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Neo-Homesteading in the Adirondack North Country: Crafting a Durable Landscape

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This study uses action research as a tool to present an alternative model for reconstructing and promoting a resilient and durable rural landscape in the Adirondack-North Country of northern New York State. Standing in sharp contrast to traditional rural sustainability strategies that repeatedly focus on economic development or capital infusion as the sole means of revitalization, this research suggests a nested, bottom-up approach that capitalizes on the region's diverse and burgeoning population of neo-homesteaders. This dissertation argues that, collectively, neo-homesteaders serve as an important catalyst in the construction of durable communities, and the promotion of working landscapes at the bioregional level. This study concludes by linking the durable community paradigm with practice through the establishment of the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes,* an institute developed by the author using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to promote working landscape policies, teach practical skills related to neo-homesteading, and serve as an innovation and dialogue hub for bioregionally significant topics and initiatives.

Key Words: homesteading, Adirondack Park, cooperative extension, working landscapes, resilience, sustainability, sustainable development, environment, Cornell, Paul Smith's College, APA, ACWL

The change I am talking about appeals to me precisely because it need not wait upon other people. Anyone who wants to do so can begin it in himself and in his household as soon as he is ready—by becoming answerable to at least some of his own needs, by acquiring skills and tools, by learning what his real needs are, by refusing the glamorous and the frivolous . . . And by this action the possibility that other people will do the same is made a likelihood. —Wendell Berry

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Sustainability Gap

Despite the allure of "sustainability" as a new paradigm for modern society, a significant gap remains between theory and practice. The existence, and arguable widening, of this gap, has been attributed to a variety of factors, including a historical abundance of natural resources, an emphasis on efficiency over resiliency in economic systems, and a general unwillingness by society to internalize environmental externalities. Further preventing a shift toward sustainability is a pervasive cultural ethos based in technological optimism (Chiras and Reganold 2010).

Tucked beneath our dominant cultural ethos is an alternative lifestyle that argues for a different set of values and behaviors; a lifestyle that emphasizes living within our means, both in our households and on our planet. Historically, this lifestyle of self-sufficiency or self-reliance has been articulated as an act of individualism. While Wendell Berry's quote at the chapter opening highlights the power of the individual to effect change, "the possibility that other people will do the same" suggests the contagious nature of neo-homesteading as a phenomenon capable of transcending the individual and household unit. Perhaps nowhere is this movement as evident as in the Adirondack-North Country of upstate New York: a region that is both ecologically well-endowed and historically, socio-economically challenged; conditions that rural sociologist Jeffery Jacob notes as being part of a perfect storm to promote a culture of homesteading (1997).

Neo-homesteading as a cultural movement in the Adirondack-North Country argues for, and more importantly, *demonstrates through practice*, an alternative to mainstream consumer culture via a more connected and localized lifestyle. The current generation of neo-homesteaders will be preliminarily defined in this research as individuals and families who participate in a lifestyle that practices (to varying degrees) self-reliance, ecological stewardship and a commitment to the future of their communities (Brown 2011). As a movement, neo-homesteading coincides with a back-to-the-land migration starting with the "Y2K" technology scare, followed by 9/11/01, and the collapse and tenuous rebuilding of global financial markets (2008-present). The convergence of these global events has demonstrated local effects, ranging from food insecurity to housing foreclosures, thereby contributing to a renewed interest in self-reliance and a desire to go back-to-the-land (Astyk 2008).

The lifestyle and ethos of homesteading culture has long been recognized as an important factor in advancing rural sustainability (Jacob 1997). This is especially true in the Adirondack-North Country, which historically, has been touted as a destination for those seeking a life rooted in self-sufficiency (Terrie 2008).

Understanding neo-homesteading sub-culture is of particular interest to those concerned with rural sustainability for two reasons. First, neo-homesteading has evolved to include a wide array of participants across the social, economic and political landscape. This diverse participation offers an important entry point for transfer of skills, knowledge, and the development of social capital, which can be a catalyst for community-based conservation initiatives (Ostrom 1998). It is through this door that the values and behaviors of neo-homesteaders can be leveraged to promote sustainability in the context of *durable communities,* a concept I developed through action research to help articulate this more inclusive approach.

Importantly, this concept was not developed in isolation; instead it was informed through the use of two action research approaches: Practical Action Research which primarily used Participant Observation (PO) techniques and second, Participatory Action Research (PAR)[1] which included stakeholder-driven symposiums and community listening sessions in addition to more traditional tools such as participant surveys.

The second linkage between neo-homesteading and sustainability is based on a prevalent ethical norm-behavior gap; that is, subject stated values and motivations of participants in social science research often lack mechanisms to verify belief statements (Jacob 1997). However, in the case of this research, stated values can clearly be evaluated in the context of observed practices on the homestead, thereby demonstrating the degree to which a sustainability ethic is backed by practice.

With a better understanding of the diversity within the neo-homesteading movement and the ways in which neo-homesteaders address the ethical norm-behavior gap, we can craft a response which leverages the contributions of neo-homesteaders and smallholders. This affords the opportunity to not only address sustainability at the individual and household level, but also extends to communities. This extension is articulated in the context of *durable communities* which I define as:

An inclusive sustainability approach that treats households and communities as both economic and ecological units that are responsible for their food, energy, culture, and entertainment. Durable communities display a reverence for the natural world, and an ecological imagination that creatively re-envisions the relationship between people and place in the interest of resiliency.

[1] To avoid confusion, "PAR" will be used throughout the dissertation in reference to *Participatory* Action Research. *Practical* Action Research, a related action research approach will be spelled out for clarity. The primary distinction is that PAR is focused on *process* while practical action research is *product* orientated.

The word "durable" is preferable to other words for the tangible meaning it offers to a variety of audiences. Terms such as "sustainable" and "resilient" are challenged by both their overuse and their perceived alignment with political and environmental agendas (Marshall and Toffel 2005). In addition to being apolitical, the term "durable" also offers an appropriate contrast to the "brittle," or easily compromised communities they aim to replace. The areas of emphasis identified as being central to operationalizing durable communities were a directly informed by both practical and participatory action research methodologies; the application of these methodologies and the corresponding methods, are explored in the context of each chapter.

Further reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of this research, I explore how durable communities can contribute to the development of a bioregional model built around the concept of working landscapes. While increasing spatial scale of analysis runs the risk of moving sustainability further from the tangible and poignant world of household-level accountability, it also offers the opportunity to address the concerns of critics who note the enormity of our environmental crisis. This research retains an operational approach to sustainability even at this larger bioregional level by narrowing the scope of working landscapes to sustainable agriculture and forestry.

While the notion of a "working landscape" bioregion emerged in 2011 during the pilot research related to this dissertation, it was the PAR findings which demonstrated a community and bio-regional need for a center dedicated to promoting working landscape policies, teaching practical sustainability skills, and serving as an innovation and dialogue hub for bioregionally significant land-use initiatives. In recognition of this demonstrated need, this dissertation presents a blueprint for the continued development of the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes* based on stakeholder participation.

Purpose and Major Questions

The overarching purpose of this study is to better understand how neo-homesteaders in the Adirondack-North Country might contribute—thorough culture, community, and innovation—to a more durable future. Collectively, three nested and interdisciplinary questions form the basis of this research and direct the flow of inquiry in logical stages.

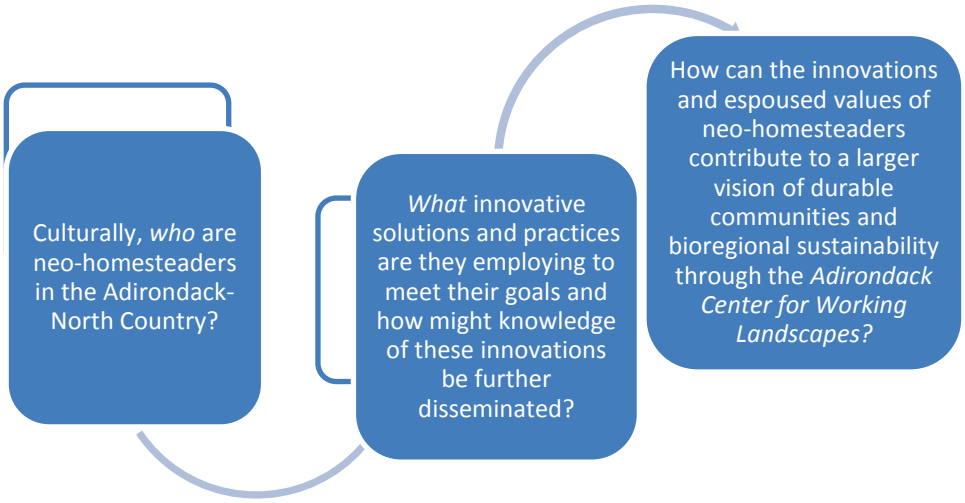


Figure One: Flow of Inquiry based on the Major Questions

Foundational to this research is: first, a regionally-focused, ethnographic inquiry of neo-homesteading sub-culture; second, an examination of specific innovations that contribute to homestead goals, including an evaluation of knowledge transfer using agricultural extension, intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and lay-science publication; and finally, an examination of how the innovations and espoused values of neo-homesteaders can contribute to a larger vision of durable communities and bioregional sustainability through the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes*.

First, *who* are neo-homesteaders in the Adirondack-North Country? Relatively little scholarly research exists related to neo-homesteading, and even less in the context of the region.

Developing a comprehensive and diverse understanding of the movement's participants is essential to crafting an accurate description of this subculture, which is often caricatured as an insignificant fringe movement of "hobby farmers" (Brown 2011). Operating under an action research paradigm, ethnographic inquiry using stated and implied values deduced from participant observation methods forms the cornerstone of this research. This approach is particularly appropriate because it aims to shorten the distance between the outsider's interpretation (etic perspective) and the meaning of lived experiences for the perspective of the research participant (emic perspective) (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). The result of this approach is a less caricatured, more authentic understanding of neo-homesteaders in the region.

While the first question is intended to bridge the gap between etic and emic views, the second question focuses on specific practices by asking: What innovative solutions and practices are they employing to meet their goals; and how might knowledge of these innovations be further disseminated? Analysis of this particular question will focus on identifying specific, unique practices that these homesteaders have employed to meet their sustainability-related goals. This question also served as the content base for the researcher's forthcoming book: *The Woodland Homestead* (Storey Publishing, 2015), and included layout excerpts that demonstrate lay-science communication and knowledge-sharing. This portion of the dissertation is consistent with the recent moment in agricultural extension that emphasizes the participatory role smallholders in contributing to rural sustainability (Ellis and Biggs 2001). Importantly, this current paradigm is well-aligned with the original purpose of agricultural extension which was focused on community development, as opposed to specialization and yield-driven state-led initiatives (S. J. Peters 2006)

Finally, this research employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods (discussed in the following section) to demonstrate how the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes can contribute to the formation durable communities and bioregional sustainability by promoting community, teaching innovative and traditional rural skills, and serving as a venue for grassroots rural policy development. PAR is appropriate for this particular inquiry because as the researcher I'm able to serve as a resource to those being studied. Conducting this research using a PAR framework relied on an integration of the first two questions (an understanding of the participants and the innovative techniques they employ), as well as macro-scale analysis of policies that promote a diuternal trajectory for the region. Addressing these three questions collectively offers not only regional applicability but also an alternative approach for other rural communities in pursuit of a more integrative bioregional vision.

An Interdisciplinary Theoretical Framework

Among the factors that make this research unique is the linking of scales and disciplines that, traditionally, have operated in isolation. A clear theoretical framework fortifies the arc of the research by: demonstrating what is already known about the topic and what isn't; supporting the alignment of the research questions with specific methodologies and existing theories; establishing a clear relationship among the study elements; and finally, addressing the knowledge gap by making an original contribution (Maxwell 2005).

My initial inquiry was influenced by observations that suggested both a knowledge gap and an opportunity to effect change. Among the unique observations was the way in which neo-homesteading culture in the ANC crosses traditional political, social, and economic lines. Given the class-based conflicts that characterize life in the Adirondack Park, this common ground emerged as an opportunity to bridge the gap. There were other observations that prompted

further questions, such as what happened to the last wave of homesteaders from the 1970s, and did that movement have any lasting contributions at the community level? Homesteaders of the previous wave offer a curious contrast to the influx of young neo-homesteaders who have moved to the region and scaled up homestead-level operations into thriving small farms.

Notably, these early observations helped to guide the development of the formal research questions and bound my literature review. This literature review began with a historical overview of homesteading to see if my observations were unique, or part of larger historical patterns. Because the research is geographically bound to the Adirondack-North Country, I found myself consulting primary literature and ephemera from the Back to the Land Research Archives at St. Lawrence University. This rich data came in the form of grassroots publications such as *The Rootdrinker, The Rural Life Association Newsletter,* and*, The Northern Light Alternative Energy Guide*.

Equipped with these regionally focused historical findings, I broadened my research to explore homesteading as a cultural phenomenon and as a point of academic inquiry. Despite limited literature, two studies proved invaluable in shaping my methods and providing solid theories from which to base my research. The first was the work of Jeffery Jacob, a rural sociologist who devoted his career to exploring who "back to the landers" are, and why they pursue this demanding lifestyle (1997). The second influential work was the historical and anthropological research of Rebecca Kneale Gould who explored the spiritual dimension of modern homesteading (2005). Despite representing different disciplines, both researchers provided a clear methodological recommendation: if you want an uncaricatured understanding of homesteaders, you must share their world on the ground. Even after collecting more than 1,300 surveys, Jacob returned to the field so that he could construct more accurate typological sketches.

Gould did much the same, using her time with the Nearings (and dozens of other lesser-known homesteaders) to engage in participant observation experiences that ultimately informed the relationship between nature-influenced spirituality and the decision to engage in modern homesteading.

Given the overarching goal of the dissertation to effect change, Action Research (AR) appeared to be an ideal methodological approach. In the context of this work, AR is defined as "the study of a social situation with a view to improve the quality of action within it" (Elliot 1991, 69). The AR framework of this research includes both Practical Action Research, which focused on the development of product (e.g. clearly documenting the innovations of neo-homesteaders) and Participatory Action Research, which focuses on the democratic process of defining and creating more durable communities.

While Participatory Action Research has emerged as the dominant action research approach, Practical Action Research is a product-oriented approach that is appropriate for documenting the innovations of neo-homesteaders. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) state that action research theorized as practical inquiry is a "way to generate or enhance practical and applicable knowledge" (1999, 19-20). Practical Action Research is most commonly applied in educational research as a tool for developing new insights or methods from actual teaching experiences.

Participatory Action Research is defined by Reason and Bradbury as, "a democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview…[and bringing] together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of

pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities" (2001, 22).

In terms of specific methods, Participant Observation (PO) bridges the gap between Participatory and Practical Action Research both by contributing to a democratic vision of durable communities (Participatory Action Research) and also by documenting the innovations of neo-homesteaders (Practical Action Research). Other tools such as the use of participant surveys, community opportunity symposiums, and participant-inspired workshops neatly constitute Participatory Action Research (PAR), with the goal of authentically addressing stakeholder needs. This focus on democratic, stakeholder-driven involvement is particularly important, given the history of class-based conflict in the region that often recalls elements of colonialism, including the extraction of resources, outside rule, and classism (Knott 1998).

The analytic process associated with these action research methods moves from the bottom up, linking specific observations to broader generalizations and theories noted by other researchers. This approach clearly falls within the grounded theory research paradigm outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Organizationally, the dissertation addresses three scales: individuals (neo-homesteaders); durable communities; and working landscapes at the bioregional level. Given that many of the theories I relied on were scale-sensitive, I scaffold theories (micro/meso/macro) to demonstrate the nested relationship and address the third element of my theoretical framework, establishing a relationship among the study elements.

The primary micro-level theories that contribute to this dissertation included the previously mentioned homesteader typologies by Jacob, and Gould's theory that homesteading is a tool for religious and cultural work. To develop the historical context and differentiate neo-

homesteading from previous homesteading "waves," Dona Brown's cultural history of homesteading, coupled with Eleanor Agnew's historical memoir of homesteading in the 1970s and Philip Ackerman-Leist's advancement of *crafted interdependence* as a distinct element of neo-homesteading, chronologically demonstrate the evolution of this movement.

The meso-level theories situate neo-homesteaders as agents of change within their communities. Informed by both well-established theories of community (Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft*) and modern rural sociology constructs (Wilkinson's interactional theory and Putnam's theory of social capital across diverse social cleavages) help to provide a contemporary framework for understanding the opportunities and barriers to creating durable communities. However, this framework extends beyond the rural sociology literature to include economic dimensions that, for many rural communities, stand as the most formidable barrier to durability. A multifaceted approach looks both inward, examining the informal economies that are essential to many neo-homesteaders, as well as toward state-sponsored programs through sustainability-focused agricultural extension programs that explicitly include smallholders.

Helping to narrow the gap between community theory and the creation of durable communities will rely on stakeholder input that is focused on a clear endstate. The durable community construct is acutely aligned with the PAR work of future studies experts David Mason and James Herman. Their work to define an endstate for the region that is both desirable and attainable acknowledges the role of smallholders in contributing to durable communities. Their work also suggests that by supporting a working landscape agenda, a larger bioregional model may emerge (Herman 2013). These meso-level theories help to demonstrate mechanisms and processes for cultivating specific elements of the durable communities concept. Furthermore,

these findings served to inform the PAR component of the research in the development of the ACWL.

Finally, macro-level theories contribute to the theoretical framework of this study by fortifying the conceptual links and overarching themes related to durable communities and working landscapes. The macro-level theories that contribute to this research focus on resilience theory and panarchy. While based in ecology, these theories demonstrate applicability in social systems as related to self-regulation. Other disciplines, such as systems dynamics, offer a theoretical base from which to integrate social, economic, and ecological elements. One such framework, the Stacey Landscape Model, offers relevance to the durable community concept by focusing on creating a culture that acknowledges and rewards adaptive responses. Collectively, these macro-level theories demonstrate the opportunity for change under the nested model presented in the research, and proposes a blueprint for developing durable communities within a framework that is both democratic in process and rich in purpose.

Lastly, the theoretical framework of this dissertation address a knowledge gap by making an original contribution that answers the following research questions:

One, culturally, who are neo-homesteaders in the ANC? This question was addressed through both pilot surveys and a deeper treatment of the respondents who didn't fit within existing homesteader typologies found in the literature. Using an ethnographic approach, three proto-typologies were established to better define the cultural landscape of neo-homesteaders in the region.

Two, what innovation solutions and practices are they employing to meet their goals, and how might knowledge of these innovations be further disseminated? This question was addressed

by documenting the innovations of neo-homesteaders during the PO phase of the research. This provided the content base for developing *The Woodland Homestead* which is a tool for information dissemination. Further contributing to information dissemination is the development of the ACWL.

Three, how can the innovations and espoused values of neo-homesteaders contribute to a larger vision of durable communities and bioregional sustainability through the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes? (ACWL) Because the mission of the ACWL is directed through participatory action, this center has the ability to support policy that recognizes the elements of durable communities and vibrant working landscapes. This vision is will be further operationalized by following the ACWL blueprint in chapter five.

