

Raising (Pitch)forks for Climate Justice:
Leveraging a Just Transition in Dismantling *Big Meat*

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Minneapolis, Minnesota (July- August 2018)

Berlin, Germany (September- December 2018)

Community Studies Capstone

UC Santa Cruz

Winter 2018

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Introduction & Methods	6
 PART I:	12
Field Site	13
Defining the mid-space	14
Context of issues:	
- The climate crisis	16
- U.S.Political Economy of Food and Agriculture	17
- Limits to the alternative food movement	20
Just Transitions	21
 PART II	22
Positionality in the <i>Just Transitions</i> :	
Section A: Critical systems thinking & bridging narratives	23
Section B: Challenging corporate conglomerates (Big Meat)	37
Section C: Pushing for transformative policy	44
 PART III	50
Accountability to front line communities	
 Conclusion & closing statements ~ Getting to the root	55
 Appendix	57
Work Cited	58

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAFO's - Confined animal feeding operations

CLARA - Climate Land Ambitions Rights Alliance

CSO - Civil society organizations

COP24 - The 24th United Nations "Conference of the Parties" on climate change

DCJ - Demand for Climate Justice ~ international climate justice network

EJ - Environmental justice

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FN - Field notes

GDP - Gross domestic product

GHG - Greenhouse gases

GND - The Green New Deal

IATP - The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

ISDS - Investor-State Dispute Settlement

KJW - Koronivia Joint Work for agriculture

LVC - La Via Campesina

NAFTA - North American Free Trade Agreement

NCEJN - North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

NGO - Non-governmental organization

RCD - Rural Climate Dialogues

TNC - Transnational corporations

UNFCCC - The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

Preface

“Apparently they tracked me when we left the building last night, matched my face to security footage. Crazy stuff. I recognize the privilege I have in this situation being a white woman but the level of police presence and the extent of how far the Polish and United Nations administration will go to protect the interest of private industries over the public is absurd! The police will even stop you if you are wearing the same shirt as someone else!” (FN, 12/7/18, pg. 164)

These are my recounts hours after getting kicked out on my last day at the United Nations Climate Conference (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, for a minor act of solidarity with the climate justice network. At the conference I witnessed first hand the sheer lack of urgency and blatant injustice perpetrated on the global stage. The conference itself was sponsored by coal companies, with a *actual* coal display in the Polish Pavilion. “This is a matter of our life and death,” activists through the *Demand for Climate Justice* network pleaded; yet you would never know it watching delegates shmooze over the free alcohol at the German Pavilion (FN, 12/5/18 pg. 159).

Even in just the first three months of my field study alone, I watched from afar as wildfires tore up towns in Northern California (burning two of my friends’ childhood homes to the ground), hurricanes in North Carolina causing toxic sludge to seep into communities, while record-breaking heat waves in Japan and floods in northern India killed hundreds and displaced thousands (FN, August - September 2018).

Youth and front-line communities worldwide are fed up. On February 24, 2019 a group of 7-16 year-olds went to Senator Dianne Feinstein's office in San Francisco to demand her support for the Green New Deal (GND)¹ (Zuckerman, 2019). Despite the youth’s excitement, they were met

¹ The GND, proposed by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Markey, is the most progressive resolution on sustainable jobs and infrastructure since the New Deal in the 1930’s (Sunrise, 2018).

with a dismissive and outright demeaning response. “I’ve been doing this for 30 years, I know what I am doing,” Feinstein argued (Sunrise, 2019). In defense of these youngsters, Morissa Zuckerman -- my friend and fellow organizer who attended the meeting -- wrote an opinion piece in the San Francisco Chronicle:

“I wish I could look to my elected officials to fight for me and my generation. Instead, young people are taking that on ourselves. We will keep coming back again and again until our representatives understand our very lives depend on bold, ambitious action. [...] Sen. Feinstein recommended that I run for Senate someday. By the time I’m old enough to run for the Senate, our future could already be condemned to chaos. Sen. Feinstein: We’re out of time. We need you now” (Zuckerman, 2019)

Activists past and present have put their bodies, hearts, and minds on the line to protect the finite resources we all need to survive. The paper you are about to read is inspired by this incredible network of activists I had the privilege to meet during my time in Katowice as well own activist community here in Santa Cruz, whom taught me more about organizing and social justice than any class or textbook.

With that, I would also like to dedicate this paper to the staff at IATP, specifically Shefali Sharma, for mentoring me and trusting me with research projects far bigger than I expected myself to be able to complete. To Kate for all your tremendous inspiration and insight throughout the field study. Finally, a huge thank you to both the Community Studies Program faculty and my family for your unconditional support and encouragement to pursue my passions.

“Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness – and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling – their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

Remember this: We be many and they be few. They need us more than we need them.

Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

— Arundhati Roy, War Talk (2003)

Introduction & Methods

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has issued the warning that we have 12 years to keep global atmospheric warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius, from pre-industrial levels, if we are to avoid irreversible, catastrophic climate change (2018). Through increasing floods, fires, droughts, and other extreme weather events, climate change poses one of the greatest public health and social justice crisis of our time. This raises critical attention to *climate justice* in acknowledging how indigenous communities, low-income communities in the global south and other structurally vulnerable populations are hit first and worst by these proliferating changes (Klein, 2015).

Food and agriculture systems are also at the center of social, economic, political and environmental injustices. Taken together, industrial agriculture systems are both responsible for the accelerating climate crisis, while also extremely vulnerable to its ongoing impacts (IATP, 2016; 2017; 2018). This is particularly evident in ‘Big Meat’ where together the top five meat and dairy corporations (JBS, Tyson, Cargill, Dairy Farmers of America and Fonterra) combined emit more greenhouse gasses (GHG’s) than Exxon, BP or Shell (IATP & GRAIN, 2018). Big Meat - like Big Oil, or Big Ag. - pertains to the collateral influence top meat and dairy industries have over cultural understandings of health, climate and agriculture legislation/litigation and the market (Weis, 2007, Nestle, 2002 and Midkiff, 2004). In this paper, I will employ the language of “Big” to signal to this multi-dimensional impact.

Given this situation, an alternative food movement (AFM) has grown, providing consumers with options that attempt to address the environmental and social issues at hand. Examples include: buying local, organic, veganism and vegetarianism. However, the AFM’s reproduce elitism along the lines of race and class by relying on the market as a site of change and an over-emphasizing the

role of individualism. Consequently, these *neoliberal mentalities* and governance tactics (Guthman, 2008) have allowed the corporate industrial agro-food complex off the hook by failing to address the regulatory and structural change necessary (Guthman, 2008b; Allen et. al, 2003).

What's needed to complicate these individualistic and consumer focused narratives is a *Just Transition* (JT) that centers farmers, farmworkers and frontline communities² to transition out of industrial livestock production (and industrial corporate agriculture more broadly) while directly targeting the leading corporations most responsible for environmental degradation and pollution in the fight for climate and food justice. Referencing the work of Mascarenhas-Swan (2017) and the larger climate justice movement, a JT creates a framework to allow society to shift to a regenerative economy, while centering around the autonomy and agency of the key stakeholders.

During July-December 2018, I had the opportunity to conduct a field study with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) in both Minneapolis, Minnesota and Berlin, Germany. IATP works at the intersection of local, national, and international policy to challenge corporate power in agriculture and encourage sustainability for the betterment of farmers, rural communities, the environment, consumers and communities impacted by climate change (IATP, 2019). In this capacity, IATP has recently begun to lean into the rhetoric of JT's to learn more about its potential in supporting the shift out of industrial agriculture models. In contrast to the AFM, JT frameworks avoid market-based action, and instead put emphasis on generating political and social momentum for social justice.

² Front line communities, pertains to communities who bare the brunt of a given social, political, environmental and/or social injustice. For example, front line communities in the face of climate change are low-lying nations in the Pacific, indigenous communities in the global south, farm-workers etc (Vanderwarker, 2016).

IATP's positionality fits into what I will later define as the "mid-space". This mid-space pertains to organizations who occupy neither grassroots nor political offices. Instead, they leverage and bridge both institutional and embodied knowledge³ between the two spaces to advance efforts for social, political and environmental justice. This mid-space also refers to individuals and organizations whose relative institutional privileges affords them safety and distance from the immediate impacts of the climate crisis. Therefore, as I will explore at the end of this capstone, existing in this space requires a great deal of responsibility in order to adequately deconstruct reproduced oppressions (Apostolopoulou & Cortes-Vazquez, 2019).

Research Questions and Thesis

Taken all this background information and critical theory together has lead me to ask: To what extent does IATP's focus on policy and research serve as a viable alternative to the neoliberal governance practices of the alternative food movement? What tactics are effective in creating political momentum in the fight against the corporate control of industrial livestock production (i.e. Big Meat & Dairy)? What is IATP's role in facilitating a "just transition" from corporate dominance to a climate- and social-justice framework for food and agriculture?

In pursuit of this question I had the opportunity to serve as both an intern for the Industrial Meat Program, under the guidance of the Director for the European Office Shefali Sharma, as well as conduct ethnographic field observations for my own research. Through these observations I took daily field notes, attended weekly staff meetings and regional and international conferences, as well as interviewed staff members and other constituents. Since

³ Embodied knowledge refers the knowledge one has gained through direct or passed down lived experiences (Wilcox, 2009).

returning to Santa Cruz, I have coded these notes in correspondence to the abundance of academic literature on the topic(s). Re-visiting my work has allowed me to make the following claim:

A Just Transitions framework centered around livestock production is a necessary pathway to actualizing climate justice. IATP's positionality in this nexus of social change serves as an important case study in analyzing the oppositional potential of "mid-level" organizing (Allen et. al 2003). Namely, this position allows organizers and researchers alike to provide a systems-level analysis, challenge corporate agri-businesses, such as Big Meat & Dairy, and push for transformative policy in the areas of climate, trade, and agriculture. With that, however, climate justice can only be realized when there is deliberate and on-going accountability to- and direction from- the communities and stakeholders on the front line.

Finally, the purpose of this paper is neither to champion nor outright criticize IATP. Instead, I am using my experiences with IATP to learn more about how the JT framework, and a mid-level positionality, can yield potential for the larger movement.

