private sector through government contracts, selling off entire agencies and departments; or removing regulations that protect historically discriminated-against classes, leaving their fate to a so-called marketplace of ideas. It's no wonder, then, that social movements in the neoliberal era would be influenced by this trend to some extent by acting in tandem and spirit with neoliberal thought to elevate the significance of the private sphere in their modes of action. This shift to emphasis on self-actualization through the private sphere is significant not simply because the traditional pathways to accessing political power have narrowed (Boggs 2000) in empirically testable ways (Gilens and Page 2014), but because activists who embrace lifestyle as a means of political action, in their own words and actions, express frustration or hopelessness with the efficacy of public direct action against political antagonists as a means to generate change (Portwood-Stacer 2014).

Yet, what may be most distinctly new about "new" social movements and neoliberalism is the era of increasing social complexity in which they have all come

about. The world we live in has become more complex, more interconnected and, in many ways, more affluent. Gubrium and Holstein (2001) note this complexity, arguing that we live in an era of proliferating institutions which leads to a proliferation of selves – each with the capacity to be troubled and aggrieved:

“Today's range of discursive environments for self-construction was unheard of a century ago. Our forbearers were likely to have constructed themselves in relation to spiritual, familial, or communal identities. They simply didn't encounter the profusion of institutional offerings and demands that confront us today. Their lives were spread across dozens of sites and situations that now call for distinctive kind of self-presentation. Indeed, today's panoply identities has strangely reconfigured some of the standard parameters of self-construction.” p.

14

Such a plethora potentially troubled selves may be roused to political action for many different reasons, though as with before they must share a grievance as much as an institutional membership identity. Increasingly complex selves make for increasingly intersectional activism, and at least partly explain why NSMs added to, rather than displaced, older class based movements, and why lifestyle has added to, rather than supplanted, direct action tactics. Complex selves can be witnessed in the way that activists today “spill over” between different movements (Meyer and Whittier 1994), with activists and scholars alike arguing for the importance of intersectionality to effective social action (Crenshaw 1991, Doetsch-Kidder 2012, Cho, et. al. 2013). Thus, 22

person's lifestyle as a site for political contention has grown in importance because there have been ever-expanding opportunities and sites for contention in practices of production and consumption.

DR is illustrative of the recent trends in social movements – the devolution of recruitment to lifestyle concerns over public ones, the multiplicity of identities and selves with the capacity to be troubled, and the embedding of activism in everyday life. They also illustrate a paradox in the development of NSM theory in their emphasis on horizontal power structures *and* individual self-actualization. Compared to the “old” social movements, who typically have a core leadership or charismatic head, movements that recruit based on lifestyle must straddle the development of a collective identity with intersectional identities and individual pursuits of today's highly mobile activists.

The culmination of these changes, and their contemporary influences, is the emergence of a type of movements called *lifestyle movements*. This idea, developed initially by Haenfler, et. al. (2012), has been expanded on by others (whose contributions are present in different parts of this dissertation) to express the types of movements largely driven by the everyday practices and consumption patterns that add up to a common lifestyle. Lifestyle movements “are loosely bound collectivities in which participants advocate lifestyle change as a primary means to social change, politicizing everyday life while pursuing morally coherent ‘authentic’ identities.” (ibid., p. 14) Participants in lifestyle movements don't always end their engagement with lifestyle.

Instead, lifestyle is the basis for further continued political engagement, which often results in participants re-engaging (or engaging for the first time) through direct action.

Lifestyle can be a form of activism in and of itself. It can also be the means by which activists organize themselves. Lifestyles that activists have created through complex and collaborative processes, like anti-consumerism (Portwood-Stacer 2014), urban farming (Dobernig, et. al. 2015), and low carbon living (Büchs, et. al. 2015) are lifestyle movements because they leverage the everyday nature of lifestyle in their challenges to authority and aspects of the public sphere that restrict and regulate society in a way that interferes with their vision. Arguably, they are just as analytically interesting as the movements that gather thousands for protests and marches in centers of power against the decisions and policies of influential figures. Yet, they have only recently become the subject of inquiry for scholars of social movements, and their significance has often been downplayed because they tend to lack a clear antagonist.

Lifestyle movements, as a phenomenon distinctly related to social movements, represent newly important (though not inherently new) agents of social change in the era of NSMs and neoliberalism. In these, lifestyle is not just a subcultural practice for self-actualization, it is also a means of political engagement, as lifestyle movements are intimately linked to the direct-action contestations used by social movements. Lifestyle is not a new site of activism for social movements: NSM viewpoints have long recognized lifestyle as a site for the basis of a collective identity and political discourse (Touraine 1980, Offe 1985). Yet, it has only been more recently that arguments have emerged for lifestyle as its own category of movement activity (Haenfler, et. al. 2012).

Lifestyle movements are born out of the intersection of the lifestyle concerns of NSMs, the inevitable result of the hyper-individualism of neoliberalism, and a proliferation troubled selves. It is no wonder that activists with emergent and intersectional identities, who may eschew direct action as a regular means of engaging social change, and who are on the receiving end of a cultural message of personal liberty - that they must take charge because it is not the role or capability of the state - should conclude that their everyday practices and consumption patterns are a suitable site for struggle.

Cultural Movements and Politics

The final form that comprises part of the node are cultural movements. Cultural movements can be broadly conceptualized as an intentional shift in the signs and symbols a group consumes and produces, which also includes the everyday practices of lifestyle. These may arise from subcultures, as when groups form out of shared social strain within prevailing norms and the resulting anomie (Cohen 1955, Cloward and Ohlin 2013 [1961]), but represent an engagement with, rather than retreat from, those norms. The idea of cultural movements also breaks cleanly from social movements in their lack of political engagement. Cultural movements run the gamut from periodic trends in art or food fads, to more serious endeavors of spiritual and personal fulfillment, though they all share a common thrust of social criticism and, like social movements and lifestyle movements, a claim to the nature and future of society.

Like social movements, cultural movements rely on embedded networks of like-minded people to support their claims. For example, a group of vegans that Cherry (2006) studied found support for their lifestyle in pluralistic ways: through either following a diet set by a large national organizations' definition or, for others, through its embeddedness in the punk lifestyle which they were a part of, or some combination of both. Either way, it was the support of others, the close social and cultural networks with which they affiliated that promoted adherence to their moral claims-making about the immorality of consuming animal products. In other words, "[t]o ensure the success of movements that rely upon maintaining cultural and lifestyle changes, unaffiliated participants need support for their activism, which can be found in culture and social networks." (p. 168) Those in her study that were already organized around the punk subculture found it easiest to adhere to a strict vegan lifestyle because other punks around them did similarly. Relatedly, it has been a long established understanding that a social movement might find its most ripe recruitment for direct action from a population erstwhile organized around an existing trait (e.g. McAdam 2010, Tilley and Wood 2009).

Cultural movements also share with social movements and lifestyle movements that claim by members to the nature and future of society, albeit from a distinctly non-political standpoint. For example, Grigsby (2004) writes that groups of Simple Livers – people who intentionally live with as few possessions and as self-sufficiently as possible – rarely see their work as something which should lead to changes in law or policy. Instead, they perform the self-actualizing work of what they call "getting a life," which

she says is the “identity work aimed at remaking the self as a moral identity while simultaneously resisting the rationalization process and the forces of McDonaldization that increasingly characterize contemporary society globally.” (p. 53) This work to live “simply,” and is centered distinctly in the personal sphere.

We can see similarly in Schwalbe’s (1998) work on the mythopoetic men’s movement that it “...was not what sociologists would normally call a social movement. It was not centrally coordinated, had no official leaders, did not proselytize for new members, imposed no doctrinal tests on participants, and was not aimed at changing public policy.” (p. 5) The men he studied in the movement sought to rekindle their connections to masculinity as they saw it, in a way that was self-affirming, but did not seek to impose that definition on others. Such ideals and practices of consumption and production in cultural movements do not straddle the political on one end and the cultural on the other in the way that lifestyle movements do, but fall firmly in the latter camp. Participants in cultural movements partake in the daily behaviors that constitute a lifestyle, though the lifestyle is an end in and of itself rather than a basis for wider public, political action. Cultural movements tend to eschew direct action, and politics in general.

Which is not to say that they won't, or don't. Often, the "cultural" sphere of social life is painted as on the opposite end of a spectrum from the "political" sphere, and that certainly reflects what could be seen as a spectrum between the two.

Figure 1 - Movement branches that form the social movement "node"

However, figure 1 below illustrates a more nuanced version of how social movements, lifestyle movements, and cultural movements are related. When all three elements are present in a given group or population, I argue that this constitute three branches from which a social movement node is formed, where each type overlaps with each other through shared processes and characteristics. The node is made possible because of the overlap between the three forms. Cultural movements share in common with social

movements an emphasis on the embedded support networks that make each possible. Social movements and lifestyle movements are based in some cultural component that drives their claims-making, and just as cultural movements are prompted to some extent by groups' perceptions of the political problems of their time.

Similarly, inasmuch as there are formal organizations for a cultural movement, they exist to support the lifestyle of participants rather than a launchpad for further action. Like lifestyle movement participants, members of a CM seek to lead by example and hope others will join - Grigsby (2004) notes that cultural movements are viewed by participants as forever a process rather than a result – rather than participating in direct political action. Organizations in LMs are similarly supportive in creating definitions for members, though can be formal or informal. Despite being clustered in some ways, and diffuse in others, they can overall be characterized as diffuse for their lack of large, encompassing national organizations (Haenfler, et. al. 2012).

The social movement, lifestyle movement, and cultural movement forms all overlap to create what I call a social movement node. Each of the movement types can be detected separately and distinctly, yet are interwoven through three shared processes outlined below. Each of these processes will be the focus of a chapter later in this dissertation, demonstrating how the overlap between the personal and political operates in multiple ways.

An Intentional Community as a Social Movement Node

The ICs of today can trace an archaeology, originally, to the novel *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More (Sargent 1994). A fictional account of a “perfected” society, More’s (1869) work takes the reader through several fantastical ideas of social arrangements that were a reflection on the social ills in Europe of the day, and explores his proposed solution to them. Generations of ICs since have declared themselves to be in pursuit of the utopian⁷; their own perfected arrangement, or at least an attempt, here on Earth and not just in the canon of political philosophy. Their motivations are varied, but all ICs are constituted by sharing a common goal that involves creating a lifestyle around a given ideology and living in a close geographic proximity of established settlements. Defined this way, the early settlements of the Massachusetts Bay colony and other religious colonies fit the bill of proto-ICs – early experiments in creating the perfect community on this mundane plane in service to a holy ideal. Later IC formation then became more diversified, with others assuming the importance of intentionally separating themselves from the rest of society but for economic, secular, and non-Christian spiritual reasons.

But more than just a thought experiment, More’s *Utopia* was a critique of monarchs and the Catholic Church in Europe, and ICs have similarly been formed on critiques of their own contemporary institutions. Moreover, ICs today represent radical

⁷ See, for example, Oneida, New Harmony, Twin Oaks, or the East Wind communities – at least in their early or formative stages.

reactions to contemporaneous social ills much in the way that their progenitors did, but as activists in contrast to older arrangements that were more often retreatist, reactionary, or spontaneous. According to Pizter (1989), communal living is a generic social mechanism available to all peoples at all times, and as such is an essential tool “during the stage of social, political, religious reform or development...” (p. 69). Since More’s original tract, ICs have served as laboratories of change in Western thought for the development of new ideas about social forms through their moralistic claims about human nature. Corrine McLaughlin and Gordon Davidson (1990), veterans of the contemporary community movement, see ICs as “...one of the mapmakers for humanity’s journey into the future. They function as research and development centers for society, experimenting with new approaches to the problems of inflation, pollution, energy shortages, job alienation, unemployment, and rising health care costs.” (p. 2)

Such is also the case of DR, where I spent several years gathering data for this dissertation. Rabbits (as members are called) have some head-turning, unusual, and surprising habits, which I will detail throughout this work. They also have some downright conventional and conforming habits as well, which will perhaps come as a bigger surprise. Herein lies the lesson I took away from my time at DR: new and unusual lifestyle practices can be a means of contesting power, and they are the basis for why I argue that DR is a change agent represented through the idea of a social movement node. Their lifestyle practices in many cases hold personal and political meaning simultaneously, grounding the overlap between social and cultural movements noted in Figure 1. Moreover, it is because this linkage is embedded in a shared (and commonly

negotiated) lifestyle supported by the formal organization that is an intentional community that they fit the bill of a node which combines all three aspects. Rabbits live for self-fulfillment, but also to see that their efforts lead to larger social and political changes.

I am not the first to argue that an IC, or the collection of ICs throughout historical periods, are tied to wider social movements. Such arguments engage with how they build collective identities based on shared grievances (Ergas 2010), are expressions of resistance to hegemonic norms (Schehr 1997), and how they are often coupled with movements using protest as their chief tactic of engagement (Lockwood 1979) in the way that social movements are conventionally observed to do. Waves of IC formation, too, have been observed as rising and falling much like waves of protest (Barkun 1984, Berry 1992) did in the 1840s and the 1960s-70s. Yet, these various aspects have only been studied and written about individually, while here I work to weave them all together in to a more complex understanding of how ICs can act as change agents. This dissertation is organized on three major points as they pertain to life in the ecovillage as it is at DR, which represent the intersections of where the social movement node meets other forms: 1) the building of collective identity, 2) the formation of alternative social structures prefigurative of their claims to the nature and future of society, and 3) the relationship of the community's lifestyle to direct actions like protest. Each of these points represents a chapter that ties common social movement indicators to an uncommonly-associated social movement body: the intentional community. These points demonstrate how DR explains the concept of the node, where multiple

movement forms coalesce. Just as SMOs are the formal manifestation of the underlying causes behind a social movement, so too is this node a symptom of the swirling forms from which it is constituted.

To be clear, though, not all ICs are captured by this argument, since not all of them seek to influence the society they spawn from in the same way. Some are fully retreatist, with none of their intentions geared towards the influence and change of others. Rather, they seek solely self- or small group-improvement, often to the point of a “perfected” way of living that is usually prescribed through the interpretation of a religious text or the dictates of a charismatic leader. Yet, among the ICs that seek social change as a result of their experiments – both historical and present – and their contemporary social movements, there is distinct overlap. DR is a case study of such a phenomenon: an IC that has chosen the path of engagement over the more historically popular path of retreat.

The Three Shared Processes

DR was founded for the purpose of challenging a set of norms in the sociopolitical milieu, and in doing so they have developed as a “node” where social movements interface with lifestyle activism and cultural struggle. The choice in their founders’ vision of engagement over isolation has led them to take on several characteristics of social movements, and lifestyle has become the primary means by which we can understand the presence of social movement activity, while their work also involves a significant component of self-actualization alongside their mission of

social change. Such a model is a clear expression of how lifestyle can be a site for both cultural and political activity.

In chapter 2, I describe a “day in the life” and DR, where I walk the reader through a number of daily habits and goings-on of the typical Rabbit through the lens of a day in my life while living there. This is the most richly ethnographic chapter, told as a sort of collective story, where some of what happens is based on stories related to me rather than my own experience, though most of the chapter is based on things I experienced firsthand. The reader should gain a good insight in to what life is like at DR, and this chapter aims to answer the most common questions one would have about an unfamiliar living arrangement.

The rest of this dissertation is an exercise in examining how the discourses of cultural change and political engagement are put in to practice through the political engagement associated with social movements, the daily practices of lifestyle movements, and the supportive embedded networks of cultural movements. DR doesn’t fit neatly in to any one of these established categories, but nonetheless contains hallmarks of what have traditionally considered to be associated with each. In this dissertation, I draw three major themes out of social movement literature, aimed at demonstrating how DR exhibits certain features common to social movements and emphasizes lifestyle as a defining vehicle for activism. I argue that the lifestyle at DR constitutes a social movement node because the village has the following traits in common with both social movements *and* other movement forms:

1. *Chapter 3 focuses on the creation and negotiation of a collective identity*, which delineates clearly the group's boundaries and socializes potential new members in to the Rabbit lifestyle. Rabbits work to maintain a semi-porous group identity that involves connections to allies outside the village and seeks to export aspects of the Rabbit lifestyle. It also promotes recruitment of new Rabbits, while also creating boundaries to group entry based on recruits' fit with lifestyle practices. I examine the ways in which the boundaries of group identity develop and are enforced, and how the village balances an activist lifestyle between engagement and group identity integrity.
2. *Chapter 4 is about Rabbits' deployment of prefigurative political practices*, wrapped up in what I argue is a Weberian value-rational authority structure, in which group norms and values are in conversation with, and a reaction to, the individualistic tendencies of the neoliberal era. Both social movements and ICs present some claim to their vision of society. Yet, it is only at the intersection of lifestyle that movements generate a claim to a viable alternative. Movements regularly ask members to "be the change you wish to see in the world" – a request that is only achievable in the everyday practices of lifestyle. At DR, members submit to a series of group norms that are value-rational in nature (Weber 1978), which I argue therefore creates a value-rational authority structure that has been the subject of speculation by Weberian scholars (Rothschild-Whitt 1979, Sciulli 1986, Waters 1989, Adler, et. al. 2008).

Submission to a value-rational authority structure is, in this context, a prefigurative “being the change” embodying the mission of the village.

3. *Chapter 5 is about how their lifestyle serves as a synecdoche for direct action* through the creation of what are called *collective action reservoirs*, which are “...pools of potential participants whose collective value identities make them an ideal ‘reserve guard’ ready to periodically support particular protest events and mobilizations.” (Haenfler, et. al. 2012, p 13). Rabbits eschew direct action as their primary means of engagement, yet are wont to sometimes engage in it due to the tendencies of their lifestyle, and their individual orientations towards it, which I found to be altered as an effect of engaging the Rabbit lifestyle. More than just a reservoir, the node can be a training ground that draws out latent activist tendencies through supportive social structures. I also argue that the *collective action reservoir* is a phenomenon that extends beyond lifestyle movements, and can be found similarly in other movement forms.

None of the three processes stand alone analytically. Rather, it is the presence of all three that support the argument made in this dissertation that the social movement node constitutes a unique clustering of people engaged in social change. The careful reader will observe that each of the three chapters noted above give some degree of prominence to each of the movement types that form the node, while still containing elements of all three.

It is here that my investigation in to DR begins, with the premise that the social movement node has emerged as a significant phenomena worth examining within the

realm of social movements and social change. There is much about my examination that adds to a proliferation of studies in recent years which have begun to examine lifestyle movements and cultural movements in earnest (see, for example, Schwalbe 1998, Grigsby 2004, Kahl 2012, Portwood-Stacer 2014, and de Moor, et. al. 2017).

Subjects in this study use the same language of grievance and motivation as participants in protest-centered movements do, but work to address them in a way that bridges the gap between lifestyle and politics that is too often relegated by theorists to respective corners. Thus, the “social movement” takes precedence in labeling the node, because it represents an analytical strategy to deconstructing the divide between personal and political realms carried by many social movement theories.

ICs, too, have typically evaded the scrutiny of those who study social movements, because they often aren’t recognized as such despite containing the conventional criteria of formal organization and moralistic claims making. This dissertation is therefore based on a conceptualization of movement dynamics that accommodates the emerging forms of political challenge produced in the present era, one that is designed to provide a case that the social movement node links several movement forms. The increasing significance of lifestyle to social movements over the last half century has provided a significant analytical fulcrum towards this end, as the three key processes shared across movement forms at DR illuminate just how deeply the processes of social movements have become embedded in the everyday practices of lifestyle.

Into the Warrens⁸ of Rabbits

Dancing Rabbit is an “ecovillage”⁹ style IC, where members work to minimize their resource use and maximize sustainable practices. They welcomed me in to the village readily, though slowly, as I built rapport with members over the course of several years. This started with a brief Saturday morning tour in 2014, then a three-week visitor period later that year (designed for prospective new Rabbits to get the “ecovillage experience” and see if the village is a good fit for them), followed by an extended residence there in 2015 for 8 months. There are three components to the data: 1) a deep wealth of ethnographic experience that came from residence in community where everyday practices and, 2) a series of 19 in-depth interviews with adult Rabbits, and 3) items the Rabbits have written and published elsewhere (which are cited where applicable). The results, then, are a mix of first-hand accounts and quotes from Rabbits from numerous sources. This method of gathering data from a variety of qualitative sources builds from a Grounded Theory perspective (Glaser and Strauss 1967), where theorizing about the subject has been inductively generated from what I as the researcher recorded rather than tested from a pre-conceived hypothesis.

⁸ rabbits live in warrens, and so Rabbits have taken up that idiom for their plots of land.

⁹ Ecovillages, as a type of IC, share an orientation towards sustainability as their collective claim to the nature and future of society. Their concern, rather than perfecting a human arrangement with other humans or a human arrangement with their deity, is a copacetic arrangement between humans and the planet they inhabit.

As a method, ethnography tends to be setting driven, rather than theory driven anyway (Lichterman 1998), and allows the researcher to uncover information that would otherwise be lost in asking questions through an existing theoretical lens. Therefore, the various forms of data were collected progressively: interviews took place after several months of participant observation in order to more accurately plumb the depths of the village's organizational and individual practices. Interviews born out of ethnographic research (ethnographic interviews) differ from other forms of interviewing because they occur more deeply *in situ*. Researchers can conduct interviews on location or in a setting created by the respondents, but ethnographic interviews take on an extra dimension of depth because they allow interviewees to shape the context of the research itself through familiarity with the researcher (Heyl 2001).

To push the central metaphor of this work a little further, nodes are in other contexts connected by branches to other nodes or termini. In this dissertation, the reader will see how DR as a social movement node is connected to SMOs or other groups of people through the efforts and building a sustainable and egalitarian lifestyle. Most notably, there are a handful of other ICs in their vicinity that I will make reference to at various points throughout the work, and former members that have branched out to other endeavors but return to this particular node from time to time. I note when a respondent is from one of the smaller neighboring communities or not currently a communitarian, and all of their names (along with several of the Rabbits') are changed to protect their privacy. Only when I got explicit, written permission from someone

during interviews do I use their real name, while the rest are named after different breeds of rabbit.

This dissertation, then, contains a mix observational findings and the words of member Rabbits themselves. There are also several quotes pulled from members' personal blogs, as well as the DR blog, known as the MemDem – a shorthand for the Memphis Democrat, the nearest local paper in which their column used to be published for a time before the Rabbits decided to opt for an all-digital audience. From the interviews and participation in group meetings, I saw the themes that comprise the social movement node emerge. Rabbits described their actions and decisions through the lens of both self-improvement and political engagement, of lifestyle and of direct action. This has led me to view them through the lens of the concept I work to develop throughout the dissertation, where these motivations intersect as a link in the study of how social movements develop from larger populations.

Conclusion

DR is representative of new trends in the study of social movement activity. As an IC, they intentionally defy the norms and practices of the society they wish to have an impact on, but in ways that *engage* rather than *retreat*, and build networks with others who share their vision. Anthropologist Joshua Lockyer, who also studies the community, has noted that they operate said engagement on “three transition discourses” of “cultivating cooperative cultural values and behaviors, recreating the commons, and sharing their experiences and lessons with broader publics through

media, research, and educational programs” (2017, p. 529). My research goals are similar to his, as we both seek to “use scientific research methods and critical analysis to help communities like DR become more effective at achieving their goals.” (p. 538) According to both him and Jones (2014), Rabbits consume about 10% as many resources as the average US citizen – inclusive of water, energy, and trash production. As an activist, and observer of activism, I care that these results carry meaning in to the rest of the larger sociopolitical milieu that DR aims to influence, as I also wish to see a drive towards a more ecologically sustainable future succeed.

This dissertation uses the metaphor of seasonality as a jumping in point to discuss the ways that the shared processes of the social movement node contribute to social movement activity. Each of the four content chapters starts with this metaphor, touching on how the seasonal variations in weather affect the plants and the people of the prairies where DR is built, and how they are, in many ways, comparable to the seasonality of DR’s own social movement node. Movements don’t simply die when the most visible parts disappear, and neither do the prairies of northeast Missouri. Both simply go through periods of growth, stability, decline, and dormancy (or abeyance). Likewise, the most visible aspects of the node happen above ground where they are easily seen through the direct actions that Rabbits participate in, while the cultural “roots” of everyday practices that are alternatively political and personal, are also an object of interest. The three key processes – building a collective identity, the use of prefigurative structures of authority, and residence in a collective action reservoir – play a role in the development of this metaphor, as each is tied to a season, and are

therefore an aspect of how lifestyle contributes to the development of a social movement node.

My metaphor is similar to the “cycles” or “waves” metaphors of social movement activity deployed by others, but with nuance specific to the social movement node. Where cycles or waves crest with innovation and diffusion, and trough with inactivity and stagnation, seasonality means a dormancy that ends with picking up with new growth after each death. So, even though social movements may experience crests and troughs of activity, their processes of challenge and innovation are more gradual when examined as part of a node that intersects with lifestyle. Change in a context where lifestyle links cultural struggle and political resistance is slower and more continuous than the context of the desired legislation or policy outcomes of social movements. Cycles of protest can rise and fall quickly, but the development of lifestyle will likely be slow, developing much as plants grow: in a way that we can’t readily see within a protest cycle, but that we can detect through careful observation over time.

Because they straddle a critique of the present with developing an alternative social form upon which they base their ideals for the future, while simultaneously engaging in outreach and activism, their work is decidedly political in nature. Yet, because it is wrapped up in the everyday practices of being a Rabbit, it is also cultural. Rabbits work to build a collective identity, formulate their practices around values important to the group over conformity to a set of codified rules, and intersect with conventional social movements on many fronts. The sum of these practices establishes that DR has many of the qualities associated with social movements that put them

squarely in their realm of study, and which makes them part of an increasingly significant social current that uses lifestyle as central form of political engagement.

So, if we return to Harlequin's statement that "I could go be poor and farm anywhere, but I chose to do it here because I feel like I'm making a difference" we can begin to see how the node encompasses all three forms. She does her work because it is a labor of self-fulfillment. But, she has also found a place to farm – not just any place to farm - where it can simultaneously be a political statement. Every Rabbit has a different story of their relationship to activism and self-fulfillment, and this dissertation will tell their stories. They tell of a lifestyle that straddles the divide between cultural critique and political engagement, of a social movement node that illustrates how activism meets everyday practice. Moreover, these stories exist in the context of an evolving era of global political resistance, and their individual narratives reflect key aspects of contemporary forms of activism.

Chapter 2 – Winter: Cultural Practices and Lifestyle at Dancing

Rabbit Ecovillage

Introduction

In the winter time, life in the prairies of northeast Missouri is dormant. Trees have dropped their leaves, grasses turned brown, and squirrels survive on caches of stashed acorns. At DR, a similar period of dormancy and stashing is in place. The village does not accept many guests, and instead many Rabbits venture “off farm” to make visits of their own to family, friends, vacation destinations, and to work seasonal jobs. Construction halts as it often becomes too cold or snowy to mix “cob”¹⁰ for plastering on to natural buildings, or for artisanal outdoor work like Sambucus’ or Hassan’s carpentry. The Rabbits that self-identify as introverts hole up in their personal residences to rest and recover their social energy for a few months.

In the winter, the social life of DR more closely approximates a cultural movement over a more activist one, where the everyday lives of Rabbits are not occupied with outreach and messaging in the same way as they are during the warm months. In other words, the outwardly aspect of the activist nature in the DR lifestyle is

¹⁰ Cob is a mixture of sand, straw, and mud that is used as a plaster coating on both the interior and exterior surface of straw bale and other forms of natural housing. It’s characteristics mimic that of concrete, where mud stands in for the Portland cement and straw stands in for rebar in that mixture.

seasonal, in contrast to the way that activism among conventionally considered movements is cyclical. Plants mostly hibernate in the winter, but those with strong root systems deep underground continue some low level of activity, ready to spring forth, as the saying goes. Likewise, as the Missouri weather is unpredictable, sometimes a warm spurt in January will send the occasional buds shooting sunward during otherwise cold months.

I use this metaphor of seasonality in describing the changes at DR because they respond much more slowly and deliberatively to challenges of lifestyle than the political opportunities pursued by social movements. The social movement node does not lead members innovate tactics of direct engagement (or, at least, not *just* tactics of direct engagement) but is rather wrapped up in the everyday practices that constitute a lifestyle as a means of indirect engagement, practices which are much slower to change or innovate because they are more pervasive to one's life than any given protest campaign or boycott. Nonetheless, for those that are so inclined - members who still see a value in direct action – their engagement doesn't necessarily follow the seasonal cycle, but the national political cycles. Rabbits who are most strongly wont to participate in other forms of collective action like online petitions, social media posting, or traveling to protests across the country still tend to keep it up regardless of the season.

In subsequent chapters I will describe the activist nature of the DR lifestyle, with the barriers and institutions that comprise it. This chapter, though, is all about the nuances of the everyday practices of consumption that signify a unique lifestyle. It is a

walk-through of a generic day I would spend at Dancing Rabbit, a focus on the *social life* rather than the political engagement of Rabbits. The format is also different from the rest of the book, as I aim to first provide a more personalized account of what life is like for someone who has gone through the process of acceptance and integration in village, as informed by my extended participant observation. The principal voice, unlike the rest of the book, is a first-person narrative, as I attempt to illustrate for the reader the Rabbit lifestyle as I experienced it. In later chapters I turn such ethnographic accounts in to theoretically-informed analysis of just what goes in to the social movement node.

While no one day would necessarily involve all of the activities I describe in this chapter (not the least because there aren't enough hours in a day), they are nonetheless representative of what a typical Rabbit would do. They also include parts of the process of integration a typical new Rabbit would be subject to over time. Some of the stories are my own, some are representations of stories told to me, and some are aggregations of the Rabbits' collective story. Also, despite the progression of the seasonality metaphor, many of the activities in this chapter are really only found in the warm months. Their presence signifies the same thing winter does to the prairie ecosystem: some activities (the political ones) are suspended, but other activities continue in preparation for the next Spring fury of growth and expansion. The cultural and lifestyle roots of the social movement node are perennial, while the social movement shoots and leaves are annual. Ergo, this chapter is designed to establish a base in the cultural movement aspect of DR as a social movement node, where members' activities are largely based around practices of self-fulfillment and cultural change rather than

challenging any given authority as social movements would. However, since these cannot be disambiguated from the concept of the node, moments of political action appear as well in this chapter.

Rabbits have some lifestyle quirks that are fun, interesting, weird and, importantly, effective at achieving the goals of living their vision of a more sustainable and egalitarian lifestyle. It's not always obvious when some of their practices are tied in to that larger vision, and many of them are just quirks that aren't in service to the larger political mission except in witnessing the lifestyle as an aggregate. I endeavor, in this chapter, to point out when a certain practice or norm does explicitly have those ties, though that is not the main objective. I will let the reader interpret further activist meanings as they intuit them beyond my explicit associations. As I've said, lifestyle is a site for political resistance, so there may be acts of resistance apparent to the reader based on their own meanings and political engagements that I haven't experienced or weren't explicitly stated to me by Rabbits. Throughout the chapter are examples of how DR's core group held values of egalitarianism and environmentalism are deployed into everyday practice, as well as how those practices often hold meaning for both self-actualization and political critique at the same time.