Broader Implications and Significance of Research

In the context of the Adirondack-North Country this research is timely. The recently published regional sustainability plan launched under the New York State Cleaner, Greener Communities initiative in 2013, acknowledged neo-homesteading as a relevant component of sustainable development[2]. Additionally, this same plan included the "durable communities" idea as a useful concept for advancing a bio-regional vision (ANCA 2013). Dovetailing with this report was the Adirondack Futures visioning study which demonstrated a belief among residents that grassroots sustainability initiatives, rooted in a culture of neo-homesteading and small-scale agriculture, represent the most desirable and attainable vision for the region (McKinstry 2012).

Finally, it is worth noting that this research is significant because it represents an apolitical and more inclusive approach to sustainability. Instead of focusing on environmental

[2] In the interest of full disclosure, I served on the ANCA "Working Landscapes Advisory Group" that advocated for recognizing neo-homesteaders and smallholders as important contributors to rural sustainability initiatives.

issues through an eco-centric lens, the values espoused by neo-homesteaders and the durable communities concept emphasize creating common ground around universal, resource-based issues like food and energy. In practice, sustaining food and energy resources often relies on intergenerational transfer of traditional skills, and leveraging socio-economic diversity to create innovative and inclusive solutions that build social capital within communities (Ostrom 1998).

From Example to Exemplar: The Need to Advance Sustainability in the Adirondack-North Country

The Adirondacks is often characterized as a six-million-acre park without gates, but where people live, work, and play; a place where communities and conservation areas are designed to be resilient, and where ecological and economic systems coexist thanks to year-round tourism. Advocates of the Adirondack model often highlight the fact that designated "Wilderness" areas in the Park are twice that of federal lands and were developed 72 years before the National Wilderness Act, demonstrating strong and enduring land-use policy (Schneider 1997). To many, the Adirondacks are held up as an *exemplar* of sustainable development. Unfortunately, there are other statistics which are less inspiring. This same park also has the highest unemployment rates in New York and highest fuel consumption per capita; imports most of its food; and has an economic model based entirely on a volatile tourism industry and state corrections facilities (Erickson 1998, AAPA 2009). Those natural resource industries that remain (forestry and agriculture) face a variety of barriers including limited markets, high transport costs, and a short growing season (Erickson 1998). In terms of future generations, youth continue to seek employment opportunities in more urban areas, breaking the cycle of intergenerational transfer of both land and traditional knowledge. This set of challenging

conditions has evolved into a popular narrative, which posits that preservationists have succeeded in protecting the land, but at the cost of livelihoods and community prosperity (Terrie 2008).

Further polarizing the issue is a history of socio-economic bifurcation that can be traced back to the region's settlement in the late nineteenth century. In 1893, for example, 45 families owned over 941,000 acres of the Adirondack Park (Schneider 1997). At the other end of the socio-economic spectrum were poor itinerant farmers, who could not afford land in New England and instead struggled to carve out an existence in the rugged Adirondack Mountains. However naïve an agrarian existence in the mountains may have seemed, respected agriculturalists such as John Todd promoted a prosperous agrarian vision for the Park as early as 1840 (Terrie 2008). Todd perpetuated the popular notion that clearing forests would lead to a warmer climate, and thus served as a hopeful vision for the Park's poorest residents whose livelihood was directly connected to the land.

However, to define the region in either its historical or current state as simply a playground for the rich and an inhospitable landscape for the poor exaggerates the reality and ignores the opportunities that exist beyond the area politically defined as the Adirondack Park. As noted by former Chair of the Adirondack Park Agency, Ross Whaley, many areas, especially those at the outside periphery of the Park boundary, are equally impoverished; therefore, to conclude that the Park is poor *because* of strict environmental regulation within the Blue Line boundary is at least in part, false (Porter, Erickson and Whaley 2009).

The historian Philip Terrie has also noted that while the region faces real challenges in terms of developing a unified vision for the future, a long-standing culture exists that prides itself

on self-reliance and strength through adversity (Terrie 2008). It is this enduring culture that has contributed to the current neo-homesteading movement and offers hope for the construction of more durable communities. The following section outlines the historical evolution of the movement, revealing an ingrained ethos of self-reliance that in its current iteration has evolved to become more inclusive, diverse and interdependent. Importantly, a clear and accurate understanding of this cultural phenomenon is considered essential to the development of accurate proto-typologies, and has tangible policy implications. In Scotland for example, the Rural Planning Commission uses typologies as a way to articulate socio-economic challenges and lifestyle choices of their rural residents, which in turn, is used to identify rural policy gaps (UK Commision 2005). This research develops similar insights in the context of the Adirondack-North Country using proto-typologies that contribute to a more informed and authentic definition of durable communities. Further demonstrating the practical contributions of this research was the development of *The Woodland Homestead,* an agricultural extension-style book that details neo-homesteader innovation. Finally, this dissertation concludes by offering a blueprint for the continued development of the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes- a* participatory center that focuses on the contributions of neo-homesteaders and smallholders in promoting durable communities and bioregional vision of working landscapes.

Chapter Two: From Homesteading to Neo-Homesteading

The Adirondack-North County has been home to no fewer than four distinct sustainable life/ homesteading movements—a testament to the region's enduring history of homesteading, and an endorsement of its cultural significance. The 1850s were marked by the largest intentional homesteading movement to date. At this time, conditions of squalor in Manhattan drove impoverished African-American families into epidemic-ridden slums, which coincided with disillusion spurred by the 1846 defeat of the New York equal suffrage referendum. In response, abolitionists crafted a plan to offer African-American families a fresh start in the Adirondack-North Country by offering free land, beginning with the Timbuktoo settlement just outside of present-day Lake Placid, New York (Traditional Arts in Upstate New York, 2003).

Leading this ambitious effort was Gerrit Smith, an abolitionist, politician and wealthy land speculator from New York City. Smith believed that promoting rural homesteading in the Adirondack-North Country would encourage self-sufficiency, civic virtue, and an agrarian ideal. Land ownership was also viewed as an essential step under the suffrage act, as tenure and ownership of improved land was a prerequisite for African-American males to vote. Drawing from his own vast land reserves, Smith sought 3,000 African-American families to receive 40-acre homesteads in the Adirondack-North Country. In an April 3rd, 1846 letter from Gerrit Smith to Marius Robinson of Marlboro, Ohio, Smith underscores his agrarian ethics: "It is true I own three-quarters of a million acres, and yet, paradoxical as it may seem to you, I am an agrarian and think it wrong for a man to own more than one farm. I am rich as the world says, and yet… I think it a sin to be rich, and would rather live and die poor…" (Smith 1846).

Equally important as Smith's philanthropy were the men who worked as agents to help relocate and educate the new African-American homesteaders. Chief among these figures was minister and slave-born activist H.H. Garnet of Troy, New York. Garnet and the 12 other agents focused their work on selling the homestead dream to 3,000 families. Central to Garnet's motivation was a strong personal belief that this rural lifestyle would bring not only liberation from slavery, but also spiritual renewal through nature and the ability to provide one's own food and shelter. The requirement for blacks to enter into Smith's homestead plan was simply that grantees be hard-working, able-bodied men between 21 and 60 years of age, non-smokers, and currently not listed as "property" (TAUNY, History Unveiled 2003).

The images associated with homesteading were quintessential Americana. Homesteading embodied hard work, "improving" land, and self-sufficiency. Abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith and Willis Hodges knew this, and fully intended to exploit the patriotic virtues of homesteading as means of elevating the image of free blacks. At the 1847 National Convention of Colored People, Willis Hodges and Charles Ray, representing the Agricultural Committee, announced: "Forsake the cities and towns and their employments of dependency therein, and emigrate to those parts of the country where land is cheap, and become cultivators of the soil, as the surest road to respectability and influence (TAUNY, History Unveiled 2003)."

Abolitionists openly discussed how the homesteader's freehold could be used as a tangible example of African American fortitude, ultimately dispelling the myth of black inferiority. In fact, so strong was the influence of African American homesteaders that Fredrick Douglass bought a 244-acre homestead from Gerrit Smith in the heart of what would come to be known as the Timbuctoo homestead region of Essex County, New York. Douglass not only wanted to live within the abolition movement, he also hoped that he could contribute to the

agricultural success of these early homesteaders. Douglass himself had a successful past as a farmer and hoped that his presence in the region would promote knowledge transfer among the residents of Timbuctoo (TAUNY 2003). This pattern of urban residents moving to rural landscapes with hope, but without inclination, would become a dominant theme of the larger homesteading movement. Despite the best of intentions, Douglass spent little time at his Adirondack Homestead and instead found himself returning to the South to further the abolitionist movement.

While motivated by democratic ideals, the harsh climate and a lack of agricultural knowledge prevented many of these early homesteaders from staying. In fact, of the nearly 3,000 families that were offered homesteads, it is thought no more than 150 settled permanently, though it is difficult to know since there are no known settlement maps (Christian 2002). Perhaps the greatest contribution of this early homesteading movement was not the physical construction of homesteads, but the democratic values they promoted. Land and self-sufficiency became the currency of democracy and independence. In the context of neo-homesteading and the durable communities they aim to create, this democratic ideal holds equal resonance today, as issues of energy independence and food sovereignty emerge as the ultimate manifestation of what it means to be democratic society, a place where citizens have direct control over the most basic and essential elements of life.

A Homestead for the Transcendentalists

While the African-American homesteading movement arguably represented the most noble and patriotic reasons for pursuing a back-to-the-land ethic, there was a more genteel brand of homesteaders emerging during this period as well. In response to Thoreau's 1854 publication of *Walden,* transcendentalists took to the field and forest in search of a more honest relationship

with nature. Casually read, some might suppose *Walden* was written as a mid19th century "how to homestead" book. However, as highlighted by Dona Brown in *Back to the Land,* Thoreau's book may have been inspirational to those wishing to cast away society's new socio-economic drift net, but it failed to offer the sage advice many had hoped for (Brown 2011). As an example of this, Brown cites *The Bean Field* chapter in *Walden,* emphasizing that while the detail may suggest a "how-to" manual, Thoreau's agenda was really to skewer the materialism and competitiveness of modern consumerism, not to promote practical homesteading. Furthering this point, Brown offers a critique of his methods: "He flouted sound agricultural practices, growing his beans without fertilizer, hoeing them in the morning when the dew is most likely to spread disease, putting up only a fitful resistance to the woodchucks. Not surprisingly, in the end Thoreau reports harvesting only a meager crop (Brown 2011)."

Despite the lack of practical advice, *Walden* became the bible for would-be homesteaders. Thoreau developed cult-like status promoting "cultivated ignorance." This philosophy was based on the idea that all new endeavors promise learning; for new homesteaders the implicit message minimized the costs of failure, and maximized the value of learning (Gould 2005). It is difficult to know the effect of either Thoreau's promotion of "cultivated ignorance" or the general influence of his compelling prose on would-be homesteaders. However, Gould suggests that Thoreau's influence extended to fellow transcendentalist, John Burroughs and his decision to go back to the land (Gould 2005).

Early back-to-the-land writers such as Thoreau and Burroughs were geographically blessed in the East. Their proximity to the populous meant that their message could reach an audience, and while neither of these men homesteaded in the Adirondack-North Country, their historical influence in the region is undeniable. Like many urbanites fed up with city life,

Burroughs left Washington, D.C. in 1872 with his sights set on the Catskills, just south of the Adirondack-North Country. In returning to the Catskills, he built a homestead retreat known as "Slabside," where he wrote, and took frequent breaks to tend to his celery crop and walked among the mountains and meadows. Burroughs's Slabside retreat was built in the rustic Adirondack vernacular, a style that he found appealing, as it accentuated his connection to nature. While at Slabside, he devoted significant time to developing a market garden as a way to supplement his income (Gould 2005).

Eventually, Burroughs gave up his day job at the Bureau of National Banks in order to pursue a life closer to nature and become more self-reliant. While returning to the land had been a long-held dream for Burroughs, he faced the same dilemma that both historical and contemporary homesteaders face: how does one reject the culture of consumerism and practically address the fact that to *become* self-sufficient requires capital for land, tools, and other necessities? In the case of Burroughs, self-discipline and a natural proclivity for writing offered him a way out.

The Catskills were also a convenient escape for Manhattanites looking for an agrarian experience. True to the Victorian influence of the 1880s, many of these homesteads were symbols of agrarian gentrification and *suggested* self-sufficiency, even if it was only a façade. For the less romantic and arguably more practical, going back to the land meant heading north, where land was cheap and opportunity abundant.

Urban Exodus and the Adirondack-North Country Dream

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, the line between farming, pioneering, and homesteading was blurry, but loosely correlated with the scale of the land and amount of "improvement" needed. These terms, nebulous in definition, appear in historical ephemera as

somewhat interchangeable. This second wave of homesteaders that followed the itinerant farmers of New England and the African American homesteaders of Timbuctoo, could be characterized in terms of both the sheer number of participants, and the intentionality of their decisions. Whereas the homesteaders of the 19th century were running *away* (namely, from slavery and poverty), the homesteaders of the early 20th century were instead running *toward* a highly intentional lifestyle—one marked by self-reliance, a spiritual connection to nature, and the desire to live "more simply."

While the genre of homesteading books may have contributed to interest, it was the depression of 1893 and the sheer number of participants in this second homesteading wave that encouraged Americans to question their personal security in a world of uncertain prosperity. Rural America, particularly the Adirondack-North Country, was ready to receive these homesteaders with abundant land and half-carved towns left from the logging boom of the previous half-century.

Supporting the link between a rural homestead and self-determined freedom was Bolton Hall's 1907 publication of *Three Acres and Liberty,* subsequently followed by his 1908 treatise entitled, *A Little Land and a Living.* In this latter publication Hall contrasts urban life (he himself was from Manhattan) with "the wild joys of living."

> Life is something that was thrust upon him (the average man) unasked and must be maintained at any cost. It seldom occurs to him that there is anything either beautiful or wonderful in it. He beings to drudge in youth and for years the daily round of rising un-refreshed from sleep under conditions that make rest impossible, to spend hours in a workshop or factory and then return to his cramped, airless quarters, goes on without hope of change. How incomprehensible to him the joyous cry of Browning 'Oh, the wild joys of living!' (Hall 1908)

Hall's rich social commentary demonstrates the contempt that existed at a time when industrialization and "progress" were rarely challenged concepts among the mainstream. These

same social forces that drove middle-class urbanites to consider a return to rural life also won appeal from wealthy New Yorkers looking for a mountain respite. While generally not looking for a life of hard labor, the opulent summer society that developed in the Adirondacks espoused many of the same values as the more middle-class homesteaders of this period—namely a desire to slow down, enjoy the natural world, and live more simply, even if only for the summer. This cross-cultural dream manifested itself throughout the Adirondack-North Country as a genteel "back to nature" movement for the rich, and a more utilitarian "back to the land" movement for the middle and lower classes. Consequently, these two parallel movements proved synergistic in a variety of ways. First was the fact that many of the formerly urban middle-class back-to-the-landers falsely expected to live off the land without external supplements. The reality of a short growing season and limited bartering markets (a function of low population density) meant that most were forced to find employment outside the homestead. For many, this meant using their backwoods knowledge to guide wealthy guests and seasonal visitors. Additionally, many of the wealthy retreats, known as "great camps," needed to function as self-reliant entities in order to provide fresh fruits, vegetable, and meats for the residents and guests. This need translated into small-scale diversified agricultural operations both within great camp estates and at surrounding farmsteads.

To be clear, many of the early homesteaders who expected to eke out an existence in the Adirondack-North Country failed, a result that's attributable to both a lack of preparedness and a cold climate. However, some parts of the Adirondack-North Country are more naturally endowed with quality agricultural sites, namely the Champlain and the St. Lawrence valleys that flank the Adirondacks on the east and west sides, respectively. The comparative advantage of this agricultural beltline would ultimately lead to many small, diversified homesteads

transitioning to mid-size agricultural operations. The forces driving this trend included the improvement of the "turnpike" system and the introduction of automobiles and trucks. Additionally, the northern climate that made growing crops a challenge allowed milk and other dairy products to be shipped greater distances without risk of spoilage. It also brought an end to the cooperative cheese market, which allowed small-scale homesteads to sell small volumes of raw milk for processing as cheese (SLCPO 2012). Predictably, the promotion of large-scale dairy operations led to greater financial insecurity as a surplus of milk and other agricultural products led to a collapse of prices. The volatility of the 1920s, concluding with the stock market crash of 1929, further reinforced the notion that small-scale diversified homesteads promised greater security than the mid and increasingly large scale agriculture promoted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Homesteading: A Strategy for Mitigating the Depression in the Adirondack North Country

The depression was a time of unique demographic shift in the Adirondack-North Country. Many farmers on the front end of the agricultural collapse headed for the cities believing that life *must* be easier there. Conversely, urban dwellers headed to the country hoping that self-sufficiency would set them free from the wrath of capitalist collapse. This latter belief was one that was also shared by both failing industries and government. The farm machinery manufacturer International Harvester offered gardens to its laid-off workers, while the State of New York offered up 50,000 plots of land (some in the Adirondack-North Country), hoping to minimize unemployment (Brown 2011).

Just as in the first wave of the back-to-the-land movement, publishers were quick to offer homesteading books to the would-be homesteader. The most popular book of the time was *Five*

Acres & Independence written by M.G. Kains. While other texts painted homesteading as a panacea to financial and social ills, Kains was direct in assessing the challenges of going back to the land, particularly in harsh regions such as the Adirondack-North Country:

> How would you like to be snowed in as my family and I have been so that for ten weeks neither you nor your neighbors could use an automobile because of the deeply drifted snow? Can you and your family stand the isolation usually characteristic of farm life? Do you know from experience the meaning of hard, manual work from dawn to dark—and then by lantern light? Are you prepared to forgo salary or income for months at a stretch? (Kains 1935)

Posing these questions on the first two pages of the book was intended to weed out the romantics and offer homesteading as not only a viable economic solution, but as a socially superior option: "Which, think you, is the better citizen, the man who pays rent for a hall room, a hotel suite or a 'flat,' or the one who owns a self-supporting rural home and therein rears a family of sons and daughters by the labors of his head and his hands and their assistance? (Kains 1935)"

This theme of independence and self-reliance in nature is one that can be traced back to Gerrit Smith, Thoreau, Burroughs, and many other back-to-the-landers of the previous two centuries. However, unlike other social movements, the back-to-the-land movement resonates at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum. On one end you have those who embrace homesteading as an alternative to abject poverty. On the other end of the spectrum are those who are financially secure, yet feel trapped by the "rat race."

Neighbors to the Adirondack-North Country

Perhaps the most famous of all Adirondack-North Country back-to-the-landers were Helen and Scott Nearing who began homesteading just east of the Adirondack Mountains in Vermont. The Nearings left New York City in 1932 in search of "a simple, satisfying life on the

land, to be devoted to mutual aid and harmlessness, with an ample margin of leisure in which to do personally constructive and creative work" (H. Nearing 1970, p.6).

The basis of this decision to "go rural" was rooted in a variety of social, political and economic factors. In the introduction to *The Good Life,* Helen describes society in 1932 as "gripped by depression and unemployment, falling prey to fascism, and on the verge of another world-wide military free-for-all" (1970, p.7). The Nearings contemplated a variety of solutions to their dilemma, including a move abroad. In the end, however, they concluded that a model built on rural self-sufficiency offered the greatest opportunity for an independent life.