Roadmap:

To support this multifaceted thesis, the paper is constructed as follows. Part I will provide background information on IATP and my field study in order to situate their role in the JT and help define what I call the mid-level positionality. The rest of Part I will briefly explain the climate crisis, with supplemental information on the rise of industrial corporate agriculture and Big Meat. This is important to explain the inadequacies of the alternative food movement, which contextualizes both the importance of the *Just Transitions* framework and of IATP broadly. Part

II will dive into three central aspects of the JT: critical systems thinking and bridging narratives, challenging corporate consolidation and transformative politics to increase regenerative agroecological practices on the ground.

This analysis, however, isn't complete without understanding the critical importance of centering the narratives and taking leadership from communities on the front line. Therefore, Part III will explore the nuance of accountability frameworks and unpacking the *distant gaze* (Apostolopoulou & Cortes-Vazquez, 2019). This section focuses on some of the ways I believe IATP and other mid-level organizations have more work to do. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, now more than ever, we have to pay attention to complexity and intentionality in building a larger movement throughout the food system. I will conclude with a larger call to action to “build movements of movements” (Mascarenhas-Swan (2017) in identifying the deep connections of larger justice work.

The analysis you are about to read is intentionally broad. Although I use case studies from my field study and academic literature to ground my analysis, I will refrain from honing in on any specific site/impact in order to argue that a *systems level* analysis is critical to both understanding the breath of the issues, as well as synchronizing our activism to fight against it ⁴.

Methods

For this research I draw upon 164 pages of, single spaced, participant observation field notes.

These field notes were written based on my daily observations, interactions and analysis during

⁴ Both the scholarly literature and my own field notes document the ways that gender and sexuality are significant social factors that impact individual, household and community vulnerability to food and climate injustice (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Patel, 2012). Though beyond the scope of this capstone to give these perspectives the attention they deserve, gender and sexuality must remain an integral analysis of activists' and academics' works working the fields of climate and food justice. With that, I recognize that “Big Meat” is itself a sexual innuendo. For now, you has a reader can disregard this fact or choose to read into the anti-patriarchal undtones to this essay.

my time working 40+ hours a week for five and half months at IATP. The first two months of my field study took place at IATP's main office in Minneapolis, Minnesota followed by three and half months working directly with my supervisor, Shefali Sharma at her office in Berlin, Germany.

Included in my field notes is information from my 12 staff interviews, notes from weekly staff meetings, and post-reports from the conferences and conventions I attended. The two conventions include Farmfest and EuroTier . The conferences include: Brot Fur Die Welt, Klima Alliance (Climate Alliance), Governors Food Forum, and the 2018 UN Climate Conference. To supplement these experiences, my field notes also draw on relevant news articles over the span of my field study, as well as a plethora of background information from IATP's own 30+ year archive.

In my academic analysis, I draw on my literature review, completed before my field study in June of 2018, which outlines key scholarly literature on climate justice, food justice/food sovereignty, the political economy of agriculture, and greater movement and activists theory. This literature review was built off of my four and half years of undergrad education as a Community Studies and Environmental Studies double major, with a concentration in Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.

Finally, the theory in this paper is also informed by the larger Environmental Justice and Climate Justice Movement. Specifically, the language and movement theory of JT, as well as challenging narratives on hierarchy and leadership. In building this analysis (on and off my field study) I largely drew upon my own experience as a student organizer four years with the

campaign Fossil Free UCSC. This campaign, and other student organizations on campus, have largely shaped my worldview, and thus the trajectory of this paper.

PT I: IATP, Climate Change, Industrial Agriculture and the need for a *Just Transition*

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) is a US based 501 (c)(3) non-profit and think tank that works at the cross sections of local, federal, and international policy. In their work, they challenge corporate power in agriculture and encourage sustainability for the betterment of farmers, the environment and communities impacted by climate change, industrial agriculture and unjust trade agreements. Because of their focus on trade and agriculture, IATP's work relies heavily on the intersections of economic, social and political analysis and advocacy. In this capacity, IATP is able to exercise a range of tactics to achieve short and long term goals. Over the course of their 32 years, these tactics have taken shape in each of their various programs: Agriculture, Community Food Systems, Industrial Livestock, Trade, Climate Change and Rural Development. In each department, staff utilize research, partnerships and community networks to advance a platform in support of sustainable agriculture and farmer rights. The institute is primarily based in Minneapolis Minnesota, although it has staff in DC, Maine, and Berlin (IATP, 2018).

History

The history of IATP is central to their work today. IATP was founded by Mark Ritchie in 1987, at the heart of the 1980's agricultural crisis. During this time, farmers across the globe were systematically undercut by neoliberal trade agreements and other international neoliberal

policies. After an international meeting in Geneva in 1986, farmers and agricultural movements from across the world began to recognize the innate correlation between the political agenda for economic liberalization, and the crises experienced by farmers and rural communities worldwide. Out of this meeting emerged a group of rural and farm leaders, who later became IATP's original board and body of leadership. In the early stages, IATP played a major role in negotiating the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which later became the World Trade Organization (IATP, 2018). Since then, IATP has used this analysis to support their ongoing critique of industrial, corporate agriculture production and its correlation to the climate crisis.

IATP prides itself today on staying true to its original mission - fighting against free trade agreements and advocating for farmers and rural sustainability. Although now the mission has expanded to include food justice and climate dialogues, these roots remain a focal point of the organization. As of today the mission reads: "IATP is committed to advancing policy solutions - locally and globally - to some of the world's most complex problems in order to promote resilient food, farm, and trade systems [...] IATP has worked for agriculture and trade policies that are good for farmers, ecosystems and social justice...." (2018). This includes identifying the links between hyper globalization dominated by transnational corporations (TNC's), the decline in prices earned by farmers, promotion of industrialized agriculture (synthetic inputs and mechanization), restricted access to healthy foods and the increase of hunger worldwide (IATP brochure, 2012).

"IATP's strength comes from the values that it was founded upon and that it has been able to maintain and deepen over time. Those values of fairness, and social justice,

respect for culture and environmental integrity, respect for the relationship of people to land...a belief that people need to be on the land...which is a value, a value that transcends any kind of calculus, any kind of metric.” - Interview with Executive director, Juliette Majot (FN 9/23/18 pg 31)

In this quote, Juliette alludes to the importance of land not just as a resource, but as a vital aspect to livelihoods, indigenous epistemology, and the vitality of rural communities. This quote is also powerful because it demonstrates IATP's deeper commitment to justice. Although they often have to work within the confinements of national and international bureaucracy - i.e. the UNFCCC- staff members share a vision for the world that deviates from the capitalist hegemony of prioritizing growth and resource extraction.

IATP and the Mid-Level Position

Given the breadth IATP's goals, their location in Minneapolis is strategic. On one hand Minneapolis is one of the most diverse and progressive cities in the country (Fawcette, 2015 & US Census Bureau, 2017). The Twin Cities' - Minneapolis and St. Paul- high urban concentration is also in stark contrast to the predominantly rural majority of the rest of the state. This contrast is reflective and necessary in agricultural work. Although IATP is left leaning in their anti-corporate and food sovereignty rhetoric, they were built on the foundation of supporting “family farmers”⁵. Therefore, being located near farming communities, not to

⁵ I am putting “family farmers” in quotes because it is a term that is malleable and manipulated depending on the given audience. More appropriate would be to say small to midsize farmers. In an interview with Colleen she explained to me how saying “family farmers” is also problematic because it implies a heteronormative, white nuclear family (FN, 8/20/18 pg 68). Colleen's comment supports Guthman (2008)'s argument of how an assumption of whiteness is perpetuated in the food movement.

mention geographically in the middle of the country are important factors in bridging rural and urban experiences in the US.

The “mid-space” in this context has a few other meanings than the two listed above. The most important definition is that it represents where it fits in among JT’s strategies. Since they are not explicitly “on the ground” tactics (i.e. working on a regenerative farm), they help to build capacity for such solutions, but not necessarily engage with them directly. Second, it signals to the larger conversations about flipping hegemonic notions of power and leadership (Freedman & Schaaf, 2015 and *People’s Demands for Climate Justice* COP24 FN, 12/7/18 pg. 162). Thus, in this analysis frontline communities are the “leaders”, or where knowledge should be originated, with politicians and elected officials as “followers” to this knowledge. Reclaiming visions of “people power” and “deep democracy” (Mascarenhas-Swan, 2017)

In my evolving definition of the mid-space I also refer to it as one’s degree of vulnerability to the climate crisis. In other words, someone who has more institutional privilege (along the lines of race, class, age, able-body etc.) are relatively “safer” or have more capacity for resistance, than say those on the front line. Given an *intersectionality* (Crenshaw, 1991) perspective, however, this is a more reflective spectrum, than a given set point (DuPuis et. al, 2011). Nonetheless, it is a useful tool for organizers to understand one’s positionality in relation to how much stake one has in the JT and, ultimately, what one has to gain from the collective liberation⁶ (Crass, 2003).

⁶ Collective liberation is a social justice theory to explain how everyone has something - albeit different given one’s social positioning- to gain in uprooting systems of oppression (Crass, 2003).

Context: Climate Justice

Climate change is inherently a social justice crisis. Both domestically and internationally climate disasters have disproportionately impacted low-income communities, and communities of color (or racialized minorities in countries in the global south) (Cole & Foster, 2001 & Klein, 2015).

This is consequence to the legacy of colonialism and institutional systems of oppression.

Examples include: building low-income housing in disaster prone areas, mass-incarceration of black and latinx communities, in-access to healthcare or legal protection for undocumented communities, etc. These social, political and economic factors work together to increase what Harrison defines as “structural vulnerability” of marginalized communities to climate related disasters (2008). In the global policy arena, climate justice is used to explain how former colonizing countries and other countries in the global north⁷ (e.g. United Kingdom, United States) have a greater historical responsibility to GHG emissions. Given this imbalance, the Paris Agreement⁸ attempts an *equity* approach to mitigation, adaptation, and finance⁹ (Chan, 2016 and People’s Climate Demands, 2018).