Meet Some Rabbits

An important part of any ethnography is a deep understanding of the cast of characters who are the subject of study. In larger studies, this takes the shape of a demographic description. But for a village comprised of about 40 adults and 12

children, a more intimate description is in order. Before I begin the story of what comprises the lifestyle at DR, then, I would like to introduce some practitioners of that lifestyle. Below are a few profiles of the diverse backgrounds found at DR, not only in where they came from but what issues are salient to them as part of the Rabbit lifestyle. It is by no means a comprehensive guide to all of the rabbits' biographies, but rather an introduction to the cast of characters that this project follows. They are an eclectic bunch, indicative of much of the modern wave of ICs, though they have managed to find common ground through being a community of activists.

Sparrow is a native Texan with a big smile and a laugh you can hear from half the village away. Her passions, as expressed to me, revolve around producing her own food and caring for the village children (though she has none of her own as yet). Before living at DR, she told me that she was a steadfast vegan, one that would go so far as to antagonize meat-eaters at parties and instigate debates. Yet, her demurment was one of a larger cultural critique, one of which she said "[p]art of my being vegan felt like asceticism, part of how I saw the system as gross." Once she had been at DR for a few months, and knew her neighbors' chickens, and saw them as happy, she stepped outside that constraint and embraced a new relationship with animals as food. Now, that complex aspect of self-growth has led Sparrow to husband her own flock as a form of activism, of which she told me that "[i]t's a lifestyle choice that I think we're making out of love for animals. Part of that love is that at the end of their life cycle is eating them. Doing that with honor is something that we're holding highly here." Sparrow was raised Catholic and, though I witnessed her and several others participate in traditions

from other religious backgrounds, still held on to that part of her identity strongly enough to attend a nearby Catholic Church on Christmas and Easter.

Alline is a California native, though at the time I met her she had lived at DR longer than almost anyone else. She told me that "[w]hen I was 26, I deliberately left the religion I had been raised in [Mormonism], and I had to re-think all of my values because they weren't handed to me on a plate" and that while her parents had been social justice minded individuals, they were far short of just how radical she ended up being. When I asked her what gets her "fired up" in the world, she waxed poetic about teaching adult literacy classes in the San Francisco Bay area and leading hiking trips for the Sierra Club in younger days. Since landing at DR, though, her time has been occupied with founding and running the Milkweed Mercantile bed and breakfast with her husband Chaudry, an endeavor that has allowed her to put in to practice a stake in the issues she's most passionate about: environmentalism preventing animal cruelty. The Mercantile is a two story building of straw bale and wood, decorated in reclaimed materials, books, and the portraits of famous environmentalists like Rachel Carson and John Muir. The meals they serve are local and legendary: Thursday nights pack in the modest dining and bar area of the Mercantile for pizza night, complete with Missouri beers on tap, meats raised at a neighboring farm, and cheese fermented by fellow rabbit Criollo.

Sharon is soft-spoken but fiercely and doggedly opinionated about the major issue important to her: climate change. She also holds a special place in her heart for Latin America, around which issues of US imperialism first stirred her to become an

activist in the 1970s. Though all of the founders of DR were Jewish, they had by my time at DR all moved on to other pursuits and left Sharon as the only Jewish person on farm. Being of Jewish descent myself, it was heartening to share with her a prayer when Hannukah came around, and other Rabbits gathered around to witness and learn from it. She, more than perhaps any other Rabbit, embraces the outreach mission and activist side of DR – beyond being a booster for the village and consistently searching for grants that would allow them to bring more people to visit for workshops and tours. She also coordinates the local chapter of a climate change SMO for all of northeast Missouri.

Sallander is a rabbit of nearly a decade and a half, and a technophile if there ever was one. He works online as a search engine optimization consultant, runs a high-traffic social media page, and is easily the highest earner at DR. He, in contrast to many others there, pushes for techno-centric solutions to problems there are in the larger society. In this endeavor his most notable contribution to DR has been to spearhead the revival and modernization of the local currency at DR, the Exchange Local Money System, or ELMS, which will be described in Chapter 4. I ate in the same kitchen co-op as Sallander, and had many long discussions about the role technology should play in society. At the time I dined with him, he was the only ardent vegan at DR, though not without exception as he would also practice "freegan" norms of eating animal products that no one else would eat and would otherwise go to waste. For example, he was the only one in the kitchen eager to suck the marrow out of chicken bones after we had boiled a

leftover carcass for stock. His desire was to not waste any edible part of the animal, while the rest of us were willing to let that flavorless and difficult-to-access part go.

Lop is a hard-scrabble fellow from Colorado, though he related stories of many jobs across at least a dozen different places he lived before landing at DR to start his farm, a winding path that I'm sure even he has trouble remembering the order of sometimes. He's a rather prolific writer who keeps his own blog and contributes regularly to the MemDem, and one with notably strong opinions as evidenced by a blog entry he made about using a mainstream farming magazine as toilet paper when he ran out of the conventional stuff: "For eight bucks an issue, I ought to be able to wipe my ass with it, because there is no other way that Modern Farmer can possibly make my day-to-day operations smooth." Such folksy sayings accompanied his daily interactions with others, and he always seemed to have some way of addressing or brushing off the problems that appeared before him with a whimsical comparison to the diurnal rhythms of nature or the bodily functions of his flocks of fowl. Lop is first and foremost a farmer and, while I didn't get a sense that religion in any form really played much of a role in his life, he was always cautious in the ways he would navigate his heathenish ecovillage ways around farmer peers in the rural and densely religious areas neighboring the village.

Finally, Orestad was a Georgia bicycle activist of many decades, and had retired from the busy life of active advocacy in the non-profit world to build a natural-earth home at DR. Of the transition, he says it was prompted by the realization that he was simply not living up to the potential he wanted to see in the world. This, too, formed

informed his spiritual outlook on activism, where he paraphrased to me the classic Marxist aphorism of organized religion being an opiate of the masses. He embraced a form of mysticism in the sense that there are things about this world he said he can't explain through logic, though logic was the route he usually relied on. What's most important, he said, was that he "do what is my nature - to be involved and working towards good change, and not be anxious about the results." Perhaps more than any other person in the village except the Webeloes' (described below), the building he was constructing with his partner Sharon eschewed modern convenience. They were off-grid for electricity and water, cooked on wood-fired rocket stoves in their outdoor kitchen, and layered their roof with soil in order to grow vegetables on top.

Sadly, Orestad passed away from a malignant brain tumor shortly after I left DR from my longest visit. The community listserv swelled with a bounty of mourning and logistical planning over how to best support his partner Sharon in her time of mourning. The City of Atlanta named a bicycle path in his honor. He was the second person to die at DR, and he is buried on the land.

While the cast is diverse in life experience, they are homogenous in many ways as well. The village is overwhelmingly white in a way that reflects the demographics of the area they reside in, and most (but not all) have a college education. The one Rabbit who would stand out as not being a Caucasian American is from Spain, and so only his accent and slightly darker skin make him stand out in the rural, heavily white area where DR is built. Few of the Rabbits are under 30, except the children, and few over 60. But, perhaps the most striking similarity is the common embrace of the Rabbit lifestyle, for

among the village there were many shared hallmarks of this. Everyone agreed on the pursuit of altering everyday practices of consumption and expression to accommodate a mission of egalitarian governance and reducing their ecological footprint, which can be seen among the many activities detailed in the ethnographic analysis contained in the rest of this chapter as well as the rest of the dissertation.

My Day as a Rabbit

On this generic day, I wake up with the sun shining brightly over the big prairie sky. Many people would do this throughout the warmer parts of the year, rising as early as possible to put in as much work as possible before it gets too hot to manage. But, there's no standard wake up time so I set my own, which today starts as soon as the reverberation of chirping birds outside my window reaches the volume of an alarm clock. They wake up with the sun, and shortly after so do I. I roll out of bed: a futon frame with an air mattress on top intended to for shorter-term stays that I've managed to make comfortable for months because I enjoy the rarity of living in a house that also contains a kitchen and an air conditioner.

The first thing I do, which would be the habit wherever I lived, is check my email. The internet is surprisingly fast at DR, as the local provider is a rural co-op which has managed to rather successfully bring high speeds to much of rural northeast Missouri. In the house where I rent a room from Cob and his two boys, that connection can falter from time to time due to our combined high use, but no more so than for any four people who were using the internet in a household at the same time. From time to

time, also, other Rabbits will come work at the couch or table at Cob's place to soak in the air conditioning on exceptionally hot days and further split our internet use.

The community was founded by web developers and, while none of the founders remain, their prioritization of internet speeds in site selection for the village, which continued as the community grew and has been a great boon to its livelihood. There are many people who generate large portions of their income online: Cob does subtitling for videos, Elfin writes for a popular tiny house blog, and Sallander runs his SEO consulting firm out of his shack-cum-tiny house. There aren't clear numbers for what proportion of DR's income as a village comes from these online endeavors, but between those, the non-profit employing several Rabbits to do outreach while garnering donations, and the several small farmers who sell to other Rabbits and surrounding neighbors, the community gets by economically. No one is rich despite several members having come from upper-middle-class backgrounds, and a few are even on government assistance in the form of food stamps, disability, or veterans benefits. The community, though, is notably better off for having a decent internet connection.

Once the email chore is out of the way I migrate to the kitchen where, as it is across DR, I make breakfast on my own. What I eat varies. If the chickens one of the neighbors' place down the road have been producing heavily for a while then it's usually some preparation of their eggs. If they haven't, then toast or oatmeal usually does the trick. Occasionally, if he's been up early tending the garden for an hour or so already, Cob will make fried corn cakes for breakfast. Since I'm renting a room from him, he always offers to make enough for me to have some as well. Breakfast is as it is for

households everywhere: a mundane beginning to the day. Cob drinks his fair trade coffee, reads the morning news on his smartphone, and listens to choral music in the background live-streamed from a radio station in his home town in upstate New York. Other Rabbits' morning rituals, of course, vary. Some sleep in, while others are up even earlier than Cob to tend to their animals. Some skip breakfast entirely. Widder makes homemade yogurt for his kitchen, which is a frequent start to the day for members of that co-op.

This morning, there's a work party to build a new fence for the pigs the Webeloes are planning to acquire, so I head that way. Crunching down the gravel path, I wave hi at Alyssa, who is tending her garden, and stop for a chat with Orestad, who takes some time to educate me on his process of pounding mud in to the inside of a stack of used tires around the perimeter of his house. His goal is to eventually create a windbreak wall and house a cistern for collecting and using rain water in his house. It's an incredibly labor-intensive process for the 60-year-old to do, since it involves shoveling large lumps of mud in to a tire and then repeatedly pounding it with a sledge hammer to get out air bubbles and pack it tightly in the tire walls to ensure that, as the wall is built and endures seasons, it will produce a minimum amount of shifting.

Yet, hammer away he does, sometimes humming folk songs and sometimes just sweating. He is emphatic in his reminder to me that these are used tires, and while it's not great that he's using a petroleum byproduct to build a part of his house (modern tires are made predominantly of synthetic rubber), he's saved them from being shredded and either put in a dump or burned in a power plant. When he and Sharon

retired they decided that they should be living their ideals more fully, and so moved to DR to make that possible. Most people would spend the years of their retirement relaxing, but they have spent it building. Their house is a marvel of natural and recycled building that incorporates straw bales, large black walnut timbers from the land in the frame, earthen tire walls, and a “living” roof of soil and garden. After the quick lesson on pounding mud into a tire, I bid Orestad farewell and move on to the work party.

The Webelos are hosting it this time. They are a sub-community, a small group of people within the village that live together and have an additional set of goals beyond those set by the full community. As a group, they live with the fewest average amenities and lowest average income in the village, preferring to forego many opportunities for conventional income in the hopes that their animal husbandry and farming will offer a decent return farther down the line. They raise goats and chickens, and now soon they will have pigs. They grow dozens of different vegetables, all done in a very labor-intensive manner without the use of chemical pesticides or herbicides, and little mechanical equipment. But more than an income, theirs is an ascetic way of life that prioritizes their conception of how food should be produced, with money being somewhat secondary to that. I don’t envy the way they live, but definitely their work ethic and idealism about how food should be produced. Harlequin, whose statement about living her farming ideals at DR I opened this book with, is a part of the Webelos subcommunity, as is Lop.

Not everyone shares that asceticism, though one of the “covenants” that Rabbits agree to abide by as part of taking up the lifestyle is that any food they produce on farm

must be done so at least to OCIA organic standards and contain no petroleum products (See Appendix B for more on these covenants). For many of the Rabbits, this covenant is a distinct point of interconnection where activism and personal growth meet. Illy, Rae, Orestad, Alline, and Sparrow all told me in their interviews about the importance of DR in improving their relationships with the food they ate – that before becoming Rabbits they had strong ideals about ethical food production but had trouble living them, and the move to DR made that possible for them.

When I get to the Webelos' place the party is already in full swing. Widder is driving the village's one tractor - a heavily used piece of diesel equipment that is broken down almost half the time and lacks any semblance of safety features – with a giant hole drill connected to the back end. He waves me over alongside Perlfee, and we steady the giant drill over a small stick that someone used to mark the site for the hole where a fence post should go, and hang on for dear life as Widder flips the lever that sends the drill downward, wobbling pell-mell against our combined strain to hold it straight. Several hours and dozens of holes later my arms are a jiggly mess of tired, but we've set the foundation for a large fenced area.

A team behind us has been filling the holes, too, with posts made of branches from the Hedge tree. Hedge, also known as the Osage Orange with its bright, iconic neon yellow seed balls, is native to parts of the Midwest and was used among early settlers as a customary fencing material because the wood is incredibly dense and takes a century to fall apart to rot. In fact, even as steel rose to popularity as the material for fencing across the country, many farmers in Hedge country have continued to prefer

Hedge for its cheap abundance and longevity. So, too, do Rabbits, because it grows bountifully in the low-lying areas of their land and requires no fossil fuel inputs to acquire – it is far less fossil-fuel intensive to harvest their fence posts from the land than to buy them from a store, where the steel may have been imported from overseas.

The team of post-hole-fillers is comprised mostly of the Webelos’ “wexer” interns, a portmanteau of “work” and “exchange”. These wexers come for a longer term than the visitors, and typically with the intention to learn a specific skill practiced at DR, like natural building or organic gardening, but with little intention of staying beyond the terms of the internship. These are often, but not always, college students, or college dropouts looking for a meaningful learning opportunity. About a dozen or so wexers come to DR every year to work for the Rabbit that hires them, and in return that Rabbit pays for a tent site for them to camp on, all of their meals, and any fees that person would owe for being there long-term.

Apparently, lore passed down from the founders goes that even when the village was just getting started they would host hundreds of visitors per year. As the population has aged and started to include more children, this tapered off quite a bit. Jennifer tells me that the six annual visitor sessions (described more in Chapter 3) in place today is a vast downsizing from when she first moved to DR 10 years ago with her 3 children. Part of this has to do with the founders moving away, but also the drive of the village changing and the desire for focused recruitment overtaking the desire to be a destination. The nature of the visitors has also changed, she says, as the program became more formalized. *Everyone* that came used to be a wexer in one form or

another, and it was only when early Rabbits got fed up with people showing up to the community at random times, for random lengths of stay, to randomly commit to helping do the work that needed to be done, that the community separated and formalized those roles in order to make the management of those groups of people easier and more efficient. Now, “visitors” are potential recruits, who pay to come to the village to get the “ecovillage experience” and see if it is something they would like to be a part of.

Such work parties are fairly common at DR during the warm months, for Rabbits, visitors, and wexers alike. As such, there are far more work parties during visitor sessions because they take advantage of the influx of helping hands. The more hands, the more a work party can accomplish, and there’s no shortage of work around the Webelos’ warren. While Widder, Perlfee, and I are digging holes, and the wexers are behind us filling them with Hedge branches, visitors are working with Rabbits, erecting walls for a new chicken coop, digging trenches to add a bottom rail of scrap metal to the fence intended to keep out digging coyotes, and still more are serving water and homemade kombucha to prevent dehydration. This work party will accomplish a lot, though there is always more to be done. It is also one of the more unusual work parties because there are more Rabbits present than visitors. The anticipation of our fence-making leading to a pen for DR’s first hogger has many Rabbits excited and willing to chip in their labor to make it happen. Whatever we don’t finish, the wexers will continue to labor on until the task is done or their time at DR comes to an end.

Sweaty and tired, we post diggers and fillers decide to take a break from the manual labor to cool off by going swimming. We trot casually down to the small copse

away from the village where, hidden behind a row of trees a large, full acre pond awaits us. In the early summer, its cool waters help Rabbits replace the need for air conditioning by offering an icy reprieve from the sun's heat, while later in the warm season it becomes more tepid and better for a midnight skinny dip. We strip naked and splash around for about half an hour, feeling the cool pond water wash away the morning's grime and release the tension in our muscles.

There's no shame in nudity out here on the land, as there isn't generally at DR. Cob will occasionally wander home lacking clothes after a hot early morning in the garden, drenched in sweat because in the dead of summer it can stay above 80F on the Missouri Prairie even throughout the night. In the populated parts of the village and during daylight hours, though, Rabbits are usually somewhat wary about being fully nude because there's a host of random comers and goers that might not enjoy seeing a naked Rabbit. There are two midwives, for example, whose clients include conservative Mennonite mothers from the surrounding area, are careful to send out an email every time one needs to come to the village for a consultation, with reminders to stay clothed during that time. Removed from the village and the eyes of any passing guests, though, we wash away any bodily sexualization or embarrassment in our nudity along with the dirt and sweat of the morning.

After our bodies cool and fingers start to wrinkle, we depart the pond. I put on shorts and drip-dry on my way back to the village. As I near Cob's house, where the room I rent is, I pass Oliver on the path pulling a cart behind him on his way to the "humey" pile. This most fetid of tasks he is performing means carrying 5 gallon buckets

full buckets of poop and sawdust from Rabbits' houses out to their destination at a special compost site several hundred yards from the village. Everyone uses the "humey" system (short for human manure, or humanure), as there are no flush toilets allowed at DR (dictated by another one of the covenants), but not everyone wants to carry and clean their buckets. So Oliver, one of the few that has found peace with the task, regularly accepts payment from other Rabbits to empty and clean their buckets for them. I never once cleaned a bucket, because Cob was one of those poop patrons who hired out.

Oliver is in mixed spirits, happy to get little extra income but by no means happy with the task at hand. He's planning to start building a tiny house at DR soon, and every little bit of extra income helps. He just got approval for full membership from MARC (the Membership and Residency Committee), and is awaiting approval for a plot of residential land from the Warren Siting committee. I congratulate him and move on. There's still a lot of work to be done today, for the both of us. Life at DR moves slower sometimes, because there is no rush of city life that pushes Rabbits to keep up. But there is always more work to be done building, maintaining, growing, and organizing; so while Rabbits are quick to slow down as they deem necessary, they also work long hours to meet their personal needs as well as contribute to community work.

I return to my room, and check my email once again. Like many of the Rabbits, my income is derived from working online. I teach an online class for my University, a token of sponsorship from my department to support doing an ethnographic study. I log in to the forums and spend some time responding to students' posts. Then, I record

some notes for my ethnography about the morning work party. Perhaps tomorrow I'll record a video lecture for the following week's lesson, something that will require more preparation but which is made possible again by DR's stable and fast internet connection. But, my time is limited because it is close to lunch hour, and as a member of a co-op I eat with everyone else at an agreed-upon time of 12:30 PM.

Today, we're feeding the current cohort of visitors lunch, so after the online chores I venture out in to the kitchen of the house where Elfin has been furiously prepping to feed over twenty people – a combination our normal co-op plus over a dozen visitors. Most co-ops have enough members that a typical member will have to cook once per week, though that can vary when there is an influx of wexers or a outflux of people "off farm" traveling. A cook shift everywhere, per custom rather than requirement, is two steps: the person whose shift it is cooks dinner, and then lunch the next day. The second is typically leftovers, though when the visitors come around it is often difficult to prepare enough food in one shift of up to 25 eaters to satisfy both meals. There's a host of special dietary needs between the two parties present for today's lunch, everything from vegans to dairy and gluten restrictions, so Elfin is making some rather generic beans and rice, which is a common staple when the visitors come around anyway.

The visitors start to trickle in. This group spans the spectrum from retirees to young couples with their newborns, and soon the small space is overfull with people. Everyone serves themselves, then finds a place to sit either at the table, on the couch, or at the picnic table outside. As visitors sidle up to Rabbits who are members of the co-

op, the take the opportunity to ask questions and further discuss their experience thus far at DR.

Of course, an inevitable conversation about poop comes up. Meal times are one of the few arenas where the visitors are all gathered in the same place while not having the topic of discussion planned out for them (or work placed before them) as with the work parties described above or the workshops that will be described in Chapter 3. They are also, then, an opportunity for visitors to steer topics in the direction of their own curiosities, and someone inevitably has burning questions about poop. Therefore, it is often the most opportune chance they get to have a candid discussion on the topic. Several Rabbits also joked to me that they're sure there's a psychological association between the food they're consuming and its inevitable end product that wells up from visitors' subconscious. Meals like these are often how most Rabbits interact with the visitors one-on-one. While the visitor program does host a meet and greet, and often public events like the "no-talent show" described below, these events lead to experiences of brief, superficial socializing in the hopes that Rabbits and visitors will find points of interest they share in common to explore later at intervals such as these.

Everyone washes their own dish at the conclusion of the meal, as is another mealtime custom in the village. The person who cooks also cleans all the kitchen stuff they used in preparation of the meal. So, as people finish eating and wrap up conversations in preparation of their afternoon workshop, a small but steadily regenerating line forms at the sink for several minutes. Oftentimes, a visitor will volunteer to do everyone's dishes because they are in deep conversation with Cob or

another co-op member and want to stick around for more, or because they are moved by the spirit of volunteerism found in the community. If not, the cook waits until everyone else has gone to do their portion of cleaning and places them in a precarious pile around Cob's disproportionately small drying rack.

After lunch, there's a meeting in the common house that has piqued my interest as a researcher, so I head there. The topic is an "economic heartshare" – a medium of discussion that was never fully explained to me but which took the form of a collective, collaborative airing of grievances around the state of DR's economy. The format is tailored to avoid debate, though it arises at points anyway. Each speaker chooses a person to speak to, and that person's job is to reflect back a summary of what they heard or describe how hearing what they did affected their relationship to that person, an exercise that one might alternately see deployed as "active listening" in team-building workshops or group counseling. And really, that is the form this "heartshare" seems to be: a co-counseling session among Rabbits to deal with their economic anxieties. At times, when someone feels like they are being personally attacked (whether they were or not), they break from this format. The facilitator lets them finish, and then steers the group back in to the selected format.

Their economic anxieties abound, too. DR is not the economically egalitarian place that a lot of other ICs are. For example, the neighboring community of Sandhill is based around a cottage industry and is income sharing. This means Sandhillers all work for the community, sharing equally as they are able in producing the community's goods (mostly sorghum syrup) and reaping equal rewards through profit sharing after the

community's expenses are taken care of. While everyone at DR is expected to contribute equally to the creation and maintenance of common infrastructures like the common house and roads, not everyone uses them equally nor has equal ability to pay since they must find their own individual income streams. Rabbits are typically content with this model and know they will have to pay their own way upon gaining residency in the village, though there is a stark income inequality that presents a source of friction among them and this discussion is meant highlight some of the ways in which those frictions manifest in order to better address it and improve the relationships among Rabbits.

There are many tears shed during the hour and a half meeting, much of it dominated by Sparrow. She states that, "DR is a gated community. We decide who gets in based on our covenants and guidelines. As someone who has been on MARC basically since I got here, I've seen that the gate is more open for people with money than for those without." She also noted that money was the reason she wanted to move here when she was a visitor. Or, rather, it was the possibility of getting along in a place without the use of money. She says she cried the first time she was paid in bell peppers for running the pre-school, because she was so happy. She also concludes that there seemed to be a somewhat-hierarchical division in the community between those who worked online and those who didn't.

We then engage in a discussion of what "menial" labor means, because Sparrow included in that hierarchy such jobs that were often hired out like humey shifts and cooking. Humey is dirty work, and she asserts that it seemed some people thought they

were above it. Cob returns that he paid Oliver to do his humey and didn't feel bad about it for two reasons: 1) it kept money flowing through the community and created work that allowed someone to stay here who otherwise couldn't and 2) humey pays more per hour than almost any other work; despite it being gross it is a huge advantage to the person willing to do it. His eyes well up with tears, as he explains how he is worried about the stability of his livelihood. In response to Sparrow, he notes that he works online and there wasn't necessarily any more stability in that than other jobs at DR. Of this stability, he says, "everyone poops, but everyone doesn't always need a consultant"

Sallander also weighs in by saying that he felt attacked, not by Sparrow but on a regular basis. He acknowledges his position of relative privilege in being the highest earner in the community at around \$50,000 a year while running his SEO firm, but that he has also donated huge portions of his income to charity. Similarly, he dedicated huge portions of his time to community work, in committees and elsewhere. His eyes start to share in the tears of his fellow Rabbits as he describes feeling devalued in his position working for the community's land trust, saying that he has continually foreseen fiscal problems before they happened, brought on by Rabbits' unwillingness to tackle difficulties in the organization's budget through longer term planning and paying the real cost of maintaining infrastructure. Then, he's tasked with fixing it by an angry population only after reaching crisis stage.

These sorts of emotional meetings are not uncommon at DR. Making room for emotion in the public interactions of the village is, I think, one of their more notable

steps towards their egalitarian vision. In many, if not most other settings, the naked display of emotion by crying would be deemed unprofessional and damaging to one's standing in an organization. The Rabbits I talked to, though, saw displays of emotion in meetings as an important sign that they embraced a feminist message (discussed further in Chapter 3), as such emotionality is often popularly associated with femininity, and that making room for the emotionality of both men and women in public was to break down the walls of such hierarchical gender definitions. It also served to entangle the personal business of individuals with the community's business, meaning that personal health and well-being were ideally to be valued as much as the community's health and well-being, and vice versa. While DR is not income sharing like Sandhill is, they are in this more abstract sense emotion sharing, and emotional labor serves to build investment in the community among Rabbits in the same way that physical labor does for others.

Not everyone attends this meeting, as it is with most meetings at DR. There are few that are significant enough to get the whole community out, as Rabbits frequently have personal business that outweighs the pressing issue of the day or week to be discussed. For example, while this economic heartshare meeting is going on, I see Harlequin leading the Webelos' pack of goats along the main path outside the common house where we are. While many people have chickens at DR, the Webelos are the only group that has more labor-intensive farm creatures which require a great deal of effort to husband – goats, a donkey, and of course, soon after I left my longest stay at the community, several pigs. As such, members of that group will often show up at random

times to meetings with the excuse that “Donkey (the animal’s eponymous name) was being stubborn,” as donkeys notoriously are. Yet, he is a necessary fixture as he aggressively defends the tribe of goats against coyotes and other predators, much as the sheet metal railing would do for the pigs.

These animals require daily attention since they are social creatures, and every couple of days a Webelo moves the portable electric fence structure containing the goats and Donkey from one part of the village outskirts to another so they have fresh pasture to graze on. It’s quite the symbiotic arrangement, too, as their critters are herbivores who thrive on the prairie grasses, and by helping to cut those down near the village it reduces the habitat for other, unwanted pests like snakes and mice who would make their home there. Plus, the animals’ poop helps to fertilize the prairie soils that might someday become someone’s garden as the village grows.

After the heartshare meeting, everyone needs to decompress a little. For some of us, that means going to happy hour at the Milkweed Mercantile bed and breakfast from 4-6, and it’s right across the main path from where we are in the common house. The hours are not what one would expect, nor is the venue. But this is the ecovillage, after all.

“Uncle” Chaudry greets us at the door. An affable sexagenarian who has spent over 15 years at DR and who built the Mercantile with his wife Alline, he spends most of his afternoons tending the bar and socializing as a form of pseudo-retirement, though he also keeps up with some carpentry projects around their warren. He stocks a dozen different types of cold beer, including two on tap, and many local Missouri beers in

addition to the cheap staples of Pabst and Stag. In the Mercantile I see regulars Sambucus and Havana, who almost always spend their afternoons there socializing and discussing an issue of the day – whether they be current events or village concerns – over a few beers. Neither of them are particularly tech savvy, and neither own a TV or computer, so their knowledge of the world is mostly informed through printed newspapers Havana picks up from his regular trips to town, or through listening to the radio. Nonetheless, whenever I socialized with them I was always impressed with their knowledge of current events and myriad other topics like airplane maintenance, carpentry, and, somewhat ironically, home brewing beer.

More than just relaxing, these happy hours serve to support the Mercantile as one of the few viable independent businesses at DR. Their overnight guests alone could not support them, and they only have 5 rooms in which to house people. Also, it provides yet another chance for visitors (and other guests of the Mercantile) to interface with Rabbits – if they can keep up with the eclectic topics that Sambucus and Havana like to pontificate on. So, the happy hour performs a service for Rabbits while at the same time Rabbits do themselves a favor in supporting a highly visible extension of village commerce.

The Mercantile also provides other major services to support itself and the village, serving as a major nexus for the village's outreach mission both to activists across the world and to their local neighbors in northeast Missouri. They regularly hold workshops on topics that Rabbits find useful but which also draw in visitors to learn skills that support the environmentalist mission of DR or other significant parts of the

lifestyle, like soap-making, permaculture, growing mushrooms on logs, or writers' retreats. Perhaps the most popular recurring event at the Mercantile, though, is pizza night, which happens every Thursday. It draws people from not just the village, but the surrounding county, and serves as a major point of interface between Rabbits, who make some of the best pizza I've ever eaten using many ingredients they've grown themselves, and locals that would otherwise be wary of the lifestyle at the DR that they often lack the cultural vocabulary to understand. But they understand pizza and beer, which the Rabbits will gladly sell them.

Rabbits have, over the somewhat brief history of the village, tended to open up lines of communication and interaction with the non-communitarians in their corner of the world through the more universal language of commerce. The area is roughly half Mennonite and half "English" (which Mennonites term the non-Mennonites of the area, and a term which many Rabbits have adopted for non-Mennonite, non-communitarians), with the communitarians at DR, Sandhill, and a third community named Red Earth Farms representing an additional small minority. With the conservative Mennonite population, they shop at the local grocery store down the road to the south, purchase whole milk by the refillable half-gallon glass jar from the dairy down the road to the east, and hire out their heavy machinery needs when digging home foundations or getting their cars un-stuck from muddy roads, in addition to the midwifing services some of the Rabbits provide. With the English, they buy straw bales, wood, gravel, and other home-building materials, and even exchange vegetables for meat with a family raising cattle nearby.

With other communarians, they exchange some food – both of the other ICs grow far more of their own than DR does – and knowledge. To some extent this means discussing their relative experiences with experimental self-governance and communitarian economics. Sandhill, described above, is about 3 miles down the road, and intentionally limits their community membership to 12 people. Red Earth Farms owns 76 acres on the land immediately next to DR and practices the “homesteading” model, where members are spread throughout the land in a series of small farms rather than clustered like DR or Sandhill, though they share a common governance over the land and a common set of goals just as the other communities do. Among the communities, there is a Tuesday potluck that rotates every week, and a cooperative homeschooling effort where all of the children under 10 among the communities get together for shared lessons. There is also a Spiral Scout troop for the young children of these communities – a gender-inclusive organization analogous to Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts. Each community, in addition to their relationships with the other ICs, has their own relationship to the both the Mennonites and the English of the area, making for a complicated body of interconnections that any prospective Rabbit must learn to navigate over time.