While a rural existence seemed consistent with their goal of developing a "use economy," based on home production and barter, the social challenges associated with going back to the land proved more formidable. After acquiring 67 acres, the Nearings moved to their property as seasonal residents or "summer folk." The reception from local residents was generally skeptical, stereotyped as coming "…with a little or lot of money, and not intending to stay long or do much work" (1970, p.8). The Nearings also noted that other summer residents were altering the economy by demanding factory goods and specialty items, which ultimately displaced locally produced products.

Prognosticating the future of Vermont, Helen feared that the development of a seasonal population would promote a "vacationland economy" marked by a decline in self-reliance and an increase in economic volatility. Not surprisingly, this reality came to fruition for not only Vermont, but for much of the Adirondack-North Country (Terrie 2008). However, the challenge of a seasonal population was not just economic, but also social, as people leave and populations

regularly dwindle. Cogently articulated by Helen, “Neighborhoods, to be meaningful, must have continuity” (1970, p. 11).

Acutely aware of these effects, the Nearings made the decision to move to their homestead full time in 1935. This move represented not only a commitment to the community they would be joining, but also a commitment to a new way of life. Importantly, however, is the fact that while Scott Nearing may have given up his formal professorship (he was dismissed from several academic appointments for his political views), he remained a devoted teacher and scholar. This transition from academic to “pracademic” was apparent in his daily musings, which followed a pattern of observation or participation and later reflection. This blending of worlds, inquiry and practice, ultimately led both Scott and Helen to become transdiciplanarians—interpreting the world around them through a variety of lenses. The most fundamental lesson for the Nearings was that nature was paramount; the first foundation of economic viability, political dissent, and social reform (Gould 2005).

It is impossible to know the extent to which homesteading as a lifestyle served as the impetus for Helen and Scott’s reassessment of the world around them. However, this blended analysis of the intellectual and the practical is in keeping with another influential scholar of the time, Aldo Leopold. Leopold’s homesteading adventure paralleled that of the Nearings during the same period of economic depression. Like the Nearings, Leopold and his family set out to rehabilitate denuded farmland and fulfill a desire to become more self-reliant. The Nearings would have likely agreed with Leopold’s assessment of the value of self-sufficiency: “There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace (Leopold 1948).”

As the Nearings predicted, the Depression concluded with the launching of World War II. While patriotism and economic stimulus reduced the perceived urgency of self-reliance for a burgeoning consumer culture, others continued to embrace notions of thrift, efficiency and home production—all of which had contributed to the mantra of a self-reliant America during World War II. This tension between two worlds—urban and rural, consumptive and productive, modern and anachronistic—created a polarity that historian Dona Brown believes led to the caricature of the movement. Citing evidence of this, Brown points to several movies including *The Egg and I; Christmas in Connecticut; Granby's Green* (Brown 2011). Collectively, these movies mocked country life and played into a deeper tension between the new consumer opportunities available in the postwar years and the persistent longing for a return to home and security (Brown 2011).

Perhaps the strongest champions of the cleverly disguised counter-culture movement were Ed and Carolyn Robinson who reissued their wartime homesteading book, the *Have More Plan.* Packaged as a manual of domestic skills and small-scale farming, the Robinsons made homesteading appear to be both mainstream and commonsensical. In 1947 the book was republished by a major press as *The Have More Plan for a Little Land, a Lot of Living.* (Brown 2011)

By the early 1950s, homesteading was a lifestyle that had almost entirely been relegated to counter-culturists such as the Nearings (Agnew 2004). Predictably though, homesteading follows a trend by which participation is correlated with economic polarity. While it is obvious that a lifestyle rooted in self-sufficiency and thrift would be appealing during challenging economic times, another motivator seems to fuel the homesteading movement, namely a desire to opt out of the "rat race." The appeal of homesteading at both ends of the economic wave, and

across socio-economic lines is perhaps the most compelling argument for homesteading as a *universal* movement, relevant to more than just the social fringe.

New homesteading and back-to-the-land texts were virtually non-existent in the 1950s, as American interest waxed toward technology and competition with the Joneses—at least for a while. Holding true to the same pattern of the roaring 1920s, the game of consumptive competition in the 1950s grew old. Improvements in both the automobile and the establishment of the interstate highways system meant that rural ambitions were now within reach for those who had only dreamed of going back-to-the-land while continuing to run the rat race in urban and suburban America. In short order, roads and cars became the signature feature in the democratization of rural America, including the Adirondack-North Country (Terrie 2008).

Back-to-the-Landers: A New Cultural Force in the Adirondack-North Country

The development of the leisure class in the 1950s and 1960s brought many city dwellers to the Adirondack-North Country, some as visitors, and some as more permanent homesteaders. Among the third wave of 1960s homesteaders was Anne LaBastille, an Ivy League–educated wildlife ecologist and devotee of Henry David Thoreau. In 1965 LaBastille moved to a remote location just outside of Old Forge, New York and focused her efforts, like Thoreau, on observing nature and living simply. Her self-constructed log cabin served as the basis of her homestead and would become her haven for writing. It should come as little surprise that homesteaders throughout history, from Burroughs to Thoreau to the Nearings all focused on writing as a principle vocation. The freedom from distraction allowed them to focus on their writing in an inspiring environment.

In a review of LaBastille's homesteading memoir, *Woodswoman,* former New York governor Hugh Carey alluded to the challenges of a new social movement in the Adirondack

North Country saying, “I greatly enjoyed your new book, *Woodswoman*. Changing life styles and learning to live a new way is never easy, yet you explain it beautifully (LaBastille 1976).”

The alternative lifestyle that LaBastille described was consistent with the visions of many young Americans during this period. War, economic pressure and environmental degradation made the idea of simple, harmonious rural living more attractive. LaBastille also used her Adirondack homestead as a base from which to conduct her conservation work. One of her greatest frustrations was that logistically, and somewhat ironically, homesteading in a rural area was in conflict with the professional demands of being a renowned conservationist and scholar who received requests to participate in the lecture circuit and collaborate on research. Eventually she purchased a farmstead along Lake Champlain where she had the convenience of telephone, running water and electricity (Hackett 2011).

While LaBastille’s Champlain Valley flanked the eastern Adirondacks, the western St. Lawrence Valley was quickly becoming a mecca for would-be homesteaders; land was cheap and like-minded individuals developed an ad hoc network focused on cultivating lost skills and building community (Agnew 2004). Some chose to pursue homesteading alone, like Anne LaBastille; others made the plunge as couples or as part of land-buying collectives. Even more popular, particularly in the Canton, New York, area were the back-to-the-land communes of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Intentional communities such as Big Dog, Meadowsweet, and the popular Birdsfoot Farm formed an unplanned, but arguably successful bioregional model that focused on self-sufficiency, particularly in terms of food and energy production.

Like the first homesteaders to the region, most were from more hospitable southern climates. The challenge posed by homesteading in the harsh Adirondack-North Country was

often viewed as a litmus test of individuals' fortitude (Agnew 2004). For the few back-to-the-landers who moved to the North Country with intentions of "going it alone," they quickly realized that such a strategy was predisposed to failure. Cooperation, on the other hand, represented a means to achieving greater efficiency in a system that by design does not maximize efficiency, at least in the conventional sense. Unbeknownst to many of these back-to-the-landers they were engaging in a rural social structure known as *Gemeinschaft.* The term was first coined by German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887. Literally, *Gemeinschaft* translates as "community." However, its precise meaning extends beyond this simple translation. The central tenet to the *Gemeinschaft* concept is that community members are bound by common mores or beliefs that help to define community roles either in formal intentional or unintentional communities.

The basis for *Gemeinschaft* is local orientation that creates a generalized bond which rural sociologists Luloff and Bridger cogently summarize: "people who inhabit the same territory inevitably interact over common issues, and this interaction gives structure to local life" (Luloff and Bridger 2005). As part of a larger counter-culture movement former homesteader and historian Eleanor Agnew expresses this sense of community as carrying even greater meaning that transcended the Adirondack-North Country:

> It wasn't just our local friends who made us feel validated; we also knew that we were part of a much larger national energy, a coast to coast network of back-to-the-land people who were living out the same dream. Whether they were milking cows in Wisconsin or picking oranges in California or chopping wood in upstate New York, they were our kin too. Belonging to a large and significant subculture brought a strong sense of satisfaction. We were part of something important (Agnew 2004).

Despite the strength of the national homesteading movement, local efforts to organize and legitimize the movement in the North Country coalesced around several more formal

organizations. One such organizational attempt was the establishment of *Rootdrinker,* a journal with a bio-regional and environmental focus. The journal which carried the tag line, "Local News as if People Mattered" emphasized the power of the grass-roots influence, and drew on the writings of Wendell Berry. Among the organization's greatest grassroots achievements were the protests again 765KW power lines and the establishment of a nuclear power plant on the St. Lawrence River, a battle that involved many of the region's homesteaders. *Rootdrinker* was also considered well ahead of the curve on food and farm policy and included a number of visionary articles on the future of food. One such article illustrating this point was published in the October 1975 issue entitled: *A Vision: St Lawrence County as a Whole, Self-Sufficient Community.* The article opens with an appeal: "This is a plea for a fresh look at this country's destiny. We need to re-examine our notions and assumptions about our environment, our natural and human resources" (Jones 1975). The author, Doug Jones, goes on to prognosticate his fears related to expanding agri-business and cozy relationships between land-grant universities and corporations. However, despite his skepticism of mainstream society, Jones lays out a compelling argument for the Adirondack-North Country as a bio-region uniquely positioned to emerge as a series of resilient communities. Supporting his thesis is the notion that economic *under*development is a regional saving grace. Jones explains that being a regional economic outcast means that agricultural and forestlands are still available at reasonable prices for would-be homesteaders and farmers. Jones also cites a vibrant interest in preserving traditional skills and culture as central to the region thriving (Jones 1975).

Other *Rootdrinker* articles focused on developing practical skills unique to the environment. One such article, *Feeding Ourselves in the North Country,* cites the statistic that the Adirondack-North Country unnecessarily imports 90% of its food from other areas (Jones

1978). Jones goes on to offer practical advice on cool-weather crops, successional crops, and food preservation techniques. Equally prevalent in the pages of *Rootdrinker* are articles on energy conservation and homestead-level solutions including passive solar design and wood heating technologies.

Despite lasting more than two decades, the rural transformation that many predicted never materialized. The momentum of the movement was thwarted by the return of low oil prices, a dearth of new environmental legislation that promised environmental quality without compromise, and a price collapse affecting agricultural products. One indicator that offers unique insight into this collapse and the associated cultural shift are the publishing records of various sustainable living periodicals. During these two-plus decades of the rural renaissance, two magazines dominated the newsstands, *Mother Earth News* and *Countryside Journal. Countryside Journal* went from a circulation of 40,000 in the 1970s to 4,000 in the 1980s (Brown 2011). In an interview with rural sociologist Jeffery Jacob, *Countryside Journal* founder J.D. Belanger described the journal's decline this way: "Reagan. Yuppies. The me-first generation. The farm crisis. Interest in homesteading and small stock dropped like a bale of wet hay from the top of a 40 foot elevator" (Jacob 1997).

Following the predictable trend of homesteading interest peaking at both times of economic boom and bust, the October 1987 stock market crash prompted many to reconsider their single-minded and unrelenting pursuit of wealth. This renewed interest in homesteading came a bit too late for many of the back-to-the-landers in the Adirondack-North Country. By the early 1980s, regional homesteading journals such as *Rootdrinker* and *Northern Light Magazine* had been discontinued, as some people moved in search of a seemingly more conventional

livelihood — whether that meant connecting to the grid or, pulling up roots in search of employment opportunity outside the region.

However, some of the region's most ardent homesteaders realigned their efforts, convinced that a rural existence would promote not only self-sufficient individuals, but also more durable communities. The result was the establishment of the Rural Life Association (RLA) which declared its mission as: *"Promoting the development of a healthy, sustainable rural community, a locally integrated food economy, and to be a clearinghouse and focus of sharing, social interaction, and inspiration for small-scale farmers and homesteaders* (RLA 2013)*."* Throughout the 1980s, the RLA provided a network for homesteaders and small-scale farmers to exchange knowledge, swap labor, and promote their rural way of life. The RLA faded by the late 1980s, only to reemerge as a neo-homesteading movement twenty years later.

More recently, preservation of the regional homesteading culture from the 1960s to the present has been recognized and documented by the organization, Traditional Arts in Upstate New York, or "TAUNY." A 2010 exhibit entitled "Hippie Houses and Homesteads for the 21st Century" examined both the domestic architecture and culture of homesteading in the Adirondack-North Country. The visual exhibit argues that "hippie homesteads" represent their own unique vernacular; marked by use of local materials (from stones to straw), an evolution in the sophistication of the architecture as a result of skill development and the adoption of renewable technologies, which set the stage for the current neo-homesteading movement (TAUNY 2010).

Evolving Homesteading in the 21st Century: Moving from Self-Reliance to Crafted Interdependence

While the romanticism of homesteading clearly provided the impetus for many would-be back-to-the-landers, it was in many ways a false promise. Among the first lessons that novice homesteaders learned was that self-sufficiency is neither attainable nor desirable in most homesteading arrangements. From a practical standpoint, homesteading requires a great deal of diverse knowledge, as well as land (rented or purchased), a plethora of implements and tools, and even in the most rudimentary of arrangements, some infrastructure.

The notion of crafted interdependence is useful for addressing not only the practical needs of rural homesteaders—such as borrowing tools, sharing labor, or bartering within the informal economy—but also for the construction of durable social communities. Consistent with the earlier discussed notion of *Gemeinschaft* which suggests that rural community members are bound by common mores or beliefs, is a rural movement that is marked by collaborative rural education (by organizations such as the RLA and CCE), small-farm apprenticeships, and a variety of other community-based initiatives that argue for a different ethos and approach to rural living. As described by professor, homesteader, and author Philip Ackerman-Leist: "This crafted interdependence between households works on a scale that avoids the perils of numbing anonymity and misguided individualism, neither of which will cultivate much-needed change in the way we make ourselves at home on this shrinking planet. (Ackerman-Leist 2010)"

While "getting the scale right" is important for building social capital and living within ecological limits, there are other merits to small(er) scale models. In terms of agricultural systems, the current industrial agricultural model is one that presents significant risk. As illustrated by the *E. coli* scare of 2006, in which contaminated spinach resulted in five deaths and

several hundred confirmed consumer illnesses, risk is clearly proportional to the size of the distribution network (Philpott 2006). If on the other hand, we were to adopt a food system that was more local in scale, and relied on small-scale producers, we could reduce risk and build a food system that possesses resilient qualities as a result of diversification and local distribution.

The same could be argued for the kind of local and informal economic system espoused by many homesteaders. The economic collapse of 2008 was based on a large-scale system that relied on the continual movement of risk (loans) and the continual creation of credit. Underpinning this system was blind faith and speculation of continued market growth. Contrasted with these abstract and risky financial vehicles (e.g. mortgaged-backed securities) homesteaders favor an economy based on exchange of locally-produced, tangible goods and services. Dr. Shanon Hayes, in her ethnographically-based book, *Radical Homemakers,* argues that a cleverly created consumer culture has moved households and homesteads from being *units of production* to *units of consumption* (S. Hayes 2010). As an advocate for revitalizing local food systems, Hayes argues that homesteaders play a key role in constructing a bridge from our existing *extractive economy* where corporate success is regarded as the single metric of economic wealth, to a *life-serving economy* where egalitarian values, resource stewardship, and community development contribute to a triple bottom line. It should come as little surprise that the homesteading community, throughout history, has regarded economic and ecological systems as inextricably linked. The fact that *eco*nomics and *eco*logy share the same linguistic root (*Oikos,* meaning "household"), suggests a natural point of extension where the home is considered to be a small-scale ecosystem, marked by inputs, outputs, and interactions (Daly 1991).

In interviewing several homesteaders, one theme continually reemerged. For those who had gone from a "conventional" lifestyle to a back-to-the-land existence, they seemed shocked

by the degree to which affluence had allowed the divorce of economic and ecological choices. Instead, economic limits and ecological constraints should be viewed as both soul mates and counterweights, providing a synergistic balance. This household-level accounting allows us to consider our choices, consumption and contributions in the context of the planet's carrying capacity and our own carbon footprint. Critics of this micro-scale approach often cite the enormity and global reach of our current environmental conundrum as needing change at a larger economy of scale. Unfortunately, global environmental policies have fallen short, ranging from the un-ratified Kyoto protocol to the Stockholm convention to ban known toxins that still allows for the use of DDT (Hardy and Maguire 2010). The reality is, as Professor Ackerman-Leist points out, economic security does not begin on Wall Street or Main Street; instead, it begins at home in each of our collective household economies. These household economies become a collective national psychology that drives our cultural values and financial markets (Ackerman-Leist 2010).

The highly intentional and idealistic homesteading movement of the 1960s and 1970s served as the archetype of the current neo-homesteading movement. Yet, unlike the previous homesteading movements, homesteading in the 1960s and 1970s was viewed as a more intentional effort marked by an explicit ecological ethos (Brown 2011). Underpinning these ecological motivations were economic factors that made the connection between resource consumption, foreign oil dependence, and environmental degradation exceedingly clear. The oil embargo of 1973, while political in its roots, forced many to consider concepts of conservation and self-sufficiency at the household level. Responding to this renewed interest was a national migration trend that lasted throughout the 1970s; towns with populations fewer than 50,000 continued to grow faster than urban areas in excess of 50,000 people (Jacob 1997). Admittedly,

not all of these migrants were going "back-to-the-land," many in fact, were part of a trend of suburban development. Still, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the back-to-the-landers were a part of a broad demographic movement that reaffirmed the small-town and rural way of life, not only within the Adirondack-North Country, but more broadly across rural America. In fact, rural sociologist Jeffery Jacob estimates than no fewer than 1,000,000 people intentionally went back to the land between 1969 and 1980 (Jacob 1997).

As presented in the introduction, neo-homesteaders in this study are preliminarily defined as individuals and families who participate in a lifestyle that practices (to varying degrees) self-reliance, ecological stewardship, and a commitment to the future of their communities (Brown 2011). In terms of the current neo-homesteading movement, it is perhaps even more difficult to quantify the number of participants or their contribution to household/local sustainability. A primary reason for this challenge is the diversity of participants. While the homesteading movement of the 1960s and 1970s was demographically unique (young, (sub)urban, idealistic and counter-cultural), the current movement is defined by a different, and arguable wider range of values reflecting greater diversity of individuals and potential motivations. Specifically, the neo-homesteading movement focuses on gentler and more inclusive sustainability approaches, crafted interdependence over individualistic self-reliance, and conservation over preservation. It is this cultural shift in neo-homesteading that my research aims to address.

A Durable Communities Construct

Advancing a new community construct is a task not to be taken lightly, or without one's feet grounded, and ears attuned. Having lived in the Adirondack-North Country on and off for 16 years, I am by local definition, still, from "away." And while my lineage shares no ties to the homesteaders of Timbuctoo, or to the Adirondack communitarians of the 1970s, this is a place

that I care deeply for—both the land and the people. This visceral connection has provided the motivation to listen, reflect, and respond with a construct of durable communities that is democratic, attainable, and desirable. Realizing the importance of *how* communities are discussed was central to developing a meaningful PAR framework. Specifically, the use of the adjective *durable* was selected because it is both apolitical and self-defining. During the research process I noted the synonyms used by the participants, including: "rugged," "tough," "long-lasting," and "resilient." My initial review of the literature revealed a number of concepts related to community building and social capital; however, only those ideas that reverberated in the ethnographic interviews, surveys, workshops, and participatory symposiums made their way into the definition below.