⁷ In recent years scholars and activists have used the terms “global north” and “global south” instead of using the rhetoric of “developed” and “developing” countries. Although neither are fully correct in categorizing the sets of countries, saying “global north/global south” is less problematic. Primarily because it rightfully complicates the narratives that countries with smaller GDP will inevitably industrialize in the way that westernized countries have (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Klein, 2015; Patel, 2007). This is important because if we as activists are going to push for a regenerative economic model, including peasant agriculture and agroecology (as I will later argue in Part II section C), then we cannot use language that counters this narrative.

⁸ The Paris Agreement is an international climate agreement drafted at 2015 COP in Copenhagen which sets non-binding climate mitigation, adaptation, and finance guidelines for each country. Under the Trump Administration the US is currently threatening to pull out of the agreement (UNFCCC, 2018).

⁹ Mitigation refers to reducing GHG emissions to stabilize or slow down climate change, whereas, adaptation is about building protection and resilience to its impacts. In relation to the terms *equity* and *climate justice*, countries in the global north have a greater responsibility to finance (provide money for) adaptation effort due to their historical responsibility.

Centering an equity analysis differs than “traditional” U.S. environmentalism.

Environmentalism is largely problematic through its reinforcement of white, classist and apolitical narratives. Hailing to John Muir as a founding father, the movement’s emphasis on wilderness and preservation ignores the colonial history of indigenous displacement and genocide that took place for the sake of conservation. Moreover, like the alternative food movement explained below, environmentalism conflates “protecting the environment” with individual acts of consumerism -- such as buying hybrid cars or refillable water bottles -- while dismissing the systemic root causes of environmental degradation such as capital accumulation and resource extraction. (Cronnon, 1995; Szaz & Meuser, 1998 and Cole and Foster, 2001). Therefore, climate justice and environmental environmental justice (EJ) frameworks are essential to addresses the implicit racial and economic injustices of the climate crisis.

Incentivizing Overproduction- Political Economy of Industrial Agriculture

Industrial agriculture systems are both responsible for the accelerating climate crisis, while also vulnerable to its ongoing impacts. The political economy of agriculture - upheld through commodity-driven Farm Bill’s in the U.S. - are constructed to maintain a constant state of grain surplus (primarily cereal grains such as wheat, corn and soy). Overproduction of cheap grain is then used for biofuel, animal-feed and ingredients for processed foods. In order to maintain these high quantities, farming systems have to rely on monocultures, fossil-fuel intensive machinery and synthetic inputs such as pesticides and fertilizers. These practices rapidly deplete topsoil and biodiversity; vital aspects to maintaining resilience to extreme weather events and pest invasion (Wies, 2007 & Gliessman et. al 1998 and IATP, 2017). As I will explain later in Part II section B,

incentivized overproduction encourages the consolidation of corporate agriculture through vertical integration¹⁰ which leads to low prices and diminishing rates of family farmers (IATP, 2019; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011 and Howard, 2016).

In the United States, the corporate food regime is also contingent upon both the colonial legacy of indigenous genocide and slave labor, and upheld through agriculture policy that privileges white land ownership (Patel, 2007; Winders, 2009 and Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). From *haciendas* - where indigenous peoples were forced to work on the land for a settler with little to no protection - to the Homestead Act of 1862, which gave land to “citizens” i.e. white, men, to slave operated plantations in the south, colonialism laid the foundation for a highly racialized and exclusive access to food and agriculture (Mintz, 1985; Harrison, 2008). In the food system today this shows face in both farm/ factory labor exploitation and increased rates of food insecurity in black and latinx communities (Lo & Jacobson, 2011 and Schwartzman, 2013)

Inequality in the food system was also exacerbated through the 1980’s Debt Crisis and Structural Adjustment Policies. While the rest of the world was told to liberalize their economy, the United States and the United Kingdom remained protective of its domestic markets. These hypocritical policies, such as the Peace Clause, under the Agreement on Agriculture, and export subsidies, (driven by biotech agribusiness) further incentivised over-production of grain in order for it to be sold at low end prices in the international market (Schurman & Munro, 2010)

This analysis is important because, just like climate change, inequality in the food systems is rooted in longstanding global inequality. Although the purpose of this paper is more geared towards climate change and climate justice, this analysis is still important in

¹⁰ Vertical integration occurs when a single company is able to buy up operation of other companies along the supply chain (i.e. seeds, fertilizers etc.). In contrast, horizontal integration is the merging of companies that offer the same product. Both result in increased market control (Howard, 2016).

understanding the limitations of the alternative food movement and the need for a JT and agriculture policy to addresses these structural inequalities.

Industrial Livestock Production & Big Meat

The political economy outlined above, leads to the corporate consolidation of industrialized livestock production; also known as *Big Meat*. In Big Meat, the top two companies, Tyson and JBS, sell half of all 1 billion chickens consumed, while the top four cattle companies - Tyson, JBS, Cargill and Smithfield - produce 85 percent of all the beef in the United States (Howard, 2016 and Haulter, 201;192). In this context Big Meat, also refers to vertical integration of genetic patents, livestock feed, medicine and transportation, slaughter facilities and branding. Together, concentrated market control allows to greater influence over political decisions regarding environmental regulation, trade agreement, labor rights amongst others.

IATP's recent publication *Emissions Impossible:How Big Meat and Dairy are Heating Up the Planet* opens by explaining how Big Meat has a greater cumulative climate impact than any singular fossil fuel industry. In this report, IATP and GRAIN show that "By 2050, we must reduce global emissions by 38 billion tons to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. If all other sectors follow that path while the meat and dairy industry's growth continues as projected, the livestock sector could eat up 80 percent of the allowable GHG budget in just 32 years" (IATP & GRAIN, 2018). Centering on Big Meat's climate impact is thus crucial in the climate debate because it broadens the conversation beyond just Big Oil as a target for political action.

The Alternative Food Movement: Limitations

In response to the interlocking environmental and social crisis explained above, individuals continually turn to their purchasing power to affect the industrial agro-food complex. In the case of Big Meat, consumers are increasingly turning to vegetarianism, veganism and localism to boycott meat (and/or dairy) products. Despite the good intentions of the AFM, it ultimately fails to address the structural issues of the agro-food complex and tends to reproduce elitism along the lines of race and class (Allen et. al, 2003; Guthman, 2008; Alkon & Algyeman, 2011). Namely, by relying on individuals and the market as a site of change, the AFM merely reproduce apolitical subjects through neoliberal governance (Guthman, 2008). Guthman (2008) uses Peck & Tickell (2002) to explain how neoliberal governance - the “rolling-out” of neoliberal ideologies and “mentalities” of personal accountability and aversion to the welfare state- put total responsibility for one's health on the individual, instead of recognizing the larger socio-economic factors at play.

Another significant limitation to the AFM is its reproduction of whiteness - both literally and symbolically (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011 and Myers & Sbicca, 2015). Sbicca (2014) writes: “Veganism perpetuates symbolic border construction by it failing to address issues of social justice, specifically labor exploitation and inaccessibility of healthy foods (Sbicca, 2014:3). This is problematic because it reinforces the coding of alternative food movements as “white” and economically elitist (Guthman, 2008). Consequently, these individualistic and “colorblind” (Guthman, 2008) narratives dissolve critical organizing potential against the institutions most responsible, limiting the potential for radical change in the food system (Guthman, 2008 and Zitcer 2017).

Just Transitions

In contrast to the limits of the AFM the JT provides a framework to center farmers, farm laborers, food workers and other front line communities in the transition out of industrial corporate agriculture. The *JT* framework is a theory of change coined by union activist, Brian Kohler who worked with labor organizers in 1998 to make sure that as the economy shifted away from coal to a low-carbon alternatives, coal miner's livelihoods were protected through new job trainings and community reinvestment. Early adoption of the framework include: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) 'Plough to Plate' food and agriculture (2000) International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (2009) the International Labor Organization (2013) (Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, 2018 and FN 10/5/18, pg 105). Since then, the framework has been picked up by a larger network of climate justice organizers and even the Paris Agreement itself to emphasize the necessity of *justice* at each step in the transition to a low-carbon economy. In particular to ensure that workers in extractive industries are included. In the context of Big Meat and IATP's constituents, this includes conventional and contract farmers, farm-laborers and communities on the front-line of factory farm pollution.

Framework

For this analysis I will be drawing on Movement Generation's (MG) JT zine, which is based on the writings of Mascarenhas-Swan (2017), a "Case For Just Transition", from the book *Energy Democracy*. In this articulation of the JT, Mascarenhas-Swan M (2017) presents two economies - extractive economy (re the industrial agricultural system above) vs. regenerative economy to

represent two dichotomous economic and social structures. In the middle of the two, is the site of the *transition*.

There are four main components to MG's version of the JT. One, "change the story" two, "change the rules" three, "move the money" and four " build movements of movement". Each of these sections I added in the numbers 1 - 4 in MG's diagram (see figure 1 in the appendix). Largely these four steps fit into what MG writes as "end the bad and build the new" or "starve and stop (i.e. divest) from their power and feed and grow (i.e. invest) in our power" (2018). In this paper I will explore these four components in more depth to articulate IATP's role in the JT and the role of activist and researches broadly who may not be on the frontline, but play a role in supporting the development of the *regenerative economy*.

Part II: IATP and Mid-Level Positionality

IATP's recent engagement with the JT process is holds great potential in the greater climate justice/ food movement. In the following three sections I will break down three components of the transition and explain how IATP - as a case study- demonstrates the important strategic role in initiating the transaction beyond place-based alternatives. Namely, in holding a critical systems analysis, using this analysis to challenge key corporate actors and, three, utilize capacity to track tedious trade, agriculture and climate policies to advance visions for justice. IATP and other organizations in this nexus have an important role to play in shifting resources and capital to communities on the frontline to support their leadership in the Just Transition.

PART II Section A: *Systems Perspective and Bridging Narratives*

Having a mid-level positionality allows activists and researchers to bring a systems perspective to advocacy and research. In turn, this allows for the bridging of narratives of different front line communities such as farmers, farmworkers, communities in food deserts, and communities facing environmental racism; all of whom have an important stake in the Just Transition.