After a vigorous discussion on the days’ topic (which, today, is about the various hand tools one can use in traditional carpentry, because Havana recently discovered a nearby conference in Iowa on the topic), I head back to Cob’s house for dinner. It’s just the regular members of the co-op tonight – us, plus Ma’ikwe, Elfin, Sallander, and Cob’s two teenage sons. The male-heavy crew, which Sparrow has disaffectionately termed

the “bro-op” for its tilted gender balance and some possible slights I am unaware of, are nonetheless cordial and hungry. Cob, a masterful cook, has made us one of his specialties: a German meat casserole. This rare meat-heavy dish is lapped up by everyone at the table – except Sallander.

As we eat, various conversations emerge that sometimes include the whole table, and sometimes break down among different clusters based on interest. We talk politics, both in the ecovillage and nationally. We talk board games, which is a particular passion of Elfin’s. And, we talk about the Super Bowl, as the game is nearing and Ma’ikwe wants to get together a watch party. Often, though, we use dinner to talk shop about the ecovillage, because maintaining the Rabbit lifestyle – as lifestyles are – is sometimes an all-encompassing task.

This speaks to dinner conversations in genera at DR. It seems like dinner is always the time to reflect on ecovillage life. If there are new or unfamiliar faces at the table, that conversation revolves around the basics of everyday life or the occasional highly specific question. When the faces have been around for a while, conversation turns to deeper and more specific topics - budgets, committee work, or the ever-pressing questions of "how are we different?" and "are we different in the right way?" from the rest of the world they seek to influence in a more egalitarian and sustainable direction.

One topic that recurs regularly is safeguarding the village against various threats both internal and external. Past the initial barriers that I faced in learning about how life at DR is lived, there is consistent discussion by Rabbits of safeguarding the lives they

have built. The DR economy and struggles with money are common for example, as with many groups. Though I never got the sense that DR was on the verge of economic collapse, nor anyone at risk of starving, there was a cloud of economic concern which hung overhead from time to time. This is not the least because many people in the village have chosen to live simply, only earning enough money that they would need in order to survive while prioritizing their leisure time and personal fulfillment. Money, too, was often an analog for consumption in general, which Rabbits sought to minimize as part of the lifestyle. Without more of an income, though, few Rabbits had a savings to speak of and were therefore subject to a good deal of economic insecurity.

There are other contributing factors to the economic malaise, like the generally depressed rural economy of northeast Missouri. A number of Rabbits that rely on government assistance of one form or another that precludes them from engaging in more lucrative work, and a general sense that money won't buy happiness pervades at DR – even if it is needed to pay the bills. Another threat is maintaining good standing with the government institutions that legitimize DR's existence. This means staying in good standing with the IRS for the village's land trust and non-profit arms, and maintaining at least nominally bureaucratic structures filled with both Rabbits and allied external board members (which is discussed more in Chapter 4).

These sorts of legalistic concerns break the image of a carefree hippie-inspired lifestyle that people often conjured in their minds about the village before visiting. Rabbits, their days much like the one I've described thus far, are generally very hard workers. They seek to protect what they've worked for from the liabilities inherent in

letting in guests and visitors who might have misperceptions about the Rabbit lifestyle. It's not a vacation, or one big party. For example, I won't say there's no drug use to be found there, but if there is one thing that the community can come to agreement on as a whole, over any other issue, it is the need to protect what they have built from the sorts of liabilities carried by illicit drug use that might cause them to lose their land. On one occasion I witnessed a would-be resident be grilled about a rumor that he had made a transaction with an illicit substance, which would be an automatic disqualifier for residency. It turned out to be just that: a rumor. In fact, this later resident would go on to remark that his vices changed after coming to Dancing Rabbit, and he became more of a tobacco smoker than anything else.

This is not to say that DR is devoid of indulgences. In fact, Rabbits regularly get together for occasions of good cheer where the beer (and, yes, other substances) flow freely. They simply look different than those coming from a mainstream life would recognize. In fact, in this fictional day, there are a variety of evening activities going on that offer ample opportunity to socialize. After dinner I take some time to do more of my teaching work, diligently checking class forums and returning emails as I try to maintain a connection to my former home and workplace. As I do this, there are several evening events that Rabbits are attending across the village as weekly rituals of self-affirmation and others conducting merriment. Some of these are open to all Rabbits, and some are small circles related to personal identity concerns.

In the former category is the "song circle," a mostly-weekly gathering where Rabbits (and often visitors) come together and sing classical folks songs, random

modern hits (the younger children there, as everywhere at the time, were obsessed with Disney's *Frozen*), and some DR originals. In the circle, we would go around and take each take a turn to select a song of choice, and the lead it off for anyone who cares or knows how to follow. In the times I attended these, I preferred to ask Rabbits to sing with me widely known classics like "Blackbird" by the Beatles. I never fully learned the originals Rabbits wrote about their village, and given the nature of the occasions they were not something that I could take exacting notes on in the moment, so I only have fleeting lines scribbled, such as "we're building Dancing Rabbit, because we love the earth..." The songs are alternately joyous, dark, and ponderous. For a handful of Rabbits, like Sallander, Widder, and Tereza, they are a staple that gets them out of their house or garden and in to socializing with other Rabbits and visitors alike. But moreover, song circle is an exercise in affirmation of the Rabbit lifestyle because they sing songs that reflect their values and practices.

The other event this evening, which is in the latter category of relative exclusivity, is "men's group": a gathering of many of the village men that serves as a space for discussions and explorations of masculinity, with the roles and performance of being "a man" the regular topic of dissection. Men's group is a closed circle, shared between those who trust each other, and a subgroup within the Rabbit lifestyle that I never got to experience. The group holds open houses from time to time where they vet and accept new members who identify as male, often allowing visitors a glimpse at what they do, or new Rabbits a chance for an "in" to the workings of the circle. It's exclusive, though for a reason – much like the men in Schwalbe's (1999) study of the mythopoetic

men's movement I noted in Chapter 1, the men in their private circle at DR negotiate and repair their relationship to masculinity. Unlike Schwalbe's study, though, I can't speak beyond that as to how they conduct their sessions of self-help because I was never available to enter the group on the rare occasions when they opened it.

Instead, my knowledge comes from purposefully vague accounts of its members and the random guttural sounds I occasionally heard emanating from their meeting space as I passed by from time to time. The men's group is a safe space for passionate sharing and the release of emotion that the men of DR might have otherwise been socialized to bottle up in their life before being a Rabbit. There also exists a women's circle, the members of whom use the space to the similar ends of engaging their relationship to femininity, feminism, and the female body. As I identify as male, this was also not a part of DR I was able to experience, though like men's group one could pass by the building where the circle was taking place and hear variety of cathartic emotional sounds as the women of DR shared their frustrations and hopes with each other.

These two sub-groups are part of a larger component to the DR lifestyle ideal of egalitarianism that emphasizes restorative dialogue over any party prevailing over another in conflicts. These are mechanisms that Rabbits have developed to help manage the inevitable friction that comes with living in the close proximity of an IC. It is not a homogenous cult, nor the domain of a single charismatic authority who is the final arbiter of conflict. Instead, when conflict arises between members of the community there are many paths toward resolution. Rabbits may partake in the gender-divided support groups, approach the person they are in conflict with one-on-one, or ask for

help from the Conflict Resolution (CR) team. When the CR team steps in, it is with the consent of both parties in conflict, and they bring with them a whole host of conflict resolution tools with the goal of not just resolving the conflict, but coming out of the process with the two parties having a closer bond than before the conflict began.

As I will describe further in Chapter 4, DR relies on consensus decision-making for most things involving the whole group and for smaller sub-groups. In contrast to voting, where the majority gets 100% of what they want in each vote and the minority gets nothing, the goal of this decision-making style is for everyone involved with the process to get at least enough of they want to be comfortable with the decision. Instead of the democratic all-or-nothing practice, it is an egalitarian all-voices-are-heard-and-incorporated practice. The goal in consensus, as it is with the men's, group, women's group, conflict resolution team, and other egalitarian structures at DR, is to support the mission of the village and legitimize member Rabbits' choice to abide by the decisions of the group because they identify with those values and see group membership as supportive a shared goal. Conflict resolution and decision making can be arduously slow at DR, slower even than democratic processes, as with many groups founded on an egalitarian ideal. Yet, it ultimately leads to what Rabbits described to me as a far more fulfilling experience than with the activist groups they had been members of before moving to the village.

There is a lot of potential and actual difficulties in the Rabbit lifestyle, not the least being interpersonal conflict. It can be hard to live in a rural village of 40 people and not have a car or regular commute to other places. You see the same people day in

and day out, and as a Rabbit one is faced with only a few ways to handle this: take the steps to deepen relationships such that most other Rabbits eventually develop family-like bonds, become a hermit, or burn out and eventually leave. In the time I lived at DR I saw all three of these take place, and I was happy to leave on terms that didn't resemble that third option.

DR's stated goal is to become a village 10-20 times the size it is now. Such growth, I think, would require an evolution in the community's mechanisms of governance and a shift in its culture. Right now, everyone knows everyone else, though there are still cliques and sub-groups. But, they have already encountered issues with the community's size bumping up against the ways in which the goal of egalitarian decision-making is deployed. A few years before I came to the community they would gather weekly on Sundays, for what was later to become the "WIP" (week-in-preview) meeting, to hash out all the major decisions of the community through consensus. This proved to be not just tiring, but grinding for some and a source of membership attrition.

As Rabbits grew increasingly frustrated with these hours-long Sunday meetings that would sometimes take community business in to the night and peel people away from important community matters, it became increasingly pressing for the community to reevaluate the need for whole-community consensus. This is not an unusual problem either, as consensus decision making often bumps up against limits when group size grows. Kathleen Kinkade (1972), in autobiographing the Skinnerian-inspired Twin Oaks IC of the 1970s, wrote at the time that "...the decision-making group became defined as simply those people who were willing to put up with the slowness of consensus

procedure. Arguments could go on for hours, and there were other things to do,” (p. 53) yet “[a]s we find fault with them, we make changes to correct the faults and make the systems fit our situations better.” So, as Dancing Rabbit encountered their own problems and frustrations with reaching consensus with the full group, they opted to switch to a Village Council model of governance. Sparrow, in writing for the MemDem, describes its importance and functioning this way:

“The VC makes decisions on behalf of the community in lieu of full membership meetings and operates internally by consensus. Five people currently serve on the VC for a two-year term and the terms are staggered so that we elect new cos (co = gender neutral pronoun some of us use as a noun) every year. We had one full group plenary meeting to discuss slates of willing council members and will take two weeks of process time before coming back as a group to make a decision. With such a spectrum of Rabbit talents, many factors are considered in order to make up a holistic council for serving the community. For me, there feels an ease with the distribution of responsibilities to keep our village functioning.”

The VC also often works long hours, but at least their terms are limited, their roles rotated, and Rabbits have settled in to a more comfortable sense of progress under the new arrangement.

While I sadly I am unable to attend song circle or men’s group this evening, there is one final event happening later on that draws far more of the village’s population: a “no talent” show. It is held in the “Casa de Cultura,” a dance-studio style building that⁷⁹

was an endeavor of a former member who was emphatic about the arts. Though she is long gone, the Casa has become a common space (one Rabbits who desire to use it must pay fees to support) for not just these no-talent shows, but weekly yoga and meditation; workshops, meetings, small concerts from touring bands, and many other events.

At the no-talent show, one of the visitors goes first, busting out their guitar and bursting into song. Then, a communitarian from the neighboring Red Earth Farms does a short stand-up comedy set, satirically presenting commercials for local products from the various ICs in the area as though they were being advertised on television. Widder takes to the stage to do a penny-whistle duet with his 9-year-old daughter. And, in my favorite act, Cob dons a dress and a wig to act the part of “Mrs. Freud” – his imagined character of Sigmund Freud’s mother. He asks people to tell them to share their last night’s dream with him (err, her), and then interprets their meaning in hilarious fashion. Everyone laughs and has a good time, and there are no winners or losers among the performers.

From a morning that begins with hard physical labor, to an afternoon filled with meetings and emotional bonding, and finally an evening of entertainment and laughter, the Rabbit lifestyle contains many hallmarks of what most people might see in a mainstream life. The major difference is, of course, that it is carried out in relative geographic isolation with an invitation that others come and join in their effort to affect greater social and political change. It is done as a critique of that mainstream, with a notion that what they are doing is in some way a better path for humanity in terms of fulfilling individual needs and ensuring that our existence on Earth is sustainable. These

are like the claims of any IC, to have an answer to the nature and future of society.

While many ICs have claimed or do claim to have gotten their arrangement exactly right, however, DR presents itself as an “experimental” community rather than a perfected one.

Conclusion

The social movement node is a concept not inherently tied to the rhythms observed in the rise and fall of social movements, whose constituencies are more notably tied to the winds of political opportunity. Since the node is not contained to just that form, it is observably altered by the rhythms of everyday life and the lifestyle developed by the group. At DR, such rhythms are also strongly tied to the seasons and their effect on everyday lifestyle practices. The topic of weather, climate, and seasons is constantly on the lips of Rabbits, especially those who garden, farm, and husband animals, as a sudden change in weather or the slow move from rainy to dry season can have a significant impact on their livelihood. Alline, for example, wrote for the MemDem that “[a]s the weather gets springier, so do we — designing our gardens, starting seeds, and making our summer plans.” Lop, similarly and self-reflectively, wrote that “[i]f you’ve read more than a couple of these ecovillage updates, I’m truly sorry about the constant obsession with the weather. It’s very relevant here. And actually, I’m not sorry.”

At the end of the day, I lay my head down to rest back in the room I’m renting from Cob. The loud roar of birds from the morning is replaced with an almost-as-loud

din from the nighttime critters and insects. But, it's much easier to fall asleep to a constant rhythm from nature than to stay asleep when a new one emerges, so I am able to drift off right away after a long and busy day. Were this winter, as with the metaphor's alignment to this chapter, I would fall asleep and wake up to near silence because everything would be dead or hibernating. So too, does ecovillage life slow in pace with the season, and folks like myself find a relief in sleeping in. But the roots of the Rabbit lifestyle run deep, and under the frozen prairies they still sustain life that will continue to manifest in the more visible activity of activism, waiting also to spring forth with new outreach activities once spring comes around.

Chapter 3 – Spring: Recruitment and Collective Identity Processes

Introduction

The spring is a season of opportunity, where growth begins anew. Perennial plants push out new buds as it gets warmer, and seedlings pop out of their shells with the advent of moisture during the rainy season on the prairies. Life seems to all at once explode from a landscape before seemingly devoid of all life but the hardiest of evergreens, even though the potential was waiting there all winter. Likewise, as the days get warmer Rabbits gear up for a new season of recruitment in the hopes of expanding their vision in a social terrain full of contentious ideas and shifting landscapes of opportunity. Yet they do not aim to recruit people straight in to direct action, as with traditional SMOs, but rather in to the lifestyle of their social movement node which later becomes a stage for launching other forms of political engagement.

The social movement node is based upon a conscious cultivation of a collective identity, much like those identified in the New Social Movements. The constructed “we” of a collective identity is the first basis by which I argue for the overlap between the social movement node and other social movements in general, for it is the basis in which participants in the node come to define their grievances and situate political definitions within their shared lifestyle. Members of cultural movements, in contrast, often relate to collective ideas in their own way, constructing everyday practices in a way that makes sense to them as an individual rather than in tandem with an entire group. So, too, do many of those subject to the recruitment practices at DR come to the

village with cultural ambitions. But to fit in to the Rabbit lifestyle they must be willing to adapt those personal struggles in to a larger, shared matrix of common struggle.

Recruitment is key, but so is a filter that protects the group's identity-centered core beliefs and defining features. Dancing Rabbit utilizes processes of recruitment and retention to construct and defend a *collective identity* based in accommodating for personal and political concerns, and one characterized specifically by the values of egalitarianism and environmentalism as a focal point for a shared lifestyle.

The First Approach

Dancing Rabbit is hard to find unless one has a GPS or has been there before. No matter what direction one takes in to northeast Missouri, it requires leaving the interstate highways behind, then state highways, state roads, and finally the pavement for the last mile and a half as you crunch along the gravel up to the village. A colorful purple sign swirled in tie-dye style welcomes you, visitor, to park in the lot at the front of the village. Another sign insists that from this point onward, the road is for walking rather than driving.

Once you have parked and disembarked from your vehicle, the first sights are reminiscent of how society's collective imagination has captured a hippie commune: a garden along the path, leading to a fairly dilapidated shed on the right and a better maintained barn on the left which is covered in vibrant murals on three sides. Keep going, and you enter a courtyard with picnic tables and sun-powered outdoor ovens, which is clearly a place people gather to eat in. On your left and right, two-story living

structures stand reminiscent of Colonial architecture but different in a way that you can't quite put your finger on. The sound of a windmill whooshing can be heard somewhere in the distance. Ahead is a more conventional looking building covered on top with solar panels, and a path that continues forward.

If you're among the first in the warm season, you'll arrive at the same time that flower bulbs emerge and are beginning to push their stems up through the soil, while fruit trees are starting to bud. In the garden by the entrance you'll see some hardy greens planted in late winter that have already matured, and maybe some seedlings for warmer season veggies already poking up through the ground. In the spring, the ecovillage comes alive much in the way that nature does, with people emerging from a long hibernation in their homes spent doing computer work to start their gardens and various construction projects that will last over the next several warm months. Bees and butterflies flit through the flowers, and the animal rabbits bound about their warrens as the human Rabbits pull weeds and turn over soil.

You are unsure where to go, how to proceed and find the right person to talk to about your purpose for being in the village. This is the first hurdle that people face upon arrival to DR. Because it is a real village, a group of people all with jobs and daily chores they must attend to and not a tourist destination, there is no kiosk, no visitor's center, no guide to direct people where to go unless their arrival is part of a planned group. Yet, there are new people who arrive in scores every year, sometimes even daily, at the invitation of Rabbits, in order to experience that functioning village and the lifestyle that

is particular to DR. You will face several more hurdles to know where to go and who to talk to as your time at DR progresses, though they will vary based on why you've come.

There are only a couple of reasons one would be in this situation, arrived at the front of the village and unsure what comes next. First is for a weekend tour, which is the most cursory of visits and lasts only a few short hours. Tourists come from all over the country, and world, but just as often are locals from the region, curious about this strange place their friends talk about from time to time. Second is because they are more intrepid tourists come to stay at the bed and breakfast for a night or two. Third is if they have come as a personal guest of a Rabbit, often old friends of members come to reconnect or potential recruits they've met while traveling. Finally, there is the visitor program, which is a topic of discussion later in this chapter. This is the main vehicle of recruitment for new Rabbits, and a key means of defining the DR lifestyle both to visitors and Rabbits themselves.

You can't just show up at DR with no reason to be there, no invitation, and no scheduled tour to take. You'll be asked to leave. Rabbits guard their privacy zealously, even as they invite hundreds of people to see their village every year, because it is fleeting under such an arrangement. Rabbit Sparrow noted to me the importance of these two faces, saying "[i]t's a lot different to say we're going to live this way and we're going to be really insular, not going to open our doors, this is us and we're putting up the walls. But we don't, we live in this community, and we open up our doors six months out of the year and have sooo many people come through, probe at us, ask us these questions, and learn from us. It is hard to be under scrutiny, even when the

question comes off as light, it's still the questions that we're constantly being asked. I think the activist part is being the demonstration." Similarly, Aaron noted in a planning meeting for upcoming programs that "it is a form of activism to live the way we live. We have to have people coming here to make a difference." While they want to be on display as a "demonstration community," as Sparrow calls it, that exists in tension with the need to build and maintain existing interpersonal relationships, and having time for the introverts of the village to rest and recharge. This is illustrative of the node, where the everyday practices generate a Rabbit lifestyle, while at the same time their practices of outreach generate a political message and meaning to their everyday habits both for visitors and Rabbits themselves.

Imagine you're a person who keeps a prize-winning garden at their house, the best in the neighborhood. You win awards from the local garden club, who insist that part of winning is contingent that give workshops to aspiring gardeners on how you achieved such ornamental beauty where others have only lawn. People are interested in what you do, why you do it, and how they can do the same. Because you believe strongly in the importance of a good garden, and that everyone should have their own because it would be a better world if they did, you invite them to see and hear from you how you maintain your garden. Tours then come by all the time to see the lovely collection of flowers and trees you maintain. As an avid gardener, and someone who likes spreading the gospel of good pollinators or the aesthetic benefit to home values, you might relish such opportunities to evangelize to groups coming to your door to ask you about these topics that bring you passion. It is a defining feature of your life. It is

not important to just have a garden, you think, but to agitate for others to have a supportive environment for gardening. Local city codes should remove barriers to gardening, and maybe people should even get special incentives to do the right thing and plant their yard with something other than grass.

Then strangers start coming by your house to take pictures at random hours, often when you're not home. Others will see you working to maintain your beautiful yard and step across it to come and ask you questions unsolicited and unwelcomed. They will then be taken aback by your rebuff that you're busy and not available to answer questions, nor do you want to because maintaining such a yard requires you to stop answering questions and get to work on it more often than not. Pretty soon, your prior evangelism gives way to a constant random deluge of questions from all types, from the passionate uninitiated to the random curious. *This, you think, is not the reason I picked up gardening - I want to get others to do it, but not if it's something I can no longer enjoy.*

Rabbits find themselves in such a state. They want visitors, even new Rabbits. They want to spread their own message of sustainable and egalitarian community, have other ICs emerge following their example, and even see structural changes that are born out of their set of ideals. Yet they also want to live their lives and have some privacy from time to time. Being the curious center of attention is great for spreading a gospel, but it's also difficult to turn off without setting boundaries around its availability.

Such is the curious and paradoxical nature of integrating lifestyle with activism. In order to be an effective agent of social change, a group needs their message to

spread, and more people to be activated or brought in to the fold of their ideological leanings and practices. When that activism involves someone's daily habits, preferences, and choices, it's no wonder that members of that movement would put up notably significant barriers to entry. Inviting someone in to your lifestyle is like inviting someone in to your garden – a carefully developed and maintained arrangement - only in this case the home is a place of radical transformation and sociopolitical action. They may trample your ideals and practices, as much as someone may trample flowers and seedlings underfoot, often with good but misplaced intentions.

This chapter outlines the various ways in which Rabbits have erected barriers to entry in their village and lifestyle, and how they use boundary maintenance tactics to both protect their own personal spheres as well as the integrity of their mission as an intentional community. I examine two major aspects of the Rabbit lifestyle which contribute to the development of a collective identity at DR: the visitor program, with four major barriers it presents, and candid discussions about poop. Potential recruits are run through a program that communicates "we do this at DR" and that there are a narrow range of behaviors and preferences one has to conform to in order to fit in. The phrase "we do this at DR" is my own creation to summarize how the Rabbits work to communicate the boundaries of their shared life style, and not a common saying of the village. While rabbits want people to join in order to increase the size and effectiveness of their organization, they simultaneously guard the integrity of their lifestyle through some exclusionary practices that result in the construction of a collective identity around their shared lifestyle.

Collective Identity

The ecovillage is peculiar - not just by a general standard of any generic observer, but in the worldviews of most any urban- or suburban-ite that comes to witness their lifestyle. It is also a foreign body even to their neighbors in rural, deeply Christian and conservative northeast Missouri. Yet it isn't built to be an island paradise in a sea of deep political redness, nor is it adrift of the norms of US mainstream culture in contrast to many of the retreatist ICs of past and present. Rather, the village and the participants in its lifestyle are actively engaged in creating a collective identity in dissent to, and in conversation with, those predominating cultural positions. Rabbits are not isolationists, but rather style themselves as innovators, which leads to their distinctiveness as a group. As Ergas notes in her study of an urban ecovillage, "[e]covillagers simultaneously live in the ecovillage and the larger society, thus, local laws, economy, and prevailing ideologies within the dominant society affect ecovillagers, and vice versa." (Ergas 2010, p. 33) Many historical and present day ICs are conversely, isolationist, making their claims about the nature and future of society in a microcosm amongst themselves. This is not the case for a social movement node like DR (or the ecovillage in Ergas' study), where direct engagement with the rest of society is part and parcel of the Rabbit lifestyle.

Here I take the term "collective identity" from social movement literature, where it implies a set of characteristics that create a shared sense of belonging to a group, the same characteristics which distinguish that group from others and are a fulcrum

supporting efforts at change. Melucci notes that collective identities “...contribute to the formation of a more or less stable ‘we’ by rendering common and laboriously negotiating and adjusting at least three orientations: the *goals* of their action; the *means* to be utilized; and the *environment* within which their action takes place.” (1989, P. 26) They are, more than anything, a way of identifying with the group, and disidentifying the group from others.

A collective identity is distinguished through at least several features (Taylor and Whittier 1999): the use of boundaries, which construct a positive identity for the group; consciousness, which is an interpretive framework for defining common interests of struggle; and negotiation points, which are the ways in which activists resist negative social definitions characterizing their participation in the movement. For analysis at the movement-wide level, this is useful for understanding how movements grow, recruit, maintain, and eventually die. Often such identities are built around one or more collective grievances, which, through attaining the desired changes, are expected to lead to greater self-actualization and quality of life for the collection of individuals affected. They are also fluid, as the needs of the group change and their grievances shift to meet their needs or the environment in which claims are made.

For example, collective identity is often invoked when speaking of the Women’s movement. In that collective exists a fairly diverse set of individual standpoints and concerns related to quality of life and self-actualization for the collectively imagined group. In practice mainstream feminists and radical lesbian activists are often imagined as part of the same group when planning direct actions or building institutions and

recruiting members to support the movement, while more realistically there are wide differences in what self-actualization looks like between the two groups, and they are bedfellows of practicality. They have traditionally had enough in common to make cooperative, rather than competing, claims against a straight, cis status quo, though as Taylor and Whittier (1999) note that the lesbian feminist contingent do not tend to organize through formal SMOs the way that mainstream feminists do. Of course, one need not be holding a sign and chanting, lobbying their elected representative, nor collecting petition signatures to pose a challenge of identity.

To imply that all people identify within the alphabet soup of a homogenous “women’s movement” group would be folly - a failure to recognize the many individual standpoints that contribute to a bigger grievance with enough in common to be comfortable sharing a group identity. Yet, movements arise from communities that sustain common cultural meaning among a collective group (Taylor and Whittier 1992, Staggenborg 1998). Likewise, all ecovillages and all ecovillagers are not the same, and not all members of a social movement node perceive their shared lifestyle through the same lens. I use the idea of collective identity rather specifically here, as explaining a Rabbit lifestyle, for a couple of reasons. First is that this study is an ethnography of one small group, rather than the entire movement of intentional communities - a discussion which would warrant its own wider comparative set of data because each IC has its own mission and claims.

Second is that, as Poletta and Jasper (2001) note, collective identity has been forced to do a lot analytically in the study of social movements. As they note, we

should be wary of using the idea of collective identity as representing either only the individual *or* the group. Collective identities are not conterminous with individual identities, as individuals move between collectives in space and time, and groups change to recruit or expel members with certain characteristics. As I describe in Chapter 5, Rabbits are members of myriad other social movement organizations outside of their affiliation with the social movement node that is DR. Not every member of a social movement community, organization, or node is always easily roused to collective action, even if they share the same cultural practices that make for a decipherable collective identity.

We all belong to a great many groups, whether they be through self-identification or claims made by others. Members of Ergas' urban ecovillage "...actively create a collective identity through a process that includes generating a collective vision by agreeing on common values, establishing goals, and converting them into action." (2010, p. 33) Similarly, my ethnographic encounter with DR leads me to conclude that they have successfully constructed a collective identity that functions simultaneously as a group of individuals each with their own characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors, and a lifestyle with enough in common to set clear boundaries between who belongs in the group and who does not.

Setting Boundaries

The Visitor Program

Collective identities are distinguished by how groups set boundaries and act together. This chapter is written in the interest of demonstrating how Rabbits set boundaries around their lifestyle through what I describe as "what we do this at DR," and introducing the reader to some basic aspects of the village in the same order that most people who visit come learn about them. The further one reads in to this work, the more complicated their understanding of the village should become, just as living in the village longer will bear continual revelation about the complexities of it.

While there are visitors of all stripes that come to DR, those that are most interested in the message tend to appear as part of the *visitor program*. This is a 2-3 week intensive boot camp designed to be fully immersive of the ecovillage experience. This was the first deep exposure I had to the village, when I came as part of the program in 2014 to see if a longer study was possible let alone something I could endure. The prospect of moving to a rural community with notably different norms than I was used to warranted a pilot, and I also needed to touch base initially in order to build contacts within the community and have reason and means to return for a more in-depth study.

Participants in this program come from all over the country, and even other countries on rare occasions. They have to fill out a lengthy form with questions ranging in complexity from "How did you hear about DR?" and "What do you hope to get out of the experience?" to "What experience do you have with consensus-based decision

making?" whose completed form is then sent to the entire community for appraisal¹¹.

According to Danielle, who coordinated the visitor program while I lived there, the program seldom gets such an abundance of candidates that the community needs to be picky about who they choose to let in. Usually, the form itself works as a fastidious initial barrier for the unserious.

Visitors arrive in groups of 12-15, some bringing children, some camping and some staying at the bed and breakfast; some young, some old, and some dirt poor while some are middle class; few rich and few not white¹². Beyond that, the diversity of the visitors spirals outward. In my program, there were two Navy Veterans, a film engineer from Italy, the owner of a small solar energy firm from Canada, a software engineer, and an Anthropology professor, among other backgrounds.

Because we had a reason to be there, and because they are told to arrive in a certain range of hours on a certain day, there was a Rabbit there to greet us, show us our accommodations, and tell us when and where to find dinner than evening. My field notes during my pilot project to the village as a visitor belie a great deal of confusion and feelings of being overwhelmed. I'm not sure these feelings were by intentional on the part of Rabbits but more likely rather simply from my lack of familiarity for the region, the building styles, and the people - in other words, the trepidation of first arrival seems less likely a barrier by design than an unavoidable culture shock. I don't

¹¹ See Appendix B for the full form.

¹² The demographics are discussed further in Appendix A

know where I am, I don't know any of these people, and other than the protein bars I brought with me in case of emergency, I don't know what I'm going to eat. It's all in the hands of these strangers who live in an unfamiliar way.

It was interesting, then, during my residency at the village the following year, to witness subsequent waves of visitors (an average of 5 groups per year) as part of the full project from my position as observer. The looks on their faces of wonder and amusement, and certainly confusion, very closely approximated my initial feelings, and what I certainly must have looked like. That mix of excitement, confusion, and eagerness seemed to be incumbent to the first experience one has with the visitor program. After the visitors arrive and find their accommodations, some wander the village for a time, or stick trepidatiously to the front courtyard for fear of getting lost. Of course, the next day they'll take a tour and discover that getting lost is nearly impossible, given the size and layout of the village.

One mix of feelings gives way to another, or more of the same but to fluctuating degrees, as dinner time descends upon the village. Visitors are brought to one of the several kitchen co-ops, where they are fed by one of the Rabbits who make a spectacle of the meal provided that night. On my first night, the meal was prepared by Sparrow, who produced a "nettle-strone" soup: a minestrone variant that included the leaves of the local foragable stinging nettle and various root vegetables. We formed a circle, held hands, and sang a simple non-denominational song of grace before digging in. It was one of the best meals I had ever eaten in my life! Perhaps it was the wild emotions I

was feeling, or a deep sense of the need to be accepted, but the soup left me warmed and full.