An inclusive sustainability approach that treats households and communities as both economic and ecological units that are responsible for their food, energy, culture, and entertainment. Durable communities display a reverence for the natural world, and an ecological imagination that creatively re-envisions the relationship between people and place in the interest of resiliency.

Importantly, this durable community concept represents an extension of neo-homesteading values and behaviors to the community level; it is a nested approach to sustainability that begins with individuals at the household level and extends to respective communities and bioregions, as illustrated in figure two.

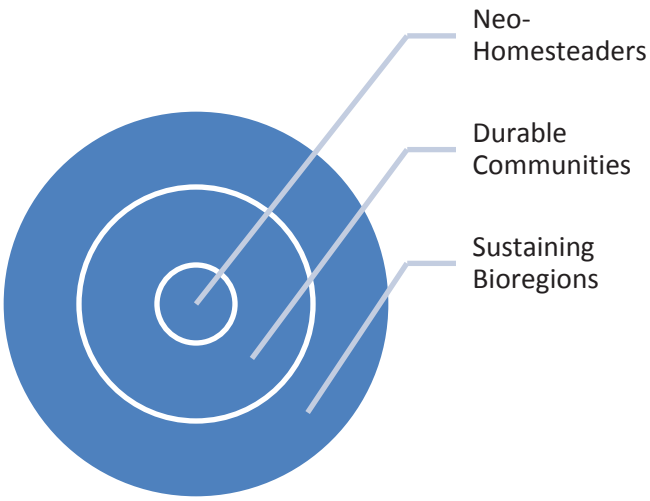


Figure Two: Nested approach illustrating how neo-homesteaders can serve as catalysts in developing durable communities and sustaining bioregions

The following section describes how the elements of the durable community concept emerged through the research, as well as their larger place in the literature. Chapter six focuses on the four areas of emphasis in the definition through the lens of operationalizing the durable community construct. *Community* itself, is a concept that scholars and practitioners have struggled to define, placing it in same murky landscape as other key social science concepts like "morality," "justice," and "rationality," according to sociologist Philip Selznick (1996). However, one common element among the nearly two-dozen definitions of community consulted is that they represent a common *group* experience and presume *locality*. Equally represented in the rural sociology literature is the notion that community can only thrive when there is opportunity for interaction, commitment, and responsibility (Selznick 1996; Lulloff and Bridger, 2005).

The evolution from a broad understanding of community as social theory, to a more nuanced definition targeted at neo-homesteaders, prompted a highly reflexive approach as I

moved between the literature, interview transcriptions, field notes, and surveys. What emerged was an authentic, but intellectually-grounded conceptualization of durable communities. One such example of this linking between the literature and stated values of the participants can be seen in relation to the 19th century German sociological concept of *Gemeinschaft.* The premise of Gemeinschaft is predicated on a socio-economic arrangement in which individuals are oriented to the larger association as much as, if not more than, to their own self-interest (Tonnies 2011). This element of Gemeinschaft was present in nearly every interview, but Mary Malone described her community structure in a way that underscores the nature of relationships under the Gemeinschaft construct: "Like trees in a forest we are rooted and share resources . . . . We also have fun together; the people I toss hay bales with in summer, are the same ones that I play fiddle with in the winter. None of us are rich, but we feel so rich . . . we're rich in trust and security. Nobody's going to fail . . . it's our job to prop one another up." This quote illustrates the Gemeinschaft structure marked by organic unity that is layered with intrinsic worth. Another attribute of Gemeinschaft evident in this and other interview responses is that kinship exists alongside work, and often extends to the creation of a community's own entertainment. The importance of not just existing, but enjoying and creating entertainment in a durable community is a point worth making explicit; it emphasizes the wholeness of the experience, which is central to creating not just durable, but desirable communities.

A contemporary articulation of Gemeinschaft is *crafted interdependence,* a term coined by Philip Ackerman-Leist. The notion of crafted interdependence represents a useful contribution to our understanding of the linkage between neo-homesteading at the individual level and the creation of durable communities. While early homesteaders were in pursuit of self-sufficiency, adopters of crafted interdependence recognize that community reliance offers greater resiliency

by building social capital (Ackerman-Leist 2010). Conceptually, crafted interdependence is intended to flip the focus of homesteading from the individual to community. The role of interdependence as an element of community is articulated in the literature as being a practical component of community building, but one that can be difficult to cultivate in insular or affluent communities that feel little need to engage in an interdependent system that's underpinned by reciprocity (Luloff and Bridger 2005). *Crafted* interdependence suggests that in rural communities where neo-homesteading is prevalent, a higher degree of planning and intentionality informs the roles of community members, and their contributions. The roles and contributions of crafted interdependence can be labor, product, or capital-based.

The participant observation research component highlighted these arrangements; in one example, neighbors agreed to use compatible hitching systems for their tractors (and horses) so that implements could be shared. Crafted interdependence was also modified within communities, based on specialized skills, financial considerations, and the amount of time available. As another example, a part-time homesteader I interviewed had a well-paid job in town and purchased an expensive hay mower, which was then used by another less affluent neighbor who homesteaded full time and cut all the hay for the entire neighborhood. Such arrangements of crafted interdependence help to address the time-money gap faced by neo-homesteaders. While crafted interdependence is a practical response to the needs of neo-homesteaders, it also suggests a recalibration towards developing strong social relationships. This recalibration occurs because the exchanges that take place under crafted interdependence go beyond coordination for limited goals; it is also a social exchange that like the labor and capital exchange cited above, is open-ended. This open-endedness is identified in the literature as representing a high-stakes environment that may be seen as a deterrent to engagement, precisely

because it fails to offer clear measures and defined transactions (Selznick 1996). While this may be seen as a limitation, I would argue that by promoting a system marked by open-ended reciprocity, a more durable social framework is created—one in which the perils of misguided individualism are tempered by an arrangement that promotes both a practical response to the needs of neo-homesteaders and builds social capital through reciprocity and frequent interaction.

Given the self-described goals of neo-homesteading, it came as little surprise that most of the issues participants mentioned were framed around questions and ideas related to local food and energy. This was one of the initial observations of the research that was cited as a universal issue, and point of entry for developing dialogue both within and beyond the neo-homesteading spectrum. Interestingly, both food and energy were consistently identified (through both the survey and interview process) as the two areas that homesteaders felt they had an ability to affect; this same result was found by Jeffery Jacob in his earlier typological study of homesteaders (Jacob 1997). The example below highlights the central role food plays in contributing to the development of relationships in durable communities.

Beyond the basic recognition of food as sustenance, this topic was framed by participants through a variety of related topics. Those neo-homesteaders looking to springboard into market gardens or Community Supported Agriculture arrangements cited the common narrative of "farm to fork" educational opportunities, as well as supporting the local economy, while neo-homesteaders who focused on home food production referred to health issues (obesity, GMOs, pesticide use) as the primary concern. Still, others spoke of broader fears related to food security and a desire to distance themselves from conventional agriculture. The participant observation portion of the research offered the opportunity to share meals and ask questions that evolved into a narrative of community. Invariably, the meal became the story, as participants described who

they had traded seeds with, told stories of mysterious loads of "black gold" (manure) appearing at the edge of their garden, and recounted canning swaps at the grange where a half-gallon of maple syrup was traded for a case of world's sweetest pickles.

These rich participatory experiences were essential to capturing the importance of historicity, or shared history and culture, which through practice fortifies community bonds. While the context of the narrative varied, historicity was described by all of the interviewees across the proto-typological spectrum, and usually centered around customs tied to the seasons and rootedness that was bound in a deep understanding of the region's history, and their role as cultural participants in an alternative narrative. The discussion of individual's roles along a historical continuum also prompted questions related to the future. The participants in the study recognized that even their comparably low-impact lives are inextricably linked to a landscape shaped by inexpensive fossil fuel. Instead of writing off society, these neo-homesteaders have countered pessimism with creativity and vision. David Orr describes the ability to cultivate this vision as *ecological imagination,* a tool necessary to re-envision rural landscapes through a lens that is both hopeful and realistic. This process of using ecological imagination to drive a vision was central to the Adirondack Futures project that identified neo-homesteaders and other smallholders as potentially significant contributors to a more sustainable trajectory (Mason and Herman 2012).

Critics of grassroots approaches to sustainability such as the durable communities concept often cite the enormity and global reach of our current environmental conundrum as needing change at a larger economy of scale (Wagner 2011). However, the issue of scale in the context of sustainability should not be viewed as an "either/or" decision. Instead, scale should be viewed as a continuum from individuals and households to the global level (Wilbanks 2007).

Along this continuum there are some scales at which sustainability is more easily rooted, thus creating what economist Robert Costanza and others have described as mosaic of lumpy, nested scales. The nested and interconnected nature of sustainable processes at various levels creates a false temptation to promote a spatial hierarchy where global or large-scale sustainability efforts are characterized as being more significant, and therefore, a more appropriate trajectory for effecting change (Campbell and Sayer 2006).

This simplistic coupling of scale and significance in terms of sustainability is problematic in several ways. First, a "shrinking" planet, resulting from globalizing forces such as technology, means that distant neighbors become nearer neighbors—this adds a *virtual* scale to an already existing *physical* scale. This mixing of scales should argue for a more sophisticated and integrated approach to sustainability, not a stronger top-down mandate. Several studies have highlighted multidisciplinary integration as a logical trajectory for pursuing sustainability, demonstrating that it is most effective when it is place-based at a relatively local scale (Kates and Wilbanks 2003). Second, large scale, top-down sustainability analysis is strongly shaped by generalized input assumptions that may not be generalizable based on the locale. Finally, top-down forces run the risk of being insensitive to local concerns, thereby creating a backlash among stakeholders that can diminish local creativity in problem solving (Campbell and Sayer 2006). In light of these observations, the durable communities concept recognizes desirability (as defined by stakeholders) and attainability (the belief that change is possible) as equally important to the technological dimensions that are typically emphasized as being tools to operationalize sustainability.

To be clear, this is not an argument solely for grassroots, bottom-up decision making. Such an approach would represent an equally myopic trajectory. Grassroots initiatives often face

a significant hurdle in scaling up or replicating successful sustainability actions. While multiple factors influence the potential to support action, there is a clear mismatch of resources and problem solving ability across scales that results in policy failure. Large-scale (global) sustainability projects tend to be well-funded but lacking in innovative and appropriate (both socially and biophysically) problem solving. On the other hand, small-scale (local) sustainability projects tend to be successful in developing innovative and appropriate sustainability strategies, but lack access to funding, which is necessary to achieve replicability and scalability (Wilbanks 2007).

While a more equal distribution of resources is key to operationalizing sustainability at local scales, there are other ways to make sustainability more complementary between and across scales. This play among scales has the potential to create more durable communities through trust building, cross-scale interactions (beginning at the household level), the development of an infrastructure for disseminating information about successful approaches and techniques at all scales, and the demonstration of how local leaders can leverage change outside of their immediate sphere.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that the focus on scale in the context of the durable community concept matters because it is directly related to how and where decisions are made that affect sustainable development. This is particularly true for the Adirondack-North Country which is currently in the process of developing and refining the New York State–sponsored multi-sector, multi-scale sustainability plan (ANCA 2013).

Moving Toward Bioregionalism

While individuals and households have demonstrated sustainability at the micro scale, the question remains, is such an approach scalable and/or replicable at other levels, such as in

bioregions? Bioregionalism is a political, cultural, and ecological system or set of views based on naturally defined areas called bioregions, similar to eco-regions. While bioregions are generally defined through physical and environmental features, including watershed boundaries and soil and terrain characteristics, they should also be understood as a cultural phenomenon—one that emphasizes local populations, knowledge, and solutions (Alexander 1996).

The promotion of durable communities in the context of a bioregional vision represents a consistent, logical, and nested vision that neatly translates from individuals, to communities and finally regions. The concept of bioregionalism is often presented as an alternative to the "industrio-scientific paradigm" that is credited with the divorce of ecological and economic systems (K. Sale 1985). Instead, bioregionalism places a primary focus on the development of self-reliant economic, social, and political systems (K. Sale 1985).

Consistent with the stated values of neo-homesteaders and the values espoused under the durable communities model, is the role of "place" as a focal point from which to cultivate change. The landscape architect Robert Thayer has argued that fostering bioregional identity is central to advancing the sustainability movement: "People who stay in place may come to know that place more deeply. People who know a place may come to care about it more deeply. People who care about a place are more likely to take better care of it. And people who take care of places, one place at a time, are the key to the future of humanity and all living creatures" (Thayer 2003).

In the context of the Adirondack-North Country bioregion, there are already strong indicators that the nested approach—from neo-homesteads, to durable communities, to sustaining bioregions- is gaining political momentum. The recent Adirondack Futures research

project is a testament to the validity of neo-homesteading as an appropriate conduit to community, and the larger bioregion. Respondents in Herman and Mason's Adirondack Futures research participated in a process that identified the most desirable endstate, as well as the most attainable endstate based on a 25-year vision (Mason and Herman, Finding Consensus: The Future of the Adirondack Park 2012).

To the surprise of many, the vision that emerged was surprisingly clear. The concepts articulated by a diverse range of respondents argued for strong communities marked by self-reliance and an agrarian tradition. The belief that the region's forest could and should be a "woodbasket" and the surrounding valleys a "foodbasket" was also clear, and consistent with the notion of self-reliance at multiple scales. However, perhaps what was most remarkable about their findings was, in a region that is marked by conflict, a clear winner emerged—not just in terms of *desirability*, but also in terms of *attainability* (Mason and Herman, Finding Consensus: The Future of the Adirondack Park 2012). This intersection of desirability and attainability provides an imperative for capitalizing on the strength of the region and the hope that sustainability as a practice can be replicated from homesteads to communities and bioregions through a deeper understanding of espoused values and innovation.

In Chapter Three we'll begin our inquiry into neo-homesteading with an ethnographic inquiry that uses participant observation interview methods to help create composite typologies. These typologies expose emerging sub-cultures within the neo-homesteading movement and suggest important points of integration related to both the durable communities concept, and bioregionalism.

Chapter Three: Typologies—Examining Culture along the Sustainability Continuum

While my interest in homesteading represents a lifelong obsession with self-reliance and sustainable living, my formal planning to acquire land and become a homesteader coincided with what is now largely recognized as the start of neo-homesteading, a chronology launched by Y2K, followed by the events of September 11, 2001, and more recently the financial collapse of 2008. Through these events it became obvious that homesteading as a sub-cultural movement was beginning to morph. Just as the previous generation created a sub-cultural shift through relevant current events (the Vietnam War, environmental degradation, and the emergence of a post-industrial society), a new set of drivers, and a new set of practitioners were once again going back to the land as a way to move forward.

As I began my formal inquiry into the socio-cultural neo-homesteading movement, I was fortunate to discover the work of rural sociologist Jeffery Jacob, who devoted his academic career of three decades to understanding why individuals and families went back to the land in the 1970s, and the extent to which homesteaders were able to break away from the mass-market society and find fulfillment in practicing a sustainable lifestyle on their smallholding. It is his work that has not only provided a methodological framework for examining neo-homesteaders, but also serves as an important foundation for understanding the nexus between self-reliance and the cultivation of an environmental ethos.

Jacob employed a variety of social science and ethnographic techniques in his multi-decade inquiry, which included structured surveys (n=1300), semi-structured interviews, case studies, and participant observation (Jacob 1997). However, Jacob is best known for his creation of the "seven ways of living" homesteader typologies. A typology is a systematic classification

based on multiple variables and common characteristics and is useful for identifying convergent and divergent themes within cultures (Babbie 2014). However, typological analysis is often criticized because dependent variables can be difficult to correlate and are subject to qualitative (and potentially biased) interpretations by the researcher. Research subjects may also object to typologies, particularly if they don't agree with how they are categorized. Nonetheless, establishing labels for the sake of labeling was not the intent of Jacob's research nor my own. Instead, the use of typologies is simply a tool for identifying socio-cultural patterns within a complex and poorly defined sub-cultural movement. Importantly, typologies are not meant to be absolute or discrete categories, but instead represent relative positions along a cultural continuum (Patton 2002).

Typological Applications

In terms of broader application, typologies represent an important lineage in sociological and anthropological analysis, ranging from Ferdinand Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* (community/society) categorization to Weber's "ideal types" of social behavior (Mellow 2005).While categorization and labeling is a basic analytical tool that allows us to make sense of the world, typologies offer a more formal treatment of this intuitive process. Claims about the rigor with which phenomena are observed, as well as the explanatory significance of distinctions, are formalized through a variety of systematic approaches (including coding) in typological development. Employing typologies often invites a critical opinion which contends that typologies are simplistic reductions. In the case of Tonnies, some argue that urban and rural divisions are overgeneralized, and also dispute his assertion that different societies follow the same path (Mellow 2005).

In assessing the typology literature, I was struck by the difficulty in comparing various typological approaches. This challenge is a function of the wide range of purposes for which typologies are employed, as well as the variety of research paradigms (ranging from positivism to constructivism) under which typological research is conducted. However, perhaps the clearest distinction of typological development approaches comes from Busck (2002). Busck noted that positivists often employ a taxonomic approach based on empirical data. A second approach, consistent with the constructivist paradigm, is a relational approach based on the theoretical assumptions about the structural relationship between individuals and the biophysical environment. The third approach, also based in the constructivist paradigm, is generally referred to as "experiential" and focuses on interpreting the meaning of various practices (Busck 2002). The typologies developed within this dissertation are established based on the third approach since the focus of this research is to better understand the intersection of neo-homesteaders' values and actual on-the-ground practices.

In the context of rural sociology, typologies have largely been used to distinguish social and economic characteristics of farming communities, (Emtage, Herbohn and Harrison 2006). However, even typologies within farming communities are different in terms of units of analysis (farmer, farm-household, crops, land-use practices) and their analytical purpose (class relationships, market share, business approach). More fundamentally, typologies differ significantly in terms of the assumptions they posit about how social phenomena should be conceptualized and explained. These differences center on the relationship between observation (often empirical), representation (experience), and theory (explanation) (Van der Ploeg and Long 2005). From an epistemological standpoint, differences in assumptions create competition among paradigms subject to significant variability in the construction of typologies (Emtage, Herbohn

and Harrison 2006). The relative strengths and weaknesses of each of these approaches were considered in the development of my research methods, with a focus on constructing typologies that are applicable in the context of this dissertation's larger durable communities concept. Table One offers an overview of typological approaches reviewed in the development of my theoretical and methodological framework.