For this analysis I will be using a “systems perspective” as being synonymous to *critical systems thinking* (Jackson, 2001). Jackson (2001) defines critical systems thinking as: “a methodology [...] which has supplied the bigger picture [and] can be used together in a coherent manner to promote successful intervention in complex societal problem situations” (233). Jackson explains that critical systems thinking is both social theory and systems thinking. *Social theory* deals broadly with “ontological and epistemological assumptions that go into gaining knowledge.. [but] rarely seem to draw out these implications in terms of specific guidance for what should be done in changing organizations and society.” In comparison, *systems thinking* is “dedicated to practice but often neglects theory” (234). Therefore together, *critical systems thinking* is another way of bringing theory to practice, particularly in understanding how systems of power interact and influence within institutions, hegemonies, policies, and access to resources (Jackson, 2001). In this case, applying critical systems thinking to food systems research is crucial in (1) understanding how stakeholders across the agro-food supply chain are innately connected and (2) bridging these narratives to increase social and political capacity for social change.

IATP is an important case study to analyze critical systems thinking because of its programming, structure and positionality. IATP is not on the front lines, nor do they see themselves in that way. Instead, as a staff of about 18 people they work on several strata of the

food sector to challenge corporate influence in agriculture and trade, push for the rights of farmers nationally and internationally, and fight against climate change. In interviews with staff members in August 10, 2018, of the 11 people I interviewed all confirmed that “yes,” IATP is a social justice organization, although not in the typical way (FN, 8/2018 pgs 80,82, 77, 75, 74, 68, 65). On the day to day, IATP tracks a range of agriculture and trade issues, and writes blogs and other articles calling out these key themes in relation to their mission statement.

In a conversation with the Executive Director, Juliette Majot, she said pointedly, “IATP is stubbornly broad” (FN, 8/14/18 pg. 61). Later in her interview, she explained how IATP’s “systems thinking” is extremely valuable but warned:

“One of the biggest dangers of systems thinking is assuming other people are using it too, and therefore thinking that things are obvious. And that is where the arrogance can come into the picture. And I don’t think arrogance is often intentional [...] I think arrogance can come from accident. And that accident can come from thinking other people are using a systems thinking from a systems perspective when they are not. Because a. They do not think it valuable or b. They don’t see what value it brings to overall society to govern itself.” (FN, 11/28/18, pg. 101)

Majot warnings became evident over the course of my field study as funders continually chose to fund the diet-based campaigns over system-level ones like IATP. Allen et al., 2003 (in Harrison, 2008) explain: “With the decline of the civil rights movement, neoliberal evisceration of regulatory agencies and decline of foundation funding for policy work, activists found the oppositional and confrontational work of regulatory and policy change to be slow, outgunned, unfunded and emotionally taxing” (73). With funders showing more interest in the more quantitative and

proliferating diet-based agendas for change, IATP's programs have to cut against the grain (pun intended) for other organizations to understand the need for production - not just consumption - oriented change (FN, pp 61, 83).

For instance, towards the end of November, Shefali and I attended a meeting at ProVeg, an organization that advocates for “reducing the global consumption of animal by 50% by the year 2040” in their new “50 by 40” campaign. We met at ProVeg's main office space in downtown Berlin. The office - as they called “the incubator” - was built to replicate the structural design and strategies of startups in Silicon Valley and other venture capitalists. Despite the obvious AFM and “vote with your fork” rhetoric, what was more telling of the situation was the amount of funding ProVeg was able to secure in the past year for the campaign. Earlier in my field study, Juliette flew to Los Angeles for the “Reduci-tarian” Conference to learn more about who is funding these campaigns. Upon her return she expressed the same general frustration that funders were more interested in shifting consumption because they didn't see the value in focusing on production. As she had warned a few months prior, the arrogance of funders and non-profits shows to the detrimental impacts of ignoring a more production and systems level approach (FN, 10/22/18. Pp 115).

This is the context I see IATP situated in. Although they may not be the only organization pushing for a systems perspective around production and policy in agriculture, they do stand out as one of the few. Therefore, they have an important role in supporting a JT because they provide a larger political-economic and historical analysis of the industrial agro-food system.

Political Economy of Agriculture - Production Drives Demand:

Focusing on demand alone (i.e. conscious consumerism such as vegetarianism as explained above (Guthman, 2008 and Allen et al, 2003) isn't suffice to enact structural change. To understand the concept *production drives demand* it is important to connect the dots between the combined cultural, political, and social influence of Big Meat and how that impacts the price and availability of meat (and dairy) products.

In roaming IATP's archives at the Minnesota office's basement, I found article after article confirming what Tony Weis, in his book *The Global Food Economy*, calls the "grain-to-livestock complex." The grain-to-livestock complex describes how the increasing production of meat is fueled by maintaining a constant state of grain surplus. Beginning with programs in the New Deal (1933-36), managing surplus was instrumental to the rise of cheap industrial meat, increasing value-added markets as well as "export competitiveness in which to forge new markets" (63-64). Since then price supports, subsidy regimes, and economies of scale have allowed corn, soy and wheat producers to overproduce, despite notoriously low prices (IATP 2016; 2017). Although IATP has known about this phenomenon for years, Juliette asked me to write her an internal memo in August in order to string the argument together more coherently. In researching for this memo I turned back to Weis and other similar scholars in the literature review I wrote before field study. Here I found more information on how the political support for surplus grain is able to directly feed the proliferation of Big Meat (Weis, 2007). In Big Ag, the top four grain producers - ConAgra, Cargill, ADM and Cereal Food Producers -

account for 71 percent of national soy and 63 percent of national wheat . Of all total grain produced, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of it is grown for livestock consumption (Weiss, 2007; 79).

Through vertical and horizontal integration, these top four grain companies are able to gain more control of the market, and leverage direct and indirect lobbying to maintain their financial support for production (Schwartzman, 2013; Nestle, 2012). Two areas where the impacts of this can be seen are through commodity price regulations and distribution of federal farm aid. Leading agribusinesses have increasing control over commodity price fluctuations through risk management strategies such as “computer driven high frequency trading” (Hansen-Kuhn & Murphy, 2017). Access to this technology allows grain markets to remain relatively stable, thereby ensuring Big Meat a consistent and reliable source of feedstock.

Similarly, the unequal distributions of federal farm aid is another case study into the systematic favoring of grain and maintaining the grain-to-livestock complex. For example, during my time at the Minneapolis office the staff were diligently tracking Trump’s tariff wars with China. At one point an internal email explained that due to China’s tariff retaliation, the USDA had to distribute \$12 billion of federal support to domestic farmers (FN 8 /1/ 2018 pg 38 & USDA, 2018). Two avenues these funds were distributed were the Market Facilitation Program and the Food Assistance Program. In the Market Facilitation Program pork producers received \$558.8 million of the total \$1.2 billion available, which was about \$400 million more than the second highest recipient, apple growers at \$93.44 million. Within the Food Assistance Program, soybean farmers received \$3.6 billion of the \$4.7 billion while second recipient went to cotton growers at less than \$300,000 -- a ratio of 12:1. In response, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (one of IATP’s partners) pointed out: “... cuts to agricultural research, cuts to rural business development,

cuts to nutrition, and cuts to conservation even while they are spending \$12 billion to make up for the tariff war they started, and even while the farm bill languishes due solely to the intransigence of the House GOP leadership and the White House” (FN, 10/22/18 pg. 114). Although lobbying efforts were not transparent, the unequal distribution of this assistance provides valuable insight into how political manipulation on the supply side increases the availability of feedstock and meat products.

Another important angle is the role of free trade agreements in proliferating cheap meat (Hansen- Kuhn & Murphy 2017; IATP, 2016; FN 10/24/18, pg. 132; Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 201). IATP has tracked the detrimental impacts of free trade agreements, including NAFTA, since their inception. Karen Hansen and Sophie Murphy, two IATP staff members, explain in their forthcoming article on *The True Costs of U.S. Agricultural Dumping*, that NAFTA allows the U.S. to dump surplus corn into Mexican markets. With the avalanche of U.S. corn, Mexico’s livestock production increased dramatically. The livestock is then sold to the U.S. for processing and packaging and sold back to Mexico in the form of cheap processed meats (Hansen- Kuhn & Murphy, 2018). Grain dumping into foreign markets through free trade agreements has bolstered rates of meat consumption worldwide (IATP, 2016).

This brief political-economic background offers a window into IATP’s critical systems level analysis. Once again, since they do not work in a specific community nor region, they are able to allocate more resources researching and writing about these processes in order to complicate the dominant narrative that relying on the market alone (i.e., consumption choices) will suffice to shift rates of production. Alternatively, what these examples suggest is that policy change oriented directly to the grain-to-livestock complex is a viable path forward. Ultimately, this framework is

critical in combating industrial corporate livestock production because it proves that the food movement must put more of their attention onto policy and other regulatory frameworks in order to shift incentives. I will explore this more in Part II section C when I discuss the important role of transformative policy in the JT.

Bridging Narratives from a Critical Systems Level:

If a *Just Transition* framework is to be applied to shift the grain-to-livestock system, key stakeholder narratives and voices are crucial. In September, not long after I first arrived in Berlin, Shefali started talking about JT theory as a strategy IATP's Industrial Ag Program could employ. During this time, Shefali and I had several conversations about the importance of applying narratives and emphasizing how the transition must be centered around those "who have the most to benefit from it," namely farmers, farmworkers, and front line communities to industrial pollution/climate change (FN, 9/17/18 pg. 95).

In this section I will hone in on three different stakeholder groups IATP works with -- rural communities/farmers, communities facing environmental racism in North Carolina, and community groups in Minneapolis, Minnesota facing food insecurity --as case studies to illustrate the different communities whose voices must be central to the transition.

Rural Communities and Farmers

Rural communities and conventional¹¹ farmers, have much to gain from a JT. During my field study the rural/urban divide emerged as major theme. In the US this chasm is largely apparent in

¹¹ Conventional farmers is a loose term to describe farmers who use non-organic, and other industrial practices such as monoculture, synthetic inputs (pesticides, fertilizers), CAFO's, intensive watering etc. In the midwest, conventional farms primarily grow cereal grains such as corn, soy and wheat (FN, 8/6/18 pg. 46 - 48).

the cultural and social divide between red and blue states. For communities in blue pockets -mostly major cities- people in rural areas are seen as “uneducated” “racist” and “hopelessly conservative” whereas people in red communities see people in blue cities as “elitist” “hypocrites” and/or “taking away resources and their jobs” (FN, FarmFest, 8/6/18 pp 48). For instance, during my time in Minneapolis I attended a convention for industrial, conventional farmers called Farmfest. At Farmfest there was a governor’s forum for all the candidates running for office in the upcoming November election. During the forum one of the Republican candidates said to the audience, “We cannot let Minnesota become anything like San Francisco or California,” and the crowd erupted in cheers (FN, FarmFest, 8/6/18 pp 48).