From the other side, though, I saw how this was an informal barrier to entry. Much of life at DR revolves around food - growing it, obtaining it, cooking it, preserving it, composting it, and discussing the comparative ethics of what one eats are all components of the visitor program in various ways. Could the visitors stomach unfamiliar foods, or ones prepared in a perhaps more austere way than they were used to? Rabbit chefs are very accommodating of common dietary restrictions like gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, or vegan, but this was also rather easy because so many meals were based on simple grains, beans, and an agglomeration of whatever other vegetables were on hand or cheapest to acquire. I watched visitor groups subsequent to my own eat meals much leaner or simpler than I regularly saw on my plate as a resident, and observed the same in many of the other kitchen co-ops. Of course some people at DR *do* eat quite the lean diet: Oliver (who often dined alone), for example, lived many a day subsisting on Nutella and toast, or oatmeal with raisins, while the Webeloes kitchen co-op fluxuated between enormous feasts of fowl when it was time to slaughter their chicken flock and rice and beans in the time between when the roots cellars started to run low before Spring harvests. In contrast, the Milkweed Mercantile kitchen co-op (discussed more in Chapter 3), which was integrated in to the bed and breakfast, regularly had meat, exotic imported or unseasonal fruits and vegetables, and other fancy fares because they often had to accommodate guests of the business who

were not interested in becoming new Rabbits, only curious about seeing it for a night or two.

Some of the lean-ness of visitor meals comes from the challenge of cooking for so many people at once, but moreover they reflected food ethics of DR. Quite simply, the meals that visitors received reflected meals atypical of many Rabbits but nonetheless meals that they should expect to be ok consuming as a Rabbit themselves. Once, when I was entrusted with cooking for visitors, I reached for the jar of dried shitake mushrooms only to be told that those were too expensive an ingredient to be feeding them despite being something we regularly consumed in the co-op I ate in. Thus, that first meal is a "we do this at DR" barrier that posed to visitors this question: *can you eat like us?* The answer, quite often, was no. As the program proceeded, visitors often found that the lack of meat and overabundance of beans led to uncomfortable digestion, or they balked at the unfamiliar homemade fermented foods the Ironweed kitchen produced, among other mealtime concerns.

Meat and more familiar ingredients are never very far or necessarily difficult to acquire at DR. The on-farm grocery store (run out of a converted shipping container by one of the Rabbits) contains all the staples one could possibly need: gravity bins that dispense the dried bulk foods visitors were used to and rabbits regularly refilled, refrigerators full of organic butter and tofu; and freezers containing meat produced on-farm and a farming neighbor. All of these products, produced to organic or near-organic standards, were pricier than what one would conventionally find in that part of the

country due to the emphasis on quality. Thus, most Rabbits opted for the beans and grains that are more filling per dollar than the expensive meats.

If they care to venture farther, visitors can find a local Mennonite-owned grocery store colloquially called Zim's (short for Zimmerman's) in the town of Rutledge two miles away that carries much more of the conventional groceries. But visitors be warned: informal sanctions await those who drive there. Walking and biking are the only acceptable modes of transportation you should use during the visitor session at DR unless an absolute need appears. Visitors are reminded such behavior isn't indicative of what Rabbits do, and that if they need to go to town they should walk or bike, and at a minimum make sure their car is fully loaded to maximize the use value of burning fossil fuels. Besides, why would you want to go to town when there's so much still to explore in the village? Alyssa recalled that a former Rabbit in a previous year publicly called out at a communal dinner, by name, some visitors for using their personal vehicles to get about during the program. While she noted that it was unusual to do such public shaming, most Rabbits politely suggest alternatives to driving if they hear a visitor is planning to do so.

Most visitors do go, though, and most avoid the chiding by walking there. Meat eaters find satiation at the greasy spoon diner attached to the grocery (a place I started to frequent after a couple months), while others just go to explore another unfamiliar place while they have the chance. Indeed, DR is located in the middle of Mennonite country, and so exploring the grocery also means exploring Mennonite habits. A sign hangs in a window by the entrance reminding customers that women "should be

dressed appropriately" (read: long pants, sleeves and no cleavage showing, per their conservative standards), indicating that the Mennonites, too, have their own group barriers they wish to enforce. Other norms are on display there, such as older Mennonites speaking pidgin Dutch to each other, traditional drab long sleeve and pant garb; and the separation of gender in work roles with women running the diner and grocery while men run the warehouse in back.

Rabbits frequent Zim's quite a bit, and more than they let on to the visitors. Every time I went for lunch, I inevitably ran in to other Rabbits there, coming or going. Many of the Rabbits are on food stamp assistance, and since Zim's accepts that form of payment while the grocery store on farm doesn't (or didn't in my time there), even Rabbits that grow their own food will travel to town to buy staples they can't grow themselves like flour, sugar, and grains. Others will sell what they grow, use food stamps to get more food, and then invest the money earned from agriculture in to other projects - not exactly what one pictures a sustainable community to be, though nonetheless an effective method of bringing more money in to, and helping circulate it around, the community.

But for visitors, to journey regularly to Zim's was to miss out on the ecovillage experience offered by the program. And, to miss out on the experience is to communicate that, as a visitor, you're not ready to take the next step toward becoming a Rabbit. Therefore, while not strictly prohibited, going to Zim's as a mealtime escape was prohibitive of future chances for becoming a Rabbit. If the diet of the visitor program seems austere, it is only because Rabbits want to prepare visitors for how they

might live as a rabbit. And if visitors can endure the flatulence brought on by adjusting to the Rabbit diet, there are plenty of other challenges in the program as well.

One is work parties, which vary in intensity and nature. Visitors assist on various everyday projects that would take place in the village regardless of their presence, which fall in to two types: feeding the village and building the village. The former is a lot of gardening work like weeding, planting, harvesting, shoveling dirt, and repairing fences. It's work that most Rabbits do regularly to some extent, since almost all of them have at least some garden space. Often this work also entails picking ingredients that will later be used in their meals.

The latter is more varied, as are the building needs of the village. When I was a visitor, my group participated in a "cob-stomping party," which required us to take off our shoes and dance flat-footedly on a mix of water, clay, sand, and straw to mix them together for use as a building material for a house in progress. Other visitors were tasked with distributing an enormous pile of woodchips across the footpaths of the village, sorting and stacking firewood, moving very large logs through a team effort, and, perhaps most spectacularly, participating in controlled prairie burns.

Rabbits often have these same build-the-village work parties as a community, though not as often as visitors are tasked to participate in. The work parties emplace a couple-of-times-per-year practice in the community as a couple-of-times-per-week practice for the visitors. Rather than being about the spirit of communalism and the willing spirit of helping one's neighbor or the commons as a means of eventually helping one's self, which is how they manifest in community-wide builds, they are more a

grueling trial of physical labor meant to dissuade the less physically fit or less willing from moving to DR, as they would be less likely to build a garden, build a structure, or contribute in other ways to the manual labor necessary to maintaining the village. The spirit of a metaphorical good ol' fashioned barn raisin' infects the village every now and again, but from the perspective of a visitor it's something they are expected to participate in near daily. The not-so-subtle message embodied by the work parties is *you need to be able to work this hard to live here*, even as the amount of arduous physical labor performed varies widely among Rabbits.

Another challenge placed before visitors is the many workshops they are expected to attend. These cover both the formal aspects of the village, like the complex egalitarian governance structures described in Chapters 4, and the informal aspects like bonding through private emotional circles, described in Chapter 2. Each session is run by a Rabbit who specializes more in the given area, though I witnessed an often-rotating cast in many of them.

The details of the institutions and practices these workshops I leave to their respective places in other chapters, as they warrant a lot more depth of description. Those discussions, too, are incomplete in their own way as the norms and practices of DR are immensely complicated and the purpose of this work is not in describing what they all are to the finest detail, but how they function to create a unique activist lifestyle. Visitors in the program, though, are subjected to a whirlwind of information that communicates said complexity in a few short weeks despite it being impossible to learn in such a time frame. Even after all the time I spend at DR, I am still only

moderately confident in my ability to explain in full depth how the governance structures work, though I am more far more confident in my ability to describe and interpret the social processes.

The workshops, then, represent a fourth barrier to entry because they communicate that in addition to physical labor, strenuous emotional and mental labor are also expected. Among these workshops include ones on the local alternative currency (ELMS, described in Chapter 4), consensus decision making, the covenants and guidelines (which are listed in Appendix B), permaculture, and something called "inner sustainability" that covers the co-counseling and emotional support techniques deployed by Rabbits.

If a visitor could transcend all of the other barriers placed in the path to Rabbinhood, they faced a final challenge: finding a host. As noted above, someone needs to have a reason to be at DR, and a person without a reason is asked to leave. When the visitor program comes to an end, so does a visitor's reason for being there. Many of the visitors are ready when that time comes to move on, having gathered a wealth of new experiences but also ready to return to their jobs, air-conditioned buildings, and flush toilets. Others who wish to stay will ask a Rabbit they've befriended to sponsor them in staying long, while they either try to get more of the same experience, or figure out the logistics of applying for residency.

Despite the trials faced in the program, visitors more often than not left with a cheery attitude, having made friends and tried new things. But, most of them felt the change to a Rabbit lifestyle would be too big for them to manage. The barriers raised by

the program are not intended to make people hate the village, but rather more clearly perceive the boundaries of the Rabbit identity.

The barriers established by the visitor program - its form, the food, work parties, workshops, and finding a host - thus charge the visitor program with a second purpose: even when visitors were not turned in to new Rabbits, they embraced at least a few aspects of the experience and decided to bring some of the norms and practices back home with them. And, as Angora notes in the MemDem, the exchange is a two way street because she finds herself "wondering who will come, what we'll learn from them, and what kind of impact we'll have on their lives." Loren said that she has "a strong interest in meeting all the visitors who come in - to engage them because these people are here to do more good and live better than how they could. If they're looking for footing and connections to move here, I try to help them find those more easily."

For those still want to stick around, finding a host is the means of continuing to have a reason to be at DR. Typically, for someone able to transcend all the previous barriers, finding a host is the easiest of the barriers. When a visitor finds a host they become a guest of that Rabbit, much like the guests that Rabbits host on a more temporary basis, except with the understanding that this form of guesthood will eventually lead to Rabbithood. The host is someone willing to take responsibility for the actions of the visit, essentially to "vouch" for them as someone who is compatible enough with the community to continue staying there. The path to Rabbithood is long, as visitors become residents, and then eventually member Rabbits where they shed the need for a host, over the course of at least a full year.

Poop Talk

Visitors and guests, warned in advance, arrive to find facilities that are expected yet not at all something they could fully anticipate. Most of them come from a world of flush toilets, where you simply push a lever to remove the products of digestion and other unwanted substances with a satisfying *whoosh*. But at DR there are no flush toilets, no satisfying whoosh, and certainly no "unwanted substances" that would normally be speedily carried away.

The community's covenant (see Appendix B) that "waste disposal systems at Dancing Rabbit shall reclaim organic and recyclable materials" means *all* organic materials get saved and reused, whether that be rotting wooden beams from an older structure, food scraps, chicken feathers after their slaughter and, yes, even human waste. This is humanure, also known as "humey," and it is an often shocking yet significant practice that Rabbits use as a means of testing potential members' readiness to accept the lifestyle of DR while weeding out the warier, more urbane candidates. Most people are uncomfortable talking about poop, let alone encountering new and unfamiliar ways of doing it. The poop talk of DR is perhaps the most significant initial barrier to entry in to Dancing Rabbit - lots of people are turned away almost immediately, and ask where they can find a "real toilet," to be told that the nearest one is nearly two miles away, in town at Zim's.

And it's not just the practice that is intended to create such boundaries and hurdles, but Rabbits' willingness to talk about it with new arrivals. Everybody poops,

and so when the question inevitably comes up about where to go, the Rabbit guiding the tour or orienting the visitors will explain, often in great detail, how their humey system works: there are buckets all over DR, many in private residences, some in outdoor outhouses, and two in the Common House where people do their business. Most often, these buckets will have a seating apparatus built around them to make it easier to sit on like a conventional toilet. After one has relieved themselves, there is toilet paper to wipe and sawdust to scoop on top of it to reduce the odor through desiccation and hide the turd from the next person to use it. When the buckets are full, their owner will transport the contents to the "humey bins" several hundred yards outside the borders of the village, dump and rinse them out, and then return them to their apparatus.

This would seem unsanitary to most. After all, common sense (and plenty of science) tells us that human feces carry and support loads of bacteria that bear many potential risks to the humans that poop them out. This is why we have modern plumbing structures in the first place, to prevent outbreaks of feces-borne diseases. But no one at DR has ever gotten sick from the practice, at least not to the best of their knowledge. The careful application of sawdust, the considered distance between the piles and the village, and careful study of compost maintenance has all but removed any vestige of worry about sanitation in the humey method. This knowledge has worked to assuage many, but not all, of the safety concerns inherent in non-flushing waste solutions. Many visitors tire of their anxiety around the lack of flush toilets quickly, and leave for more porcelain pastures.

Those that stay receive a healthy dose of poop talk. In my experience of DR, it was more than just a practice to promote sustainability: it was a defining characteristic of whether someone was ready to commit to the DR lifestyle. Visitor groups inevitably contained a few who were curious about the practice and asked about it with an open and eager mind, and a similar few who had experienced humey previously. Since the early days of the visitor program are typically packed full of daily seminars and work parties, their first opportunity to ask about it was often at meals, and Rabbits were ready to answer. If a visitor could stomach talking about what was going to happen on the other end with their food as they were consuming it, that was taken as a positive sign that they would be a good fit and potential recruit.

Even when visitors were not around, poop talk was common. It could happen at any hour of the day, but most commonly I experienced poop talk at meal times since that's when people most often gathered in groups to discuss their daily concerns. The rotating responsibility of emptying shared buckets led to constant checking as to whether the appropriate person had done their chore in a timely fashion, lest there be no where to poop when the time came. Also, maintenance of the humey piles was always a topic of concern as the eventual application of the "rested" (fully composted) remains was not yet a settled topic. Should we use it on gardens? Even many Rabbits weren't comfortable with that. For the time being the only settled use was silviculture, fertilizing trees planted by Rabbits across the land and for a variety of purposes, though mainly for landscape restoration . There also followed many discussions about what pooping in a bucket meant in the context of the Rabbit lifestyle, either boosting visitors

who successfully integrated in to the humey system or lightly knocking those who hadn't, and answering the questions of those who were unsure how to feel.

For those passing through, with no intention of a full-time engagement in the lifestyle, there did exist an exception to the buckets: the composting toilets at the bed and breakfast. While these did not flush, they were much closer to conventional toilets, with the human waste disappearing in to a dark abyss (rather than a two foot tall bucket) as it fell to the commercial apparatus specially installed in their cellar. Since the bed and breakfast was designed to accommodate travelers and short term guests, and was not open more than a few hours a day to the general population, the toilets there didn't represent a viable alternative to any potential Rabbit hoping to avoid the bucket. The guests of the bed and breakfast – those typically not candidates for becoming Rabbits - were allowed a reprieve from the norms of pooping in a bucket, and later emptying it in to the humey pile. Thus, the boundary of pooping in a bucket as a lifestyle practice was firmly established as a norm for those wishing to become Rabbits, rather than anyone and everyone who visited.

Who They Want and Don't

There's nothing in particular that makes for the "right" ecovillager or right kind of Rabbit. Certainly, there are desirable characteristics for any prospect and a pledge one must make to adhere to community standards in their behavior. It helps if one is already primed with knowledge of consensus decision making or comes to the village looking to participate in egalitarian decision making, or committed to environmentalism

and can poop in a bucket without a second thought. These sorts of considerations belie the necessity of a “consciousness” listed as central to the formation of a collective identity by Whittier and Taylor (1999). The environmental and egalitarian inspirations behind the visitor program and poop talk as barriers to entry are essential to showing recruits what points of struggle and self-identity they need to come to the village with, or be willing to develop as a consequence of joining.

In my time there, a set of circumstances converged to add a new desirable characteristic and, therefore, a new group boundary. One circumstance was an increasingly out of balance gender ratio. This is something that was the subject of frequent debate - a previous standard had been set that the village would allow no more than 60% of one gender in the village, and the population was coming precariously close to 60% male. The fears, shared among some men and women of the village, was that too much of an imbalance would make future recruitment of women more difficult and relationships between genders in the villages more difficult to navigate were there to be a clear minority. So the prevailing rule was to not allow new men to start living in the village once that magic 60% threshold was reached, and put them on a wait list until the gender balance evened out. From my position as a researcher, this was problematic for a simple reason: my presence as a male contributed to the imbalance.

The opposite fear, to which a more vocal separate bloc spoke to, was the problems inherent in limiting entry by gender. For some, this was obviously a discriminatory practice. From a legal standpoint, such a barrier to entry would certainly fail any challenge in court, and the Rabbits did not want to have to endure such a trial.

For another, some saw this policy as wrapped up too much in cisgender heteronormativity. What of agender or transgender individuals? What if a male-male same sex couple wanted to live there together, but one was barred because they would tip the gender balance too far? This group of critics also noted that masculinity and femininity are difficult things to quantify, especially among their pool of potential recruits, and therefore were bad measures to set quotas on. In the end, the debate bore little fruit and was settled without having to address the policy in a significant way. Danielle, who managed the visitor program, started having an all-female visitor session every year, and that helped push the numbers back towards the desired equilibrium through proactive rather than prohibitive means.

The second circumstance was a period of stalking and an attempted sexual assault against a Rabbit by a former visitor who was staying as a long-term guest. This incident took place in between two of the lengths of time I spent at the village, yet was a topic of intensive reflection on more than one occasion I witnessed. The guest, who was going through a divorce, made romantic advances on many of the women in the village in sequence and was spurned by each. In growing frustration, he eventually tried to use physical force on one of the women, calling them "teases" for talking openly about sexuality but not openly offering sex. Since this is a rather sensitive topic and incident, I won't share which Rabbit this happened to, but it should suffice to say that the community was rattled that they could let someone in to the midst who was capable of doing such a thing.

The gender imbalance and sexual assault are two salient events for analyzing the process of collective identity formation and re-formation. In addition to the barriers erected through the visitor program's "we do this at DR" mantra, the village faced, in my time of observation, a watershed period for establishing their village as supportive of women as a centrally defining trait, both in the village and in general. As a result of these two events, the aforementioned all-women's visitor group was established, a question was added to the visitor form that reads "What does feminism mean to you?", a section on feminism was added to their website, and many people began calling DR a feminist ecovillage rather than an unqualified ecovillage moniker. Rae, reflecting on this, said "I've lived in a feminist ecovillage for three years now and I actually don't know what the word feminist means. I don't really know much of anything about feminism, but then when I hear my neighbors talking about it I'm like 'yeah, that's so outrageous when so and so does that'...I'm getting to learn what feminism is through an experiential example of it instead of looking it up or going to class and studying it. Now we're forming a group that going to meet and discuss this, so I get a lot of support from my community to talk about important social issues."

The barriers to entry are significant, but that is only because Rabbits value and zealously guard their unique lifestyle as a claim to the nature and future of society. Sparrow, using a public meeting called by the coordinator of the visitor program that sought to garner feedback on it, echoed this sentiment and preached that "...DR is a gated community. We decide who gets in based on our covenants and guidelines." Yet, she also felt a sense of increasing vulnerability after the assault occurred in the village:

that even though she knew all her neighbors, an emerging sense of anxiety had begun to creep up in her life when seeing an darkness-obscured silhouette on the paths at night where before she could simply assume it was a friend. She expressed that her metaphor was borne out of the concern that other people should see that gate as something they could close for undesirable people, for those unable to fully embrace a feminist aspect to the Rabbit lifestyle.

Feminism as an explicit value at DR didn't emerge out of nothing from these two events - pretty much everybody at DR would self-identify with some brand of feminism if asked about their beliefs. Yet, it lingered in the background as a shared set of beliefs not enumerated clearly by the group as a whole. Here we see the interface between individual and group that the concept of collective identity is designed to capture in this chapter: many individual standpoints and worldviews converge to form a boundary shared by the group. This boundary is nebulous enough to get all the group members on board with it, while still being distinct enough to separate the group from the larger society (and even other ICs). The boundaries of collective identity, once they become clearly articulated, then become barriers to entry in the community. In my time there, an active self-identification with the label of “feminist” became one such articulation.

Conclusion

In the spring, the village opens up to outsiders the way a blooming flower opens its corolla to reveal the beautiful petals contained within and attracting the pollinators necessary for survival and reproduction. Indeed, just as the flower needs to open up to

pollinators in order to reproduce and ensure the survival of the species, so too does the village need a consistent stream of visitors coming through to exchange ideas and information with. Not every species pollinator interacts with every kind of flower, though. Likewise, there are points where the shared framework of a collective identity that is expressed in the common Rabbit lifestyle serves as a filter for who they want as new Rabbits and who they don't.

As people complete the visitor program, they spread the ideas they encountered to the places they return after leaving: ideas about living in more sustainable, egalitarian arrangements. That is the more notable function of recruitment: to fulfill the mission of influencing others. Sure, Rabbits would be quite delighted to see a flood of new members join the village. Their stated goal, after all, is to grow to be 500-1,000 people. But in order for the village to continue functioning as they bring in potential new Rabbits, and in order to ensure that their lifestyle continues to exist as a means of agitation and medium for engaging social and political change, they enact barriers to entry. Few who visit end up moving to DR, and of those who do many are usually gone within a year.

Some end up becoming donors, which helps the village in a very tangible way. They exist as part of a larger support network that has formed around the village, mostly as digital collaborators who support the ideals of DR and work to implement such practices in small ways in their own lives. Others leave disenchanted, and often early, from the program, and return home questioning whether they were right to come in the first place. The latter are often more put off by the difference between what they were

expecting to experience and what they actually encountered. At one point, Sparrow related to me that "[w]e're pretty capitalistic, and that actually turns some people off when they come here" because they are expecting a more communal, income sharing experience rather than one where everyone must manage their own economic fate. Many times I heard from visitors that they were excited to see what life was like "off the grid" only to find that, while DR does produce much of their own electricity and capture much of their own water on site, they are nonetheless hooked up to the "grid" for the baseline provision of such commodities.

There are a whole host of barriers that turn people away to differing degrees. The initial confusion, visitor program's diet, work parties, and workshops, as well as the poop talk and ideological alignments, represent significant barriers to entry erected to protect the collective identity of the village that supports its ends as part of a social movement node. Few people end up actually hating the village experience, and most find that they just can't live up to threshold of "we do this at DR" and instead pivot to use their visit as a learning experience for their own lives as part of the larger community surrounding the node. For the Rabbits' part, they are engaged in a continuous struggle to balance the outreach component that brings potential new Rabbits to the village with the self-actualization part of their lifestyle. One October evening over dinner, Lop told me that he was glad the visitor sessions for the year had ended, because that meant he could retreat from being social and more fully embrace his nature as an introvert. While he also loved the spring, he did so because of the stimulated growth in nature, and not the influx of people to the village.

A community is typically a group of people who self-identify with a particular belief, background, and shared history. In this, the community that is DR spans far more than those who live just in the village. It includes the many allies and friends Rabbits have acquired over the years but who decided that the barriers of "we do this at DR" were too tough for them to climb, yet they could still support in spirit or financially. Yet, those contacts and connections between people who didn't end up becoming Rabbits and the Rabbits themselves form stems connected to the node where the cultural and political claims meet in a shared activist lifestyle. This overlap is something that the next two chapters will continue to elaborate and expand upon.

A social movement typically contains a permanently working population of activists who continue to agitate in lull periods between when issues rise to prominence and fade away (McAdam 2010, Staggenborg and Taylor 2005). Rabbits represent such a permanent class of engaged individuals, working to build an alternative model that someday may be taken up en masse or may spill over in to other venues for sociopolitical change at the height of a cycle. Yet, because Rabbits maintain their permanent activism through lifestyle, they represent a node that makes their cycles look less like waves or cycles because they more regular, more predictable, more permanent and more clearly tied to everyday practices than to shifting political opportunity.

Chapter 4 – Summer: Prefiguring a Better World Through Dancing

Rabbit's Alternative Institutions

Introduction

In the summer, the prairies of northeast Missouri strain wildly upward, with grasses reaching seemingly beyond their capacity to stay upright. They suck every last bit of moisture from the soil in yearning growth as the abundant rains of spring typically transition to oppressive dry heat with only the occasional summer storm. The flora of the plains also grows downward, left, and right, often around and over each other in frenetic competition for resources. Yet, there is also a symbiosis between the plants and their environment that, historically, led to deeply rich organic soils in this region. Underneath the seeming chaos and messiness of the prairie landscape that the casual observer would see is instead a shifting series of opportunities for the various grasses and trees.

So too are social movements often intertwined and clambering over each other for scarce resources or take advantage of moments of political opportunity. They produce moments – some historically longer than others – of cohesion and dominance on the landscape when the conditions are right for their growth. Other times the confluence of conditions are right for another movement to dominate the political landscape, and so on as the complex array of possible constituencies and collective identities fluctuate in importance and need. Yet, perennial plants go through a longer

life cycle, as their deep root systems sustain them in dry years, and allow them to better compete in wet ones.

Intentional Communities (ICs) are social arrangements that inevitably call into question the legitimacy of existing social arrangements as they work to re-form human interaction. They re-orient the everyday goals of the membership and represent a mode of action wherein organizations can be more like communal relationships in pursuit of common ideals. Typically, modern organizations are comprised of a hierarchical arrangement that empowers select few, and they will often adapt and change to meet outside challenges to maintain that stratification. However, Rabbits have developed a system of governance and a lifestyle that prioritizes the survival of group ideals over the survival or easy functioning of the organization. Like many SMOs – especially those of NSMs – they have developed and operated on a form of organization that reflects the world as they wish it to be rather than as it is. These are the roots that ready the village for growth in good years and sustain it in leaner years.

Unlike the larger political landscape, where collective identities are activated, shifted, and eventually exhausted for a time, the collectivities that make up a social movement node require careful attention, maintenance, and pruning. Successful ICs like DR have managed to calm much of that chaos associated with shifting political winds and resource availability through the deployment of value-oriented social action that supports the goals of the group and makes it an everyday activity as part of their lifestyle. Where they plant and weed their gardens among the chaotic growth of the prairies in the spring, Rabbits tend to their established plots as the dryer summer

arrives. Their garden (semi) well-tended against a backdrop of a complex ecosystem, Rabbits wait for their lifestyle to bear fruit even when it's not raining.

This chapter focuses on what kind of world Rabbits hope to create with their lifestyle, and examines how DR's sense of order within their collective identity leads to re-arrangements of power, labor, time, and money as attached to value-rational ends, instead of purposive-rational ends that typically dominate in the modern bureaucratic state. This sort of *prefigurative politics* is found in many other social movements, where activists build political structures and processes in-group that reflect the type of society they wish to create (Leach 2013). They do this through adherence to what I call "group held values" of egalitarianism and environmentalism. Additionally, where often organizations today are usually interpreted as operating through a Weberian rational-legal use of authority, this chapter makes the case that DR operates on a later-articulated value-rational authority as a means of prefiguring their desired movement outcomes. This Weberian interpretation enables me to link the lifestyle practices of the social movement node to its more distinct political underpinnings, as the prefigurative institutions at DR are simultaneously a political critique and the site of everyday practices of being a Rabbit.

Prefiguring a Better World

Dancing Rabbit's collective vision is to be a community based on environmental sustainability and egalitarian decision making. They work to create an alternative model that embodies the future they wish to see rather than reproducing existing unequal,

unjust, or problematic structures. This is similar to many other movements, where their techniques of contention in many ways mirror the outcomes they hope to achieve (Boggs 1977, Maekelbergh 2011, Yates 2015). If one wants to create a more just world, the premise is, that should already exist somewhere in this one, ready to take over as a modeled structure when the opportunity comes. Pitzer, who I noted in chapter 1 as saying that communal living is a generic social change mechanism used by peoples across time and place, goes on to say that it also creates “useful, perhaps essential, arrangements during a formative stage of social, political, religious or reform development and of altering or abandoning communal forms, economies, and practices in response to subsequent challenges and needs.” (1989, p. 2)

At DR, this is most easily seen through their use of what I call the “re-arrangements” of their lifestyle. These are both local institutions and everyday practices that are altered from a mainstream norm by the adoption of DR’s egalitarian and environmentalist goals, enforced through a value-rational type of authority that Joyce Rothschild-Whitt has termed the “collectivist organization” (1979). These are archetypal structures to the prefigurative politics of many NSMs, where form and action are both means to change (Leach 2013, Yates 2015). Considering both Rothschild-Whitt and classical sociologist Max Weber, I describe in this section how Rabbits collectively participate in a form of authority and social action germane to social movement activity and the social movement node.

Considering Authority

In his posthumous magnum opus *Economy and Society*, Max Weber (1978) noted that the transition of Western countries into the era of capitalism also brought with it the rise of bureaucratic structures that transformed the nature of authority in society from being capricious (as with the whims of a monarch) to a more stable and predictable arrangement. This also brought with it the rise of instrumental-rational social action, which is recognized in the bureaucratic state through the hallmarks of divided labor, hierarchy, and highly rationalized decision-making.

While bureaucracy as an organizational form is quite ancient in human history, the modern bureaucratic state is associated with reform of monarchic state power in western Europe to a model based on the espoused rationality of Capitalism. Said bureaucracy's hallmark is the erasure of individual legitimacy in favor of organizational legitimacy. People in bureaucratic organizations would no longer follow orders from a person because of who they are, but for the office they hold (Clegg 2006), and so as the authority of monarchs gave way, they were replaced with institutions where power was exercised by the office and not the office holder. Authority for Weber, then, was the logical result of submission to a form of legitimate domination, and is "distinguished from persuasion by the fact that people *a priori* suspend their own judgment and accept that of an acknowledged superior without having to be convinced that his is correct." (Blau 1963:307)

Today, embeddedness in bureaucracy is fairly universal among those in the West. Bureaucratic organizations, such as the state or corporation, vest the power to

make rules in an impersonal, rationalized apparatus to achieved calculated ends. But social action, Weber noted, can also be motivated through *communal* relationships, which are based on a sense of belonging, in addition to those *associative* relationships, which are based on mutually agreed upon ends and are the basis for bureaucracy. He said that communal relationships tend to rest on the “antithesis of conflict” while associative ones “very often consist only in compromises between rival interests.” (1978:42) Bureaucracy, as a rational structure that constrains and shapes social action, controls potential conflict and mediates associative relationships through rationalized structures, formally codified rules, and a division of labor. Conversely, communal relationships avoid conflict because they are based on a subjective sense of belonging. Families, tribes, followers of charismatic leaders, and other basic forms of association are not without conflict, but are the basis for association that manages that is averse to conflict through that sense of belonging.