Table One: Overview of typological approaches related to natural resources

Basis of Typology	**Criteria Used**	**Common Techniques for collecting information**	**Research Paradigm/Approach**	**Example Authors**
Anthropological	Socio-political and cultural structures	Participant observation, qualitative analysis	Experiential, constructivist, hermeneutic	Johnson-Weiner 2005, Kneale-Gould 2005
Homestead/farm-ing scale and occupation	Scale of ownership, management intensity, technological dependency	Structured questionnaires, cluster analysis	Taxonomic, positivist, realist	Jacob 1997, Johnson 2002
Wealth ranking	Socio-economic factors (as defined by community)	Participant observation, focus groups, community immersion	Relational constructivist, hermeneutic	Blesky 1984, Balbarino 2001
Livelihood strategies	Factors affecting the livelihoods of households	Focus group discussions, structured questionnaires, expert interpretation	Experiential, realist, hermeneutic	Bourgeois 1999, Dorward 2002
Farming systems	Elements of systems used	Structured questionnaires, expert interpretation	Taxonomic, positivist, realist	Van der Ploeg 1993,
Attitudinal	Attitudes towards natural resources (preservation/conserv ation)	Structured questionnaires, cluster analysis	Relational/experiential, constructivist, hermeneutic	Boon et al 2004, Emtage 2004

In addition to the work of Jeffery Jacob, another noteworthy scholar who has examined the spiritual dimensions of neo-homesteading is Rebecca Kneale-Gould (1997, 2005). In addition to the similarity of their subject matter, both of these researchers employ multiple methods as a means of triangulation. In the case of Kneale-Gould, her research included participant observation, personal lived experience as a neo-homesteader, historical analysis using primary documents, and semi-structured interviews. What emerged from her work was a set of "conversion narratives" that explained why individuals and families went back to the land, and how the process of conversion is influenced by socio-economic, environmental, and spiritual drivers. The concept of conversion and the choices that neo-homesteaders make is highly relevant to this study because changes in behaviors and stated values can be illustrated in the context of the conversion process (Kneale-Gould 2005).

Kneale-Gould's work was a natural extension of Jacob's earlier typological assessment which emphasized neo-homesteading as a cultural phenomenon, not easily reduced to discrete elements. While Jacob's work is considered seminal in terms of identifying a typological continuum of self-reliance (from "purist" to "weekender") it is geographically unfocused and largely fails to consider the role of modern technology in neo-homesteading. This chapter aims to build on his work, suggesting new typologies that have emerged in the last decade.

Addressing the Typological Gap

In addition to offering a tighter geographic focus by examining a sub-culture of the Adirondack-North Country, this dissertation also represents a contemporary interpretation of Jacob's arguably anachronistic typologies. Notably, Jacob established and refined his seven typologies after conducting nearly 1300 surveys in Canada and the U.S., hundreds of structured interviews, dozens of case studies, and numerous participant observation interviews over three

decades. By examining current, as opposed to historical or theoretical typological assessments, I am able to offer a unique snapshot in time. Jacob's typologies (Table Two) were relevant in the context of homesteading in the late 1970s and early 1980s but fail to capture some recent technological, social, and economic changes within neo-homesteading culture.

Table Two: Homesteader Typologies developed by J. Jacob

Category	**Description**	**% of Sample**
Weekenders	Half-time employment away from their homesteads; free time is spent working on the property.	44
Pensioners	Lifestyle is upheld by pension, investments and social security.	18
Country Romantics	Part time, leisure is their primary pursuit.	17
Country Entrepreneurs	Small business (not agricultural) is their main source of income.	15
Purists	Provide for virtually all their needs through the homestead; reject consumerism and support the informal economy	3
Microfarmers	Became farmers later in life, now devote their working time to intense cultivation of cash crops	2
Apprentices	Learn back-to-the-land craft while working for an established farmer	1

Source: Adapted from J. Jacob 1997, with permission from Penn State University Press

During Phase Two (2011-2012) of my Ph.D. work, I conducted several pilot studies to identify a range of neo-homesteaders across a sustainability continuum, from New-Order Amish families, to technologically advanced off-grid preppers. These pilot studies consisted of both participant observation sessions and a survey of 150 self-identified neo-homesteaders from the Adirondack-North Country region, and served as the basis for identifying new typologies that better represented neo-homesteaders. The pilot survey was based on the same questions previously used by Jacob to identify homesteader typologies, and was administered as part of a

faculty-led student research project approved by the Dean of Curriculum at Paul Smith's College, in northern New York State. Thematic analysis was used to code these surveys using the same process as Jacob describes, beginning by recording patterns or "themes" within the data. The emerging themes were then organized into two categories or dimensions: practical and ideological. The practical dimensions were food, energy, and technology. The ideological dimensions were environmental stewardship, knowledge transfer, and citizenship. Approximately 60 of the 150 pilot project participants failed to fit Jacob's established typologies, suggesting that the addition of new typologies may be appropriate. These survey outliers represent the first step in the identification and formation of new, composite typologies.

The 60 outliers were then coded by common emergent themes that examined both the practical and ideological dimensions examined above. Out of this came three new and distinct typologies that warranted more in-depth analysis and became the basis for the new composite typologies examined in this research: Educated Agricurious; Spiritual Homesteaders; and Techsteaders. Of the 60 outliers in the preliminary pilot study, 19 indicated that they would be willing to participate in a participant observation research exercise where I worked alongside and interviewed individuals at their homesteads over a 2- to 4-day period between September 2013 and September 2014. Because spouses and relatives often wished to participate, there were a total of 14 interviewees, representing 9 homesteads. This participant observation interview pool is considered to be within the appropriate size range of 12 interviewees, as concluded by the National Centre for Research Methods (Middlesex, England) review paper that included expert voices Norman Denzin, Jennifer Mason, and Howard Baker (Baker and Edwards 2012). The degree of overlap in responses in emerging themes also suggests that response saturation was achieved, a condition that ethnographer David Fetterman refers to as the "law of diminishing

returns" (2010). Prior to conducting these interviews, a research protocol was established and approved by the Antioch Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The use of participant observation is particularly useful for establishing typologies for two reasons. First, observing research subjects in the context of their homesteads offers a way to tangibly contrast their stated values against the observations of the researcher. Second, actively participating in labor activities can be an important element in transitioning the relationship from insider/outsider to insider/insider, thus allowing for the development of more accurate and less caricatured typologies (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). Research participants who agree to the participant observation structure were asked to suggest activities that allow interaction and involvement. Some activities lent themselves to greater interaction, and therefore greater insights (e.g. working side-by-side in a garden or butchering livestock), while other activities were too noisy to facilitate conversation (e.g. chainsaw work or haying with tractors) but still elucidated valuable insights. My role as not only a researcher, but also a homesteader, encouraged open dialogue and an emic relationship with the participants, as well as a more in-depth perspective of the choices and challenges associated with neo-homesteading.

Establishing Accurate Proto-Typologies through Participant Observation

The overarching purpose of developing these new proto-typologies is to establish a deeper understanding of potential group normative motivations, as well as a common language for describing this sub-culture within the sustainability movement. The refinement of proto-typologies in this research was dependent on data collected through in-depth participant observation interviews with research subjects. Methodologically, participant observation is an applied ethnographic technique that combines participation in the lives of the people under study, while maintaining professional distance in a way that allows adequate observation and recording

of data (Fetterman 2010). In short, participant observation is immersion in a culture. The process of participant observation is generally considered to be cyclical, beginning with a panoramic view, then focusing on fine details, and then panning out to the larger picture again—but this time with new insight into minute details (Fetterman 2010). Field notes and, where permissible, photographs and audio recordings were made during the participant observation process and used throughout the analysis. At the end of each observation session, all recountable elements, large and small, were recorded, noting emergent themes as a form of naturalist inquiry (Van Mannen 2011). Figure Three below illustrates the participant observation process used in conducting this research, which is based on the work of ethnographer Joseph Howell (1972). Note that the process begins with establishing rapport. In the context of this research, rapport varied greatly —some participants were accessible simply with a phone call request, while other relationships with participants took two years or more to establish (e.g. New-Order Amish family, and a particularly insular homesteading community). In future sections, I discuss the field process which focuses on immersion, an essential step that DeWalt, et al. describe as cultural acceptance by "walking the walk" (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland 1998). Multi-source field data was collected using field notes, recorded interviews, photographs and a reflexivity journal where all recountable details were recorded immediately after the Participant Observation (PO) experience.

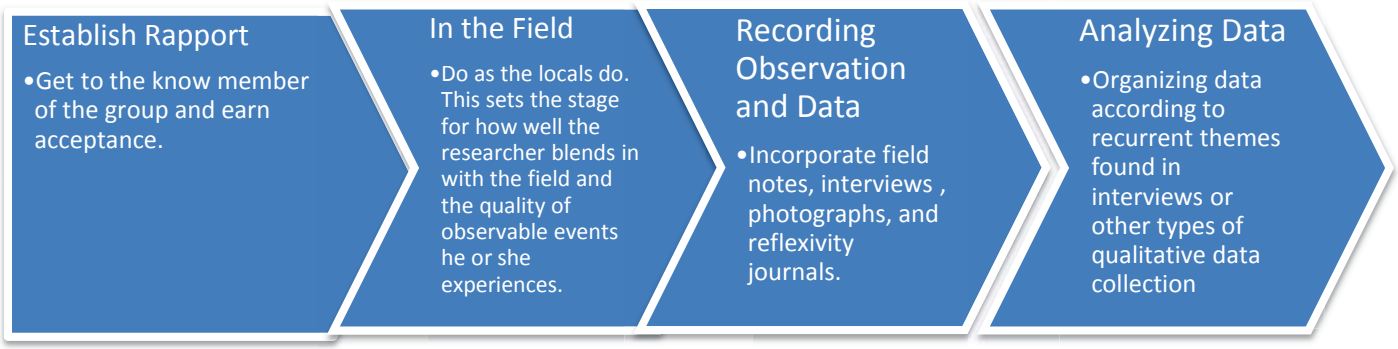


Figure Three: Participant Observation Process

In terms of developing specific participant observation field techniques for this research, several recent studies contributed to my understanding. While the subjects of these ethnographically based studies are unrelated to the topic at hand, they offer important techniques, applicable to this research. One such example is a 2013 study by Sandra Lee Pinel who used participant observation to study social relationships in a community-based conservation project in North-Central Idaho. Pinel and her assistant used participant observation as an entry point to better understand the culture of the research subjects and develop questions for semi-structured interviews, which followed the participant observation portion of the study (Pinel 2013). Similarly, a 2012 participant observation study (documenting environmental change in Alaska) by Lilian Alessa and Andrew Kliskey, used participant observation as the starting point for developing a cultural sketch, followed by the formation of agent typologies, and finally the construction of a semi-structured interview guide (Alessa and Kliskey 2012). Another recent multi-method qualitative study in the journal *Human Organization* examined intergenerational relations in Ghana using participant observation, focus groups, and interviews to triangulate and generate a more emic perspective. Notably, the authors emphasized the importance of allowing concepts and theories to emerge and be refined throughout the data collection process (Hampshire, et al. 2008). This reflexive approach was particularly important when

examining/developing amorphous concepts such as resiliency, durability, self-sufficiency, and bioregionalism.

The Participant Observation Interview Process

Of the 19 homesteaders who offered their participation in this research during the pilot study, 9 homesteads were selected for site visits, based on a series of follow up questions aimed at identifying typological exemplars. Three participant observation interviews were completed for each of the three neo-homesteader typologies identified in the pilot study and included 14 interviewees. This gave balance to the data and allowed for the construction of composite typologies.

As the researcher, my work began long before I set foot on the participating homesteads. In the case of the New Order Amish family I interviewed, I spent two years getting to know them in hopes that they might agree to participant observation research. As part of my research, I also attended more than a dozen small-farm and homesteading conferences, including: the Mother Earth News Fair in Seven Springs, Pennsylvania; the Northeast Organic Farming Association conference in Saratoga Springs, New York; the Cornell Cooperative Extension Sustainable Living Project in Canton, New York; the Common Ground Fair in Unity, Maine; and Antlerstock Homesteading Festival in Jackson, New York. Attending these public and often large events (the Mother Earth News Fair numbered 18,000 in 2013) allowed me to contrast my relatively small interview set with a much larger pool of homesteaders, many of whom appeared to represent the new typologies presented in this research and served as an informal "member check."

Other participant observation research preparation happened in a much shorter timeframe. It was often only the evening before an interview that I'd receive confirmation and a brief description of the planned participant observation activities. Knowing the value of helpful

and informed hands, I would research the tasks in advance to ensure that I was well-received and helpful, thereby cultivating a reciprocal relationship. For example, in a short-notice participant observation interview with the New Order Amish family, I learned that we would be haying the next day using a four-horse hitch. Having never driven more than a team, I spent hours studying the hitching order and driving techniques. While this may seem to be an unnecessary step, it paid dividends when it came time to ask probing interview questions that I doubt would have been addressed had I shown up as a greenhorn or skill-less academician.

In another participant observation experience, I was three days into the process and had less than ten minutes of interview tape. I felt as if my presence was a burden for the family and they seemed skeptical of my research. Finally, I insisted that I wouldn't feel right leaving the next day if we weren't able to get one large and important project done on the homestead. It was at that point that the family patriarch confessed that he was really worried about a dying 200-year-old sugar maple tree than leaned over their only mountainside access road: "If that tree falls, we'd have a heck of a time getting out of here, especially in an emergency." I insisted on helping him, using a variety of specialized tree-felling tools that I had packed in my pickup truck for exactly this purpose. Once the wood was on the ground and bucked into firewood, we headed back to the house and had one of the longest and most thoughtful interviews of this research.

In reflecting back, cutting that maple tree was not so much about creating a *quid pro quo* arrangement; instead, it was about crossing an important homestead task off the list that in turn, made room for a long and thoughtful interview. It was also clear that in having demonstrated proficiency with my hands, he was willing to entertain the idea that my intellectual ideas *might* have merit as well. In participant observation with a sub-culture that values capable hands as

well as a thoughtful mind, this sort of emic expertise became my most important tool for accessing the inner workings of the nine homesteading families that I interviewed.

Another important field practice was making the interviews feel conversational, not interrogative. On-site participation with semi-structured conversational interviews allowed me to observe body language, tone of voice, and facial expression, and to experience the homesteads as the interviewees experience them. This technique of making interviews conversational is acknowledged as being key to producing rich narratives that elicit "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973). Thick descriptions are essential to understanding the often nuanced and ambivalent choices that neo-homesteaders face in their daily lives.

Other subtleties played an important role in facilitating the immersion and acceptance process. When interviewing a young family of homesteaders, I showed up in my old diesel Volkswagen (instead of my pickup truck) knowing that they, too, had an old Volkswagen that they were looking to convert to biodiesel. This became an entry point for conversation and facilitated further dialogue. Other important subtleties included appropriate dress for the given task—muck boots for cleaning stalls, steel-toe boots for chainsaw work, and several changes of clothes for herding sheep in the rain.

With the exception of a New Order Amish family, all of the interviews were recorded using an Olympus WS-801 high definition digital audio recorder. By using the conference setting I was able to record my interviews with the recorder tucked in the breast pocket of my vest. This allowed both the conversation and the work to proceed unencumbered. In addition to the audio recording, I also kept a field journal, in which I noted observations, future questions, and

emergent themes. The homesteads were also photo documented with the exception of the New Order Amish family, who permitted photos taken from the road but not on their property.

The participant observation experiences usually began with introductions, in which I explained the overarching purpose of my research, and a bit about my background. The participants then signed a consent form, and in most cases offered a tour of their homestead. These introductory tours were useful in addressing many of the background series questions related to how land was acquired and how the function and vision of the homestead had evolved over time. Some interviewees were anxious to get work done, while others were more excited to talk about their homesteads, families, or political views of the day's news. Striking a balance between encouraging free-flowing conversation and eliciting thick descriptions relevant to the research was a challenge. In order to tease out the most exceptional stories and examples, I employed "life story" questioning techniques that examined how lived experiences influenced virtually every facet of their sub-culture (Cole and Knowles 2001). In many cases, this meant constructing a series of redirected questions that eventually led up to a more specific question from the interview guide.

The semi-structured interview questions were organized by series in an interview guide, which I memorized. The series included: background/history; definitions and values; economics; socio-political; practical/skills based. Within each series were specific questions that included the following topics: food; energy, technology, knowledge transfer, citizenship/community, typology definitions, resource conservation. There were 33 open-ended questions in all, though the questions weren't asked sequentially, in order to preserve conversational flow. Some questions were also omitted, based on relevance (e.g. questions about homeschooling for those without children). Other questions (primarily those about income) were omitted by interviewee request.

Once the interviews were complete, the recordings were compressed to remove dead space and inaudible entries. The interview was then transcribed in chronological order, and then reorganized by series to correspond with the interview guide.

Coding Participant Observation Interviews

While typologies are sometimes constructed without coding, as the researcher I felt that the formal and systematic framework of the coding process would be useful for ultimately identifying patterns and themes within and among PO interviews. Data collected through PO interviews was subject to content analysis using a system of inductive axial coding based on emergent themes and patterns. This process of coding, mapping coded themes, and then drawing primary conclusions allowed for verification and refinement of the initial typologies. The importance of accurately reading patterns in both statements and actions is central to ethnographic reliability and was further reinforced by practicing Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis procedure (2006). This procedure moves the data from codes to emergent themes, and then evaluates those themes in the context of the proposed typologies.

Because this work uses typological categories along a continuum, convergent and divergent themes were highlighted to show elements of similarity or dissimilarity among participants. In coding the data, particular attention was given to the degree of overlap within coding categories. Generally, coding is conducted using a matrix format that allows for multiple themes to be considered simultaneously (Hammersley and Atkinson 2003). I constructed a matrix in Microsoft Excel that was organized by series. Each series was assigned a primary color, and sub-codes or child codes were denoted based on a specific shade of that color. This visual organization was extremely useful in identifying convergent and emergent themes and is consistent with the analogue approach to visual coding practiced by Miles and Huberman (1994).

The initial coding process revealed a number of unassignable and overlapping data items, which is evidence of structural faults in the coding/categorization system (Patton 2002). To remedy this I worked back and forth between the data and categorization system to verify the meaning and accuracy of the categories, and the placement of data in appropriate categories. This resulted in clearly defined sub-codes that contributed to emergent themes that were unique to the typologies identified in this work.

Participant Observation Interviews—Insights beyond Proto-Typologies

Just as sub-codes help to form parent codes, parent codes contribute to the formation of emergent themes. These themes have been identified and woven within the following three typological sketches, which are introduced in the table below (Table Four), and more fully explored in the proceeding section. The sketches have been constructed using the same composite approach employed by Jeffery Jacobs and Rebecca Kneale-Gould (1997, 2005). Gould describes her "composite portraits" as a "kaleidoscope approach" that is rooted in a seemingly straightforward analysis of neo-homesteaders, but one that morphs into a new pattern of connections and themes with each twist of the kaleidoscope, and relies on interviewee generated "thick descriptions" to help deliver the narrative portrait. While such an approach runs the risk of being disciplinarily disconnected, it also presents the opportunity to explore the textured lives of neo-homesteaders that explores the stated values, challenges, successes and ambivalences that make this sub-culture so unique. Not surprisingly, the themes emerge at different scales, with macro-scale themes contributing to larger questions of this research that examines the potential of neo-homesteaders to contribute to the durability of their communities and bioregional sustainability.

Table Three: Typological Overview

Proto-typology	Defining Characteristics of PO Interviewees	Emergent Themes by Typology	Percent of Respondents
Educated Agricurious	• Young (24 to 36 years) • No agricultural background • Creative ambition • College educated • View homesteading as a springboard to larger agricultural ambitions	• Integrated academic skills with homesteading skill set (grant writing, ecology training, communications) • Place-based connection rooted in childhood experience and/or early environmental education • Recognized agricultural knowledge gap, but valued bringing a fresh perspective to problems • Relied on farmers and more experienced homesteaders for knowledge/skill development	42%
Spiritual Homesteaders	• Motivation to homestead is deeply intrinsic/spiritual • May or may not be religious • Homesteading *practices* are representative of spiritual connection	• Work as spiritual practice • Focus on creating a better self by connecting land and spirituality • Living one's spiritual and environmental ethic • Ritual of food and soil • Awareness of technological drift as a threat to spiritual values	30%
Techsteaders	• View technology as a primary tool for achieving homesteading objectives • Financially well-off • Early adopters of green technologies	• Green technology as a surrogate to behavioral change • Vigilance in defining "appropriate technology" • Strong belief that regulation should be structured to reflect emerging green technologies • Homesteading community generally assumed to include both local community and an online community	38%

The Educated Agricurious

"I went to school to be a graphic designer . . . I was going to live in the city, drink lattes from Starbucks every day and outsource my food, transportation, clothing, and even my nails, if I were so vain as to want them painted. That's why you go to college, to get the good job so you can live the American Dream, fueled by consumption."