In many ways this divide has only intensified due to the rural “protest vote” for Trump. Juliette described in a recent panel discussion how voting for Trump was a way for rural communities to garner national attention for how their communities have been systematically ignored and sortchanged (Majot, 1/9/19; Walley, 2017). Tara Ritter, an IATP staff member who works with the Rural Climate Dialogues program, explained “People’s hospitals are closing and their schools are crap, they can’t afford health insurance and there are no good jobs left [...] If we keep ignoring Rural America we are just feeding the opposition” (FN 7/20/18 pp 16). This was a major eye opener for me as someone who grew up exclusively in a blue, coastal region. As the 2016 election showed, the increasing income inequality and continual denial of resources and legitimacy to rural communities was a major factor in Trump’s success (Walley, 2017).

This proliferating rural/urban divide is detrimental for agriculture issues because it overlooks how neoliberalism (in the form of trade agreements and the rollback of the welfare state (Peck Tickell, 2001) and Big Ag has gained control over farmers. Despite the consequences

of the Trump election, most people I have come across in the agriculture community in Santa Cruz/ Bay Area ¹² do not understand how much conventional farmers are also hurt by the corporate consolidation of agribusiness (Big Ag). Farmers are often trapped in contracts with Big Ag for seeds, fertilizers, production etc., stuck in cycles of debt due to the “treadmill of production” and thus vulnerability to the booms and busts of the market. For instance, in 2012 98 percent of the chickens consumed were grown on contract farms, while farmers made an average of \$15,000 a year (Hauter, 2012). Consequently, since the farm crisis in the 1980’s rural economies have greatly depreciated with the loss of family farms. For instance, in 2012, 12 percent of US farmers made up 88 percent of value of farm production (Huater, 2012). This is a trend IATP has been tracking since its inception.

Today, although rural issues intersects with all of their programs in some capacity, IATP mainly addresses these rural issues in their Rural Climate Dialogue (RCD) program. RCD is a program within IATP to help farmers in rural communities understand the implications of climate change and demand political action. The rural farmer perspectives are critical when analyzing the implications of climate change. Ben Lilliston, one of the directors of the RCD, recently stated in IATP’s podcast *UpRooted*:

“Rural areas have a lot of stake when it comes to climate change since they are natural resources based economies... they have a lot of stake in building a new renewable energy economy, and that rural community needs a voice when responding to climate change” [...]

¹² As an Environmental Studies and Community Studies double major in Santa Cruz, CA, I can speak from personal experience that often the people I interact with who work in ag as researchers or practitioners not only write off conventional farmers as playing an important role, but even blamed directly for the environmental degradation associated with monoculture and conventional agriculture systems.

They are experiencing climate change as we speak, it is not a theoretical future so reliance is important” (2019).

Therefore, if we want to transition out of industrial production then conventional farmers’ experiences and perspectives must guide policies and incentives towards regenerative agricultural systems.

The second important stakeholder group are communities on the front line to industrial livestock pollution. North Carolina is home to one of largest concentrations of pork production in the United States, with the majority of production in Duplin and Sampson counties (Pierre-Louis, 2018). A major source of pollution from industrial pork facilities are manure lagoons. Animals in CAFO’s (confined feeding operations) stand over slatted floors, so when they have to relieve themselves the feces fall through the cracks and accumulate in pools adjacent to the facilities. These pools become giant cesspools of bacteria and pollution. Duplin County, a predominantly black community, is exposed to this pollution at enormous rates from having the manure sprayed directly from these lagoons into the “fields” - aka homes- in the surrounding areas (NCEJN, 2018) . These communities are particularly situated in vulnerable areas due to discriminatory mortgage lending practices, red-lining and the construction of low-income housing in disaster and/or pollution prone areas. Consequently, these communities face disproportionately high rates of respiratory illness, various cancers, infant mortality and other effects of constant ammonia and noxious chemical exposures in the air and drinking water (Kravchenko et. al, 2018). A textbook case of environmental injustice ¹³ and environmental racism.

¹³ Environmental Justice (EJ) is a movement that centers where environmental goods and risks are shared unequally along the lines of race, often due to discriminatory home loan lending practices, red-lining and building of low-income housing in disaster and/or pollution prone areas (Cole & Foster, 2011).

Industrial pork production situated in marginalized communities is also a case study for climate injustice. As explained in Part I, industrial pork and beef production is one of the leading causes of climate change through the reliance on monocultured feedstock and the subsequent emissions of methane from ruminant digestion (IATP & GRAIN, 2018). Dialectically, black/latinx communities and low-income communities in North Carolina are unequally impacted.

Hurricane Florence, a Category 4 hurricane, hit the coast of the Carolinas on September 14, 2018 and then made its way inland, downgrading to a tropical depression five days later. In that short period of time, Shefali and I followed closely as the storm proceed to dump eight *trillion* gallons of rainwater - causing 1,100 road closures, leaving 340,000 people without electricity, and killing 53 people (Mufson, Dennis & Fears, 2018).

As flood waters rose due to the hurricane, manure lagoons breached, contaminating waterways with toxic feces. “These contaminated waters will flow through communities downstream, threatening homes, churches, schools, and anything else in their path,” reported the Waterkeepers Alliance, one of IATP’s partners and a grassroots organization fighting CAFO’s in North Carolina. At the time people were instructed to boil their water due to risk of drinking water contaminated with fecal coliform bacteria (Pierre-Louis, 2018).

Industrial agricultural will only exacerbate the harmful effects of natural disasters, as well as increase the structural vulnerability of communities on the front line. Therefore, we must continue the work with farmers, politicians and front line communities alike to shift production to more agroecological and regenerative models. Doing so will help to mitigate and adapt to

climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing crop resilience, and through the decentralization and diminishing noxious polluting sites (FAO, 2018) . As climate change continues to threaten us all, impacts to farmers, and public health are critical elements in the conversation about who has a an even greater stake in the JT. Through IATP's positionality, they are able to help amplify these experiences in the work to dismantle Big Meat for climate justice.

Bridging Stakeholders - The Governors Food Forum Case Study

The last constituent group described in the context of critical systems thinking are low-income communities who face food insecurity, predominantly communities of color. Although food insecurity, and thus food justice, are beyond the scope of this paper, it's important to highlight that hunger isn't a byproduct of a shortage of food production, but a failure of distribution (Patel, 2007). This has to do with greater systems of inequality such as how racial formations and institutional racism are re-created and reinforced in the food sector (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011). Racial formation pertains to the ways that racial categories are created through "political and economic conflicts" whereas *institutional racism* is the way in which these racial categories and consequences are upheld through institutions such as schools, housing, prisons etc. (Norgaard, Reed & Horn, 2011, 26). In the case of Big Meat and Big Ag, racial formations are reproduced through the systematic denial of indigenous lands, the exploitation of people of color in farm work and factory labor, and finally, inaccessibility of affordable, culturally relevant, healthy foods. In this example I will describe a conversation that took place early my field study at a community event called the *Governors Food Forum* (FN, 7/30/18 pg. 36-37).

The Governors Food Forum, which was set up by a group of local food oriented groups including IATP, was an event designed to give the community and special interest stakeholders an opportunity to tell the candidates running for Minnesota governor in the autumn of 2018 what they care about pertaining to food and agriculture in the state. The event itself was located in a huge food pantry warehouse about two miles east of the downtown Minneapolis. After initial introductions, the room split up into about six groups. At each group was a facilitator who posed discussion questions so the group could brainstorm priorities to convey to the candidates later. The second question read: “What are Minnesota’s greatest barriers when it comes to food/ag?”

To this question participants around the circle shared issues that impacted them directly. Examples include: the lack of farm training programs for young farmers, the lack of affordable land for immigrant farmers (Hmong or Latinx people in particular), lack of healthy foods in schools, and so on. Finally, an older black woman sitting in the back - whom I will refer to as Participant 2 spoke up and said:

“It’s good people talk about accessibility in relation to food but there is a lot more work that is needed. When I go to get food it’s really difficult because I have to wait for the bus, and those aren’t reliable. And even when I do make it to the grocery store, my SNAP benefits don’t cover the healthy food I actually want to buy. On top of that carrying the food back is heavy. And even though I’m overweight, at least I’m healthy. A lot of people in my neighborhood aren’t healthy and so it’s nearly impossible to get food” (FN, 7/30/18 pg. 36).

After listening to everyone’s experiences, a middle-aged white man, who turned out to be an ex-professor from University of Minnesota said, “Let’s just acknowledge the elephant in the room: agribusiness.” He explained, “The real barrier is agribusiness because everything else

lacks power.” There were nods around the circle. He explained the correlation between his experience with being kicked out of University of Minnesota (a land-grant university dominated by Big Ag) for talking about these issues, and how it impacts so many of the issues people shared in the circle.

By the end of the conversation Participant 2 said: “ I’ve learned so much tonight from you all, I had no idea my experience was so related to all of your. How we do we brings this to people who aren't talking about this?”(FN, 7/30/18 pg. 37). The conversation evolved to the whole group rallying around the idea of building a broader food coalition to push for intersectional activism.

Although Participant 2 has unique experiences with food insecurity, she found value in situating her experience with others who face different issues in food and agriculture. What this experience highlights, therefore, is the radical and oppositional (Allen et al, 2003) potential of uniting narratives across the food supply chain. It is radical in the sense that participants are able to identify some of the root injustices perpetrated in the food system (i.e. structural inequality along the lines of race and class (Spicca, 2017) and oppositional in the use of stringing these narratives to influence the political process - which in this case was the state governor’s campaign.