Social movements, often defined through their use of extra-institutional tactics, diverge from the prevailing constraints of the modern bureaucratic state in myriad ways. They make demands based on a group’s assumed legitimacy within a constituency and rightfulness over the prevailing political arrangement. Social movements, then, don’t just lay claim to how the bureaucratic state should be altered to be more favorable to marginalized groups, but often actively build alternative models to that status quo. For example, Francesca Poletta (2002), in her study of several past and present social movement groups using models “participatory democracy” (her term

for what I call egalitarian decision making¹³), describes how they sought to create new kinds of legitimate power similar to the way that Rabbits have. The groups included in her study developed and deployed new forms of in-group authority because their “dilemma...was that they wanted to effect political change without reproducing the structures that they opposed” (p. 6) and so activists were inspired to create divergent participatory decision making structures that more closely matched their claims to the nature and future of society. In this, Poletta’s participatory democratic movements entered a “commitment on the part of individuals to generating new basis for legitimate authority,” (p. 8) which I have also found to be true of the Rabbits.

Ideal types, as Weber described them, are pure representations of a concept not actually found in a grounded reality, but are nonetheless meant to help order the world. Said types contain an easy portability between how Weber describes orientations to social action and the types of authority used by groups of people to maintain order. The four orientations to social action and three types of legitimate domination (which are the foundations of authority) outlined by Weber are noted in Figure 2. While there is a

¹³ I make this distinction because the word “democracy” implies a voting structure and finalized outcomes based on that practice. Egalitarian decision making structures do not include voting, but rather consent to decisions that are consistently revisitable and reversible. To say “participatory democracy” muddles this distinction, because members can participate in either their democratic or egalitarian decision-making structures. The distinction of process is significant to my argument here.

ready changeover between pure types of social action and domination in three of those types, the notable exception there is a value-rational authority. Roberta Satow (1975) confirms this association and missing type, saying that while it is “implicit in Weber that rational-legal authority is a derivative of purposive-rational motivation...there is no category of authority derived from the value-rational form of motivation and legitimacy.” (p. 527)

Weber’s cataloging of ideal types was not simply an exercise in describing the world as it was in his time, but a methodological tool for differentiating the era of rational authority western Europe was witness to from the capricious rule of pre-capitalist, pre-bureaucratic, monarchic states. Traditional and charismatic authorities rest upon the practices of imperfect humans who might change norms and practices as the seasons change (or as their whims do). Rational-legal authority, on the other hand, portends a system which exists outside capricious authority and are vested in bodies larger than a single individual or elite few, as would a value-rational authority. For Weber, the march towards more rational forms was inevitable because they were in tandem with the advent of scientific thought and capitalism. To this point, Emirbayer (2005) also notes that in differentiating between value-rational and purposive-rational action, Weber created a hierarchy within his theorization of reason over emotion.

This is informative for movements seeking to lay claims about the nature and future of society, for their vision is often nested in the re-arrangements of their own group efforts as an attempt to prefigure the outcomes of the movement. If the rise of a bureaucratic state was premised on scientific advancement and rationality, then the rise

of whatever society would come in the mold of DR's efforts would be premised on a "value rational" authority type – one alluded to, but not fully explain by, Weber. A value-rational orientation towards social action would prioritize the goals of the group and feeling of belonging over the goals of the individual within a bureaucratic division of labor; it would maintain a more uniform reward structure and aim to equalize status across the group regardless of individual achievement toward the organization's objectives. In this value-rational form of legitimate domination, authority would rest in the whole and their "group held values," not in any one individual or subgroup. In contrast, rational-legal, the principal form of a capitalist bureaucratic society, rewards individual experience, promotes differentiation and stratification, and uses various criteria of achievement to reward some members of the group with more authority than others.

Orientations to Social Action	Authority Type (Legitimate Domination)
Traditional, or that determined by ingrained habit	Traditional, rests on a belief in tradition, and the authority of longstanding practice.
Affectual, which is determined through an individual's feelings or what is affecting them	Charismatic, rests on devotion to a person or set of persons with "exemplary" characteristics.
Purposive-Rational, which is determined by the conditions or means and in which	Rational-Legal, rests on a belief in the legitimacy of enacted rules, and vests trust

the social actor pursues rationally calculated ends	in those charged with their creation and enforcement
Value-Rational, taken through a conscious belief in the rightness of action, regardless of how likely it is to create success or gain for the individual	<i>Missing</i>

Figure 2 - Weber's Orientations to Social Action and Types of Legitimate Domination

Previously, Rothschild-Whitt (1979) posited the existence of value-rational authority in what she calls “collectivist organizations,” her term for an organization operating under value-rational authority, as represented through the “alternative institutions” of the 1960s and 70s which include free schools, legal collectives, food cooperatives, etc. She notes that, “[p]erhaps more than anything else, it is the basis of authority that distinguishes the collectivist organization from any variant of bureaucracy. The collectivist-democratic organization rejects rational-bureaucratic justifications for authority. Here authority resides not in the individual, whether on the basis of incumbency in office or expertise, but in the collectivity as a whole.” (p. 511)

The ethnographic data that I present in this chapter ties in to Rothschild-Whitt’s idea of a collectivist organization to explain how Rabbits operate with this value-rational authority, and that their everyday practices are captured under the aegis of value-rational social action. Moreover, I consider how value-rational authority structures at DR are a matter of prefigurative politics indicative of many NSMs, and, due to the

significance of lifestyle as an operative feature, a basis on which social movement node operates.

Value Rational Authority in ICs

Why did Weber not create this fourth type of authority? Rothschild-Whitt (1979) suggests that there were few real-world examples of organizations for Weber to draw on when creating his types, and that value-rational action existed in his era but had not yet emerged as a decipherable organizational form. Conversely, Adler, Kwon, and Hecksher (2008) propose that value-rationality was assigned a form of social action but not domination because “value-rationality accords no legitimacy to orders since all members are assumed equal in their exclusive subservience to the absolute value to which they are all devoted” (2008:361) and thus value-rational actors cannot be subject to domination by authority at all.

Both are arguments of organizational structure and rely on an implicit predisposition that authority should be recognizable as an ideal type in order to then exist unideally in the complex social world. Bureaucracies are easy to distinguish, as rational-legal domination tends to come with strictly codified rules and roles (Sciulli 1986). Value-rational authority, on the other hand, is more difficult to decipher because it is wrapped up in norms and practices of a given group rather than written laws or policies of an organization. Thus, the everyday practices of lifestyle at DR, and the small institutions that they bear with authority over the villagers, might otherwise be lost to

assignation as a traditional authority type if not for close examination by ethnography. A value rational-authority would be creative, while traditional authority is conventional.

Likewise, a value-rational authority would be similar to charismatic authority, in that those subject to it would willingly do so for the “exemplary characteristics” they wish to follow (Blau 1963). It would differ, though, because those characteristics would emanate from a group rather than a single charismatic individual. More than submission to a group holding particular characteristics, a value-rational form of legitimate domination would place individual participation in the implementation of group ideals above any formal system stemming from associative relationships. Value-rational actors are more wont to ask “does this action fit in with our values?” while rational-rational ones might ponder “does this action fit in the established arrangement?” As I noted in the previous chapter, the idea of group held values is first articulated through the barrier of “we do this at DR” communicated by the visitor program. These group held values represent a voluntary subjection to an authority not for personal gain, but for fulfilling value-directed goals of the group. Cob put the importance of voluntary submission this way in an interview: “...years ago we had somebody who didn’t recycle! Or, separate her garbage. [bangs fist on table] I mean, the most fundamental thing about an ecovillage and you can’t recycle? There has to be some level of alignment with ecological values and the communication expectations.” This person, accordingly, was not kicked out for failing to align her practices with the group’s values, but left of her own accord because of reactions like Cob’s.

A value-rational authority that prioritizes group ideals and process over the hierarchy and role-separation of bureaucracy would offer fewer prescribed paths and more openness for participation in decision-making. It would be, then, more like egalitarian decision-making than democratic decision-making, which Rothschild-Whitt observed in her collectivist organizations and is further discussed below in my observations of DR. In egalitarian organizations, the ultimate goal is an even distribution of power and an equal investment of energy in the deliberation of all decisions. Those that cannot abide by the group's requirements nor contribute to their development and enforcement would find themselves not subject to the group's horizontal authority structures, and therefore not fully integrated with the group.

ICs, as with any organization, contain hallmarks of one or more types of legitimate domination *including* value-rational. There are many historical (and fewer present-day) examples of domination by charismatic authorities, religious¹⁴ or political¹⁵ visionaries who rallied followers around their vision of perfection. Such ICs fit poorly with the argument presented here, as they contain a distinct power and role stratification. Purportedly egalitarian communities, too, contain both aspects of rational-legal and value-rational authority as they must adapt to the requirements of the bureaucratic state. However, many communities (like DR) practice egalitarianism

¹⁴ See, for example, John Humphrey Noyes' Oneida Community

¹⁵ See, for example, Robert Owens' New Harmony Community

quite effectively, and in doing so create prefigurative political structures and practices that support the hypothesis of a value-rational authority type.

Re-Arranging Institutions as Value-Rational Authority

All ICs are built on some level of re-arranging human organization around a claim to the nature and future of society, prefiguring the better world they wish to see, yet each does it in their own way. This chapter is intended to probe further in to how value rationality works as a prefigurative tool for the social movement node that is DR. The sort of prefigurative politics of re-arranged institutions at DR are directly comparable to the institutions of many social movements, most notably NSMs, in the way that they frame collective calls for, and discussions of, change. As part of the node, though, they are quite readily observed through the Rabbit lifestyle and as persisting beyond changes in larger political opportunity structures. I examine four major aspects of DR's organization that re-arrange everyday life in a way that is prefigurative of their egalitarian and environmentalist vision: power structures, labor practices, conceptions of time, and monetary exchange.

Power - Consensus Decision Making

Like many other ICs both past and present, most decisions at DR are managed using a modified form of consensus-based decision making. Governance in the village is highly complex, perhaps warranting its own full-length manual to fully explain all the nuance. Between the various committees, practices for proposing and finalizing

decisions, and the web of relationships between the many different formal and informal entities in the village, though, is a common thread of egalitarianism. Almost every idea, from its nascent stages as a proposal to finalized implementation, goes through several opportunities for community input where anyone may exercise a “blocking” concern that prevents finalization until adequately discussed to see if it fits within the matrix of group held values. Everyone is equally capable of proposing, modifying, and blocking new ideas as they are subject to the test of what is within that matrix, rather than such powers resting in the authority of any single person holding a specific office or role. The rare exceptions to this are where formal bodies like the village’s land trust and non-profit arms require adherence to some decisions made by a board of directors per IRS rules in order to maintain their non-profit status, and other instances where their egalitarian experiment bumps up against a predominantly bureaucratic society.

This consideration extends to the natural environment as a stakeholder in the community’s decision making as well. At DR, Danielle wrote in the MemDem, “[we] place environmental impact at the core of our considerations, and we also engage in communication, consensus, and conflict resolution practices that embody an understanding of interconnectedness.” Egalitarianism and environmentalism mesh quite readily in the group’s values such that, even though the environment does not literally have a voice, Rabbits will speak on behalf of the natural world and manifest it at the table of discussion.

This style of governance aligns much more closely with value-rational than rational-legal authority. While there are formal processes outlined, like meeting roles

for facilitator and note taker; the reporting of decisions to the community within a designated window of time, and term lengths for certain subcommittees; the process by which they come to decisions is highly fluid. Meeting roles are rotated, rather than resting on the specialization of one or a few Rabbits, and committee membership is frequently selected for based on affinity and preference rather than merit, though often this includes some background experience.

Consensus-based decision making has a long history of being associated with countercultural groups like social movements, and especially so with ICs. The earliest forms of consensus decision making are associated with Quaker religious groups, who used it to build group cohesiveness and saw it as an integral part of their religious tradition that placed everyone on an equal footing before the Christian God. The Shakers, a rather famous historical group of communitarians that founded several ICs throughout the 19th century, relied on full consensus for community governance. Consensus, at its root, means that the decision-making process itself creates a sense of group belonging, rather than the group's sense of belonging leading to any sort of easy decision (though that is a desirable result).

The use of consensus decision-making at DR is integral to their placement in the node as practicing prefigurative politics, where both political and cultural critique overlap. Ma'ikwe said that "I think I don't like confrontational activism as much as I like trying to understand what's going on with different people who have different perspectives. Really, at heart I'm more of a consensus builder than a protestor." Yet, she also thinks that "[i]n some ways, what we're doing at DR and at other ICs is

inherently political because we are literally changing the context in which people are living their lives, and that's in some ways what politics is really about." The lack of confrontation, for her, does not remove DR from the political sphere, but rather prefigures the sort of political arena that would be born out of a successful IC movement. It re-centers the political claim to the everyday practices as they are wrapped up in the group held values of DR and expressed through egalitarian decision making.

Communes founded on the psycho-social ideals of B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (2005 [1948]) marked a starting point in modern times for the deployment of egalitarian ideals embodied in consensus-based decision making which is also used for most decision-making at DR. These ICs of the 1960s and 70s relied on this alternative to democracy as a means of rejecting what they saw as mainstream obsession with conformity to rules that quelled individual expression, and the practice has evolved to meet the egalitarian needs of today's ICs. It is also notoriously frustrating to live with, as such purportedly "leaderless" organizations do tend to have informal leaders that create stratification due to the institutional knowledge or charismatic personality and benefit from it regardless of group ideals towards egalitarianism (Freeman 1972). Decisions in an egalitarian organization can also take a long time to reach. Kathleen Kinkade, in biographing the Skinnerian-inspired Twin Oaks community of the 1970s, wrote at the time that "...the decision-making group became defined as simply those people who were willing to put up with the slowness of consensus procedure. Arguments could go on for hours, and there were other things to do," (1973:53) yet

“[a]s we find fault with them, we make changes to correct the faults and make the systems fit our situations better.” (57)

Consensus as an egalitarian decision-making tool of alternative groups and institutions is fluid, and has been adapted and modified to best serve the groups that deploy it based on their claims. Egalitarian decision making, as an expression of value-rational authority, discards the “one person, one vote” rule common to democratic structures (Spencer 1970) and replaces it with an “everyone, all votes” practice. Some people will get more of a say in some decisions because they care more about the issue, while they silently assent to others. In issues discussed with great passion, individuals will often withdraw their arguments once they realize that their opinions are in conflict with group held values.

At DR, consensus is practiced as the central means of community decision making, and is similarly subject to constant tweaking to be more inclusive. Meetings are facilitated by a single person, but the facilitator does not have any more power than anyone else in the meeting to finalize a decision – in fact, there is an implicit expectation that they will work to minimize their opinion about the decision itself and try to remain a neutral voice while in that role. Unlike decisions made in a more purely rational-legal context, decisions are made when *all* members consent to a proposed idea and the flow of discussion varies by whose turn it is to facilitate the meeting, or whomever is more passionate about an idea.

Before and after my research at DR, I have participated in a number of organizations that purport to use egalitarian or consensus decision making, and the

implementation of these is widely varied. Some devolve rapidly to infighting, as their members seek to prioritize issues important to them over the group's goals, while others see the rise of informally powerful leaders, as noted from Freeman. While I can't make the case that consensus practices at DR are perfected, in my time there they served to function well enough that the group persisted and made decisions. Indeed, Rabbits made frequent reference during meetings to the group's Covenants and Guidelines (see Appendix B), as well as the spirit of consensus, as methods of urging the group towards consensus with baseline village principles. Those that disagreed with parts of a decision could simply "stand aside" rather than vote against a proposal that did not contain all that they wanted because consensus does not rest on the all-or-nothing mentality of voting. Nonetheless, as is common with consensus organizations, discussions over contentious topics would run long or require a series of meetings in order to generate agreement.

Former Rabbit Zemmouri, along with many of the other respondents, noted that when the founders still lived in the village, they retained a problematic capacity for charismatic authority within what I've purported to be a value-rational organization, much like what Freeman described, because they held deeper institutional knowledge about the village's history and rarer practices. They held more power, and were "self-appointed" leaders by virtue of holding out from consensus until their demands were met. Cob similarly used the term "founder privilege" to express how the founders, back when they still lived in the village, seemed to get exceptions made in the consensus process because they created it in the first place. This was also true for some of the

village work that needed to be done and would otherwise be decided by consensus: the biannual addition and removal of screen doors to the common house as the weather changed was a self-appointed task by a long time member when he deemed the weather to be right, rather than a decision of the group.

Though the “group held values” phrase is in common parlance at DR, when asked no two people gave the same answer for what fits within those boundaries or what is excluded beyond the core group values of egalitarianism and environmentalism, the codified goals and covenants that explain them more specifically (in Appendix B), and the established but fluid processes and practices of governance stemming from them. In this, the practice of consensus decision making is constructed as a means of ensuring that the group does not violate its core values, and the weight of those values is carried by each member rather than any specialized role or authority as they would be in a legal-rational arrangement. Below, several practices and prohibitions are noted in examples under the other re-arrangements. Each of these had to, at some point, be subject to the “group held values” test to determine both which course of action was best and which outcome most desirable for the village as a group (or for some of the sub-groups within the village, like co-ops) through the de-stratified process of consensus decision making.

Labor - Co-Ops and Resource Sharing

Unlike many other communities both past and present, DR does not rely on an income sharing model where everyone participates in communal work responsibilities

and is, in turn, provided living accommodations and a stipend. There are a few common tasks on a rotation everyone must do, like take out the common house humey buckets, but they are a mere token against the weight of individual responsibility toward work. Income sharing would be a good example of a movement prefigured by value-rational authority extending an argument for economic equality through lifestyle, but one would need to look at a different community to fully explore such re-arrangement. Money, though, is discussed later in this chapter for other reasons.

Instead, at DR incomes are individualistic and not guaranteed. Rabbits are expected to have their own jobs, and have found work in a variety of endeavors like organic farming, working for the village's educational non-profit, online consulting, and traveling construction work. "We're pretty capitalistic," Rabbit Sparrow said at one point to visitors over a communal meal, "and that actually turns some people off when they come here" because they are expecting a more communal economic experience like the income-sharing arrangements used by many other ICs. Nonetheless, there is a strong ethos of cooperation and resource sharing that goes strongly against the individualistic grain of the larger society and represents the presence of a value-rational arrangement of labor. This can be seen in the co-ops and resource sharing at DR, which prefigure a world where people use fewer resources yet have the same material needs met.

Most Rabbits eat in kitchen co-ops, which contain between five and ten members. Some buildings in the village are crafted specifically to be common kitchens, while others are in private residences. For each, though, members of the co-op take

turns cooking dinner (and for some, lunch the next day), sharing the responsibility and thus lowering their own work load to one or two long cooks shifts each week rather than cooking most nights as an individual, and reducing food waste by cooking in large batches – in part achieving the group-held environmentalist goal of reducing waste. The norm is for everyone in a co-op to eat dinner at 6:30 PM, and so community events tend to be scheduled around this time frame as well.

There is also a car co-op, where four vehicles and one tractor are shared between most of the 40 adults. The car co-op covers insurance for all drivers legally as a fleet, and pays a few Rabbits to do regular maintenance on the vehicles. These members are not selected for their technical knowledge of cars (no one at DR is a trained mechanic), but rather from those that are interested in doing the work and willing to learn the skills to do it. Recruitment for work in the co-op, like governance, is not based on special skills but rather on affinity at the time of need.

Former member Baladi, who has traveled to dozens of other ICs around the country, reflected of this requirement by saying “...I really think that the car co-op is pretty unique, that there's 3 cars and a truck now (one of those cars electric). That is pretty darn unique about DR. Other ecovillages I've been to - everybody owns their own car, people are constantly driving to town, to whatever.” Though there are fewer reasons for people to commute in their rural community than in an urban one, there are nonetheless errands that must be run. Since they do not produce nearly enough of their own food or durable goods, driving is necessary from time to time to acquire them. Individual car ownership is formally forbidden for members of the village, which is a

rational-legal form of domination over the actions of Rabbits. Yet, this prohibition intersects with a value-rational decision to self-prohibit in the first place.

A common practice in the community, then, is for people to solicit shopping lists from neighbors if they decided to drive to town, and recruit others to ride with them. This is incentivized by splitting the high cost of driving one of the vehicles, which is currently at \$.65 per mile - much higher than one would expect to pay as an individual car owner. A clear specific example of this is the Monday milk run: every week someone volunteers to go to the neighboring dairy a few miles away and load up several gallons of milk in glass containers for different kitchen co-ops in the community. Since that adds up to quite a bit of bulk, a car is necessary, and everyone who drinks milk takes turns running the errand to distribute the cost while also avoiding having many different people making the same trip for milk each week. The milk run is not co-op, but a practice born out of the re-arranged nature of resource sharing at DR exemplified more formally in co-ops.

There is also the Milkweed Mercantile. The Mercantile began as a private venture – the vision of two Rabbits starting a bed and breakfast for visitors – but eventually became a co-op after the business was firmly established. The transition happened for two reasons: 1) the couple running it was aging and had trouble keeping up with the demands of a small business, and 2) both the couple and several community members had been longing for more communally-operated businesses at DR to better reflect their values. After several months of planning, an additional half-dozen Rabbits bought stakes in the Mercantile and turned it in to a co-op where jobs rotated and

decisions were made at semi-weekly meetings by all stakeholders. The entire process of formation for the new ownership model took place using consensus of the new group of stakeholder Rabbits, per the group held value of egalitarian governance.

Finally, as noted in chapter 2, there is the practice of work parties that occur several times a year. While there is often the prospect of reciprocity to some degree – that if one Rabbit participates in another Rabbit’s build, the latter will return the favor at some point in the future when the former has a work party – that is seldom the primary motivator. My helping the Webeloes build their fence in Chapter 2 didn’t mean they were going to reward me with free eggs from the chickens it would protect, as I would still have to buy those. But I and dozens of other Rabbits showed up nonetheless because it was seen as good for the village as a whole to expand their bird husbandry capacity.

The value-rational ethic of egalitarianism appears in these forms of cooperative culture at DR. For many Rabbits, their meals, their transportation, and their income reflect a prefigurative politics re-arranged to fit a value-rational order. Radical notions of resource sharing and use minimization that drive the formation of the co-op also helps them to reduce their consumption patterns in stark contrast to mainstream, highly individualistic US culture. The result, which I also noted in Chapter 1, has been a village that consumes about 10% of the average US population in water, fossil fuels, and electricity (Lockyer 2017, Jones 2014). With these figures, Rabbits are able to make the case in their outreach that others can achieve what they have, or recruit new Rabbits with similar interests and goals.

Collective ownership rejects stratification and establishes member parties as equal stakeholders in the endeavor, in contrast to instrumentally-rational organizations that would require a division of labor and authority as a means of achieving organizational ends. The Mercantile, for example, is still a business, and needs to make money in order to survive. Yet, unlike most for-profit businesses, the so-called “bottom line” is actually two lines: one for making money and another for supporting the village’s group held values. Indeed, when considering what services to offer and products to carry there is a duality of whether they will make money and whether the endeavor promotes a more egalitarian, environmentalist mission. The Mercantile, Alline told me, could probably make a lot more money by hosting corporate retreats, but they instead opt for soap-making and spirituality workshops because they more closely align with the group-held values of both the group that co-owns the business and the overall village.

The norms of labor at DR also demonstrate more how ideal types are arranged unideally in organizational structures. Labor is re-arranged along the dimensions social control, social relations, recruitment and advancement, incentive structures, social stratification, and differentiation that would normally look quite different in a rational-legal bureaucracy. At the same time, none of these attributes are completely value-rational under the authority of any co-ops at DR, nor the village as a whole. Many of the co-ops need boards of directors to maintain tax exempt status with the IRS, which is a common bureaucratic structure. Also, the Mercantile relies on the one member with web design knowledge to maintain their website because he has a background in that,

where a purer expression of value-rational authority would eschew such differentiation and rotate the role.

Perhaps the best expression of how the village has re-arranged labor in a value-rational way is with the norm that no organization at DR pays their highest paid employee more than twice what the lowest paid employee earns. As with other aspects that make DR a value-rational organization, there is little in the way of formal codification for this. The village runs an educational non-profit to promote its activities and recruit new Rabbits, which does have as part of its bylaws this stipulation on pay. But, other entities that provide paid work follow that as a norm without written requirement. The Mercantile pays for hours worked, the car co-op pays the same rate for completing weekly maintenance checks regardless of how long they take the person whose turn it is, and kitchen co-ops are strictly volunteer labor when cooking for fellow Rabbits.

This is not a perfect re-arrangement of incentive structures or stratification, because one part of DR (the non-profit) does have a codified rule about pay and specific roles like Executive Director and Development Director. But their general practices beyond that are nonetheless a significant departure from the incentive structures of rational-legal organizations where those at the top of a stratified structure are rewarded at far more disproportionate rates. The norm of no employer paying their highest paid employee more than twice as much as their lowest paid employee exemplifies ideal-typical value-rational action, where the authority of group values is exercised strongly through group norms rather than formally codified rules. Also, the rotation of duties

eschews a division of labor that would otherwise contribute to the more distinct hierarchy we see in bureaucratic rational-legal organizations. Rabbits' non-material concerns of egalitarianism outweigh possible incentive structures and the construction of a hierarchy, the latter of which we would expect to see in bureaucratic, rational-legal organizations.

Time – The “Eco” in Ecovillage

Time is not something that can be literally re-arranged, so in the context of ICs like DR it is *concept* of time that is altered to suit the egalitarian and environmental purposes of the organization. John Hall (1988) notes that communal groups like ICs will use the concept of time as a means of organizing action, that:

“[f]or people in communal groups, the revolution, whatever its nature, is carried out in everyday life. What has been taken for granted in the constructions of time in the dominant order becomes problematic, for status passage from old times does not prescribe what new times are to be. Alternative communal groups thus give new accounts of the times – both of the old world of the established order and of the new communal world” (43)

It is therefore possible to live in the present world, organized around a universal and rationally prescribed passage of time, yet also build alternative conceptions of past, present, and future in to the everyday practices of the community. Communities, according to Hall (1988), do this in one of three ways:

1. *Diachronically*, where they have a conception of past, future, and present that may be separate from the world at large, and organized in a different way, but correspond to it.
2. *Synchronically*, which tends to be focused on the “here and now,” without an investment in an influential past or possible futures.
3. *Apocalyptic*, where groups imagine themselves as already living in a post-collapse world and are engaged in rebuilding it.

The latter two ask community members to eschew much representation of the past, because whatever happened is either unimportant or hold no lessons for the present and future. Apocalyptic communities build their conceptions of time around Millenarian or world-ending belief systems, while synchronic groups include non-Western, non-linear conceptions of time that render thinking about the past and future as we know them irrelevant.

At DR, though, they practice a diachronic time structure that involves everyday interaction and acceptance of the Western, 24-hour day and the Gregorian calendar. Yet, Rabbits see themselves situated in a historical position much differently than the rest of society. The future is fraught with looming environmental disaster, and so their time is value-rationally oriented around the premise that climate change can only be addressed in the present, as an immediate pressing need. While environmentalist organizations around the globe work as part of a larger movement on campaigns that set exact targets for renewable energy production at exact times going forward, and

proscribe that progress through legislation, DR prohibits almost all use of carbon-based fuels in the present regardless of circumstances.

Members must re-arrange their lives around this and other prohibitions. This makes many things harder, like transportation as noted above. But, it also exemplifies submission by members to a value-rational authority that prioritizes the group held value of environmental impact over rationally calculated progress towards that end. Rabbits commonly reserve their most electric-intensive tasks, like the use of heavy power tools, for when the sun is shining brightest so that their electricity is most likely to come from the solar panels in their grid-tied system rather than the coal-powered state grid they are connected to. They share devices around that monitor how much electricity a given appliance uses in order to optimize usage during peak renewable energy production, and often remind each other on sunny days that they are optimal times to charge batteries or run equipment. The time of climate change effects and resource scarcity is *now* at DR, and not at some later point as most of society views it.

Rabbits also see their practices as worthy of emulation by others. Hassan, for example, told me that, “[t]here’s a lot of research about how much consumption we do here - electricity, water, etc. I think that that’s valuable for environmental reasons, but there are other social elements of it that affect the environment that we can’t track. People have come and visited here and because of it now recycle at home, for instance.” Even if visitors don’t end up becoming Rabbits in the longer term, the re-arrangement of time prefigures for both Rabbits and others a world in which climate crisis is in the present, rather than something to be dealt with progressively over time.

The burdens of living with such environmentalist restrictions serve as an indicator of fitness for group membership. Those who can thrive without a personal vehicle and re-arrange their electricity use habits around when renewable energy is more plentiful, or those that are able to adapt, are more prized recruits than high earners or experts in any given field. The only “expertise” needed is an ability to live under the set of conditions that uphold group values, and to be able to take on roles as the group needs. Where there are formal rules about car ownership suggesting a rational-legal domination, the lack of formal rules combined with values and practices around electricity use suggest submission to a value-rational arrangement of authority.

Money - ELMS

The Exchange Local Money System (ELMS) at DR, Rabbit Sallander estimated in a public presentation to visitors, is possibly the most successful alternative currency in the United States, if not the world. While that claim is not necessarily something verifiable, the significance of ELMS to the lifestyle at DR is. Rabbit Sambucus reported that the ELMS currency did just under 1 million dollars in transactions in 2016 alone, with an average of about 80,000 ELMS in circulation at any given point in time. In a village of just 40 people, with perhaps two dozen additional users outside the community, this is no small dollar amount.

Local currencies like this incentivize local consumption, where groups using alternative currencies seek to promote alternative consumption patterns and bring new members in to the fold of existing local alternative consumption arrangements (North

1999). The point in using the system, when US Dollars are readily available, is keeping money – and labor and goods – flowing through the community rather than going in and out of it. Rabbits are therefore encouraged to re-invest resources in the group rather than direct their flow to goods and services that would be more desirable for their uniqueness, newness, or quality as a instrumentally-rational form of consumption under capitalism would predict. Rabbits will look to other Rabbits for goods and services first before expanding their search to areas outside the village. Even some of the village's neighbors who own farms nearby have begun to accept ELMS in exchange for their meat and produce because they recognize an inherent financial benefit in selling directly to people close by rather than to wholesalers.

The elevated importance of their local currency is found at the confluence of being a very rural community with a membership expected to have independent incomes. The distance to a bank and can make getting and using cash a real hassle, according to Sallander. So, ELMS is completely online, set up on a private, password protected server accessible from any internet-connected device. From there, one can send units of ELMS¹⁶ to others, set up automatic recurring payments for expenses like rent, authorize others to make withdrawals, or withdraw their balance to a Paypal or Dwolla account of standard US dollars.

Sallander, who led the charge to implement the alternative currency, estimates that 70-80% of all economic activity in the community that uses currency is done in

¹⁶ One "ELM" is equal to one US Dollar

ELMS. More than convenience, ELMS is a way that DR has re-arranged the bureaucratic nature of the dollar as a medium of exchange. The point of an alternative currency is not for the group to replace the US Dollar in its entirety, but to re-arrange the ways in which those dollars can be spent by substituting the normal flows of money with ones that incentivize keeping money within the community. Explaining this point to visitors, Sallander said, "I don't fantasize about a society without money, I fantasize about a society with socially just money." The way money is used at DR, then, is a means of supporting the group's pursuits even when people are expected to have individual incomes. By keeping greater monetary resources flowing through the community, they also support its political and cultural claims.

Adapting to Group Held Values

If an ideal type must be decipherable on its own, then no ideal type can exist as a methodological tool. Yet, value-rationality seems to have been snubbed for just that reason, because it lacks the easy decipherability inherent in the use of ideal types elsewhere. The Weberian backdrop for understanding ICs, then, is a means of explaining motivators for the social action of prefigurative politics, while at the same time explaining the complexity of how action takes place among interacting systems of authority.