Those are the words of Jessica Wilkes[3], a 32-year-old homesteader who lives on a 6.5-acre homestead, just outside the southeast corner of the Adirondack Park in upstate New York. Her story is typical of many homesteaders, in that it is a conversion narrative (Kneale-Gould 2005); the story of going from one place to another, and being transformed along the way. However, what sets the Educated Agricurious apart from other homesteaders is their relative youth, lack of agricultural experience, creative ambition, and possession of a college degree (and associated debt) that at the surface appears to be more of a hindrance to homesteading than an asset.

The Educated Agricurious represented 32% of survey respondents in the initial pilot study. By far, this typological group was the most enthusiastic to participate, likely not only due to their abundance of incomplete infrastructure projects needing more hands, but also a belief that they're part of a larger agrarian movement that deserves wider recognition. Within the educated agricurious typology, participant observation interviews were conducted on three homesteads: the Malone family[4] who purchased inexpensive Department of Defense land (complete with a Cold War–era missile silo) to begin their homestead; Shelly Haws[5] and Mike Martin[6] a young couple who moved from Vermont to the Adirondack-North Country in search of a lease-to-own agreement with the Open Space Institute; and Jessica Wilkes a single woman who

[3] Jessica Wilks is a pseudonym.
[4] Tom and Mary Malone are pseudonyms
[5] Shelly Haws is a pseudonym
[6] Mike Martin is a pseudonym

gave up her day job as a graphic designer to homestead and build a business teaching others to homestead by giving workshops, authoring books, and writing a daily homesteading blog.

Selecting three diverse homesteads was part of an intentional approach aimed at demonstrating common emergent themes within the typology, despite having three very different homesteading models. As a point of definition, note that some of the homesteaders refer to themselves as "farmers." In the context of this research I sought out individuals who initially identified themselves as "homesteaders"; however, some considered homesteading a springboard for their larger farming ambitions, which is discussed throughout this section. Analysis of the Educated Agricurious typology will take place under the five series areas outlined in the interview guide: background series; socio-political series; practical series; socio-economic series; and value series.

Background Series Insights—The Educated Agricurious

Homesteading is not a job, but an all-consuming lifestyle that's literally rooted in the soil, where, as Shelly Haws put it, "you're a prisoner, but a prisoner in Eden." None of the homesteaders in this typology came from agricultural families, despite having rural and exurban childhoods in the Northeast. Most of these homesteaders had their first taste of the agrarian life in college, or shortly thereafter. For all of the interviewees there was a conscious choice to forgo a formal career in their area of college study, and instead pursue a more uncertain, but predictably tougher life in the country. The fields of study represented by the five homesteaders were: business management, radio communication, environmental studies, graphic design, and forestry. The intentionality of the decision for all of these young homesteaders was driven by a combination of large-scale societal concerns and a desire for self-sufficiency. Jessica Wilkes describes her transition this way:

> I did not grow up in a homesteading home, or any agricultural background whatsoever. I moved for my first job out of college to the city of Knoxville, and was spending my weekends in the Smoky Mountains. And I found myself running away to the mountains every weekend to get away from stress from work. What happened was I found myself in an old homesteading community called Cade's Cove, which is a part of the Smoky Mountain tour loop you can take through the park. That was my first time seeing it in person—a homesteading community which was in this beautiful place and entirely self-sufficient. And I realized that I did not know how to do anything. Like, if I did not have a grocery store and a car, I was not going to eat and I would probably be dead. And instead of being like, "Well, oh times are different," I just got scared and realized that a human being needs to be able to feed, clothe, shelter and take care of themselves."

Tom Malone described their transition to homesteading as being motivated primarily by providing for his family, but saw the importance of treating family and the homestead as the most important unit of ecological stewardship: "The thought of being more self-reliant was always at the forefront of our minds—in a selfish way, being a good environmental steward begins at home, on your own land, by taking care of your own family."

For the Educated Agricurious, the notion of self-sufficiency being a component of environmental stewardship is strong. All of the interviewees shared stories of the impact their childhood had on their later lifestyle choice to homestead. These often thick descriptions represent deep, place-based bonds that human geographer Tim Creswell describes as being not only nostalgic, but transformative in creating identity and individual sense of purpose (2004). These place-based bonds are often characterized as *topophilia* or "love of place" that extends from a place-based bond to the idea of place as a "field of care" (Tuan 1974). For many of these young homesteaders, being able to link their environmental values to practical, on-the-ground stewardship can be traced to an ethos rooted in childhood experiences that are illustrative of the topophilic bonds as described by Mike Martin: "To have a piece of land and know that it's our responsibility to take care of it and manage it is all we've ever really wanted… it's not so

different than building a tree house in the back forty as a kid and taking care of it as if it were your own kingdom."

However, the non-linear path that many of the Educated Agricurious took to homesteading was initially discouraged by their families. Tom Malone described how his father worked a white-collar job with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (administering grants) and saw firsthand the financial challenges that farming families faced. He also warned of the temptation to grow from subsistence homestead to commodity farm, where you faced the pressures of working for a cooperative or corporation. Tom also described how his friends reacted to his agricultural ambitions, recounting one exchange with his friend Tim: "You should hear him. He rides me over the rails about homesteading, 'Hey stupid, you're a hobby farmer. You're not a real farmer. Buy from Stewart's [a convenience store chain]; they've already figured it out.'"

Others reported that while family and close friends questioned their choice to homestead, those within the agricultural community were generally supportive—especially homesteaders from the previous back-to-the-land movement, as well as older farmers who feared the loss of agrarianism. That fear of losing both agricultural land and the skills needed to work it appears to be well founded, as the average age of farmers in the United States (including part-time farms and homesteads claiming an agricultural deduction) is now 58.3 years old (USDA 2014). Shelly Haws and Mike Martin explained how the aging farmer trend became an opportunity for them to acquire their land from a retiring dairy farmer through a land trust, known as the Open Space Institute:

> We bought the land through the Open Space Institute, where it's a lease purchase agreement. It's a five-year term where basically the Open Space got an enormous

> donation from {Nat Clipper} to buy out farms across the Adirondacks. He wanted to preserve farmland basically in Essex County. They got fair market value based on the appraisal, and they cashed out and got the price they wanted so O.S.I. is holding the deed for five years. We make extremely reasonable lease payments that all go to the purchase. But since they are the landowners, they pay the taxes, so they take that out of our lease payments, but there is no interest that they are charging us. There are some pros and cons, but mostly pros for us and our situation. O.S.I. also bought the development rights, so we have a conservation easement on the land forever. They were both really open and really strict. Like, we tried to get a subdividable plot to put another house on the property, but they said no.

This perfect storm of opportunity for the Educated Agricurious helps to address two of the largest barriers: access to land and access to knowledge. In the case of Shelly and Mike, the farmer they acquired the property from also became a mentor as they transitioned from being a homestead to a profitable small farm.

Socio-Political Series Insights—The Educated Agricurious

"I don't feel like I have a political home anymore. I wouldn't call myself necessarily a libertarian; I wouldn't call myself a progressive or a tea party person. I don't feel like I really have a political home." That was the response from Jessica Wilkes regarding a question about her political affiliation; however, the notion of politically homeless homesteaders was a consistent theme. None of the interviewees had clearly partisan views; instead, their values were nuanced and sometimes even paradoxical, or conflicting. However, two themes emerged regarding government; the first was a feeling that government had gotten too large and was threatening to a rural lifestyle, the second was a belief that more agricultural subsidies should be redirected to support local, sustainable agriculture.

In a follow-up interview with Tom and Mary Malone, they spoke of a recent encounter that they had had with USDA officials who showed up unannounced at their homestead asking to see the meat that the family sold as part of their small CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) business. The couple interpreted the visit by USDA inspectors to their homestead as odd, given

that the inspectors were based in Albany, New York— three hours away. The Malones suspected that the unwelcomed visit to their freezer was linked to their support of a local USDA-certified slaughterhouse that had recently been closed after slaughterhouse workers documented the incompetence of USDA meat inspectors by intentionally processing a sick, non-compliant animal, and then documenting the USDA inspector stamping the unsafe meat as safe (Ellen 2014). The fallout of the USDA-inspection scandal has deepened the rift between USDA and small-scale producers like the Malones, who now have to drive an additional hour to process their livestock, or use a non-USDA slaughterhouse and sell the meat as either shares of live animals, or engage in black market sales. However, these smallholders have a complex relationship with the government, given their dependence on USDA funding; all but one of the interviewees admitted to receiving USDA grants. So therein lies the paradox; a general resentment toward the agency for promoting a bureaucracy that creates barriers to local food security and represents intrusion, but also provides important financial assistance in the form of low interest loans, infrastructure development grants, and applied research funding. All of the interviewees also expressed a value in government for the sake of their communities and generally took a liberal view on issues related to individual rights. Here, Jessica Wilkes describes the complex political transition that she has undergone as a homesteader:

> Oh, so politics for me have changed. I went into agriculture 100% on the side of being liberal. And when it comes to social things, I still am incredibly liberal when it comes to things like marriage equality, and things like people's right to choice like reproductive rights, or anything involving a person's personal life—I'm pretty much still very liberal. What happened was, when I first started becoming a homesteader, I found I was offending a lot of my liberal friends, and I was also offending a lot of my conservative friends, and people I knew because I didn't fit into any political spectrum really anymore. And I went from being a really political, active democrat, to seeing government in a very different way once I started homesteading and especially when I started having my own business. And when you go from being a vegetarian living in a city, really acting on your local democratic campaign, to getting threats from someone online that the USDA is going to come to your house and fine you if you fed people chili at a workshop, or if they

> dare drink your well water[7]. When you found out, government was seen in a very different way, and I started thinking both of the two main parties in our country, as I can't really take any of them seriously anymore.

Then after a long pause, Jessica continues:

> I still vote in local elections. I care about things like the Farm Bill . . . I've become much more active in local government than I ever was before. The national government has become more of a white noise.

And so, this complex relationship with big government has been met by the educated agricurious with a dose of ambivalence—use the government when you can, and keep it at arm's distance the rest of the time. Instead, invest your energy in the local community and local change. While the theme of cultivating community was a major one for all the homesteaders in this series, Shelly Hawes and Mike Martin have developed an intentional approach to developing a more sustainable community. Shelly and Mike have teamed up with other homesteaders and farmers to create a self-sufficient farming neighborhood, which Shelly describes:

> When we acquired the property we knew that there were a couple other farmers in the neighborhood, but had no idea what it would become . . . we literally have a creamery, a butcher, a vegetable grower, a sugarmaker, and a brewery within two miles. It has the potential to make us an agritourism destination, but it also represents a more sustainable system . . . our whey goes to the pigs, pig manure goes to the veggie farmer and so on. We've also build deep friendships that are rooted in long summer days helping each other hay, and cold winters trying our best to keep livestock, alive and our homes warm.

In many respects the physical and social arrangement of the community that Shelly describes is consistent with Ferdinand Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft* (community) arrangement that argues individuals who inhabit the same territory inevitably interact over common issues, and that this interaction gives structure, and strength to local life (Tonnies 2011). It is a structure where trust lubricates cooperation and builds relationships rooted in reciprocity that contribute to the development of community.

[7] Jessica Wilks later described how she no longer served food (particularly homestead-processed meat), and was even scared into serving bottled water over tap water at her homesteading workshops because of food safety laws.

The Malone family identified community as being the key to having a successful homestead. In fact, it was a neighbor who convinced them that, instead of just raising two pigs for themselves, they could feed the entire community using expired food from the local grocery store that the neighbor worked at. Here Tom Malone describes the process:

> Well, we named them Pork and Beans, for the two pigs. And our neighbor across the street worked at Price Chopper and started bringing us food with the idea that we may just be able to feed the neighborhood. Once he figured out how much he could bring us we bought four more pigs that summer . . . the grocery store was happy too, because they were just paying to throw away water and nutrients.

However, for the Educated Agricurious, community often extends far beyond their neighborhood to include the virtual community. Jessica Wilkes describes her virtual community as an extension of her modern homesteading-education business:

> Most of my money comes from ad sales, or workshops, or classes, or I sell things advertised through the blog. So the community I have online is the reason I'm able to have community in the physical word. Sometimes there's a lot of crossover, I've learned; I've met a lot of people who only found me because of the Internet, or only found me because of Facebook. And they've become friends. People have moved to my town from Key West because they used to read about me online. They didn't move because of me, but they maybe found out about Washington County through me and moved here. It's just amazing to me, the amount of people that have become a part of my life through the Internet. I think that it's because I write about farming, which is such an intimate thing, and you have this tool that can be so widespread that people that are drawn to this intimate lifestyle have this giant net they can find you in.

The idea that homesteading, an act that by definition is rooted in place, is so strongly influenced by the virtual world is a defining characteristic of the Educated Agricurious typologies. During my participant observation, experience every one of the Educated Agricurious homesteaders had a smartphone within reach. It was used to look up part numbers for a broken horse forecart, take a photo of cow suffering mastitis to send to the veterinarian, and for calling to let family know that we'd be running late because a moose had taken down a section of fence. All of the interviewees said they couldn't imagine homesteading without it,

adding that it also served as their landline, and as convenient as it is, it allowed them to shut it off and truly "check out" from society with the flip of a switch.

Perhaps the only character attribute of the Educated Agricurious that rivals their enthusiasm is their idealism. All of the homesteaders within this typology spoke of a desire to "pay it forward" or create good for others in the future. They also acknowledged that there was a leap of faith involved in their decision and that in many ways, their homesteads serve as evidence of what's possible. Here Jessica Wilkes describes the contribution of motivation:

> I would like to say as my contribution; getting people to kind of get off their butt. I totally believe in the "do-ocracy. I would say that people don't realize that the doers make the decision. Like, if forty people are fighting over what color to paint a barn, and one person just walks up and starts painting it red, it's going to be a red barn. You know a lot of folks spend a lot of time planning and talking, and on paper their bank accounts have $50,000 saved up just for fencing and livestock, and have a graph paper setup of their pasture, and barns, and stuff. And they never take the step. And I would rather be taking really messy steps in really cheap rubber boots than be one of those people sitting at home scared to do anything.

Fearless idealism and youthful exuberance collide in a way that these cash-poor, but strong-backed homesteaders are able to tackle projects in a single year that's astounding, and in many ways explains the quick transition that two of the three homesteads appear to be making from being focused on food production for themselves to food production for their communities. In the next section we'll explore the practical skills series where these homesteaders discuss the range of skills and challenges associated with neo-homesteading.

Practical Series Insights—The Educated Agricurious

> I was not born a farmer's son, never drove a tractor 'til last year, and can't tell you the "right way" to farm. What I can tell you is that not growing up on a farm may be a handicap for me some days, but other days it's a total blessing. For example, I knew nothing about milking a cow or building a milking parlor, but when we got this place I was able to identify a half-dozen things wrong with the milking parlor because I *wasn't* a farmer. I have a different perspective based on different experiences, and sometimes that's just what you need to solve a problem.

That's the way Mike Martin, who went to college to study radio production describes his approach to tackling problems with which he has no familiarity. As I listened to him describe his approach to problem-solving, it was clear that he loved the connection between using his hands and his head. I probed deeper, asking how and why working with his hands brings so much satisfaction:

> Well, it's not just working with my hands, it's working with my head, and hands, and land. Those three are the magic trio. It's kinda like actions speaking louder than words. If you're working in just a cerebral world lined with slick marketers—like I was in radio—it can all be a mirage. However, if I fix that tractor, I don't even need to say anything, I can just point at it . . . is it running? Yep. And that's because of me; I call it the judgment of reality. No B.S. here.

The "judgment of reality" that Mike describes is evident in the personalities of these homesteaders. Throughout the participant observation process, the discussion often turned to how a particular task could be done more easily or efficiently, and inevitably the question of whether one has heard of an idea, or actually done it was the litmus test of what constituted reality. Mike's pointing at the running tractor and the demand that you need to actually have done it in order to have credibility is echoed in Plato's *Gorgias* making the distinction between real (technical) skills and rhetoric, saying rhetoric "has no account to give of the real nature of things, and so cannot tell the cause of any of them" (Plato).

For these neo-homesteaders, there also appears to be a frustration between wanting to do things well, and simply completing the work or making something "good enough." Questions of skilled craftsmanship were usually overshadowed by the reality of the sheer volume of work to be done, described by Tom Malone:

> One thing I'm happy about related to education is I learned how to do all those things that you need to learn how to do to homestead. It was the community who taught me, but they didn't come to me. I went out and I worked construction jobs, and when I worked

> construction jobs, I went over to the electrician and just BS'd with him. Watching how they tape up an outlet, there's a method. I'm always trying to learn everybody else's trades, and my problem is I don't have enough time to learn all the different trades. I'd love to be able to master welding. I'd love to be a great farrier, and horse logger too, but I don't have enough time. I'd love to sit and play guitar all day long, but I don't have enough time to do that either. I've always said, I'm still petitioning for the 36-hour day. I think I could get everything done in the 36 hours and still have fun.

His wife, Mary, described the dilemma similarly:

> I've gotten good at making a whole bunch of things . . . picking up skills . . . we're not craftsmen but we get stuff done . . . we just made those pig troughs. We used plywood and 2x6 from the sawmill, and Gorilla Glue, and they're awesome . . . I was like, "I wonder if they'll hold water?" And they do, so now one of them is a water trough too. But I mean today, or over the last two days, in between doing stuff like dropping kids off, came home fed the horses, went to the sawmill, cut for a couple of hours, came down here, ripped out a bunch of plumbing, rewired an outlet, put up all this trim, you know, it's just a lot and always a rush to get things done.

Not surprisingly, the functional approach to infrastructure and skills extended to a worldview that is focused on utility over all else. Here Jessica Wilkes describes her penchant for the utilitarian:

> I don't even like when you go to museums and you see a perfectly functioning sword, or axe, and it's like, "This is on display." And I'm like, "Great, can we use it?" And they're like, "No. You can look at it." I really like using things. Sometimes you got people's houses, and like that's the living room for show? Like the idea that there's a whole room in a human's house that's for decoration? I can't imagine living that way. But, I mean people are allowed to like whatever they want, obviously. When some people look at my—I think a germaphobe might throw up and die in this house. We are literally talking with a sick lamb in a dog crate, a recovering lamb, not a sick one. A recovering lamb ten yards away from me, and you can smell the waft of sheep manure in my living room, which is heated by a Tupperware container of logs that we pulled out of the woods. So, this is not everyone's life but it mine, and it's a scrappy place with major repairs made with duct tape and baling twine.