Pulling it all Together

A *critical systems thinking* frameworks allows researchers and activists to explain how three seemingly disjoint communities are innately connected, and thus all have an important stake in the transition out of industrial corporate agriculture. As I have explored in this section,

conventional farmers in the grain-to-livestock complex of Big Meat are constrained through strict contracts with agribusinesses. For instance, pork producers are stuck in contracts which force them to meet high production quotas with little room to make financial gains.

Consequently, they have to rent land in low-income areas and rely on unsustainable practices such as spraying manure, to maintain these high rates of production. In this system, these same grain and meat companies work to maintaining price supports for the overproduction of grain, which further incentivizes the production of cheap meat. Ultimately, this squeezes out mid to small size farmers who have capacity to produce sustainably, while perpetuating food insecurity through focus on production not distribution. Therefore, the case studies above illustrate the potential for furthering the JT in understanding of how Big Ag is a significant player in all three scenarios.

In the next section I will explore how this *critical systems thinking* can be applied a step further in application to a mid-level positionality to directly ‘name and shame’ Big Meat. In the process I ask, what potential does ‘naming and shaming’ and targeting corporations directly hold in building a larger political campaign in the food system to initiate the JT?

PART II Section B: *Challenging Corporate Power- ‘Naming and Shaming’ Big Meat*

To build on the critical systems narrative explained above it is crucial to understand the how corporate concentration of agribusiness proliferate injustices across the agro-food system. Too, how Big Meat specifically works to maintain the gain-to-livestock complex. Together, these understandings demonstrate the second main leverage point a mid-level positionality offers in the JT: allowing activists and researchers to challenge corporate consolidation in unpacking

denotations and connotations of “Big”, as well building building political momentum by directly “naming and shaming” top meat and dairy companies. (see Figure 1 - point #2: “divest from their power” and “change the story”).

Following the Lead from the Climate Justice Movement

The climate justice movement does not shy away from publically “naming and shaming” Big Oil. For example, at COP24, activists from the Gassivists Collective and the Corporate European Observatory (CEO) lead a secret “toxic tour” around the conference venue to show other activists (and followers on social media) how the conference was backed by corporate coal and gas companies. The tour specifically targeted the country pavilions, such as the United Kingdom and Poland for their blatant “conflicts of interest” (FN, 12/5/18, pg 160). “COP24 Reeked of Gas” CEO wrote in a blog post following the conference: “ The ‘Paris Rulebook’ agreed to in Katowice represents a step backwards for climate justice, thanks to the influence of big polluters, particularly the gas industry and corporate-friendly carbon markets [...] pushed by the world's most polluting industries” (2018).

In both the “toxic tour” and the blog, CEO and the Gassivist Collective are direct with their agenda - keep the fossil fuel industry out of negotiations. This tactic has increasingly been used in evolving food justice movements. For example, Guthman and Brown (2017) in the book *New Food Activism* use the campaign against methyl iodide as a case study to demonstrate the critical potential of publicly naming and shaming agribusiness. They write, “ We contend that Arysta [the company producing methyl iodide] removal of methyl iodide from the market was successful, in part, because it took the form of a campaign - a focused campaign in which activists were willing to

name and take on an opponent and risk defeat” (98). This strategy is what is needed in the movement against Big Meat.

Emissions Impossible

From the very beginning of my field study, Shefali was interested in learning from the Climate Justice movement to build on her recent report *Emissions Impossible* (2018). In this report IATP and GRAIN used the FAO’s GLEAM methodology¹⁴ to quantify meat and dairy industries cumulative climate impact. Of the 35 meat and dairy companies analyzed, only four “provide complete, credible emissions estimates” whereas most under-report or failed to report their emissions at all (pg 12 figure 9b). For example, JBS - the leading emitter - was the most off target by a sheer 271.1 megatons of CO2 equivalent, which is 97% off IATP and GRAIN’s calculations (11). These findings stands out in climate and agriculture spaces as one of the only reports to single out meat and dairy corporations explicitly¹⁵.

IATP’s history - Identifying Corporate Power

The Emission Impossible report pairs well with IATP’s 30- year history of tracking the influence of agribusiness over trade agreements and the greater landscape of food and agriculture in the US. In 1986 Kevin Ristau and IATP director Mark Ritchie co-wrote the piece *Crisis by Design*. In this founding document they explain how agribusiness strategically manipulated the political economy

¹⁴ GLEAM stands for the Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model. This methodology uses a life cycle analysis (feed, energy consumption, manure management, enteric fermentation etc.) and GIS (global information systems) in quantifying emissions associated to livestock production (FAO, 2019)

¹⁵ The report was taken up by 138 different news sources worldwide including: South Korea, Argentina, Chile, across the EU, the US and etc. making it one of IATP’s most cited report (field note 9/17/18 pp 95)

to squeeze out farmers and proliferate the consolidation of leading corporations. “The primary strategy developed by the corporate planners”, they wrote, “[was]to force farmers off their land by lowering their commodity prices to levels below the cost of production” (4). These corporate funded think-tanks, such as the Committee for Economic Development (CED), were ultimately successful. “Farm population dropped by nearly 30 percent between 1950 and 1960, and another 26 percent between 1960 and 1970” ; leading to the full blow farm crisis in the 1980’s (Ristau & Ritchie, 1986; 5). To this day, the detrimental effects of the CED, and subsequent Farm Bills, written to favor commodity agribusinesses, are felt by the economically depressed rural and farming communities in the US (IATP Farm Bill Portal, 2018).

During my time at the Minneapolis office, the staff revisited this key document to see what was missing from the original manifesto. Juliette opened the conversation with the questions “is agribusiness too big to fail?” Later in the conversation, Chris Palmquist, IATP’s media coordinator, explained “the impact of Butz¹⁶” and how key agribusiness interests shape public perception. “Especially in rural communities where the media is backed by corporate ag” he explained (FN 8/21/18 pg. 71-73). Here both Chris and Juliette are echoing what Ristau & Ritchie wrote about 32 years prior. Moving forward, IATP, and other organizations in the agriculture and climate nexus, must continue to center this anti-corporate narrative with particular attention to the implications to *Big Meat*. Doing so will have substantive impact in actualizing sustainable agriculture and climate justice.

¹⁶ Earl Butz was the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in the 1970s under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Butz became known for this famous phrase “get big or get out”. Researchers point back to this moment as a key turning point in U.S. government incentivising the value-added, hyper-industrial centralized food system (Howard, 2009)

Implications to 'Big'

The use of “Big Meat” is a signal to other key anti-corporate movements. “Big” has been used in movements to articulate the cumulative political influence and impact of top corporations, or oligarchies, have in the public sphere. The use of “Big” was first used in the fight against Big Tobacco starting in 1980’s. Early success of the movement was a \$206 billion settlement by Medicaid against top tobacco companies for spreading misinformation (Keck, 2009). Through this, the movement against Big Tobacco has ultimately been successful in its ability to weaken tobacco companies credibility, and thus, lobbying power. In recent years, this strategy is increasingly used in the fight against Big Oil, Big Pharma, Big Ag. and now Big Meat. For IATP’s Industrial Meat department, “Big” is crucial in articulating the phenomena explained in the previous section regarding how production drives demand, especially in the grain-to-livestock complex.

Some key components of “Big” involve: 1) political influence through *revolving door*, campaign contributions and lobbying power (Nestle, 2002). 2) influence over trade agreements (IATP, 2016 & 2018). 3) sponsorships of health and public organizations 4) market control through mergers, acquisitions and vertical integration¹⁷ (Howard, 2016). 4) skewing public perception through instilling doubt and counter funding research in order to maintain political control (Oreskes & Conway, 2010)¹⁸.

¹⁷ Increasingly concentrated corporations leads to the *treadmill of production* with increased access to capital, large scale businesses are able to invest in more advanced and efficient technology. Overtime this reinforces their power by squeezing out middle/small size farmers who are unable make ongoing investments in new machinery (Howard, 2016).

¹⁸ Authors Oreskes & Conway in their book *Merchants of Doubt* (2010) articulate the parallels between Big Oil companies funding of anti-climate change research and Big Tobacco companies funding of pro-nicotine research to cover up harmful findings and to instill “doubt” into the public.

Two instances can be seen through in the revolving door between members of the Beef Association and Advisory Committees for the USDA nutrition guidelines (Nestle, 2002). Here representatives who once worked for Beef Association are able to write and promote legislation in support of their former constituency. In relation to general legislative influence, during the Reagan Administration, the poultry industry lobbied Congress to reduce the number of USDA labor inspections. Through this political win, poultry factories were able to increase line speed from 70 to 91 birds a minute despite its implications for worker safety (Schwartzman, 2013).

Smithfield and the NC Legislature Case Study: How SB 711 is exemplar to Big Meat's power

As just explained, Big Meat is able to circumvent litigation and other forms of regulation through their power over regulatory bodies. Here I will return to Smithfield and North Carolina case study to show how Smithfield's ability to get North Carolina Senate to pass SB 711 as evidence of the company's combined political and social influence.

In June, 2018, the North Carolina legislature held a roundtable discussion to on SB 711. It was a bill that limited communities' (such as those named previously in Dublin and Sampson counties) ability to file nuisance claims against neighboring pork processing facilities. Communities or landowners can file a nuisance claim when they are experiencing direct point-source pollution. Without it, the residents living next to the CAFO's have no legal tool to protect themselves. The bill also limited how punitive damages (financial compensation for pollution) could be awarded even if a lawsuit was successful (GANC, 2018).

A lawyer representing the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), one of IATP partners, explained during a phone conversation how despite the facade that farmers

were apart of the discussion, “the North Carolina legislature is captured by Smithfield [therefore] they are using this bill to keep themselves from being sued” (FN, 8/3/18, pg 42). They were successful through leveraging rhetoric of “protect family farmers” as disguise behind the real puppet masters; Smithfield, thereby pitting the actual farmers up against black, low-income communities.

Understanding how Big Meat corporations, not farmers, are at fault can help build and mobilize the movement against them. This case study demonstrates another opportunity for IAPT - and other mid-level organizations - to support the resistance on the frontline through publicly stigmatizing Smithfield (and other corporations such as Fontera, Tyson, JBS etc).