ICs like DR re-arrange aspects of their everyday interactions around communal relationships, which then creates a value-rational authority that members are subject through the a sense of belonging to the group and the appeal of the "group held

values.” At DR, those values are egalitarianism and environmentalism. Authority, as the means of legitimate domination in the Weberian theoretical tradition, is a complex and often messy concept to draw out. The “re-arrangements” at DR, though, clearly describe the missing value-rational authority type discussed above in the literature review, and how communal relationships and the value-rational action that stems from them can, in contrast to Weber’s original description, ultimately be a basis for legitimate domination. These “re-arrangements,” though, are merely the clearest ways in which value-rational authority is present at DR because they are built directly from the group’s core values and reflect their claim to the nature and future of society.

We can also see how Weber’s argument that the march of bureaucratic rationalization is inevitable holds weight in a value-rational regime. Even DR has, over time, developed highly rational-legal features among their value-rational expressions of authority. This is, in part, due to the requirements forced on them in an era dominated by capitalist bureaucracy, like how they need to have a board of directors for their promotional non-profit to keep the village in good standing with the IRS. It is also the default form in Western society for most institutions that aren’t the family, more easily grasped and implemented than the rarer value-rational organization.

Several aspects of life at DR stand as an inverse example to the march of rational-legal authority, like the car co-op, because it demonstrates how value-rational action can displace prior rational-legal arrangements. That co-op was inspired by a model used by several for-profit car-sharing services, like Zipcar. Car-sharing services contain some degree of value-rational action inasmuch as members perceive

themselves as part of an effort to reduce consumption through joining. Yet, car-sharing consumers typically join for purposive-rational reasons like saving money (Lane 2005) or are organized by municipalities to reduce traffic congestion (Fellows and Pitfield 2000). At DR however, the vehicle co-op, as a form of car-sharing, was developed because the group prohibits individual car ownership among members: an exercise of value-rational authority because it furthers group values of environmentalism above any individual's need or ability to make use of a personal vehicle.

The Mercantile is also a good example of how the village navigates the different Weberian authority structures. It started out as a private business in the purposive-rational vein yet transformed in to a co-op as it evolved organizational forms to support the village's group held values. Rabbits initially created an organizational model based on rational-legal authority and re-arranged it to suit their own value-rational ends.

Value-rational authority structures serve two purposes for the social movement node. First, they guide the everyday practices of lifestyle, with the varieties of both self-actualization and political meaning that come with them. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, the social movement node serves as a collective action reservoir, where members of the village are readily called to direct actions like protest around issues relevant to both individual Rabbits and the village. By their participation in a value-rational authority structure that stands in contrast to the prevailing rational-legal authority type, Rabbits are primed to define their lifestyle as a political claim to the nature and future of society.

Second, a careful observation of the authority structures at DR illuminates how the embedded networks of an activist community are constructed. Otherwise disparate individuals are brought in to the Rabbit lifestyle through the challenges presented by these re-arrangements, and rely on the support of fellow Rabbits to live up to the group held values. Not all the practices found at DR are similarly found at ICs, either present or past. Where ELMS is distinctly unique to them, practices like consensus decision making, co-ops, and diachronic time prescriptions are shared with other ICs past and present. ICs re-arrange their social world as an exercise in prefiguring their claim about the nature and future of society. Individuals within these communities are part of rational decision making structures, though with a rationality geared towards the achievement of group-held values rather than individual ends. DR pushes this claim further because their prefigurative structures carry political meaning, a distinct overlap with many NSMs and other types of movements like cultural movements.

The concept of prefigurative politics illustrates how the social movement node exists as a convergence of these many movement forms, comprised of more than one type of social action and legitimate domination can be and are often present simultaneously. Even within organizations like DR, where value-rational authority can be detected thanks to the widespread voluntary participation of members in the matrix of domination by group held values, their subjection to domination of rational-legal authority in cases where they cannot escape the march of bureaucracy is a notable source of inequality. Beyond that, DR is like many other ICs in being a very white, highly educated group, though the critique of those sources of inequality warrant their own,

fuller explanations elsewhere.¹⁷ But, they work to create and adhere to a village authority that supports their overall objectives of seeing a more egalitarian and environmentally-conscious society that manifests in at least the four ways presented in this chapter.

Conclusion

Rabbits rearrange aspects of their everyday interactions around communal relationships, which then creates a value-rational authority that members are subjected to through the importance of a subjective sense of belonging to the group and appeal to its values. At DR, those values are egalitarianism and environmentalism. Authority, as the means of legitimate domination in the Weberian tradition, is a complex and often messy concept to draw out. The “re-arrangements” at DR clearly emphasize the missing value-rational authority type, and how communal relationships and the value-rational action that stems from them can, in contrast to Weber’s original description, ultimately be a basis for legitimate domination. These “re-arrangements,” though, are merely the clearest ways in which value-rational authority is present at DR because they are built directly from the group’s core values. Value-rational authority can manifest in a mix of

¹⁷ for example, see Chitewere (2010) and Chitewere and Taylor’s (2010) discussion of social justice and equity at the Ecovillage at Ithaca.

ways, as their ideal typical forms meet with the less ideally organized, and more complex, social world.

We can also see how Weber's argument that the march of bureaucratic rationalization is inevitable holds weight in a value-rational regime. Even DR has, over time, developed highly rational-legal features among their value-rational expressions of authority. This is, in part, due to the requirements forced on them in an era dominated by bureaucracy, like how they need to have a board of directors for their promotional non-profit to keep the village in good standing with the IRS. It is also the default form, more easily grasped and implemented than the rarer value-rational organization. The Mercantile is a good example of this – a part of the village that started out as a private business in the purposive-rational vein and transformed in to a co-op as it evolved organizational forms to support village values.

The Mercantile and other examples in this chapter also stand as an inverse to the march of rational-legal authority in DR's re-arrangements, because they demonstrate how value-rational arrangements can displace prior rational-legal ones. Consensus decision making and co-ops stand as organizational modes that Rabbits re-arranged it to suit their own value-rational ends. Similarly, basing their action on a synchronic prescription of time helps Rabbits regulate their behavior around the group held value of environmentalism, and developing an alternative currency incentivizes consumption that flows through the group more than between the group and outsiders.

Such re-arrangements are also core to the position of DR as a social movement node, where claims about the nature of authority in society are simultaneously cultural

and political. Like Rothschild-Whitt's "collectivist organizations" and Poletta's "participatory democratic" movements, the people of DR have developed a system of authority that is simultaneously an exercise in political claims-making and cultural critique for the everyday practices of the group. Their re-arrangements are a practice in prefigurative politics that align closely with the practices of NSMs, and certainly with other ICs throughout time.

In the next chapter, I will pivot this discussion from the value-rational mode of social action and the boundaries of the collective Rabbit identity to an explanation of their more directly political activity. Submission to a value rational authority is an arrangement that calls in to question many of the prevailing notions of how society should operate, and as such is a notable basis for direct political action. Where Rabbits see a culture in the United States of damaging hyper-individualism and runaway capitalism, they have worked to create an alternative - an antidote as it were - to these problems that is not simply a retreat from them but an attack on their foundations and a claim to how society could otherwise be.

Chapter 5 – Fall: The Collective Action Reservoir and How Dancing Rabbit Turns Lifestyle into Political Action

Introduction

In the fall, plants that have spent the warm months getting rooted start to “bolt” – a change from growing the leaves that gather energy for the plant’s growth to the production of seeds that scatter in the prairie wind so the plant can reproduce. After months of getting established, a switch flips in plants’ biochemistry to go from survival and growth to making more of itself. So, too, does the ecovillage go through this cycle of settlement and growth.

Rabbits are part of a social movement node year-round, but a pattern emerged in my observation that once new members became settled, they worked to reproduce the mission of the village in three progressive ways. First was through then turning around and helping in the recruitment of new member Rabbits, which was covered in chapter 3. Second was through learning and integrating in to the village’s egalitarian and environmentalist orientations toward their everyday actions, which was covered in chapter 4. Finally, they would work to spread the message of the mission of DR through activism.

This third means is a complex one, wrapped up in the notion that lifestyle can be a basis for comprehending and engaging in activism. Rabbits don’t just spread the gospel of ecovillage virtue, they spill over in to social movements (Meyer and Whittier

1994) they see as interconnected with the vision of the village, which are highly varied.

Just as they come to the village with a complex array of biographies, so too are their interests varied beyond their common causes of egalitarianism and environmentalism.

Haenfler, et. al. (2012) notes that “lifestyle movements,” (LMs) are “loosely bound collectivities in which participants advocate lifestyle change as a primary means to social change, politicizing everyday life while pursuing morally coherent ‘authentic’ identities.” (p. 14) As I discussed in chapter 3, lifestyle and the test of “we do this at DR” plays a key role in building the village’s identity as part of a social movement node.

This chapter is oriented towards understanding DR as containing aspects of a LM, or how the lifestyle and social movement aspects of the social movement node overlap. I focus on these forms particularly, because while the entirety of this book describes the overlap between culture and politics that forms the node, lifestyle is the lynchpin through which both critiques are presented at the same time. While all social movements are based on some sort of collective identity, not all collective identities are engaged in sort of direct action oriented towards political change that makes for a social movement. In cultural movements, those collectivities are focused inwards towards group support of self-improvement, or self-actualization of membership. With the boundaries of a collective identity firmly established, I present this chapter as a case for how Rabbits relate to to direct political action – and how that relationship has been facilitated by the Rabbit lifestyle. In it, I rely more strongly on the interview data I gathered over the ethnographic data that predominates most of the rest of the dissertation.

Data for this chapter comes from interviews that focused specifically on activism. After I had observed the Rabbits for many months, I found that they didn't necessarily want to talk about their relationship to the more conventional markers of activism, like protesting. Yet, I knew from my experience thus far that many had done so, and continued to do so after they became Rabbits. Their reluctance to talk about protesting and other forms of activism, then, was not born out of ignorance or inexperience, but politeness. In fulfilling their the first two steps of reproducing the mission of the village, Rabbits did not speak explicitly about the riskier and more involved third step – perhaps because they didn't want to scare new or potential recruits away. Thus, these interviews fulfilled a need to understand more about how Rabbits conceptualized the link between their lifestyle and their relationship to activism, past and present, that I wasn't able to elicit just from participant observation. I performed 18 interviews in total, or just under half of the adult population. These offer a rich variety of personal histories and perspectives of Rabbits on pursuing their outreach mission and participation in direct action that form the basis for this chapter.

Throughout this chapter, I refer to three forms of action: lifestyle, which includes the everyday habits and practices of a group; direct action, which is a form of political action that involves presenting challenges to a powerful antagonist through the use of tactics such as protest; and collective action, which is an umbrella term that includes both lifestyle activities and direct actions taken by any activist group. Activists are any participant in recurring political action, whether that be lifestyle or direct action, and

whether they self-identify as such or not. As will also be discussed, activists can self-identify as such even if they used participate in direct actions but no longer regularly do.

As part of the node, LMs are more than a group of people with shared ideals and an imagined collective history, they also have a collectively imagined future in which more and more people adopt a lifestyle like theirs from a process of collectively induced social change (Dobernig and Stagl 2015), ideally supported in tandem by policy that shapes and constrains behavior to push the everyday citizen to be more like people in the movement. They, like social movements or cultural movements, lay some claim to the nature and future of society. But, they also represent an overlap between the two that would otherwise lay at opposing ends of an action spectrum between personal and political work, and represent a bridge in the personal-political divide that is central to the discussion in this dissertation.

An example of how social and cultural movements overlap in LMs comes from Portwood-Stacer's (2014) study of radical anarchists in an "anti-consumption" lifestyle movement. Such anti-consumerists hope that the extreme measures they take to disengage from capitalism will eventually lead to wide-ranging effects and challenge the place consumer capitalism in contemporary Western culture. Yet, they also work to define their collective acts as political. As Portwood-Stacer notes "[t]he way one dresses, the food one eats, even the people one chooses to have sex with, can become overtly political acts" to anti-consumptions because they are that group's means of challenging powerful antagonists like conformity or the patriarchy.

Portwood-Stacer uses the term *lifestyle politics* to refer “...to the whole cultural formation around individuals’ use of everyday choices as a legitimate site of political expression. The discourse of lifestyle politics reaches beyond radical movements; indeed, it is a feature of mainstream contemporary politics in the United States as well.” (p.5, italics original). As she describes, lifestyle is a key feature of many movements, especially those typically interpreted through the NSM theories discussed in chapter 1, for their attachment to individual self-actualization, and it fills in the gaps between contentious actions that social movement theorists have conventionally used as signs of social movement activity. Everyday practices, from the spaces a person inhabits to their consumption patterns, have the potential to bear weight as a political act, and “...what counts as activism is a discursive construction.” (p.5) The anti-consumption radicals she reports on, then, aim to dismantle rampant consumerism, despicable corporate practices that lead to exploitation of the developing world, and influence others to question conspicuous consumption through their everyday practices of anti-consumption. Their style of dress and their activities like dumpster diving are not just for self-actualization (though that is a component), but are political critique channeling action outside legitimized means for change.

Haenfler et. al.’s definition assumes this vein of radical anti-consumerists is a “loosely bound collectivity.” However, this doesn’t describe DR as a village very well since they are a tight-knit group with notable barriers to entry, thus why they are a node that contains aspects of lifestyle activism combined with other forms. There are also those visitors that become allies instead of Rabbits and their connections with other ICs

– loosely bound to the collectively imagined ideals embodied by the node of lifestyle that is the village. Moreover, that node is related to other nodes of other ICs who embody the ideals of environmentalism and egalitarianism, forming a larger network of overlap between communal nodes and their allies – those engaged with an alternative lifestyle full time as Rabbits and those that engaged in lifestyle practices away from the village after being informed by their visit to it.

Similarly, Rabbits’ strategies are centered around their everyday practices as a site of social change, with the aim of affecting a larger audience. de Moor, et. al. state that LMs “are mainly occupied with lifestyle change and lifestyle mobilization, but that some activists engage in state-oriented action as well.” (2017, p. 255) Further, Haenfler, et. al. note, “LMs and more manifestly political social movements overlap...they are often inextricably linked.” (p. 12) To that end, DR fits within the twin nature of an LM: participation in lifestyle as the central means of political engagement because the lifestyle is itself politicized, but also engaging in conventionally conceived forms of social movement activity from time to time. Haenfler, et. al. note with the example of lifestyle vegans that LM participants can often be roused to more formal actions through SMOs like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or the Animal Defense League, or even find *how* to practice a lifestyle matching their predisposition through such participation. Those organizations that enable LMs are what Haenfler, et. al. call “lifestyle movement organizations,” which may function to help grow the movement, as they “organize and groom leaders, build collective identity, refine movement ideology, organize public

events and social networks, and mobilize adherents to spread movement ideology.” (p. 11)

I argue that the social movement node at DR contains these aspects of an LM, where activism serves as basis for direct action and galvanizes people to change their lifestyle, and where both are a means of political engagement. Yet, the social movement node is distinct from an LM or an NSM: where the former epistemologically combine the personal (self-actualizing) and political within an act, the lifestyle supported by a social movement node entertains both aspects as separate or combined as needed to reinforce distinct ways of acting. Though Rabbits relate to politics and self-actualizing in myriad ways, I conclude that their lifestyle overall is both self-actualizing and political.

Bases for Activism

Given the case that group lifestyle is constitutive of a social movement node, those who live at DR participate in social movement activity and are to be considered activists because they consciously work towards an alternative lifestyle that challenges dominant conventions of society by creating new, alternative ones. Indeed, my interviews with Rabbits revealed, for the most part, that they considered themselves and their lifestyle to be a form of activism. Rae, when asked what she thought of social movements in general, grew wide eyed and shouted “whooh!!” with great enthusiasm, foreshadowing that she had much to say on the topic.

This is not to say that they all identified as activist in the same way. As research on collective identity has shown, one's participation in a social movement does not erase their concurrent associations, personal histories or other identifications (Meyer and Whitter 1994, Staggenborg and Taylor 2005). Thus, Rabbits came to be activists in different ways: some already were, some had the proclivity but lacked means before living at DR, and some accepted an activist identity after moving to the village.

Finding a Home for Activism

Most commonly, members of DR had some background in political engagement through direct action or awareness, though this varied greatly. Their decision to live in the village came in some way from a motivation to continue this engagement in a way that they felt was more effective. Some people, like Orestad, were veterans of protest actions before landing at DR. A native of Georgia and a retired engineer, he had spent much of his younger years advocating for the installation of solar panels in the sun-drenched state, as well as government policies to support and encourage them. He was also an advocate for the construction of bike lanes in the city. Now, though, he is focused on building a home almost completely out of natural, sustainable materials such as straw bales and clay. Of that earlier time, he reflects:

"It used to be, for me, a lot more changing policies, getting involved in protest actions, or direct media events, etc. to raise awareness. I wanted results, I wanted to be able to see that we had gotten somewhere and it was so frustrating not to... The important thing to me is to do now is what is my nature

- to be involved and working towards good change, and not be anxious about the results. I don't control the results, I only control what I'm willing to do in the right direction."

Orestad retired from the world of direct action to engage in a lifestyle that brought him comfort and that satisfied his yearning to be an activist. As a Rabbit, he felt a greater sense of self-actualization through the ecovillage's lifestyle than he did through the oft-stalled campaigns of his youth, or at least he stated so from a sense of retrospective.

There were those who never were engaged in contentious actions like protesting but nonetheless felt drawn to act in a political way. The midwives, Alyssa and Lilac, expressed this notion well. Midwifery, Alyssa said, is inherently political work, that of reclaiming female bodies and natural processes from what she described as an antagonistic medical establishment – a sentiment that she said she's grown in to over the last 15 years of practicing. DR, for people like Alyssa, is a place where she can perform acts of resistance in the context of times and places, and radical to most people, but are not radical in the context of DR:

"We are working on those things in a way that feels good to me. That's all a part of the core of what DR is too, in terms of the social dynamics. It is not only accepted, but maybe even admired that I am a midwife here, and that I'm standing for birth activism."

While being a midwife in most places would be a minority position, the two midwives are, in fact, the only ones qualified to assist in birthing at DR, and are held in high

esteem for their successful business relationship with local Mennonites outside the community whom also prefer birthing outside of modern hospital settings.

Ma'ikwe put this more sentiment bluntly: "Here, it's much easier to embody my values. So when that struggle is out of the space it frees up a ton of energy to do other things, and to actually get involved at the level that I want to be involved with advocacy and national networking and that kind of stuff." As the executive director of the village's non-profit education center during the time of my research, she stood at the center of DR's lifestyle message. She is also a lifelong activist, veteran of many environmentalist and social justice campaigns.

Illy, too, shared a strong background in prior political engagement through such causes as Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter. His intentions represent something of an opposite pole to Orestad's in wanting the village to be *more* contentiously political than it currently is, while still retaining the lifestyle message:

"I'm the one at the front with a torch in my hand, going 'yeah, let's do that! let's be an activist community!'...We need to basically tell them to go fuck themselves, while we're also growing our own vegetables, doing our car co-op, and preserving our organically grown local food for the train ride to the big protest in Washington D.C. I think that they all need to be happening simultaneously."

Though it was not clear in his response who "they" are here, this sort of broad statement encapsulates LMs' lack of a direct antagonist but rather defining lifestyle through a "morally coherent" (Haenfler, et al. 2012) set of principles. From Orestad to

Illly, we see a spectrum of orientations towards activism, and what Rabbits think their orientation to action within the village should be. Some Rabbits have come to the village to retire from the world of contentious political action, while others see that as just an integral part of being an activist as living in the village. But both cohorts find a home for their activism, for the node houses a variety of approaches to it.

Among the already activist, they shared the common thread of finding a home for their activism because protesting didn't seem like it did enough. Sharon praised DR's tendency to attract activists from her own experience because "I came to this community because of the outreach component and mission to influence the world." Similarly, Harlequin said (in addition to the quote opening this dissertation) "I'm living a life according to my moral values. I hope other people will see me doing that and want to live that way as well."

Sharon and Harlequin also shared this notion that they were engaged in work that not only fulfilled their definition of morality but encouraged others to adopt it. While Harlequin came to the village with the intent of raising animals in a way she is comfortable with, doing that in a rural area full of conventional animal husbandry inherently makes it a contentious activity and an alternative model to prevailing definitions of the field. Sparrow, who eats in the same co-op, was a vegan before coming to DR and now eats animals she helps raise because it breaks from the mold of the prevailing industrial model of meat production. Where once she was an activist for not eating animals at all, now she finds herself unexpectedly an activist for responsible animal husbandry.

These Rabbits, in one form or another, were already pre-disposed to the politics of the public sphere. For one reason or another, they all found that route, laden with direct action, to be ineffective or unappealing as their primary means of seeking to make change. Most Rabbits who were prior activists in some form or another managed to find a home for that activism in the social movement node of DR.

Finding the Activist Within

Some Rabbits did not engage in activism before moving to the ecovillage, and related that they were politically inclined but lacked either the vocabulary, support, or the means to engage in the activism they wanted to. Rae, for example, expressed having had an inclination towards political action, but never felt confident enough to participate in either conventional politics nor the contentious political action of social movements. She said:

"I've never voted. Since I was 18 until now. I went to the polls once, and I tried to fill out a ballot, and I was angered and disgusted about it, and I just felt uneducated... Now that I can see a solution, and I can actually tell somebody 'here's a different way to be, that doesn't cause climate change.' ... Having this lifestyle as an example gives me the courage to say 'hey don't do that because it's killing half the planet.' Before, I couldn't say that because I couldn't see what else we were supposed to do."

This statement encapsulates the sentiment of emergent activist Rabbits fairly well: Rae had a feeling of ineffectiveness due to a perceived lack of knowledge, despite a motivation to be engaged because she perceived there to be problems worth solving.

Brooke was politically inclined for a short period of her life leading up to her move to DR, but lived in a conservative region of the country that she said looked down her political orientation and on activism in general. Therefore, moving to a place that allowed her to be outspoken about the things she cared about also allowed her to develop an identity as activist. Reflecting on this evolution of opinion, she told me that:

"...I do feel like living this lifestyle is a form of silent activism. Maybe not so silent. Silent as opposed to in your face protesting on arctic drilling. For me, and I think for several others, it is a way to make a difference and try to make a difference in the wider culture without having to battle people all the time. A more peaceful way of trying to make change instead of combative."

This notion of "battling" was a common refrain among rabbits who were not necessarily engaged in direct action activism before moving to DR. Kyle did some, though his heart was not in it. When prompted about prior activist, he said "I've done maybe one or two peace marches. But that was probably 10 years ago...the closest I would consider myself an activist is as someone who lives here." As a Rabbit now, Kyle has a better idea of what works for him in terms of engaging sociopolitical change:

"There's activism through direct persuasion, by telling people what you think. Then there's activism through direct effect. The third form of activism is

the one that resonates the strongest with me, and that is activism through indirect persuasion. In other words, leading by example. I want to convince someone to alter their lives in a way that I think is better, but I'm not going to tell them how to do that. I'm going to try to do that myself, and I'm going to try to make it look so good that other people will see that as a good alternative and want to do it also. That, in a nutshell, is why I'm at DR."

These stories indicate a willingness of members to engage and expand latent (and sometimes reluctant) political selves, empowered by a group that promotes contentious attitudes and deviant behavior against the norms of mainstream U.S. culture. Where some were already active, and had been throughout their lives, for others it took a supportive group to draw that latent characteristic out in them. This did not all present in the same way, though. Some newly activist, like Rae, took to contentious political action like protest from time to time, while others, like Brooke and Kyle, found that lifestyle activism suited them best.

Accepting an Activist Identity

A minority of rabbits related that they were not necessarily politically inclined, past or present. Yet, living in the village was something that they nonetheless described as a political act. Becoming an activist meant adopting a redefinition of one's self as an activist, or for some re-defining what they were an activist *for*.

Sable, who moved to DR in 2005 and is one of the longest-tenured Rabbits, described her motivation for the move in terms that sounded like a doomsday prepper.

wanting to escape a pending political crisis in the wake of the United States invading Iraq. But over time she came to accept and grow in to DR's message of outreach and engagement, and living by example. She said "the biggest [activist] thing that I did ... was choosing a lifestyle that was DR. That has been the biggest thing that I have ever done that made a difference - basically I put my money where my mouth was and I moved to an intentional community." Cob echoed this sentiment in the way he responded to the suggestion of DR as part of a social movement:

"I see it as an attempt to model a better way of relating to people and to the ecosystem, not necessarily as a scientific theory but as a live demonstration. People will see that "hey, I can do these things that are good for people, good for the planet, and I have this acceptable standard of life." It becomes more of a no-brainer instead of people saying "well how could I possibly give up" this that or the other thing. Leading by example, to me that feels like, in a non-proselytizing sort of way, a social movement."

Others, like the reclusive Rex, were rarely engaged in community activities, let alone political engagement. While he certainly had an opinion about major political issues of the day, which I semi-regularly discussed with him and a few others at the Mercantile's happy hour, he was more concerned about maintaining a minimalist, near-hermit lifestyle while living at DR than engaging in any successive forms of political action. To him, living the in village fulfilled a countercultural lifestyle urge, and the only form of action he needed to satisfy engagement with social change.

Not everyone at DR had or has engaged in collective action beyond living in the village. For the Rabbits in this category, they are willing to accept the label of activist because they are part of the lifestyle and not because they see themselves as activists. DR's express mission doesn't mention direct action at all, and so rather than it being a requirement for Rabbinhood it is a predisposition. To try and force everyone in that box of "activist" would be futile and unethical, but DR does attract activists and the trend is for Rabbits to see living their lifestyle as one facet of their activism. For those that didn't describe themselves as activists, it was usually because they didn't participate in DR's outreach mission and had never had a tendency before or during their tenure as Rabbits to participate in direct actions.

Instead, they are bound together through the lifestyle at DR. We can think about this in the argument above that lifestyle movements are "loose collectivities" and that a network of activists exists beyond the village itself filled with sympathizers and allies. Those connections may be similarly inclined or disinclined toward direct action, but nonetheless have varied orientations towards direct action just as the whole of the network has varied orientations to adopting the Rabbit lifestyle and actually moving to the village. Participation in either – the Rabbit lifestyle and direct action – sit on a spectrum of orientation towards direct action.

Collective Action Reservoirs

As the above section shows, Rabbits came to the village with varying backgrounds and orientations towards social movement participation. Yet, Rabbits

unanimously believe creating a lifestyle supportive of radically different institutions and practices is a form of activism in and of itself. For those with a history of protesting and lobbying, it is akin to their own past experiences in using direct action, and they will take up this aegis of protest from time to time. Newly minted activists join them in this.

For these cohorts of Rabbits, entering the landscape of lifestyle activism hasn't meant leaving protests behind. Indeed, as Haenfler, et. al. (2012) point out, "LMs...serve as *collective action reservoirs* – pools of potential participants whose collective value identities make them an ideal 'reserve guard' ready to periodically support particular protest events and mobilizations." (p. 13) Those who participate in LMs and their associated lifestyles are, at the very least, primed for direct action like protesting because the lifestyle itself is politically oriented. In the case of DR, three general orientations come to the fore: those who are not part of the reservoir and never protest because they see it as unappealing, those who use it regularly alongside lifestyle as one of many items in their repertoire of resistance, and those who used to be regular participants in direct action but have cast it aside in favor of lifestyle activism.

Not Part of the Reservoir

While everyone at DR in some way supports protest as a legitimate means of expression, it doesn't whet any universal appetite for making change. For one segment of the population, they chose lifestyle as a form of activism because it supplanted protest, which they found uncomfortable or incompatible with their own orientation

towards change-making. Hassan, who had participated in protests previously, put it this way:

"I never got in to that sign holding and chanting thing. I've been to a number of rallies... But there's a part of it that doesn't feel deep enough for me. It feels like surface level, which is helpful but not where I'm at. I'd rather connect with somebody one-on-one and do some personal work and have them leave remembering that. I don't even remember the rallies I went to."

Hassan's description of experience with protest, along with that of several others, came off as impassive. Protest has long been perceived as a significant way of producing broad structural change, yet it is not universally appealing to constituencies seeking all kinds of change.

Similarly, Kyle, whose quote in the above section clarifies that he prefers activism that is leading by example rather than contentiously battling, eschews protest as incapable of reaching people in the way he prefers:

"I see that there's a lot of challenges the world is facing, I want to do something about it, and I'm not really keen on direct persuasion activism and I'm not super keen on direct effect activism, but I am big on activism that changes the world just through cultural osmosis. Changing my life, changing the culture of my self, so as to change the culture of those around me, which in turn changes the culture of those who are around them, and so on and so forth. I think it can be

a very powerful and lasting activism. It's not a very quick activism, but that's what I'm trying to do here."

Kyle used a definition of activism that differs from most Rabbits (and perhaps most activists), because it encompasses a purely cultural realm of change. He took great care to establish this definition in the interview, which eschews change from direct action against a political antagonist in favor of direct action upon individuals as representatives of antagonistic cultural groups. For the most part, Rabbits echoed this as an important part of their efforts, but didn't see it as the ending point for engagement. His answer is at least in part a reaction to the majority of Rabbits who saw direct action as a useful tool, but like Hassan he felt that the change they hoped to see could not be achieved through such means.

Used to be Part of the Reservoir

Some Rabbits are jaded about the effectiveness of protest, or just plain tired of it from their participation in innumerable past actions. For some, protest is superficial and therefore pretty meaningless. McCarthy and Phail (1998) discuss this as part of what they call the POMS (Public Order Management System) arrangement in contemporary protesting, where police and protesting groups have subtly agreed to a set of terms in which protest takes place: protestors, in cities where protest is common, will remain in designated places for the duration of the action and, in return, the police promise to refrain from harassing them. This arrangement has worked well to minimize the number of arrests for activists who do not stray from it, but it also "...banalizes protest

by making it routine and unremarkable – now just another way of influencing public decisions and one that is widely used by all social groups.” (P. 108) In this way, the effectiveness of protest is constrained alongside risk to activists.

Rabbits who used to be part of the collective action reservoir are privy to this lack of effectiveness in certain contemporary direct actions. Orestad, for example, left behind a strong legacy of protesting and lobbying with non-profit organizations he built in a major Southern city when he moved to DR, but expressed his need to change modes of activism:

“I wouldn’t say I really burnt out, but I lost some of myself along the way. I wasn’t holistic. Before that, I had started a garden and orchard in my yard, and that went to pot. I wasn’t walking the walk, I was just talking the talk. I was probably eating more fast food, driving more in order to do activism stuff, etc... I wasn’t feeding, wasn’t nurturing myself enough.”

To this cohort of Rabbit activists, lifestyle as activism is something of relief from the expectations and letdowns that accompany direct action engagement. It is a chance to “walk the walk” as Orestad put it, or to prioritize living their values rather than working tirelessly to see political changes that accomplish the same lifestyle changes in others only to be disappointed in the slow progress of change or failure of movements.

Here, we see how LMs can straddle the line between social and cultural movements, the latter of which are also comprised of people who work to “walk the walk,” so to speak, but opt not to make major recruitment efforts or influence any sort of larger social change, and instead focus solely on self-work. LMs, on the other hand, 73

still prioritize structural change as an end goal, but with a different set of tactics for doing so. LMs actively reach out to recruit new members from the pool of potentials, and bring allies in to the fold that will agitate elsewhere as part of the LMs “loose collectivity” even if they don’t fully embrace the lifestyle by moving to the village. In contrast, cultural movements adopt the attitude of building their own circles and grow through the passive means of one-on-one communication like what Kyle and Hassan favored.