While feeling the burden of uncompleted projects was a universal sentiment of homesteaders across typologies, I noticed that older homesteaders generally took the time to engage in craftsmanship and the arts. This is likely due to the fact that their essential

infrastructure was complete, where many of the younger neo-homesteaders were struggling to just get by, often living in unfinished structures and combing the forest for fuelwood as a precursor to cooking dinner. The relative completeness of the homestead also dictated the homesteader's ability to think about future plans which, for two of the three homesteads, involved engaging in larger agrarian enterprises focused on value-added products. Here Mike Martin describes their up and coming plans:

> If we're going to continue to be a small farmstead, which is what we want, we're going to have to diversity a bit. We are going to launch a kickstarter campaign for a few ice cream machines so we can offer NoCoFroYo at the café and farmers' markets. Come winter 2015/2016 we are going to build a step up parlor in another part of the barn to make room for a creamery/packing room expansion. Next week we'll be picking up some hoop trusses to expand on our solar barn to accommodate for the dry girls, as well as the ones we're milking. It sounds like a lot, but we're excited to get started.

While the Malone family was unapologetic about the scrappy and unkempt appearance of their homestead and its many uncompleted projects, and Mike Martin and Shelly Haws were organized and driven by the prospect of earning an income from their land, Jessica Wilkes offered a different take:

> I was really self-conscious… realizing all the mistakes I've been making on this farm [referring to both infrastructure and animal husbandry]. The most important thing is, I really don't care what other people think about the farm… having that ability…[to] be separated from what other people may think, I think that's the best thing I've learned about homesteading. Self-reliance is great when you have solar panels and green technology, but being mentally self-reliant, and realizing what matters at the end of the day is who you are.

Jessica's ability to move from the shortcomings of her hard skills to an understanding that such a lifestyle also requires grit and mental self-reliance was a point that none of the other neo-homesteaders in this typology acknowledged, but I believed they all inherently possessed. This

stands as a culturally significant decision given the conventional corporate trajectory that so many of their generation opted for by default.

Economic Series Insights—The Educated Agricurious

> I don't measure wealth like most. I tend to ask questions like: Did we get as much done? Am I tired? Am I sore? Did I work as much as I could? And did I think smart enough? And did I have fun doing it? Mostly, I can say that up until this point the good times have outweighed the bad times. We're wealthy if the barn is full of hay and the woodshed is full of wood. That's how we measure it—we're cash poor, but Adirondack rich!

As Tom Malone described his yardstick for wealth, it was clear that the currency he dealt in was time, not dollars. How these neo-homesteaders balance what is essentially a 19th century lifestyle in a 21st century economy is the story of wearing multiple hats, minimizing the use of cash, and finding creative ways to address modern issues like health care and education.

Of the five neo-homesteaders in this typology representing three homesteads, all but one had off-homestead jobs to help supplement their income. And, while that supplemental income was often viewed as the cash reserved for paying property taxes and making infrastructure improvements, the greater value of the off-homestead job was access to health insurance. It's important to note that the field research overlapped with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which, although it was signed in to law in 2010, didn't give access to most provisions (actual health care) until 2014 (HHS.gov 2015). All of the homesteaders in this typology expressed cautious optimism for the new law, citing that their lifestyle was inherently prone to physical injury. When I followed up with each of these neo-homesteaders in January 2015, the previously uninsured homesteader had enrolled in the ACA, with all of the other respondents in this typology reporting that they were looking into the possibility of switching to the ACA, which would allow them to either give up their off-homestead employment or work "under the table."

In terms of producing on-farm/homestead income, all of the neo-homesteaders had CSA models that offered greater financial security by procuring advance payment, and in the case of those producing meat, allowed for selling animals processed at the local non-USDA–inspected slaughterhouse. Jessica Wilkes had the most diverse model, having CSA options for wool, lamb, pork, rabbits, and even homesteading workshops where participants paid for a membership in advance. The Malone family has also employed a CSA model for meat (pork and beef), however the meat cuts received under the CSA are determined by the consumer as Mary explains:

> (The CSA works because) it's enough of the mix of couples that want more of the high-end stuff, they don't really eat a lot. And then families who want mostly just hamburger, that's what they feed their family. In a way, it means that the wealthier folks who just take a couple of nice steaks are subsidizing the working-class families who are looking for hamburger and stew meat to stretch their family budget. I like that about our CSA model.

While a mix of off-farm/homestead income and part-time work helps to meet their needs, it is the informal economy where these homesteaders report transactions that represent 20%–50% of their income. The principle tool of the informal economic is bartering, which Jessica Wilkes describes this way:

> Bartering is an alternative to the paper currency economy. A homestead is different from say your average cul-de-sac McMansion because a truly self-reliant homestead is a unit of *production* not a unit of *consumption* (emphasis added). This means that by virtue of production, homesteaders are in a pretty good position to barter.

This distinction of a homestead being viewed of a unit of production, where most modern households are units of consumption is a characterization that is noted by local food activist and scholar Shannon Hayes, who traces the transition to the 1930s when both planned and perceived obsolescence were first employed to create constant consumption which was effective at growing GDP, but also lessened the self-sufficiency of households as replacement trumped repair, and

industrial canning replaced home-grown food preservation (2010). Jessica Wilkes goes on to explain the reversal of this trend:

> Young farmers and young homesteaders are hell-bent on bucking this trend. We want to make stuff, and we're doing it. We don't have a lot of cash, but we have a fully functioning economy. I trade sheep for firewood, honey for cheese, fiddle lessons for feeder pigs, chickens for apple tree pruning, and my books for bread, just to name a few.

However, as much as bartering is part of a functional informal economy for the Educated Agricurious, it is also an activity that cultivates community. As I probed about the value of the exchanges (products and labor) it became clear that bartering is less a currency system and more a credit system; transactions within the bartering community are not zeroed out or balanced with the completion of each exchange, instead they carry into the future with loose, but functional accounting systems. Shelly Haws explains:

> We barter a lot. Just since you arrived this morning you've seen it. There was the lady who dropped of an old computer printer because she saw me complaining on Facebook that mine was broken; she left with three quarts of yogurt and some Camembert. Then there was the UPS guy who knew we needed AI gloves for this morning and changed his whole route to make sure we got 'em in time . . . gave him a quart of chocolate milk. Mike is off trying to get our new bio-diesel car and on the way home he broke down. A neighbor's lending us his trailer; we'll pay him in good rotted manure for his garden. Did I overpay some of these folks and underpay others? Absolutely, but that's okay. They know it too and we'll get square on the next round.

With community existing along a temporal continuum, it reasons that a life-serving economy should exist and compliment that same evolutionary space. All of the neo-homesteaders in this typology felt that the informal economy benefited them, which is consistent with the informal economy literature that suggests those who rely and benefit from bartering the most are those at the economic margins (McGranahan 2005); this clearly includes two of the three families in this typology. Finally, it is worth noting that bartering has a contagious behavior, which was described by Tom Malone:

> When I first approach folks about bartering, they were like, "dude, why don't you just use cash." When I explained that cash was scarce in our house, most of them felt bad and then tried to overcompensate in the barter exchange. Then, over time they started to see how by cutting out the cash you were cutting out a middle man. It's a way to get rid of whatever you have a surplus of and get what you really need. Pretty soon, even the guys with thick wallets were in on the barter game, and I call it a game because it can be fun. You end up meeting different people 'cause you need something and so-and-so says go talk to whoever and you end up bartering buddies.

The submission that a behavior like bartering, can become contagious within a community inevitably leaves one to question, what other behaviors and values might be cultivated through the power of demonstration? The following series examines the dominant demonstrated and stated values within this typology.

Defining Values Series Insights—The Educated Agricurious

Not surprisingly, the theme of food ethics was among the most prominent of the themes within this typology. All the participants identified food as their principle homestead product, and often included value-laden descriptors (organic, free-range, hormone-free, grass-fed) to differentiate their products from mass consumer products. During my PO experiences, it was clear that the animals on these farms had great lives—they all had names instead of numbers and the line between "pet" and "food" would have been easy to blur if the purpose of these animals, as food, hadn't been established at birth. Here, Jessica Wilkes describes her transition from vegetarian, to meat consumer, and finally to meat producer:

> For ten years I was a vegan, and trust me it wasn't because I didn't like bacon, it was because our industrial meat system is abhorrent. As I learned more about the integration of animals and plants as a farming system I began to reevaluate my vegan choices. I also became interested in the social parts of farming, like knowing who's growing my food . . . I wasn't getting that with tofu in plastic containers. So, I found a couple good farmers and began eating small amounts of meat. That was my entry point to raising animals, wanting that honest relationship with my plate and knowing that the way you get there is by taking responsibility for the entire system—from birth to death. Some people think they're helping animals by not eating meat, but that's like saying I'm going to stop child abuse by not having kids. Guess what? You still don't have children and the kid down the

> street's still getting beat. What you need to do is take a stand, and the best way to do that is to begin voting with your fork. Vote for local, but more importantly vote for humane.

Mary Malone expressed a similar perspective, saying: "We dread butcher day, but are content to know they had darn good lives. Tom and I even joke that most days they have it better than us. But I think that while the ethics of what we do related to meat is important, there's a larger overriding ethic."

It was at this point that we piled into Tom's Chevy pickup and drove to the back of the property, which was a former missile silo during the Cold War (it was common practice to build missile silos in rural areas, to minimize risk to population centers). The 400-foot underground silo was decommissioned 30 years ago, but military debris still litters the site. Standing atop the reinforced concrete doors, Tom delivers what could only be described as a proclamation of reclamation:

> This missile silo was intentionally designed to kill a million people, so here we are literally standing on the epitome of destruction and we've decided as young farmers that we rather be in the creation and restoration business than the destruction business. How great is that—we're flipping this place from being about killing, to being about feeding ourselves and the community.

Work quickly shifted back to loading hay, but it was obvious that Tom's mind was still on the missile silo. We discussed other constructive uses for the silo, including using it as a massive root cellar. On the way back to house I commented on the straight, wide-open, mile-long road that ran between the silo and the house. Tom smiled and said, "That's the real plan—we want to line this entire road with solar panels . . . I bet we could power 500 homes, and feed 'em at the same time." What I heard throughout my time with these young neo-homesteaders was a hopeful narrative of nested transformation: start by taking care of self and family, then the land, and then the community; and in doing so, they want to make sure every act and every action

moves them closer to the vision they have for creating a vibrant working landscape and a durable community.

However, as idealistic as the vision may seem, these neo-homesteaders were realistic in acknowledging that "agricurious" does not equal "agriexpert." These neo-homesteaders place value on learning from those more experienced and learning from their own mistakes. The notion of "cultivated ignorance" or learning from one's mistakes is a theme in Thoreau's *Walden;* Thoreau himself could certainly be characterized as part of the "educated agricurious," albeit a century and a half earlier. Here, Jessica Wilkes describes her challenges in learning to homestead, which proved frustrating, but also helped to cultivate an appreciation for those more skilled.

> So the place I have now is scrappy, that's a polite way to put it, and I've made every mistake you can make with grazing animals and ruining pasture, but I think the real adventure will be healing it, and fixing it, which I am doing. But man, I've made stupid mistakes not understanding how these ecological systems work. And part of the problem for us (referring to the educated agricurious), is that we come at all this from a point of nostalgia. We wear our muck boots, go to young farmer mixers, but who the hell really knows what they're doing . . . it takes time, it takes experience. And quite honestly, it's those old-timers who are the ones that I look up to. I value older, more experienced people more than I ever imagined. Oftentimes I feel like I'm the first person in the world to ever encounter thus and such a problem, then I meet some old-timer and they figured it out, or their ancestors, like a hundred years ago.

The value of those more experienced in the agricultural community seems to be a major element in contributing to the success of these young back-to-the-landers. However, it also appears that even among different generations, skill-swapping is valued, and an important part of establishing friendship and an economy rooted in reciprocity. Again, Jessica Wilkes:

> Yesterday I helped an older friend who called me—it's funny the woman who taught me how to drive horses, who knows how to deal with 1,800 pounds of power, and is nearly six feet tall, and can lift up a sixty pound harness in her fifties from the back of a 2,000 pound animal needed help on how to kill a chicken, how to slaughter a chicken, and I made every mistake in the world killing chickens. I've done the decapitations wrong; I've

> had the animals die from predators. But three or four years into it, I was able to show her the perfect way, and this is going to sound very un-humble, but I was able to show her perfect chicken processing without a single flaw from every feather off of it, a perfect clean kill, I didn't even get blood on my jeans, like it was a perfect situation. And I was able to help teach that to someone who has taught me so many other skills that are part of my daily life.

Finally, it is worth noting that of all the neo-homesteaders interviewed as part of the PO experience, it was the Educated Agricurious who were most vocal in articulating how being part of a purposeful interview helped to reflect on a life that ironically, seems to always be moving at a frenetic pace. Here, Shelly Haws describes the reflective process: "Until you started asking us all these questions I really hadn't thought about all we've done to this place. I should have taken more photos, but talking today has really driven home the fact that, yes, we've made amazing changes in ourselves, the land, and event to some degree, in our community." Jessica Wilkes shared similar sentiments as we sat in her living room with a weak lamb recovering by the woodstove, just a few feet from us:

> As you can probably tell, I'm pretty self-conscious about all the mistakes I've made . . . yeah, I've got my fancy design degree, but I've been learning to farm as I go, where rarely a day passes that I don't screw up. Talking to you, though, I've realized that I've grown so much in the last five years, and that while this place may not be perfect, it allows me to live out my dreams and express my values through the food I grow, the animals I share this homestead with—including this recovering lamb—and the four-thousand or so folks who read about my trials and tribulations on the blog every day.

While the Educated Agricurious are a component of the larger young farmers' movement and the even larger sustainable agriculture movement, they represent a unique part of neo-homesteading continuum and offer demographic diversity when they seek out rural areas such as the Adirondack North-Country that has traditionally seen a decline in young residents, particularly with college degrees. Importantly, it also represents a blurring of traditional white and blue-collar lifestyles, which engenders further socio-economic bifurcation. In the next

section, we'll examine Spiritual Homesteaders who cite different motivations for modern homesteading.

The Spiritual Homesteaders

> Listen, we don't homestead because it's the popular thing to do, or 'cause we read *Mother Earth News* and want to live like hippies in the woods. We homestead because it brings us closer to the natural world, which in turn, brings us closer to God. And if you don't believe me, spend the morning down by the pond watching the sun rise on a July day, and tell me you don't feel it in your bones.

That was my introduction to John Madden, a homesteader that most would confuse with being Amish or Mennonite if it weren't for his floppy, hand-knit toque and Caterpillar work boots. Under the classic homesteader typologies established by Jeffery Jacob, John Madden and his family would certainly be characterized as "purists" with nearly 100% of their needs (food, transportation, building materials) procured entirely from their 200-acre spread. If one were to challenge the seriousness of neo-homesteading as "hobby farming" or a caricature of rural life, the Maddens place this myth on its head. And it appears that the solemnity with which they embrace sustainability is, at its roots, a reflection of deep spiritual connections.

The Spiritual Homesteader typology represented 30% of respondents in the initial pilot study and included three homesteading families. In addition to John and Karen Madden, the participant observation research for this typology also included Jack Reishi, a self-described Wendell Berry spiritualist, and Lawrence Yoder of the New Order Beachy Amish. In selecting participants for the PO interviews, an effort was made to include both the religious and the agnostic to more broadly, and accurately, characterize the spiritual homesteader typology.

While the work of Jeffery Jacob highlights intrinsic values as important to the homesteaders in his study, the mention of spirituality, religious or otherwise is woefully absent. This was the most difficult typology to construct not only because it involved accessing a highly

conservative culture, but also because it meant that the conversation inevitably led to highly personal and potentially sensitive questions. Most of the deeper insights related to this typology emerged after several days of working side by side, a finding consistent with those of Hammersley and Atkinson (2003) as well as Gould (2005).

The Spiritual Homesteader—Background Series Insights

Spiritual homesteaders represent a diverse proto-typology but share a common underlying motivation rooted in a reverence for nature and a spiritual linking of culture and agriculture. Because of the diversity within this typology, we'll begin by focusing on the background of each of these spiritual homesteaders and then transition to examining dominant themes, which include: incorporating spirituality in work, creating a better self by connecting land and spirituality, symbolic action, rituals of food, and rituals of soil.

The neo-homesteader John Madden[8] who is colloquially known in his town as "the non-Amish-Amish-guy." Madden tells the story of rejecting his parents' white-collar trajectory and heading to the Maine woods at age 20 to pursue a more intentional life:

> My father was an IBMer. No, we never had animals; I grew up in suburbia and basically had no connection to anything. Church felt like this abstract thing we did on Sunday, and I just needed to get away from it all, so I packed my bags and headed to the family camp in Maine. They all bet I'd be back as soon as the lake saw skim-ice but I was in it for the long haul. I was poor as dirt, and decided to follow in Jesus' footsteps and bought myself a second-hand hammer. Rule number one was only work for as much cash as you needed. Anything after that starts to look like greed.

This rejection of a material culture was common among all our neo-homesteaders in this typology and regardless of affiliation, came to be associated with the rejection of greed. This was demonstrated by Lawrence Yoder[9], a New Order Beachy Amish horse harness maker. My very first interaction with Lawrence was over a harness repair in 2010 where he apologized for having

[8] John and Amy Madden are pseudonyms.
[9] Lawrence Yoder is a pseudonym

to charge me an extra $2.00 because his material costs had increased. He explained that he made it a point to never get too full of himself (a point that's addressed in the Beachy *Ordnung*) so he never charged more than the minimum wage for his work. When I asked how he determined his harness prices he simply said, "I figure out what I need, not what I want for something" and that's the price.

Lawrence Yoder and his family moved to Franklin County, New York in 2002. Word had spread through the Ohio and Kentucky New Order Amish communities that New York dairy farms were going out of business and that arable land could be had for $300–$500 an acre. It was with this little bit of information that six Beachy Amish families boarded a Greyhound bus in March of 2002 and headed from Marion, Kentucky, where arable land was selling for $3,000 an acre, to Northern New York. While Amish are common in central and western parts of New York State—including St. Lawrence County, just to the west of the Adirondack Park—this represented the first migration to the northern borderlands. For the Amish, this affordable land offered the chance to once again return to their agrarian roots. As of the interview in June 2014, Lawrence Yoder estimated that "near 90% of the Beachy Amish in Franklin County, New York were farming, or at least had a subsistence homestead." Lawrence himself has 40 acres; the remaining 200 acres of the old dairy farm were divided among his three sons (a fourth son worked in town doing cabinetry).

While the Beachy Amish are the most liberal of all Amish sects, they are devoted Anabaptists who integrate the Bible into daily life. I asked Lawrence to describe the connection between God and land to which he responded:

> It is not a connection between God and Land . . . God is Land. It's why we do things by hand . . . if you were to mechanize the process, you wouldn't be connected to land, which

> would mean you were disconnected from God. I know to you English this doesn't make any sense. You want to do everything fast and don't know why anyone would chose to take a slower path if a faster option exists. But that's the basis of being Amish—it's about feeling God, which can't be done if you're always running around.