Filling in the Gap: Naming the Players

“Raise your hand if you have ever heard of Fontera” *a few hands pop up*. “... JPS ?” *fewer hands*, “... WH Group?” *almost no hands* Shefali asked the long table of food and agriculture oriented CSO at our “Strategic Conversation on Climate and Livestock”. Participants’ eyes darted around the room with puzzled looks (FN, 12/5/18 pg. 161).

When it comes to Big Meat, not even the “experts” are able to name exactly which corporations are actually to blame. During our time in Poland, Shefali and I organized a side meeting with all like-minded CSO’s to discuss building a campaign to unite climate justice organizing with the existing efforts against industrial livestock. All 27 of us squeezed into a local Polish pizza restaurant and sat at a long table in the middle of the room. Coming from all these different organizations and institutions meant that everyone brought with them a different theory of change. The Brighter Green, Food and Climate Alliance and ProVeg folks were far more

adamant about “diet shifting” - as Shefali called it- , particularly with the launch of their new 40 by 50 campaign. Alternatively, members from ActionAide and ETC group - who work with rural communities and development- were clear to emphasize that not all livestock production is wrong, and we must be careful not to make this a Eurocentric conversation. The conversation spanned over two hours, with heated, yet thought provoking, debates about what is the right way to approach the issue (FN, 12/5/18 pg. 161).

Despite the controversy, a significant takeaway from the evening was a more unified understanding on the importance of identifying, tracking and publicly shaming leading meat and dairy industries. Although the food movement is slower to take up this tactic than climate justice movement, it isn’t entirely new either. For instance, activists have been successful in targeting agribusinesses in anti-pesticide and anti-GMO organizing. What made these two campaigns successful in many ways was their ability to pick a target and build a strategy centered around identified weakness in the industry (Guthman & Brown, 2017 and Schurman & Munro, 2010)

PART II Section C: *The “Regenerative Economy” and The Push for Transformative Policy*

Focusing on policy and structural change, rightfully pushes back on the over-romanticization of grassroots organizing and demonstrates the necessity of a critical systems level analysis. Moreover, attention to the transformative potential of policy is crucial to increase capacity for existing the regenerative agriculture systems such as agroecology and other sustainable livestock production methods such as rotational grazing and soil management measures (Sharma, 2017, ETC group, 2018 and National Research Council, 2010). These systems reflect Mascarenhas-Swan M (2017) utopian notion of the *regenerative economy* which juxtapose the current “extractive” paradigm

explained in Part I. In this section I will use this worldview to situate the need for IATP and other mid-level organizations to focus on policy changes to shift incentives and capacity for sustainable farming practices, while supporting global movements for peasant and smallholder production.

The CLARA report and Shefali's co-presentation with the ETC Group were two instances on my field study which outlined the need to support existing regenerative agriculture production (2018). The Climate Land Ambition Rights Alliance (CLARA) is a coalition of 31 different organizations including IATP and other climate justice advocates, land rights campaigners, Right-to-Food groups, agroecologists, faith-based organizations and representatives of People's Movements organization from regions around the world (2018). Together this coalition published the report *Missing Pathways to 1.5: The Role of the Land Sector in Ambition Climate Action* to provide an alternate response to the IPCC's emphasis on "false climate solutions" such as geoengineering. Alternatively, their report argues for strengthening indigenous and community land rights, restoring forests and other ecosystems and transforming agriculture [to regenerative systems] (CLARA, 2018 & FN, 12/6/18 pg 162).

The *Missing Pathways* report became the central piece to CLARA's COP24 strategy. On top of a following and lobbying at the COP negotiations, CLARA members (of whom were present at the conference) used the report in their official side event panels. Shefali had the opportunity to speak on two of these panels to support the third point about regenerative agriculture and the role of livestock in the pathway. One of the key takeaways from the report demonstrates how it is possible to:

“ reduce global emissions by 21 gigatonnes [food systems and forestry] of

CO₂-equivalent per year by 2050, eliminating the need for geoengineering technologies

such as bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS). It shows that rights and ecosystems are *integral* to achieving the 1.5°C goal, and should not be seen as necessary trade-offs against climate action [...]

This sentiment is crucial because it reiterates the larger point that “the barriers to avoiding runaway climate change are not technical, but political.” (CLARA, 2018 and FN, 10/22/18, pg 113).

Agroecology is another key component to the mitigation potential outlined in the *Missing Pathways* report. Agroecology as a “practice, philosophy and a movement” laid the groundwork to challenging industrial agriculture (Environment & Ecology, 2018). Agroecology itself is the application of local ecology to the practice of agriculture - a practice that indigenous and peasant communities have practiced - and continue - to practice worldwide (ETC, 2017). During the Klima Alliance (Climate Alliance) conference in Berlin, the ETC group explain that “the peasant food web already feeds 70 percent of the world on 25 percent of arable land, where as the corporate food system feeds 30 percent of the world but on 75 percent of the land” (FN, 10/24/18 pp 131). This peasant food web is analogous to the importance of indigenous epistemologies of land and respect to local natural processes and resources, such as La Via Campesina (LVC). LVC has emerged as a leading agrarian peasant movement which echos ETC’s and CLARA’s findings in that peasant farming is the path towards climate resilience (LVC, 2018).

What this shows is that we already have what we need for the *regenerative economy* to thrive. Therefore what’s needed to amplify movements, such as LVC, is for CSOs to hold governments accountable in shifting Farm Bills, free-trade agreements and other incentives away from corporate agribusiness.

Pushing for Transformative Policy

Having a mid-level positionality, therefore, allows activists and researchers to support movements on the ground by shifting resources and capital in the JT. In Mascarenhas-Swan M (2017) framework on JT this pertains to “changing the rules” on local, national and international arenas (point #3 in Figure 1). Given the technical and tedious nature of this work, it is important that there are alliances between front line communities and organizations who have the capacity and institutional knowledge to track trade, agriculture and climate policies.

IATP has a long history of focusing on state legislation, the Farm Bill and international climate and trade policy. In this work they use their research to push a for national policies that shift subsidies and incentives away from corporate agribusiness and redirect resources into supporting farmers instead, primarily those with smaller and more sustainable production models. This positionality in the movement for climate/food justice is necessary and timely. As Guthaman & Alkon explain, the election of 2016 was a wake up call (2017). The food movement can no longer take the risk of relying on the apolitical tactics of the AFM. Instead, the momentum of this movement must employ the critical systems analysis to push for policy change.

Based on the case studies in the previous two sections, broad areas where transformative policy change can have a substantive impact include: 1) setting price floors for commodities to allow farmers to sell their crops at the actual cost of production (taking into consideration externalities such as pollution). 2) instilling a carbon tax on polluters and other regulations on pollution. 3) transforming trade agreements to support farmers and combating climate change

simultaneously while shifting paradigms on who benefits from these agreements, 4) passing antitrust litigation and passing stricter rules on campaign finance to curtail agribusiness lobbying power and 5) passing cross sectoral policy- i.e. the Green New Deal - to support workers and invest in the transition to a low-carbon economy (FN pp. 66, 125, 82, 157)

Actualizing these changes however, require tedious and technical levels of analysis.

Below I will return to the Smithfield case study and tracking trade agreements as two instances where IATP's expertise is necessary supporting the larger political shift necessary towards of regenerative agriculture.

Smithfield case study cont. - Amplifying Environmental Justice

During my field study I wrote a report on how Smithfield's new manure to biogas initiatives is nothing more than greenwash – or as I wrote “corporate hogwash”. In this analysis, I explained how Smithfield is able to benefit from state renewerability standards which include biogas as a renewable source. These standards then allow for Smithfield to sell carbon offsets, generated from manure biogas - to companies such as Google; shifting their public image to seem more “green”. Despite this public face, renewable standards that include biogas as renewable allows Smithfield to increase their rate of production and thus, their bottom line. My research sought to echo the growing body of research on how biogas is a “false climate solution” and just exacerbate social and environmental injustice by continuing to rely on industrial models (Food and Water Watch, 2018).

Community organizers in North Carolina, such as the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) , have to deal with “putting out the fires” as my colleague Tara Ritter

put it, everyday due to the direct impacts of having swine manure literally sprayed into their communities. Prior to SB 711, their strategy was to target Smithfield directly through nuisance lawsuits, leaving little to no capacity to analyze the bigger picture of how states renewability standards are propping up corporate interest. Thus, there is merit to the fact IATP is geographically and situationally removed from local issues. Instead they can use their institutional knowledge and energy to influence national policy (such as state renewability standards) and fight back against the larger corporate narratives. In this relationship, however, it is still critical that IATP and other mid-level organizations continue to amplify and center around the resilience of communities such as those in Duplin County, North Carolina. (FN, 8/3/18,pg 41-42).

The Technical Territory of Trade

Another example of how a mid-level positionality can help advance transformative policies is the area of trade. Neoliberal trade agreements¹⁹ have detrimental impacts for marginalized communities (primarily in the global south) proliferate meat consumption through expanding markets while halting policies that support local markets (IATP, *NAFTA Portal*, 2018 & Sharma, 2017). Although the voices and efforts of the communities impacted must be centered, it's such a technical issue that the communities directly impacted may not have the capacity to follow each detailed article closely.

During my time at IATP I had the opportunity to listen in to both internal meetings, as well as international coalition calls, on trade. In the early months of field study, the focus was on

¹⁹ Prominent free-trade agreements include: the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the Comprehensive Economic and trade Agreement (CETA), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Sharma, 2017).

NAFTA 2.0 and the disastrous implications of Trump's tariff war with China for US farmers (FN, July/August 2018). The later months - during my time in Berlin - I sat in on calls with organizations within the "Seattle to Brussels" network which consists of organizations spanning across the European Union to Seattle, Washington (FN October- November, 2018). In both circumstances, the purpose was to push back against the increasing role of transnational corporations in influencing the agreements, specifically, around ISDS (investor-state dispute settlement) which allows corporations to sue a government, if they stand in the way of their profits.

The ongoing Smithfield case study and trade are two examples from my experience that highlight the need for multi-level collaboration, complicating the default that social justice always means local and small scale. Instead, I have come to see social justice as more of a nexus of dynamic organizational relationships working together on various levels towards a collective vision or goal.