Grigsby (2004) found this, for example, in her study of “simple lives,” people participating in the Voluntary Simplicity cultural movement; that few members of that group wanted to take proactive steps to have an influence on others. Instead, simple lives generally thought that by living the life, others might be attracted to it as well and transform themselves to live with fewer possession or obligations rather than transforming, say, policy. They were focused on self-improvement within the context of individualistic concerns, and few of her respondents wished to actively communicate their mantra outside existing circles, instead seeking support for the simple life within them through group meetings and discussion circles. LMs, on the other hand, share those individualistic concerns but apply their energies towards structural, in addition to self, improvement through active recruitment and outreach. Simple living as a cultural movement, then, is always a process, and never a result, in contrast to campaigns from conventionally-understood movements (Kahl 2012) where distinct political objectives can be achieved.

Though Rabbits not in reservoir held political causes important to them, it is the overall picture of living in a setting conducive to being an activist that gave them means for fully embracing the lifestyle necessary to both think through their relationship to their chosen issue(s) in a more holistic way and realize the means at their disposal to engage in change. This is not to say that Rabbits not in reservoir could never be counted on to participate in collective actions outside the village, but that they were far less likely than those in the reservoir.

Currently Part of the Reservoir

Though DR is very rural, this does not rule out opportunities for direct action in many forms. In my time there, several of these took place, though I was only able to observe and participate alongside Rabbits in a few of them. For example, during a worldwide day of action during the Paris Climate Accords, in which there were “climate marches” in hundreds of cities across the world in support of potential agreements to mitigate the human effects on climate change, I took a trip to the neighboring college town of Kirksville to participate in a march there with Ma’ikwe, Sharon, and Illly. We took to the streets in a rather raucous trot through the nearly-deserted downtown, holding signs and chanting to almost no one but ourselves. Kirksville is a small town of about 17,000, and is not typically privy to such protests, so the few passers-by that saw us were more puzzled than affronted.

Nonetheless, the Rabbits I went with saw this as an important event to participate in because it raised awareness locally for the benefits of the Accords. For

Sharon, it also was a chance to recruit new members to her local chapter of a major national climate change organization. Many of the marchers were students at the local college, and she saw an opportunity to raise a new generation of activists through the catalyzing power of protest.

Indeed, participation in protest was often tied to Rabbithood as similarly pivotal in the interviews I did with Rabbits who were part of the collective action reservoir. Lucas, a veteran of the Iraq War, didn't for most of his life consider protest to be a legitimate form of expression. Yet he told me "maybe about 6 months before I got here [to DR] I started getting interested in activism and pushing back." After a year living at DR, he attended a rally targeting a large bioengineering firm where he spoke on behalf of an anti-war veterans' group with the message of how the company's practices were detrimental to the environment. His background as a veteran led him to become more expressly politically oriented over time, but without the support of other politically engaged Rabbits he likely would never have had the courage to make such a speech – or, it would have taken him much longer to muster it.

Similarly, Rabbits who participated in any sort of direct action were celebrated and supported by the community. Rae, Illy, and Sparrow all left their lives at DR to participate for months in the encampment protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Though they did this after my tenure at DR had come to a close, it was the subject of much discussion on individual Rabbits' social media pages and the internal village email list that I continued observing. The village took great steps to support their three fellow Rabbits as they risked being, and ultimately were, arrested for trespassing as the police

(at the behest of the pipeline company) cleared the encampment. Sparrow still faces looming imprisonment alongside many other activists as the case wends its way through the court system.

Throughout my time at DR, and in discussions about the village's history, direct action played a significant role in defining the village. When a local power utility proposed in 2014 to run power lines through another IC in a neighboring county, Rabbits joined their allies to lobby and make public comment in opposition to the state's public utility board. Bauscat, a founder of DR long departed by the time I arrived, reportedly journeyed to Washington, D.C. regularly for lobbying and collective actions organized by larger national groups throughout his tenure as a Rabbit. After the presidential election of 2016, a carful of Rabbits came to Columbia, Missouri where I was residing because that was the closest place that had a Women's March protest as part of a national collection of such events.

The community also held numerous letter writing days and call-your-representative events over a wide range of issues on everything from environmentalism to racial justice, and many other significant political issues. For some, this was their main engagement with direct action, since protest was not their favored expression. Alline, for example, explained that "I have not stood with a sign. That's not my style. I have written lots of letters, made lots of phone calls. Writing is more how I communicate."

Those in the collective action reservoir are defined, as the term suggests, by their willingness to participate in both *engagement* over retreat, and *collective* over

individual engagement at that. Whereas Kyle and Hassan were much more motivated to engage the process of change through one-on-one interactions geared towards cultural change, Rabbits in the collective action reservoir were motivated to join with others within and outside the village from time to time in service to a political objective.

These examples exhibit the inclination of those living the DR lifestyle to also participate in protest, even though that may not be all Rabbits' desired means of political engagement. Those never in the reservoir are still supportive of those that rise to collective political action, but eschew it themselves. Likewise, there are a number of Rabbits whose history includes a lot of collective political action and who similarly support their fellow Rabbits in this endeavor.

Living, Not Just Protesting, Is Political

Some members of LMs will label their lifestyle as politically oriented and others won't, and the same is true with Rabbits. If participants in the lifestyle come to define their everyday actions as acts of political resistance more often than participants come of define them as politically neutral, that lifestyle then births a social movement.

Taylor and Whittier (1999) explain how everyday associations become movements, that collectives of people will "offer identity accounts that politicize" their social boundaries and "valorize personal experience" for those participating in the lifestyle (p. 186) that distinguishes them from other groups. Illy's quote above demonstrates this politicization quite clearly – mundane acts such as canning vegetables are mentioned in the same breath as hopping the train to Washington, D.C. for the next

big protest because to him they are both political acts. Whether or not a Rabbit is part of the collective action reservoir, their participation in the Rabbit lifestyle offers a political account of the Rabbit identity. The lifestyle is built on active recruitment for their core values of egalitarianism and environmentalism, and building a network that expands their impact outside the village in the hope of engaging larger social change.

The Rabbit identity is, of course, an optional one that members pursue rather than one they are born into and must negotiate as regular matter of course, as with the radical lesbian feminists profiled in Taylor and Whittier (ibid) whose only other choice would be to deny their inborn feelings and hide their true selves. No one is born a Rabbit the way someone is born female-bodied, with a particular sexual orientation, or with a certain skin tone. Instead, it is an intentional identity whose collective members are attracted to abstract notions of the commons, nature, and community. The decision to live at DR is one that requires a commitment to a set of practices that express their ideals, which bring forward traits and tendencies members may have had in their previous life but which are transfigured to permeate their every action and interaction.

Perhaps the most archetypal way in which Rabbits politicize an everyday act is through their management of human waste. As I noted in chapter 2, “poop talk” was a distinct and early barrier to entry at DR, and a common topic of conversation for Rabbits even when visitors weren’t around. This everyday act that plays a role in *everybody’s* lifestyle (not just that of Rabbits) takes on a distinct political dimension at DR, where the place one poops becomes a statement about problems the village sees in the world that need to be addressed. Pooping in a bucket is not just a unique cultural action, but one

loaded with meaning about how society should approach resource use and relate to nature.

If you can't poop in a bucket, you can't be a Rabbit. If you can poop in a bucket, you can maybe be a Rabbit. If you want to convince people about the virtues of pooping in a bucket, and why they should do the same, then you've become part of the movement by virtue of working to recruit others in hopes affecting larger changes. Rabbits bemoaned the wasteful use of flush toilets for sweeping away the nutrients still contained in feces that could be redirect back in to their local soil, and the use of perfectly potable water for each flush.

This critique does not add up to a particular policy claim or political decision that the Rabbits would like to see. Rather, it is part of a coherent worldview that could be supported or opposed when recognized in a more specific political context. For comparison, Portwood-Stacer's anti-consumerists aren't likely to run for office as a means of promoting dropping out of capitalism. But they are likely to write and distribute "zines" (technically short for *magazine*, though with greater meaning specific to anarchist subculture) on a variety of politicized topics. So too do Rabbits not inherently see their values in any given action of the political system, but rather in the potential that cultural change will lead to political change: if enough people start pooping in buckets because DR models it well, maybe municipalities will make accommodations the same way they have for other forms of recycling. To create demand is to create political will.

Lifestyle as a Substitute for Direct Action

The Rabbit lifestyle is a political one. Which is to say, the ultimate goal of living like a Rabbit is to accomplish political change in the same way that other social movements use direct action. Rabbits themselves readily spoke to this and how lifestyle has been developed and deployed as a tactic. Brooke's quote above about lifestyle being a "not so silent" form of activism and Kyle's coining of "indirect persuasion" activism both support this notion.

Lifestyle activism among Rabbits was perceived as a legitimate way to supplant and supplement direct action with more fulfilling and continuous political engagement because Rabbits were at least able to witness progress at a local level. For those who used to be in the collective action reservoir, and those who never were, lifestyle is the defining point for their means of political engagement because it serves as a synecdoche for direct action. For those currently in the reservoir, lifestyle works in tandem with direct action to define their means of political engagement. They share the same goals, regardless, and lifestyle is what binds their efforts even as Rabbits view direct action as one form of activism on a spectrum of useful collective actions. Orestad sums the two ends of this spectrum up well, as he has moved across it over time:

"It used to be, for me, a lot more changing policies, getting involved in protest actions, or direct media events, etc. to raise awareness. I still see a value to that part of being active. I am much more aware of the one-on-one and people changing based on example of others or based on what their friends are doing,

so I'm much more in to not making the changes one person at a time (that's too slow) but reaching individuals."

Orestad's approach, which is confusing at first brush, seems to be about changing minds rather than activating or combating those whose minds are already made up. Danielle, who is not part of the reservoir and found a home for her activism at DR, explained why the opposite approach is good fit for her:

"My philosophy at this point if we work on changing people and their worldviews, then the systems will naturally change because the systems are a byproduct of those people, or a natural outgrowth of it. That feels like the core for me to focus on rather than doing more systemic protest movements...

There's a while where I thought that "no" based activism was the way to do it. That's what seemed to make sense, and that's what people were all about - different protests and sit-ins, GOTV [get out the vote] sort of things. Now it's like oh right, that's just feeding energy back in to the system that I don't want."

In this, and several of the other quotes, we see Rabbits readily contrasting the form of activism they consider themselves to be doing against an existing popular conception of activism that relies heavily on direct action.

Conclusion

Successful movements, like successful plants, will increase their presence in the complex ecosystem of the political landscape. They have root networks that take

advantage of when the rain falls, and they thrive in a site that where adequate resources are available. No single plant will come to dominate the landscape in a well-maintained ecosystem, yet environmental variables may determine whether some plants thrive more in years producing conditions more ideal for their growth.

The significance of ICs like DR to the political landscape has certainly fluctuated on a very long timeline, never dominating but never going extinct either. The political engagement they practice and the larger network of ICs and allies that share their values and intentions are spread like seeds in the wind. As the ideology of such an LM grows and matures, it requires “nutrients” and support in the form of a membership that engages its everyday practices. Once firmly rooted, the movement “bolts,” turning the energy once expended for growth of membership to the service of spreading influence.

I want to stress here, as elsewhere, that this metaphor is not binding, since the naturalistic view of society is over-simplistic and subject to more random fluctuation than our understanding of social movements and political change. Rather, it is a means of conveyance for understanding the role that lifestyle can play in both personal growth and in influencing political change. If direct action activism is like a prairie fire that aims to swiftly wipe out the current arrangement and replace it with a new one, lifestyle activism is a diurnal cycle of growth and competition of the ideas that eventually become incorporated in to the political landscape. Prairies actually thrive with regular fires – most of the plants in that biome have evolved to reproduce after being burned, and their ashes add fertility to the soil for subsequent generations. Yet fires only

happen every couple of years, while both in the meantime and post-fire the plants and the ecosystem compete and intertwine. Many plants survive the fire through their established roots systems as well.

One important factor in the argument for a political nature of LMs is that they often lack a direct antagonist (Haenfler, et. al. 2012) like we would see in movements that use direct action. It would be quite strange to find protestors without some powerful person or entity as the target of their ire, letter writers typing out their angst to no one in particular, or protests that don't gather at a place that holds significance to their message. It is not clear which enemies the Rabbit lifestyle is squared off against. They are on one hand potentially too numerous, as environmentalism and egalitarianism are broad and multifaceted ideologies, while on the other they are potentially non-antagonistic, as there is no clear single institution challenged by either. They are, on the other, unnecessary as the social movement node simultaneously contains cultural critiques that aim for self-fulfillment of members.

Lifestyle has always been a means of collective action, and those who study social movements have only recently begun to cede increasing recognition to the importance of it. Not all collective identities will lead to a politicized lifestyle or direct action. But many do, and they are infrequently the object of analysis for political action because it is not always clear what makes their lifestyle political. Rabbits have made this understanding explicit in their responses to questions about activism as part of the Rabbit identity, and they offer a window in to the sorts of inquiries that we should make in to lifestyle as a form of activism.

Chapter 6 – Dances With Rabbits: How the Social Movement Node Works

“You have to find the right venue to find your one little corner of the world that you can change, and focus on it and make it better. So if DR can be seen as that opportunity, then it is a movement.” – Loren

Introduction

What makes for a social movement? A lot of different collective challenges have been given that label by scholars, though they have widely varying characteristics. Defining a social movement has always been a moving target, as collective political challenges alter shape to reflect and react to the societal arrangement from which they arise. But, more recently that target has widened at a somewhat accelerating pace. For example, at the outset of this work, I noted Snow's (2004) call to broaden our understandings of social movements as having antagonists outside government authority.

Lifestyle and cultural movements, too, often lack that easily defined direct antagonist, a target to which their claims are made that will either capitulate or adapt to shut them down. Instead, lifestyle and cultural movements often target the self as a source of antagonism, with the ultimate goal of self-improvement as a basis for larger change. Sometimes, their target is large and abstract, and not necessarily something that can be defeated because there is no agreed-upon representation of exactly what represents the particular evil or social ill. As Cherry (2006) describes in her study of the

vegan cultural movement(s), there was no unifying definition of just what foods one had to forego in order to be an authentic vegan, but rather such definitions varied as they were embedded in supportive networks of fellow vegans who came to collectively define the boundaries of the diet. Lifestyle movements, to some extent, represent a crossover point between cultural and social movements, in that participants deploy lifestyle as the primary site for political critique. They alter their daily habits in part as a primer for their residence in a collective action reservoir, ready to be called for more direct action.

At Dancing Rabbit, all of these elements are present. While there has not been any scholarly argument I'm aware of that these cannot or do not overlap, what I've presented nonetheless constitutes a unique combination – the social movement node – which warrants discussion on its own terms for its manifestation of a personal-political pipeline and mode of action. In this chapter, I will re-state and argue the case for understanding the social movement node as a distinct form of collective behavior that combines the traits of the social movement, lifestyle movement, and cultural movement. I will also revisit and summarize the ethnographic evidence supporting the case that DR is a social movement node. The node is something that has existed throughout different eras and in several times and places, and I will make the case that nodes can be found elsewhere, in previously studied communities who bring together the three components in their own work as well. The node represents a social space where these three forms come together in a group of people who are concerned with

both self-actualization and political change, with two ends solving the same, or overlapping, sets of problems.

The Node and Social Movements

Throughout this dissertation, I've sought to develop a novel idea for the analysis of how social movements interact with their constituencies and with larger political forces. The social movement node, as I've termed it, is one arrangement for a group (or groups) to make a claim to the nature and future of society. Members of a node participate in work that is both personal and political in nature, sometimes in tandem and often alternately, blurring the line between an already somewhat arbitrary relic of political thought. From the pioneering work of the NSMs of the 1960s, and subsequent interpretations by social movement scholars, the adage "the personal is political" is not just a slogan for understanding the node, but a shared heuristic tool between it and other manifestations of social movement activity.

Others have pondered the nature of personal-political pipelines through thinking of movements "in abeyance" (Taylor 1989), or as devolving at the end of cycles in to "movement communities" (Taylor and Whittier 1992, Taylor and Whittier 1999, Staggenborg 1998), among other ideas. My idea is an additional one, not a contradictory one, though proposed as a means of conceptualizing cohesive activist identities in contrast to, rather than as a part of, the prevailing theory of social movement cycles. What makes the node unique when compared to social movement communities, lifestyle movements, movements in abeyance, or other concepts that

social movement scholars have deployed to explain where activism rests in the interstitial moments between movements, is that it is at least somewhat permanent. It does not rise or fall with social movement “waves,” though we may see them ride such waves as they happen from time to time. But, because the node is a combination of social, cultural, and lifestyle movements, its claims making rests in many realms and is therefore not subject to the prevailing winds of opportunity in only one of them. Instead, a node might experience its own cycles based on other events affecting its membership, like biographical availability or, in the case of DR, the seasons.

There are several aspects that a social movement node has in common with social movements that are hallmarks of this form. Members of a social movement node build a collective identity, practice prefigurative politics in the authority structures they adhere to, and serve as a collective action reservoir for more direct, contentious political action. These reasons are why I therefore have chosen this label over, say, a *cultural* movement node. The action reservoir in a cultural movement, for example, likely operates in a much different way than the “reserve guard” that Haenfler, et. al. (2012) term collective action reservoirs – people would be motivated to mutual group support, but not towards contentious action. Similarly, while all three movement forms can be prefigurative in some way, only in a social movement node will members prefigure cultural and political structures at the same time.

But there are also other examples, both recent and historical, of groups that I argue meet the criteria for a social movement node. Many are historical groups I’ve come to redefine as social movement node, despite being profiled as such in other

studies. Some could also be described as ICs, while others are not. Their cases are a lesson in the importance of what persists between cycles of protest, and how the social movement node bears relevance to analyzing the interplay between the personal and political spheres of action.

Dancing Rabbit as a Social Movement Node

DR as a case study has helped in the development of this concept of the social movement node because it contains aspects of cultural movements, lifestyle movements, and social movements. Like a social movement, they work to build a collective identity, practice a prefigurative politics in their group structure and decision-making, and participate in direct actions like protest. For example, their deployment of consensus decision-making represents a prefigurative scheme deployed by many social movements and SMOs both past and present. Similarly, the collective “Rabbit” identity is constructed and enforced through rituals of “we do this at DR” for those making their initial visits to the village and considering becoming Rabbits themselves. It is also exemplified by the folks who came accept themselves as activists after moving to the village, because they came to the village for more individualistic reasons of self-actualization, and only later developed a sense that they were part of a social change organization.

Like a lifestyle movement, they use lifestyle as their primary means of political claims-making. For many Rabbits, living their shared lifestyle was a synecdoche for protest, and also served as a collective action reservoir for more contentious political

action from time to time. While living a lifestyle was, for many Rabbits, a substitute that washed away their distaste for direct actions like protest, for others it was a launchpad that gave them the tools and support to do so. Additionally, their labor practices and the use of co-ops demonstrate that they have an attachment to an egalitarian ideal acted out through the everyday practices of lifestyle. That no one gets paid more than twice the least paid person in any of the formal organizations at DR, and that there is an informally-stated minimum wage that is far above the legal minimum wage for the state, indicates their willingness to make everyday practices a site of political claims-making. Practices like pooping in a bucket serve as key points of contention in this claims-making process as it serves as a filter for potential new Rabbits, and the creation of a politicized lifestyle as it serves as an environmentalist critique to the rest of society.

Like a cultural movement, they rely on embedded networks and peer support to create meanings of resistance that construct the Rabbit identity around the aspect of self-actualization. This could be seen in the way they talked about their own habits and beliefs, in how most Rabbits came to define their lifestyle as fulfilling. Many found a home for their activism where they felt supported and lauded, in contrast to their ideals making them marginal figures to past circles. Their use of consensus, habits of organic gardening, active participation in men's and women's support groups, and pooping in a bucket are more than just acts of resistance, they are acts of self-fulfillment that give Rabbits a sense that they are living their ideals. While there are distinct boundaries around what it means to be a Rabbit, those that fit within or adapt to those ideals receive a great deal of social support for living the lifestyle from other Rabbits.

All three of these movement types share in common a claim to the nature and future of society, but differ in their means to achieve that claim. While each of the three movement types involve some form of claims-making nestled somewhere on the personal-political spectrum, the social movement node posits that perhaps it is not a spectrum at all. As the Figure 1 in Chapter 1 displayed, movement forms may instead be conceptualized as overlapping realms of claims-making rather than opposite ends of a spectrum. Through their shared lifestyle, Rabbits lay a claim that is both political and personal: they practice a lifestyle they come to define as fulfilling, while also making claims about how elected leaders should act or how laws and policies should change.

Other Examples of the Node

We can find this interplay between the culture and politics of historical moments, such as the rise of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (McAdam 2010) or the Black Lives Matter movement of the 2010s (Carney 2016). These movement cycles were built upon the presence of an aggrieved population and a favorable political climate, and while those characteristics might suffice to explain effects cycles of black liberation activism has had, they capture only the most visible part of the cycle. This view and use of social movement cycles tends to obscure the interstitial moments of activism. Just because a movement is in the lulled stage of a cycle, where there are fewer public markers of movement activity, does not mean it ceases to exist. Likewise, cultural movements tend to predate and postdate political ones.

As cycles rise, there is a rapid proliferation of new forms of direct action and the formation of new SMOs, and as Tarrow (1994) reports, “movement organizations are easier to trace than broad waves of contention and are more readily open to investigators.” (p. 142) By no means do I wish to suggest that developers and users of the cycle metaphor assume that all movement activity ceases in low parts of the cycle. Rather, I argue that the use of cycles as a prevailing paradigm has firmly established a hegemonic understanding to what is “interesting” about social movements when, in fact, the study of what happens between dramatic outbursts of fully formed movement activity hold just as many important and interesting lessons to understanding how people create challenge and spark change (see also Zald 2000).

These interstitial moments between movements hold important lessons for how opportunity structures emerge, because activism does not cease. Take, for example, the founding of Koinonia Farm in 1942. This was a commune that emerged in rural Georgia, a center of racist exclusionary politics, during a time when the prevailing political opportunities to make an impact on improving the rights and opportunities were slim, a period between Reconstruction and the rise of the Civil Rights movement nearly two decades later. Yet, led by a Christian preacher, black and white toiled together on the commune with equal pay, even as the local bank denied them loans, bandits repeatedly shot at and destroyed farm equipment; and the local chamber of commerce organized boycotts against them. Despite their troubles, the farm managed to create a mail-order service that shipped pecans and walnuts around the world (Fuller 2003). If not for Koinonia Farm and other endeavors surely lost to the pile of disinterest

within the study of social movements and political challenges, the Civil Rights movement might not have taken the form it did. Their efforts set many of the bases which the Civil Rights Movement would later use as tactics for activism: when the local chamber of commerce attempted to box them out of business connections, they tapped friends and allies in the North who wrote dozens of letters to editor in their own local papers pressuring their business leaders to cut ties with Georgian businesses (O'Connor 2005). Those and other alliances would later be tapped by more famous Civil Rights leaders for their own cause.

Koinonia Farm has a legacy as a social movement node: as much a political challenge as it was (and to an extent, still is), it was also a cultural one, wrapped up in the everyday practices of lifestyle. Black and white living side by side was not just unusual, but prohibited by custom and law in the Jim Crow South – and most visibly by the sheriff in Sumter County, Georgia. Equal pay for equal work challenged the economic norms of Southern agriculture. Law and culture, always intertwined, also meant that Southern blacks were unequal across all spheres of life, and Koinonia was a movement node that critiqued the whole of inequality through a collective lifestyle developed to make whites and blacks as equal as they could functionally be in the time and place. The size and persistence are both indicative of social movement node organization. Unlike the cycles of movements throughout the rest of the country over the intervening 80 years, it persists today as a commune with much the same mission. It was distinctly limited in size and scale to a core group of people, unlike what we might see in conventional mobilization for a social movement's rapid expansion, though with a

network of allies who might be mobilized to support the node in various ways from afar through the direct action techniques of letter writing and boycotting.

When movements enter their inevitable decline, movement groups encounter a few things according to Tarrow (1994): exhaustion and polarization, where activists demobilize or turn against each other; institutionalization and violence, where activists are either absorbed or turn to violent tactics that delegitimize them (or, they become revolutionary); and facilitation and repression, where they are either absorbed or dealt with harshly by the state. Mass publics tend to crave stability, and can only tolerate periods of heightened conflict for a period in proportion to the popularity of the issue in grievance. Yet, social movement nodes experience ups and downs on different terms, typically without the mass mobilizations or precipitous declines. They take advantage of larger political opportunities as those arise, but also make their own. The vagary of a political targets inherent in cultural movements, and their integration with social movement nodes means that a node is often free to select a target for direct political action in tandem with their own lived ideals and still take advantage of political opportunities, or simply select a target of their choosing as the group sees fit even if opportunity structures are unfavorable to mobilization beyond the small core of activists in the particular node. There is little danger that said core group will demobilize for any of the reasons Tarrow listed.

I see the importance of the social movement node as an aid for observers wishing to parse out the interstitial moments between movements. A social movement node is a consistent body or organization that tends to maintain a relatively steady

membership over time rather than the rapid growth and frequent factionalization that happens to movements in cycles of protest. In the case study of Dancing Rabbit, there is also a cycle of movement activity, though it is more regular and highly predictable as activity at the ecovillage is tied strongly to the shifting of seasons. Other nodes may be similarly subject to regular cycles of action, whether they be electoral cycles or the cycle of an academic school year. They are also influenced by the cycles of contention and larger political opportunity structures, since members of the node act as a collective action reservoir, though their persistence is not tied to these campaigns or waves of movement activity. At DR, as with other nodes, the choice to take direct action is typically born out of lifestyle concerns, and Rabbits tend to not run campaigns against ongoing antagonists. Antagonists may come and go, whereas in social movements a victory over an antagonist may dramatically change the nature of the movement. In a social movement node, though, their interplay with political targets does not inherently define the group's goals nor lifestyle. Instead, social movement nodes contain collective action reservoirs much as lifestyle movements do.

The collective action reservoir is clearly a part of the Plowshares community studied by Nepstad (2004), for example. An anarchist-inspired community originally founded in the legacy of the famous Catholic Worker Dorothy Day, the community is strongly based on anti-war and anti-nuclear proliferation causes, among a host of related issues. Most Plowshares activists don't vote, since Day's vision was "to create a more just society by withdrawing from the capitalist system as much as possible, by dialoging on a variety of issues – from labor practices to militarism – and by confronting

those who perpetuate exploitative practices.” (p. 49) Though the community foregoes some formal political channels, their frequent use of other direct action and ascetic Christian living wrap both political and cultural critiques up together in a common lifestyle. Social movements have been identified as relying on extra institutional tactics, and so foregoing the institutional ballot box does not exclude Plowshares from being a node.

In their case, where most anti-war and anti-nuclear activism had died by the 1990s, and most of the related SMOs to those movements had either died as well or adapted to other purposes, the Plowshares community remained steadfast in their activism in that period in defiance of a dearth of political opportunity. Members would regularly trespass on military installations and attempt to disable equipment or pour blood on them. Nepstad’s observations and reporting also predate by several years the rise of protests against the Iraq War, leaving Plowshares activists toiling through their cause in between cycles of anti-war protest. The community seems to break from the mold of social movement cycles, with members regularly using direct action as a means of living their ideals despite the lack of larger opportunity structures and universes of political possibility. Members, too, take up the mantle and everyday practices of simple living and Christian ritual, which together make for a Plowshares lifestyle of radical leftist Christianity. Theirs is less the reactionary, opportunity and resource driven political engagement of other, non-node groups. Rather, there is a prefigurative sort of political action based in the ritual of resistance based in a commitment to pacifism.

They also have shared communal residential spaces, the Jonah House and Atlantic Life Community, which Nepstad notes play an important role in generating commitment. She explains that, for the community, “ritualistic reinforcement is particularly crucial since Plowshares activists often see no measurable results from their actions” (p. 54), as they are not backed by larger movement masses. Plowshares activists maintain their commitment to the community by frequently attending retreats and one of both of the houses, where they eat, pray, and plan together – the same mechanisms of commitment that Kanter (1968, 1972) found operating among ICs. This sort of geographic core is a prerequisite to the social movement node, as group commitment to persist in political work requires a supportive communal experience to generate the necessary collective identity, even though not all members of the community live in either of the communal spaces full time. In the Plowshares community, a regular gathering point for religious ritual has served the same function, as a place where the population who are part of the node can gather, either permanently or as needed to reinforce both aspects of lifestyle and the need for political direct action.

The idea of the node, while not inherently limited to ICs as a phenomenon, could perhaps be seen as a twin sometimes conjoined to such communities. Not all ICs have a political bent or mission and, in fact, many could hardly be considered movement material at all since they are retreatist in nature. Often, too, the effects of the retreatist-style IC are lost to obscurity because they produce few artifacts, or the artifacts they produce hold meaning only to the members, while those communities

with the most forceful of outreach missions are remembered because they are reported on by others outside the community, or produce their artifacts and writings for wide distribution. By producing a new or emergent group identity with which to make claims, they overlap with literature on the “new” social movements.

Many speculated that these so-called “new” movements developed out of the rising quality of life in Western countries from the 1960s onward (Offe, 1985, Touraine 1985, Melucci 1980), though others have called in to question that previous movements had by any means eschewed the quality of life concerns characteristic of the cycle of movements that arose in the 1960s (Plotke 1990). One such set of critics are d’Anieri, et. al. (1990), who bring forward a few examples as containing many of the elements assigned specifically to “new” social movements but in a different time than they were theorized to have existed. One case they focus on is the the Oneida community, a religious commune of the 1840s to 1880s. The name Oneida is recognizable today from the popular silverware brand that exists today as a spin-off of the community’s original cottage industry, though its beginnings lay in more radical roots of communal living and political critique. d’Anieri, et. al. describe the endeavor of Oneida as such: “[I]ike the ‘new’ social movements of the late twentieth century, the actions of...Oneida... [didn’t] exclusively [seek] state action. The Oneida community was founded by John Humphrey Noyes in order to provide a new ‘life space,’ free from the other anachronistic constraints of society. The community’s activities, in other words, were focused not upon changing the actions of the state or other formal institutions, but rather upon constructing a social and economic system that would provide an alternative structure

within which the self-actualization of the members, through perfectionism, could occur.” (1990, p. 450) The political mission of Oneida was much narrower than the one at DR is, and their collective action reservoir much smaller, but was nonetheless a prefigurative political arrangement that was similarly persistent and based on its own economic bull and bear cycles rather than being carried by the wave of activism that occurred in the 1840s.

Like Koinonia, they shared in common a cottage industry that allowed the community to persist even as they encountered a great deal of resistance from the society that surrounded them. Few were willing to accept Noyes’ ideas of “complex marriage” and early version of free love in Oneida outside the community, yet many still bought the community’s manufactured goods. Also like Koinonia, they were the subject of protest and ridicule by neighboring, non-intentional communities (Verheyen 1998). To live a resistant daily practice, and “be the change” as the modern aphorism goes, is key to seeing the Oneida lifestyle as a social movement node. If we must distinguish between new and old movements, it would be all but obvious that a social movement node falls in to the “new” camp for containing lifestyle and cultural concerns that lead to self-actualization as a key constitutional requirement alongside their deployment of collective political action.

Then again, both new social movements and the social movement nodes are heuristics for explaining newly interesting forms of movement activity, not immutable categories of human behavior. Social movement nodes share the aspect of self-actualization with new social movements, even as that aspect is often falsely attributed

as new to the wave of movements that swept the 1960s (Pichardo 1997, Calhoun 1993) in to the present. Where there is ample evidence that social movements happen in cycles or waves, there is less evidence to effectively determine whether the same can be said for social movement nodes. The following section discusses this, with ICs standing in as synecdoche for social movements to a notable degree, as they have for much of this work.

Waves of Community

Movements have been observed to rise and fall in “cycles,” per the common metaphor deployed by the likes of Doug McAdam (2010) or Sidney Tarrow (1989, 1994), and adopted by others. Yet, the cycle metaphor is incomplete in many ways, reflective only of the most visible elements of a phenomenon. Before a cycle begins, or after a cycle ends, social movement activity and its constituent components persist on the social landscape. The need for self-actualization found among the so-called “new” social movements may retreat more to the realm of personal or cultural work, and practitioners of direct action may retire their methods for at least a time. Yet, as Schehr points out, “...sociological theorizing of social movements has been confounded by an Enlightenment-inspired dedication to linear theoretical models, models that attempt to identify a clear organic or evolutionary movement from some initial point to another.” (1997 p. 14) We need to abandon such hang-ups in the study of social movements, and instead look holistically at the interaction between the populations from which

movements arise and return to, and how those inform the claims-making processes at heights of a protest cycle.

Between the cycles of protest that have crested at various points for such movements as black liberation or women's rights, the currents pushing towards them did not subside. While on one hand, when political opportunity existed at respective times that drew millions of activists in to the limelight, on the other when opportunity structures soured, so too did mostly just the fair weather activists lay down arms. A core of activists have remained throughout the interstitial periods of activism worthy of just as much examination as the heights of cycles themselves, and the arc of movement activity extends far beyond its most visible appearances in waves of protest. We can see this in Staggenborg and Taylor's (2005) empathic questioning of "whatever happened to the women's movement?": it did not die. Instead, they note that there are a number of people committed to fighting for women's equality, but as it intersects with other issues. Just because the ways of doing so haven't (or, hadn't at the time of their writing) shared the same profile as the organizations and events of the 1960s and 70s, doesn't mean that there isn't a strong collective identification among women (and men) who care deeply about their progress in society. And, "[o]ne reason for the assumptions about the death of feminism is that scholars think about the movement in terms of "waves" or cycles of protest." (p. 37) This is not to say that cycles aren't important, but that the theory of cycles predominates in a way that often obscures a fuller picture of social movement phenomena. Indeed, as long as there is a plethora of sex and gender inequality concerns plaguing Western democracies, it is unlikely that activism on that

issue will ever cease entirely, but rather experiences waves of activism and periods of abeyance (Taylor 1989).

Freeman and Johnson (1999) use this alternate metaphor of a “wave” of activism in addressing heightened periods of visible social movement activity in the 1960s, where they observe, importantly, that “when movements cease, the community that was created often continues.” (p. 3, see also in the same volume Taylor and Whittier 1999). Staggenborg (1998) similarly suggests that, “movement communities must be linked to social movements, which are preferences for particular sets of changes. A distinctive subculture without movement connections cannot be considered a movement community; movement communities must share movement goals and attempt to advance them.” (p. 182) This represents perhaps the most striking connection between certain ICs as social movement nodes and larger social movement phenomena, as there is ample evidence that the formation of ICs throughout US history has tracked closely with other cycles (or “waves”) of protest. A bevy of historical studies have discussed how, as erstwhile social movement activity ramped up throughout the 1840s and 1960s, so too was there a rapid proliferation of ICs across the landscape that reflected attempts to address the major political issues of the day (Barkun 1984, Berry 1992, Carden 1979, Roberts 1971). Other observers, while not explicitly tying the proliferation of ICs to the social movements of their day, have also noted that there were waves of community that have recurred at various points in US history (Kanter 1972, Smith 2002) that were reflective of contemporary social strains. More recent analyses have tied modern-day ICs to the idea of “new” social movements through their concerns for members’ “life

worlds” (Schehr 1997), or self-actualization concerns, in tandem with political outreach efforts.

There are some important nuances to this connection between social unrest and IC formation, and it is important to be careful in assigning any theoretical weight to the idea that ICs are a direct outgrowth of social movements, or vice versa. Notably, scholars of both ICs and social movements propose these “cycle” theories (Barkun calls ICs “cyclical phenomena”). Past waves of ICs and social movements have significant temporal overlap, with the most significant periods of protest and expansion of ICs occurring at very similar times throughout US history. This is no coincidence, as indeed many of the same dynamisms that lead to cycles of protest and contentious political action also lead people to form alternative, prefigurative institutions and attempt to reform the system through building an alternative one. There is undoubtedly a lot of room to measure the causes of the often-cyclical nature of social phenomenon associated with unrest, but to discuss that here would be to theorize the cart before the horse. IC members create history as much as they are subject to it, and it is easier to decipher what caused them to form than the full extent of their myriad effects on society.

The same can be said about DR as part of a social movement: they create historical conditions as much as being subject to them. On the one hand, they are part of a new breed of IC, the “ecovillage,” that has arisen as a unique form since their 1990s. DR’s founders were pioneers, among the first to combine an environmentalist critique with rural communal living. On the other hand, DR could alternately be called

many things, depending on what characteristics and practices one might elevate that have historical precedent in other movements forms or groups. Their egalitarian ethos, as seen through their use of consensus decision-making, draws strongly from the ICs of the past, and from other movements (social and cultural) before them. And, being a collective action reservoir similarly matches them with any number of contentious political actions deployed by the lifestyle movements they are drawn to, most of which have long historical models.

Cycles of contention typically large enough that they draw a society's attention to the issue, far beyond just the mobilized constituency or the target of their political actions (Tarrow 1994). Social movement nodes, however, not being subject to the same dramatic rise and fall as cycles of social movement activity, are often left out of the general public's eye. They instead develop networks of allies that extend beyond the node, like pathways that lead to a central point. For all of the examples noted above, including DR, there were/are many people who have encountered the community but could never fully commit to the lifestyle that comes as part of full participation in it, yet nonetheless carried some of the Rabbit ideals with them as a result of that contact. Though they may similarly be roused to action, as with Koinonia tapping its allies in the north, or as with DR leveraging goodwill towards the community among friends, family, and past visitors in annual fundraising drives for its non-profit outreach arm, ultimately ICs lack the ability to mobilize and expand rapidly the same way SMOs would do at the height of a cycle of protest. Ergo, there is a concrete need for the concept of the social

movement node because it fills a heuristic gap left by the metaphor of cycles in the study of social movements.

Political Change and Movement Theories

In any movement, lifestyle and culture are inextricably linked to the variety of people participating in protest. Yet, they have not always been a feature central to the definition of social movements. Many conventional or functionalist models of social movements stress what resources movements are able to mobilize in given movements of history, or the confluence of political winds creating opportunity for social movement constituencies, while assuming constituencies exist as a feature of the political landscape to be drawn upon or activated. Others have often assumed a Marxist standpoint to this, reducing social movements to “class relationships rooted in the process of production.” (Buechler 1995, p. 442). There is no reason to dismiss these theories outright, but as Goodwin and Jasper (1999) note, the study of social movements has often used invariant modeling and failed to strike a balance between structure and agency, often heavily favoring the former.

These conventional models, or what Tarrow (2008) calls the “contentious politics” (CP) models, hold true to one aspect of social movement activity in their assumptions that structure is significant, because they tend to view mobilization through a class lens: a class (not necessarily economic) of people aggrieved and who would benefit from the outcome of a social movement (Zald 2000) will take up the cause to further their own interests. McCarthy and Zald (1977), in Resource

Mobilization theory, stress that “beliefs and preferences” play a major role in determining how social movement participants are recruited. The significance of this perspective is that there is a difference between the orientation a group of people takes toward an issue, and the orientation said group takes towards addressing that issue. Not everyone who holds a certain set of beliefs will be mobilized, yet when a set of “issue entrepreneurs” take up a common issue and turn it in to collective cause, they form a political community and recruit a social movement out of a milieu of the aggrieved class.

Such constituencies, too, have social networks that can be activated to participate in social movement events or organizations. McAdam (2010) pointed to this in his study of the US Civil Rights movement. Churches, schools, and advocacy groups were the rallying points by which political opportunities were seized to create change. In McAdam’s appraisal, such highly organized pre-existing networks and the context of expanding opportunity structures were both necessary to the launch and ultimate success of the movement. Said networks are the lynchpin between lifestyle and social movements, because they arise from the everyday practices of potential and actual social movement constituencies. Lifestyle is often something shared by a group of people, characteristic of a class, and the deliberate choices one makes to exercise the foundations of a shared identity. It can arise from the shared identity of people in an oppressed group as they are presented with expanded political (and social) opportunities.

Or, in ICs like DR, it can arise from a common unmet need sought out by a like-minded group of people. Members of DR come from constituencies of choice, that are

actively sought out by people who consciously develop radical ideals, rather than constituencies of circumstance as many class, gender, sexuality, or race-related movements are. For Rabbits, the lifestyle they have cultivated is a consequence of a conscious undertaking over an inborn trait or an existing established network or identity.

Put another way, if Rabbits were the same as other social movement constituencies, that network would extend intuitively beyond the bounds of the village to people closely related to them. Their parents and offspring might also be environmentalist communitarians, Rabbit-adjacent in their own lives in a way that predicts they would be related to a Rabbit. Yet, none of the Rabbits have parents who were communitarians, nor did said parents always carry a similar environmentalist ethos with them. Two different examples are important here. First, none of the offspring of Rabbits who spent the majority of their youth at DR remain in the village. They all came of age, left the village, and have not returned. Second, the many varied parents of Rabbits who visited while I was living there seemed supportive of their children's endeavors, but had no plan to do the same themselves. Sambucus's mother even served on the board of the land trust. But, the parents of many other Rabbits seemed to look upon the Rabbit lifestyle as a curiosity to be endured and supported, rather than replicated in their own lives. Widder's parents bought a house in a nearby town to be close when they retired, distinctly outside the village so they would not be held to its covenants.

In contrast, shared circumstances, where everyone in the group has a structural commonality that brings them together, can predispose their social networks in to social movement constituencies which can then be activated in to social movement participation. Roscigno and Danaher's (2001) study of mill workers in the Southern US found that radio stations and musicians that played pro-union songs found a direct correlation to strike activity in the areas they reached. They determined that the "new collective identity and movement solidarity was formed through music played on the radio and spread by local musicians traveling from mill town to mill town." (p. 42) This, coupled with the newly broadcasted presidential fire side chats that made it seem like the national powers were aligned with workers' interests to present a new political opportunity for existing networks. Their political opportunity structures were clearly detectible, as those towns subject to contemporary union movements had large (if not universal) numbers of families whose livelihoods were dependent on a single employer and were easily transformed in to a social movement constituency.

Likewise, a movement network can be forged in the fires of resistance. Taylor and Whittier (1999) observed that in the lesbian feminist movement protests became a means of building collective identity and thus "affirm[ing] members' common interest in opposition to dominant groups" (p. 172) like the larger Women's Movement. Often, though, social movements and the constituencies from which they are called to action are a chicken-or-the-egg question. Frequently, activists "spill over" from one movement to a subsequent other through "organizational coalitions, an overlapping social

movement community, shared personnel, and the effects on the external environment” (Meyer and Whittier 1994, p. 293).

But DR is unlikely to benefit from the same sorts of political opportunities as social movements, given the lack of political cyclicity in their social movement node (where their cyclicity is tied to the seasons). Their stated goal is to grow to be a village of 500-1,000 people, and to model a sustainable future that others outside the village might live by as well. They have grown precipitously in the past, only to have subsequent population crashes in subsequent years. The village likely could not handle a rapid expansion associated with a cycle of protest while still maintaining their established relationships. Nor is the Rabbit lifestyle and identity, like a true cultural movement, likely to bifurcate or schism the way that Cherry’s (2006) vegans did. Where they had a lifestyle whose definitions of the diet were supported by peer networks rather than fixed boundaries, every Rabbit has a different definition of what being a Rabbit means that is constantly negotiated through the embedded networks of their village interactions. In other words, cultural movements are subject to different interpretations by different and sometimes separate networks, but in the social movement node members share a single embedded network that generates shared definitions.

Social movements exist, by nature, on the political fringe (McCarthy and Zald 1977). ICs, both historically and presently, similarly exist on the social fringe along with many varied groups, not all of whom become politically active. Regardless of whether one lives at or regularly interacts with an IC in a way that would lead them to identify

with that constituency, the people live on that social fringe are often associated with “hippies” and “weirdos” in the collective public imagination and therefore make easy bedfellows with political action. While not every IC should be seen as contributing to social movement activity, it is not hard for members to make the ideological leap to alternative form of community as a critique of both social and political status quos. In other words, pooping the bucket is a practice that lowers the threshold for picking up a sign and going to a direct action like protest – though protesting does not necessarily lower the threshold for pooping in a bucket.

Conclusion

The idea of a social movement node is one that I hope can and will be used to bridge gaps which currently exist in the study of social movements. These include, but are not limited to: the disproportionate focus on the heights of cycles of protest when the troughs hold their own significance, the perpetually unanswerable question of how many people it takes to qualify as a movement, and the problem of detecting movement activity outside of cyclical phenomena. These questions have other answers already available - and I have detailed many of them through the dissertation. The node is a but one of many stacked on to the complexity of forms through which groups lay claim to and enact change.

I have labeled this phenomenon the social movement node for several reasons. First and foremost is that the node as outlined shares many key processes in common with social movements as they are typically outlined. Members of a node have social

processes that render a collective identity, build alternative social institutions that stem from their claims to an alternative future for humanity and society; and serve as a basis for direct action political engagement. But, they are also a more committed bunch than your typical activist, because they are willing to take action defined as political even where and when they lack significant opportunity structures that SMOs would leverage to make political gain. In fact, we could see commitment to a node much in the same way that commitment processes have been historically been defined in ICs, which Kanter (1972) seminally describes as when what a person wants to do is matched with what they must do, thus aligning the priorities of the group to that of the individual. Often, activists do not commit to political action simply because they think that they are able leverage towards the desired political outcome, but rather as a means of demonstrating to themselves that they are adequately committed to a set of beliefs, much like a religious confirmation ritual (Rubin 2010). Yet, for a group to be a social movement node, this commitment to something for one's self should be made in tandem with some sort of larger cultural and political goal.

While I have not tried here to push for a broader application of the concept beyond the case study at hand in this dissertation and a few readily comparable examples, I nonetheless see this concept as useful to a large array of communities – intentional and otherwise. Everywhere there are small groups and communities of activists that take steps to create an alternative lifestyle that is both a cultural and political claim to the nature and future of society. Sometimes, their collective identity serves as a collective action reservoir as well, and they may share a close geographic

proximity as ICs do. We may see this in a town's local punk scene, where youth gather to listen and rage to music shouted through low-fidelity speakers while talking about revolution and the revolutionary nature of their weekly dumpster dive to reclaim wasted food. Or, we may see this in the local anti-government militia, whose regular efforts and training and recruitment at the gun range or other centers of gun culture foster a focal point for revolutionary screeds.

Living in community is always a way for people to make a claim about how society *is* and *should be*. Some of those communities believe they have the *best* answer to right living, while others more modestly claim to have something *slightly better* than everyone else. Likewise, social movements lay claim to a political solution to a social issue while taking unsanctioned paths to express their criticism. Nonetheless, these share in common a claim to the nature and future of society which, when combined with a political vision and enacted through a common lifestyle, makes for a social movement node. The combination of these factors is what makes node unique from ICs and from social movements, respectively.

The success of movements is often measured in their impacts. Did the law change? Was a leader replaced? Have a number of people adopted a new, better practice? I am glad to have shared in the Rabbits' vision briefly, living among the wonderful people of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage and observing their norms as practices. What emerged from that time is an observation that activists are laying claims and making change in a way that other scholars of social movements have yet to clearly delineate and which challenges the primacy of the cycles metaphor as the way of

understanding how social movements generate change. They have repeatedly deployed direct action to make political claims, and built alternative structures that embody the ideals contained in their critiques, enacted through a common lifestyle that has persisted and evolved over the course of over 20 years.

My position is not to make claims about the efficacy of DR's mission and work in achieving such changes, nor the same for other groups that may be interpreted as nodes. That will be the job of researchers to come long after the tenure of today's Rabbit has ended, to look back and see whether they actually made the difference they were hoping for. What makes a movement exist and persist, though, is not whether the movement achieves its goals, but whether it successfully mobilized people based on a grievance they share, and brought them together to make claims about the need for social change. In that, DR is a success.

Appendix A

Recently, I attended a talk by the well-known and loved sociologist Victor Rios. In presenting a talk on his research, he recalled a conversation he had with one of his mentors about studying his chosen population: young boys of color growing up “in trouble” in Oakland. As he grew up in trouble himself, a product of how the US polices and criminalized bodies of color, this population held a particular significance to him and a particular interest to the social problems he hoped to discuss by shadowing the lives of these boys. Worried about going native, Rios told his advisor that he was worried he would “lose himself” among his study population since they were so much like himself. To this, his advisor responded “lose yourself, but then come back.”

This is a challenge that many ethnographers face, as they often choose to study populations they hold sympathies for, if not outright loyalties. As researchers, we are often tasked with writing a “story of them” while trying to navigate how that includes “us.” The danger of going native is often supposed by critics as losing one’s objectivity to the subject matter, and that by being partial to one’s subjects a researcher loses their ability to be impartial to the truth. The burden of finding some kind of objective truth is crucial to the social sciences, because we then base larger theories of the world on the data we gather to explain how society operates, changes, and manifests problems. If the data are compromised by an emotional attachment to a narrative, an outcome, or a group of people, it makes our theories about the world ultimately bunk.

Ethnography, though, holds a special place in this environment of social science knowledge and theory generation. As a systematic study of a small group or specific,

ethnography is often not generalizable enough to form broad social theory. As its expository and highly deductive nature often doesn't lead directly to theory, but rather either relies on existing theory or is the basis on which theory is later developed through more objective questions. Rios' young boys, for example, faced challenges of criminalization in Oakland (2011) – a very different punishment regime in a liberal state and an urban setting where people of color were a large share of the population - that we would have trouble replicating in another city in a state with a different policing regime and where the boys would have been a tiny numerical minority. If Rios were to replicate his study among young Black and Latino boys in, say, Louisville, his report of the regime under which their bodies and actions are criminalized would likely look quite different.

Even within the same city, changes of neighborhood, chronological progression, and researcher biography can lead to very different conclusions in ethnographic research. For example, Elijah Anderson (2000) studied one mostly-black neighborhood in Philadelphia to find that it was dominated by a division between “decent” and “street” folks, and that said division dictated the social hierarchy of respect within the neighborhoods. In contrast, a decade and a half later Alice Goffman (2015) studied a different yet demographically similar neighborhood in Philadelphia to find that the salient themes of being there are not the divisions of conduct, but the divisions between her neighborhood and others: life in the highly segregated neighborhood was dominated by variations of being in trouble, whether that be the potentiality of being in trouble, to being on the run from the police, or recently release and on parole. She

describes being invisible to police when they stop to detain and search (and harass) her subjects, or ignored by black men once they see she is “with” one of them, on the presumption that she’s in pursuit of sexual fulfillment from black men. Always assumed innocent, she manages to be a wallflower whilst witnessing interactions with the police that would often be kept out of the public eye.

These accounts demonstrate, at least, that the deep embeddedness of ethnographic research means that one cannot shunt aside their own identity or standpoint in society to commit to pursuing a fully objective piece of research the way one could do more readily with other methods. Research subjects in general are not just “vessels of knowledge” that are prefilled and preconfigured with a set of knowledge, but are rather active subjects in the groups and environments where they reside (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). A different researcher would ask different questions and elicit different answers from their subjects. Therefore, both researcher and subject are active partners in knowledge creation. For Anderson, a black man, the “them” of his research site more easily segues in to an “us” in his writing. He could readily be subject to the same conditions of threat and criminalization as his subjects, whereas Goffman, as a white woman, cannot relate to the same “them” of her subjects who demographically mirror those in Anderson’s study. Certainly, though, spending five years with her subjects would lead to her base her work in some conception of “us” that includes her, despite being able to take a wallflower standpoint when interactions with the police occurred. In these two studies, we see two different standpoints, two

different relationships, and two different ways of thinking about how the ethnographer can fit in to the population they study to create knowledge about them.

In either case, as it is with the study presented here, there is always some variation of the Hawthorne effect in place when one does research. Collecting data in whatever form will always alter social dynamics of the group one observes in some way. Were I to research a different IC, were I not white, male, able bodied, straight, and in a fairly high social status as an academic, any number of results might have differed in the account presented in this dissertation. Instead, rather than attempting to shunt those aside in pursuit of value neutral statements about DR, I have endeavored to show where my own life and characteristics are salient in the way I gathered and presented data in this dissertation.

Nor would I want my life to be unimportant to insignificant to the research. There are many variations among philosophers and sociologists of an old adage that our research should be more than a means to identify problems in the world, but should be a means to change it for the better. I care, just as my subjects do, about addressing looming climate disaster and prefiguring a more egalitarian world through alternative institutional arrangements. Yet, those goals can be presented in a number of different ways, based on any number of existing or developing ideologies that I may or may not subscribe to, and it is therefore a relevant challenge for me to write about the ecovillage without getting bogged down in those existing battles between activists. My goal throughout this piece has been to describe how such ideologies are performed – and there are many different ones – instead of placing a value judgement on them. I may

not be a simple liver, a vegan, or a Catholic like diverse Rabbits are, but if they can put their differences aside to cooperate, I like to think that I can similarly place mine aside to observe and report, pulling them back in as needed to explain how they might color my observations.

Had I chosen another IC, or even to visit DR at a different point in time, this dissertation would be arranged differently, and I might not have presented the concept of the social movement node. When I first touched base with the ecovillage for a hourlong morning tour nearly two years before I moved there to conduct the bulk of this study, the village was nearly 50% bigger. That was over 60 people, including one of the founders and another long-term early Rabbit who were gone by the time I began my study in earnest. At that size, they were still making whole-group decisions entirely by consensus at their Sunday meetings. This dynamic, I was told, was hugely frustrating and socially unsustainable, which led to the formation of the village council model I described in Chapter 2. Had I started my study then, it would have perhaps been more about the dysfunction of prefigurative politics, rather than that aspect taking a small role in a larger concept.

Likewise, as I discussed in Chapter 3, during my prolonged stay the issue of gender balance came to the fore in a way it hadn't previously for the village. As the population approached their self-imposed unacceptability ratio of 60% men, discussions peaked over how to best handle the balance. My presence as a male-identified person contributed to this dialogue even if I didn't intend it to. If my approach to ethnography had been to act as a wallflower, this would not have been possible. In a population as

small as DR's, in a rural, remote area, there's just no other way to be but involved and invested in the community. Involvement and investment could take a number of different forms, too, as I could have holed up in my room and not attended all of the many varied social events and meetings in the village. But, then, what kind of researcher would I be if I didn't care to explore all possible aspects of my population? Other than the men's and women's groups, and a few other gatherings that were particular to long-established associations or in which an individual's sensitive, private information would be discussed, every social or governance event at DR is open to everyone at DR.

Incumbent in this notion of openness, though, is the discussion in Chapter 3 where people need a reason to be at DR. The community is open to people in the community, but not open to the general public to stop in at any time. Recall that there were many reasons to be at DR: membership as a Rabbit, residency as an interim step before achieving membership, being a "Wexer," a guest of a Rabbit, a Visitor as part of the visitor program, or a customer of one of the on-farm businesses. For me to gain footing and have a reason to be at DR, I was first a visitor and then opted to apply to become a resident. I made this choice for a couple of reasons: as a guest of a Rabbit friend I could have had that permission revoked at their whim and been forced to leave unexpectedly; as a Wexer I would have had to work for someone else and potentially not had the time or energy to take research notes; and as a customer of the Mercantile I not have had the funding to stay more than a week nor been welcomed as having an earnest interest in the village. The decision to apply for residency, in a very tangible

way, put me in a position to have influence in the village whether I wanted to or not, even though it was vital for me in the first place in order to do the study. It contributed to the gender imbalance, put me in the rotation for chores, and created a financial obligation that I pay the same general fees that all Rabbits pay for maintaining village infrastructure. My renting a room from Cob also added to the overall economy of DR, even though it was a small part of the overall flow of money.

But more than obligations, it changed how Rabbits viewed me in relationship to themselves and the village. An application for residency indicates a serious intention toward living in the village and eventually becoming a Rabbit. So, while the Rabbits knew I was there to be a researcher, as soon as I became a resident I also became something closer to a peer. My opinion was welcomed in meetings, and my service sought at work parties, committees, or for general village chores. People opened up to me in a way they didn't before I was a resident. It's not that they were inherently secretive, but becoming a resident implies a level of seriousness, which for many Rabbits means surmounting a barrier of emotional investment that they wouldn't do for those they know will be transient to the village. As a resident, there was more incentive for them to become invested in me, which led to me becoming invested in them. When I left, people asked me if I planned to continue my residency so that I might return some day on non-research terms. I didn't have an answer, and I still don't. The village is on my mind to this day, and not just because I've written so much about it.

And I almost didn't leave. They did become my friends – at least, most of them. It's difficult, if not impossible, to see the same small group of people every day and not

form some bond with them in that time. I came to believe in their mission and find comfort in interacting with everyone, which included a lot of my own personal growth. As an activist myself, I am driven by a curiosity in how social, political, and cultural currents are mobilized towards the pursuit of changing society towards a claim of how it should be, and how one form interacts with others. Leaving was heartbreaking, as I knew I would never be as close to the Rabbits were I not living there.

So, this story of “them” is also a story of “us” that includes me. I took part in this mission, and had say in it, if only briefly. It’s not written to be a value judgement on their mission, which is something I believe in, but rather an exposition on the form they have developed to tackle it. But then I came back, ready to tell others about what I saw and did, and why Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is important to me and the world.

Appendix B

Note: All contents in this Appendix are reproduced verbatim from Dancing Rabbit's website or correspondence. Nothing printed here is in the author's own words.

Ecological Covenants of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage

1. Dancing Rabbit members will not use personal motorized vehicles, or store them on Dancing Rabbit property.
2. At Dancing Rabbit, fossil fuels will not be applied to the following uses: powering vehicles, space-heating and -cooling, refrigeration, and heating domestic water.
3. All gardening, landscaping, horticulture, silviculture and agriculture conducted on Dancing Rabbit property must conform to the standards as set by OCIA for organic procedures and processing. In addition, no petrochemical biocides may be used or stored on DR property for household or other purposes.
4. All electricity produced at Dancing Rabbit shall be from sustainable sources. Any electricity imported from off-site shall be balanced by Dancing Rabbit exporting enough on site, sustainably generated electricity, to offset the imported electricity.
5. Lumber used for construction at Dancing Rabbit shall be either reused/reclaimed, locally harvested, or certified as sustainably harvested.
6. Waste disposal systems at Dancing Rabbit shall reclaim organic and recyclable materials.

Sustainability Guidelines of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage

1. Dancing Rabbit is committed to working in the following ways to make itself a sustainable system.
2. Dancing Rabbit will look holistically at the issues of sustainability to create a sustainable culture that takes into account all impacts of its actions and acts to preserve the Earth for the future.
3. Dancing Rabbit will strive to rely only upon renewable resources, and to use them at a rate less than their replacement.
4. Dancing Rabbit will try to understand and minimize its negative impact on global ecological systems.
5. Dancing Rabbit will attempt to preserve and rebuild healthy ecosystems and have a positive impact on biodiversity.
6. Dancing Rabbit will try to create a closed resource loop where byproducts are reintegrated as useful resources, thus attempting to minimize waste products, especially those toxic or radioactive.
7. Dancing Rabbit will try to avoid exploiting people and other cultures.
8. Dancing Rabbit will strive to achieve negative population growth from reproduction.

As a member of Dancing Rabbit I have read and understand the above and agree to help Dancing Rabbit work toward these goals. I agree to take these ideals into account when making decisions for Dancing Rabbit and for myself while a member of Dancing Rabbit.

Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage Visitor Program Questionnaire

*Note: This questionnaire will be posted for all Rabbits to see before your arrival and will likely be all they know about you. For this reason, we ask that you be descriptive enough in your answers for us to get a good sense of you without being overly elaborate.

So tell us about yourself!

Full Name:

Nickname?:

Gender:

Age:

How did you hear about DR?

How would you rate your interest level in DR?

_____ Serious interest in membership (move in 3-12 months, DR is first choice)

_____ Moderate interest in membership (can imagine moving to DR if visit goes well)

_____ Possible interest in membership (looking for change, maybe DR could be it)

_____ Recrutable (if enjoy visit, may consider moving)

_____ Want to see what we are up to (not interested in membership)

_____ Other (explain):

Are you planning to visit DR with friends, family, or a partner? If so, what are their names?

Have you visited and/or lived in other communities? If so, tell us about your experience:

What excites or interests you about what we are doing here?

What are you personally looking for in a community?

What are you doing when you feel you are at your very best?

What is your personal approach and style in regards to communication, conflict, and sharing self-reflectively with others?

What does feminism mean to you?

Building a village requires all sorts of people with different skills and talents. If you were to move to Dancing Rabbit, how do you imagine you might create income for yourself and meet your financial needs?

What are you already doing in your life to create a thriving, just, and sustainable world?

Anything we forgot to ask that you would like us to know about you?

What is your education background?

What is your employment background?

Anything we forgot to ask that you would like us to know about you?

Logistics:

Name:

Postal Address:

City, State, Zip:

Phone Number:

Preferred E-mail Address:

Emergency contact :

Do you have any food allergies? To what?

Do you have any dietary restrictions?

Do you have any physical restrictions? (Even things like bad back or asthma should be included here.)

Acronym Guide

CR: Conflict Resolution

IC: Intentional Community

DR: Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage

LM: Lifestyle Movement

MARC: Membership and Residency Committee

MemDem: Literally, an abbreviation of the “Memphis Democrat,” a local newspaper.

Here, it is shorthand for the village’s blog, which used to also be published as a column in said paper.

NSM: New Social Movement

SMO: Social Movement Organization

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Vita

Zach Rubin is a student of the world and the people who inhabit it, which has led him to pursue a PhD candidacy in sociology from the University of Missouri. Within the discipline, his interests and specialties include social movements, political sociology, deviance, and environmental sociology. He also has an MA in Geography and an Online Educator Certificate from the same institution.

Zach has a long and varied record of teaching across disciplines and institutions. This includes courses in sociology, geography, rural sociology, and peace studies; taught at a large research institution, a private non-profit professional college, and a community college. He has taught extensively both on-ground and online over the course of a decade, in the traditional 16 week format, 4-, 6-, 8-, and 12-week formats; and self-paced.

His dissertation is an ethnographic study of an intentional community called Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, and the activist tendencies of its members. This has led him to develop the concept of the social movement “node,” where certain hallmarks of cultural movements, lifestyle movements, and social movements meet to bear a unique form of activism that interlinks cultural and political claims through a shared lifestyle.