PART III: Accountability and Radical visions of change

For the mid-level positionality to have merit, there must be ongoing and active accountability to communities on the front line. Engaging in active accountability is synonymous with unpacking the distant gaze. In their section "How can the dangers of the distant gaze be overcome?"

Apostolopoulou & Cortes-Vazquez (2019) explain how social movements that span a broad network can be working towards an elusive *other* without having explicit contact with them. In this context of this paper, mid-level organizations have a *distant gaze* to peasant and small scale farmers, and front line communities fighting for environmental and climate justice.

There are two definitions of accountability relevant in this context. First, individuals or organizations in positions of privilege must be able to hold *themselves* accountable as to not reproduce systems of exclusion, and harm. Second, to hold oneself accountable to *others* whom organizations claim to be working for. In each, accountability refers to the reconciliation of responsibility that comes with societal power and privilege. Accountability frameworks are essential in actualizing a JT because it seeks to ensure that those who have the most to benefit from the transition be the voice and agenda guiding the trajectory of action.

To define privilege, I rely on McIntosh (1988) to explain how systems of oppression, dialectically benefit those with historical and contemporary access to power. These social categories, or identities, intersect to shape one's lived experience. Therefore, when engaging in political and social change, an *intersectionality* framework is crucial. Intersectionality explains how oppression based on class, gender, national origin, race etc, intersect in political, social and legal institutions (Crenshaw, 1991).

In agricultural systems, for instance, Hmong farmers- who are the most recent Asian immigrant population to come to the US - have experienced increased criminalization and loss of autonomy to their land due to unintended consequences of USDA labor protection laws (Minkoff-Zern, 2011; 81). Although these progressive laws were designed to protect workers, they were constructed through an assumption of whiteness (i.e. misidentifying family labor as hired farm-laborers). Conventional production, therefore failed to take into consideration the small scale, family-oriented farming systems of Hmong communities (78). This resulted in increased rates of Hmong prosecutions and incarceration, demonstrating that unless racial biases and assumptions are checked, policy makers will, although unintentionally, increase the marginalization of vulnerable

communities (Minkoff-Zern, 2011). Therefore, organizations engaged in processes of accountability must be able to recognize the impact of their social positionality and how it shapes their perspectives in the fight for climate justice.

In my interview with IATP's communications director Colleen Borgendale, she said, "We have a lot more work to do as a predominantly white, northern midwest organisation. Especially for the white people in the office, IATP could be just as harmful as corporations if we don't check ourselves" (Interview transcription, FN 8/20/19, pg 67). Tara Ritter echoed this statement in her interview by explaining racial biases as "blind spots": "I think most people at IATP have an academic understanding of racial justice, but not the lived, day to day experience and knowledge [...] it's going to take more than just racial justice trainings for folks perspectives to shift around these blind spots." (FN, 8/29/18; pg 82). Together, both Colleen and Tara explained how IATP doesn't necessarily confront the ways in which majority of the staff benefit from white, or class privileges. For instance, as was the case for the USDA and Hmong farmers, despite IATP's good - and often radical - intentions, their lack of explicit discussions of privilege and intersectionality will, at best, limit the radical potential of their work, and at worst, perpetuate the harm they seek to undermine as they occupy international spaces for agriculture and climate.

Accountability to the Climate Justice Movement and Rural Farmers

In addition to holding oneself accountable, organizations must remain accountable to place-based climate justice initiatives. Therefore, for organizations who work geographically or socially removed, it is essential that their research and advocacy align with their needs of communities on the ground. This is where the nuance of IATP, and other mid-level organizations (such as many of

the ones I met at COP24 including Fern, ActionAide, the Gassivists collective), work comes into play.

In the article *Act Global, But Think Local: accountability at the frontlines*, authors Freedman & Schaaf (2015) discuss the disconnect between sexual and reproductive rights advocacy at the global level and the complexity of health services on the ground. They explain how tension partially arises in global policy arenas where “advocates need to be increasingly expert to navigate these spaces effectively and dedicate massive time and energy to do so” (103).

As I previously explained, IATP and the members of the CLARA network have the capacity and expertise to track the highly technical negotiations of the UNFCCC. To what extent, however, does their involvement in tracking the climate negotiations limit the participation of other key constituents? On our second day in Katowice, Shefali and I attended a six-hour CLARA meeting involving their lobby strategy going into the two-week long negotiation cycle. At the meeting, the organization Fern brought with them one of their constituents from Kenya to represent their home village and explain how climate change has impacted their communities’ farming systems . However, since the meeting was *so* technical, he wasn’t able to participate. Shefali and I had several conversations following about CLARA should restructure the meeting so they’re more accessible to people who do not have all the technical knowledge to participate adequately (FN, 12/6/19, pg 158).

Overall, the international climate sphere needs to pay far more attention to this, especially in relation to farmers. At COP24, for instance, there few,if any family farmer voices heard, only those representing Big Ag/Big Meat. At the Pacific Pavillion Panel the conversation about dairy sustainability was sponsored by Fonterra and other leading dairy industries in New Zealand. Similarly, the Koronivia Joint Work for agriculture had speakers from the World Farmers

Organization present as the only farmer voices. As they were talking, Shefali leaned over to whisper to me how the WFO represents agribusiness not smallholder/midsize farmers (12/3/18, pg. 155 & 12/4/18, pg. 157). Even though this example pertains more to representation, it demonstrates the point on how international policy groups fail to pay even basic attention to the communities whom the policies are supposedly written for.

Not wanting to conflate representation with accountability, I turn back Freedman & Schaaf (2015) to make the case for a “reinvigorated approach to accountability that begins with the dynamics of power at the front lines” (103). They use a definition of accountability that reframes power; expanding beyond accountability methods that include exchanges between two parties. To truly have radical and transformative potential in the agro-food system, IATP needs to take lead from these communities in order to flip hegemonic ideas of leadership in social change such as LVC and the NCEJN.

Ultimately, “accountability is not the full answer” Freedman & Schaaf (2015) go on to argue “...but it can spark a set of other processes and transformations that are necessary for the coming phase of global development” (104). Thus, accountability as praxis will take many forms. From building interpersonal relationships, regular phone calls with organizations, staff training, and negotiating climate and/or trade agreements. Regardless, accountability must be implemented in IATP and other organizational programs and strategies in order to actualize the JT and ensure that the interest and voices of those who have the most to benefit from the transition will guide how the “regenerative economy” will take shape.

Conclusion: Getting to the Root of it

Despite the sheer anxiety and fear that drives much of this work, it is also propelled by radical potential and hope. On March 15, 2019, 1.5 million youth from over 2,000 cities and 125 different countries took to the streets for the “School Strike for Climate” (350.org, 2019). Greta Thunberg, a 16-year old Swedish student started the strike in August of last year to bring attention to climate justice and, like her counterparts in San Francisco, demanded that her governmental representatives take action. In her speech at COP24, she told the delegates clearly: “You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people” (Thunberg, 2019).

Inspired by the rising tides of the climate justice movement, I used my experience at IATP to demonstrate what is possible when we push the food movement beyond the confinements of the neoliberal governance practices of the AFM; namely apolitical acts of individualisms such as conscious consumerism (Guthman, 2008 and Allen et. al, 2003). I have presented the idea of a mid-level positionality to explore and hopefully expand upon the role of organizations and activists who may not be directly on the front line. In this capacity, mid-level proponents can support a JT through a strategic combination of:

- Critical systems thinking,
- Publicly “naming and shaming” leading corporations,
- Supporting transformative policies that improve the livelihoods of farmers and front line communities.

Politicizing the food movement, thereby opens itself to empowering potential of uniting with other timely and radical social change movements.

In the words of Angela Davis, “radical simply means ‘grasping things at the root’” (1972). Therefore, in identifying the root causes of both climate change and the development of the corporate food regime (Holt Giménez & Shattuck, 2011) we can we can begin to build “movements of movements” for broader social justice (Mascarenhas-Swan M. 2017). Thus it makes sense to enjoin the movement for climate justice through the dismantling of Big Meat, housing justice, immigration justice, farmers’ rights and among others, as I have explained in Parts I and II. Combined with the urgency of taking leadership of those who have been most marginalized by systemic roots of oppression: indigenous peoples, low-income communities in the global south, womxm/trans* folks, and youth (Freedman & Schaaf, 2015)

Building intersectional movements is crucial. This past year we have witnessed unfathomable levels of injustice. Each day seems to be another mass shooting, another targeting of a marginalized community, another “win” for populist tyrants (FN, 2018). All the while inequality proliferates through gentrification, border reinforcement, regressive taxation laws, and ultimately climate change. It is time to lean into these intersections. There is no more time to wait. Although this isn't an altogether new perspective, the anger, sadness and urgency to act feels far deeper and more opportune than ever before.

Appendix

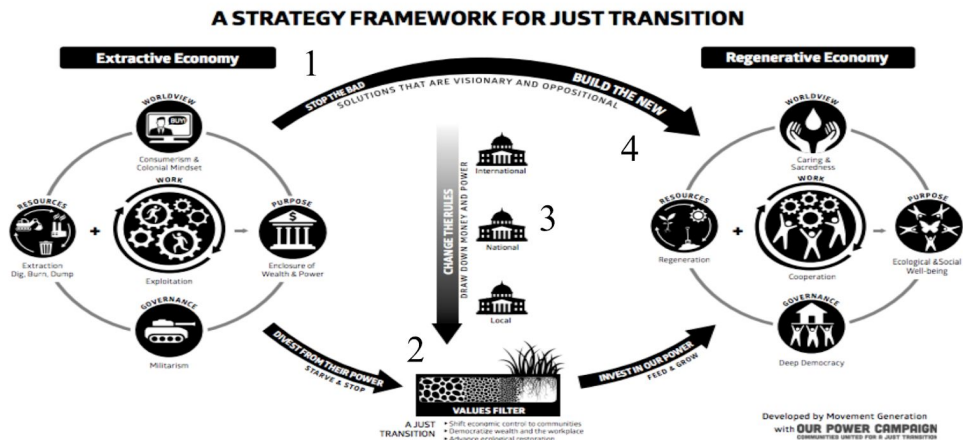
Figure 1: The Just Transitions Framework

Image from Movement Generation (2018), numbers 1- 4 added by Laurel Levin

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