Developing a pace more in keeping with natural rhythms was also cited by Jack Reishi who described homesteading as a process: "I could have built this entire homestead in much less time. In fact, I've been accused of being a 'dabbling hobbit farmer.' But for me this is about process, I feel a spiritual connection to the land when I do things slowly, and with my own two hands." Jack Reishi's off-grid cordwood homestead was built entirely using materials found on the site which Jack says is the key to having a spiritually rooted homestead. "When the materials come from the land, and your food is coming from that same land, you know you're getting somewhere . . . you also can't help but feel a deeper connection to the entire world." During the time I spend with Jack, he made it clear that he was not a farmer, but a homesteader; he liked the scale and the pace of homesteading better than dairy farming, which summoned less than fond memories from his childhood:

> I grew up on a dairy farm. Well, my uncle had the dairy farm and we lived across the road. My father was a mechanic. I can remember the earliest days, 4:30, wake-up, help milk cows. It goes on to the college years . . . And it takes about two years for the dairy smell to work out of the physical body—at least two years. That was in the early stages of the "dumb farmer" kind of thing. Farming wasn't sexy at all back then—didn't see kids going to college to be farmers. But the messages about farming from the uncle's side, not the father so much, were not positive, a lot of conflict, a lot of tension. No real clear succession plan. Work, work, work. If you're the owner of that dairy farm, you got to milk twice a day. You're not exactly contemplating the spiritual values of nature when you're standing in a concrete milking parlor pit.

As a point of convergence, it's worth noting that both Jack Reishi and John Madden have strong Amish ties, though John's religious values are best described as fundamentalist Christian while Jack Reishi considers himself "agnostic with Druid tendencies." Located next to John Madden's home is a smaller home that he rents (barter, usually) to a Swartzentruber (Old Order)

Amish Family. Living in close proximity to this Amish family gives the Maddens a more emic perspective of their neighbors, and for the purpose of this interview elicited useful cross-cultural observations. Jack Reishi is a founding member of an Amish CSA, which helps to supplement his own vegetable and meat production. Jack has also taken to distributing shares of the CSA to other members of the community furthering his relationship with his Amish neighbors.

Unlike some interviewees in the other typologies, all three of these homesteading families expressed clear sentiments related to particular language that was used to describe themselves and their families. John Madden, for example, corrected me on several occasions when I referred to his homestead as being "off-grid," a term that he found inaccurate, given that they didn't use photovoltaic or any other electricity generation system. Instead, he preferred the term "non-electric" to describe their home. Lawrence Yoder was uncomfortable with the term "homestead*ing*" but regularly referred to their smallholding as a "homestead." This was intended to be a point of distinction from the broader neo-homesteading moment that he described as "people from the city wanting mini-farms and mini-horses," and their religiously rooted lifestyle. The reference to mini-horses was based on the increase in miniature horse harness sales, which he estimated has increased five-fold in the last ten years. Finally, Jack Reishi preferred the term "hobbit farming" to "homesteading" because it congers a more spiritual and whimsical connection to his smallholding.

The Spiritual Homesteader—Socio-Political Series Insights

One mark of the spiritual homesteaders that contrasts with other neo-homesteader typologies is the concept of explicit detachment from the material world, replaced with an attachment to the intrinsic world. Here Jack Reishi describes:

> It's called learning the art of non-attachment. What I mean by that is, I did the land thing, land ethics, permaculture—permaculture is huge back in Michigan too. But soon I realized that while the land may be the base of hobbit farming or homesteading, it's also a state of mind . . . you can go out and buy a tractor or a horse, get solar panels and do the MEN thing (*Mother Earth News)* or you can say, I'm homesteading to simplify, to connect to the spiritual, which by the way is harder to do than just connecting with a beautiful landscape.

Divorce from the material world, or at least a meaningful separation from a materialistic life is embedded in Amish culture, but as I would learn through my participant observation work, is hardly consistent given the ever-evolving *Ordnung*. The *Ordnung* governs behavior at the local sect level. This code of behavior represents a compromise between outside governmental mandates and the desires of individuals in the Amish church (Johnson-Weiner 2010). Lawrence Yoder described the way technology and the material world is addressed in the *Ordnung:*

> We are slower than the English [a reference to all non-Amish], and not because we're slow, but because we've chosen a deliberate life rooted in God's ways. We are not against consumption, but we also detest greed. People say it's weird that we go to Wal-Mart or even get those chicken sandwiches at McDonalds when we travel . . . that's the only time we eat out. Truth is, we like all the same stuff, we just choose to be disciplined and temper our wants.

As you walk around the Yoder homestead it's easy to witness the effects the *Ordnung* has on daily life. In the old woodshed sits a gasoline air compressor, which is used to power a multitude of appliances and tools that would normally be run with electricity. By creating extra steps (having to go to the shed, start the gas motor, and hook up an air line to a larger compression tank) the user still feels the benefits of technology, but with some additional work, and without using grid-tied electricity, which is seen as having the capacity to corrupt Amish life through a tempting, incremental shift. The one exception I noted was that when one of Lawrence Yoder's sons purchased the farmhouse next door, the community granted him permission to keep the electricity hooked up until after he finished remodeling the house, noting that it would be

easier to do things like repaint the rooms in the evenings if there was something better than candlelight.

There are other examples of "bending the rules," which to outsiders seems inconsistent, but makes sense within the constructs of the *Ordnung.* Tucked behind the barn was a 1970s-era John Deere loader. Lawrence explained how and why the loader is used, "We farm mostly in the old ways, using horses. We can use tractors around the barn for mucking stalls or running a buzz saw for making fenceposts, but we don't use tractors in the field, only horses. One change that has come in recent years is the use of gasoline forecarts to run bailers, but we still pull with the horses." There is also a fair amount of lore that surrounds Amish communities, even in the anthropology literature. For example, Karen Johnson-Weiner's ethnography of the Beachy Amish asserts that they don't have answering machines (Johnson-Weiner 2010), but during my visit Lawrence Yoder regularly let the answering machine take calls so that we weren't interrupted. This example serves to highlight both the amorphous nature of the *Ordnung,* and highlights how existing knowledge gaps even among a culture that exists alongside the mainstream perpetuate.

In terms of the most important material possessions Lawrence didn't hesitate, "I don't need a lot of stuff, but I do need a good horse or two, good tools, and a hunting rifle . . . I also value my Bible and our family safe." All of these items were consistent with the most valued material possessions cited by other New Order Amish in a recent ethnographic study that notes a rejection of the frivolous in favor of the practical (Tharp 2007). Within Amish culture, the ideological concept of *Gelassenheit*, or deference of self to God and others was evident; in other words, these may be items valued by the individual, but they contribute to God's work and the security of the family and community.

However, to paint a picture of the Amish as being a stoic, all-work, no play society is not entirely accurate and may reinforce existing stereotypes. Throughout my time with Lawrence Yoder, we found plenty of ways to have fun, procrastinate, and even engage in mischief. On one occasion, I walked into his harness shop and sat down in my usual seat, which triggered a whoopee cushion, sending Lawrence into hysterics. Over time I would learn that this gift (which he received from his son for his 60th birthday) was something he had wanted since his childhood, and was a prank that he reserved only for his friends.

As Lawrence Yoder discussed the changes in his community over time, the concept of technological "drift" emerged, a term that other Amish individuals used to describe change in ethnographic studies by Johnson-Weiner and Tharp (2010, 2007). Drift within Amish society is nothing new—the shift from ice houses to ice boxes, to LP refrigerators was seen as a practical shift. Other technologies are harder to vet, such as the use of battery-powered items or choosing to buy socks at a big-box store instead of making them from wool procured on the homestead. The Amish recognize that not allowing for evolution or drift within the *Ordnung* could ultimately become debilitating to their society, by driving away Amish youth and preventing them from accessing everything from modern health care to refrigeration systems that paradoxically, allow them to continue their traditional way of life farming.

Finally, it is clear from both the literature and my PO experiences that biblical teachings for the Amish warn against "consumption of luxuries and conveniences," yet there appears to be an openness to drift, particularly among the New Order Beachy Amish. While some have suggested that this represents an ideological inconsistency (Johnson-Weiner, 2010; Kraybill, 2001), it appears that that New Order Amish make an implicit distinction between acceptable drift in the *Ordnung* and strict adherence to their spiritual and religious beliefs. If at any point the

Ordnung challenges major religious tenets (e.g. working on Sundays, permanent electricity, reducing prayer time), as opposed to issues of minor technological drift, only then is the *Ordnung* employed as tool to uphold religiousness. This subtle but important distinction was also noted in an ethnographic study of New Order Amish in northeastern Indiana (Tharp 2007).

While this study only examined a single Amish family, the interactions during the participant observation process were community-wide, since the Beachy Amish practice a model of cooperative work exchange. This meant that I was exposed to a cross-section of this culture that transcended age, culture, and occupation. However, the New Order Beachy Amish only represent a small fraction of the Amish population in the Adirondack-North Country. Bordering the western edge of the Adirondack Park in St. Lawrence County, New York, are Swartzentruber Amish, an Old Order Amish sect that is considered "ultra-conservative" (Johnson-Weiner 2010). While I was unable to gain entry into this largely closed Old Order community, one of my interviewees, John Madden rented a small farmhouse on his property to a young Swartzentruber Amish family, and shared his insights on the Swartzentruber Amish culture throughout our interview. Here, he describes their importance in the community:

> Before I met the Amish, I had never driven a horse or milked a cow. Didn't grow up doing farmy stuff and learned all I could from books. But I really needed someone to hold my hand—sometimes literally, to say, "put that drive line under your pointer finger," or, "move your hand up further on the cow's udder." The Amish are a key to keeping these traditional rural skills alive—they're the real deal and have the benefit of having lived basically the same way for 400 years.

For the Madden Family, one theme that was continually stressed was the idea that they are able to live a more spiritual and contemplative life by adopting many of the Amish ways, which focus more on process and less on outcome. Practically speaking, this is represented in the

choices that the Maddens have made, including trading their car for a horse and buggy, deciding to go non-electric, and growing approximately 85% of their own food.

While Lawrence Yoder said that he "had little use for government," and liked that New York didn't make him register his buggy, but that he "didn't pay much attention to national or even local politics." This stands in sharp contrast to both John Madden and Jack Reishi, who identified strong political values and a general skepticism of government. Here John Madden discusses his distrust of government:

> I read somewhere that in the United States we have two parties only to make it seem like it's more sporting. Two parties makes it appear like we have more competition. A lot of people had high hopes when Obama got in there, that a change was going to happen. I did too, although I was extremely skeptical. Unfortunately, it's the truth of the matter; the parties are not that different. It's unfortunate, but I don't know what it's going to take to get people to listen. Still, I think homesteaders have their own political influence, even if it's just closer to home.

However, Jack Reishi painted a longer history of political involvement by homesteaders, citing a wider political spectrum and the longer history of countercultural movements:

> I think you can certainly place homesteaders on the continuum of the political spectrum. Tea-baggers to the right and progressives to the left who both identify with the homesteading way of life. The relationship between the back-to-the land movement of the 60s and 70s as a proactive countercultural response to "the establishment," Vietnam war, et cetera, I think is legitimate. The local food movement and the organic agriculture movement, which predated the more recent local food movement, mostly represent a more liberal type of politics.

The idea of a political continuum existing within the neo-homesteading community inevitably leaves one to contemplate who else may fall along this continuum? The wide and informal body of homesteading literature would suggest that doomsday preppers, rural militias, hobby farmers, permaculturists, locavores, and homeschooling mothers are all part of this

continuum—one that arguably has great potential to unify those with seemingly different political motivations through practical skills and self-reliance.

The Spiritual Homesteader—Practical Series Insights

Because process and purpose run parallel in the lives of the Spiritual Homesteaders examined in this study, it comes as little surprise that they all focused on using traditional hand tools over power tools as an endorsement of simplicity and a rejection of technology. Essentially all of the tools and techniques I witnessed being used during my homestead visits were antique tools that has been restored and made functional again. However, as temping as it might be to dismiss this as a purely practical act to restore and then reuse an old tool, it was clear that it represented a larger social stance in reclaiming the tradition of small-scale, self-sufficient farming, which has nearly disappeared as a result of industrial agriculture. Here John Madden describes his horse-drawn implements as we walk behind his barn: "This number nine mower's at least a hundred years old. I put a new seat and cutter bar on and started making hay. What would happen if you took one of today's industrial behemoths (referring to modern haybines), let it sit a hundred and then tried to fire it up and cut hay the same afternoon you found it? Wouldn't work, would it?" Lawrence Yoder describes tools the same way, "it makes me uncomfortable to not know how something works. This old farm machinery is stuff I can fix and works just fine." However, it was Jack Reishi who drove home the ritualistic connection of working with simple hand tools: "The more complicated a tool or technology becomes, the further you are from the land, both physically and metaphorically. Think of planting beans with a hundred-year-old hoe, versus a modern, enclosed, climate-controlled tractor. The ritual of placing the same antique hoe in the ground each spring is my spiritual new year."

A penchant for the simple is a clear theme within the Spiritual Homesteader typology, especially in comparison to the hurried Educated Agricurious and the gizmo-oriented Techsteaders. Simplicity in the built environment is also identified in the literature as being a component of developing a contemplative and spiritually rich homesteading experience (Kneale-Gould 2005). Here John Madden describes this intersection:

> It is way easier to be at peace, and find inner peace when you're in a place where you know every nut and bolt, and every animal and every tree in your sugarbush. That's comfort. And one way to get there is to do this stuff yourself and keep it simple so you're not lying up at night wondering if some gizmo is going to fail. A good example is our water system, which uses an old windmill pump and buried lines and distributes it all over the place on the farm—to the barn, the two houses, and the springhouse…. So it works great. Once gravity stops working, we're in trouble. But, otherwise the water keeps flowing. That's what I like about low tech. When I design this stuff I ask what would Jesus do, but I also ask, what would Gene Logsdon or Wendell Berry do, or Burt Hilldale do [the farmer who owned their property previously]? I like the practical types.

As we sit and discuss the virtues of simple living, one the Madden boys comes running up with a swollen, purple finger that he had just hit with a hammer while building a tree house. John's wife Amy picks up the child and consoles him with promises of homemade ice cream. The older brother is instructed to whittle a stick for a finger split and take care of his brother for the rest of the day. That evening, after dinner and ice cream, the boys are instructed to brush their teeth and say a prayer that the sap runs early and long this year. The conversation then shifts to talking about their Amish tenants who the Maddens clearly respect, but also have great reservations about some of their practices as John Madden explains:

> But I don't want to get too nostalgic about the Amish, they've got their issues and lots of things that we fundamentally disagree with—take education. We homeschool our boys, so we're tuned in to this stuff. Well, basically, the thing about the Amish is, the way their culture stays together is that they don't really educate them the way we talk about. In other words, they go to school and they are taught about tradition, and family, and doing things the way they were back home (a reference to their roots in Ohio and Pennsylvania). In school they do not teach them how to think for themselves; they discourage thinking for themselves.

> (Amy interrupts) Things done are only memorizing and recitation. It's only English and math, no science whatsoever. They don't learn about the what, or the how. They're not taught any other subjects, so they're not taught to critically think. They know absolutely nothing about science. They are supposed to rely on how things are done back home. If there's a question, there's a quandary they go to an elder who may or may not know the answer.

The conversation runs deep into the night and eventually works toward some of the questions I have about human-nature relationships for both the Maddens and their Amish neighbors. It becomes clear that religious and spiritually-based homesteading seem to exist at two ends of an ecological spectrum. The first, rooted in Anglo-Christian values, is built on the notion of taming the land and is in keeping with nineteenth century homesteading models based on "improvement of the land" (Brown 2011). However, one important defining factor is the role of scale and technology for these homesteaders, tending toward the small and simple. Both the Maddens and their Old-Order Amish neighbors clearly fit this framework, using language like "improvement," "maximized yield," and "ditch farming" which all suggest a more domineering role. This language, and the ecological relationship it suggests, stands in sharp contrast to the permaculture approach advocated by Jack Reishi who cultivates small patches, with a distinct focus on symbiosis. This dichotomy among agricultural practices of homesteaders has been described by homesteading scholar Rebecca Kneale-Gould as tension among homesteaders and different *self-imposed* limits that suggests a wide range of both spiritually and ecologically acceptable practices (Kneale-Gould 2005).

The Spiritual Homesteader—Economic Series Insights

The economic spectrum extends from one end represented by Lawrence Yoder, whose agrarian roots are part of his religion and who does his best to separate his household economy from the larger market economy, to at the other end of the spectrum that includes Spiritual Homesteaders like Jack Reishi who are able to pursue a deeply spiritual homesteading

experience *because* they are part of a white-collar market economy that affords the privilege of purchasing land and accruing leisure time. Inevitably, this distinct dichotomy leaves many Spiritual Homesteaders to negotiate competing tensions, which may include comfort versus authenticity, nostalgia versus reality, intrinsic value of nature versus use-value, and part-time versus full-time homesteading.

However, for all the tensions, paradoxes, and ironies that Spiritual Homesteaders must contend with, it is clear that their spiritual roots have grafted with ecological roots to offer a poignant critique of consumer culture. Here, John Madden describes the fallacy of "green" products:

> The whole green product thing was really clever, it removed the guilt form being a consumer . . . it was a free license to just keep living as you always have . . . and the best part is that it only costs a little bit more. But you can't really buy green products . . . you're still talking resources. You can't just endlessly use resources, and plus the increase in the population. Too many consumer zombies; not enough mindful homesteaders.

As the conversation continues, John Madden describes how easy it to be a consumer and contrasts this with his family who use a horse and buggy for transportation: "When you don't have a car, you are not a consumer because you can't consume, because you can't go anywhere. It's not like you can't go anywhere, but you're not going to. Most people are like 'Oh, I need a loaf of bread, I'll just jump in the car….'" As convenience trumps more ecological choices, it becomes clear that even these devout Spiritual Homesteaders are skeptical of a shift by consumer society. John Madden continues, "I don't know how much we can do. Because society is so big, but hopefully people realize it's a good way to live (homesteading). Because it seems everybody's all for stopping global warming. My question is: 'Okay, are you prepared to give up your car?'"

The alignment of mindfulness, simplicity, and thrift contributes to a collective ethos that appears compatible with the overarching values espoused by spiritual homesteaders. At the intersection of the ethos and the practice is a focus on the ritual of *making* as a surrogate to *buying*. Here Lawrence Yoder discusses the process of harness making:

> It's tough to be a harness maker with hundred-year-old tools and seventy-year-old hands. When someone comes in, Amish or English, and wants a harness next week, for fifty dollars, I know that they don't get it. I *make* (emphasis explicit) harnesses from scratch-sometimes from the cowhide of the steer that grazed my pastures. It's a marvelous process where the whole time I'm thinking about the work that that harness will help do, or the many miles it will last. I would never give my children a store-bought harness, this one is worth more because I made it, not because it's a better harness.

However the most common "making rituals" that Spiritual Homesteaders cite is growing and putting up food. In *A Continuous Harmony* Wendell Berry argues that the role of food needs to revert from its cultural position as a "product" to an object of physical and social sustenance (1970). For these neo-homesteaders, this making was clearly demonstrated in the root cellars of the homesteaders. Here, Amy Madden describes the importance of putting up food:

> We put up about 85% of our food. They're a few things like mustard and pasta that we buy, but for the most part everything comes from our land. I put an ad in the *Free Trader* asking for old canning jars and ended up with over 2,000. Most are in play right now. You can see there are several hundred quarts of tomatoes, a couple hundred of dilly beans and pickles, as well as canned meat, bins of grains and lots of root vegetables. Nothing is more sacred than what you put in your body and I take great pride in knowing that my hands and this soil is all that goes in to our food.

Jack Reishi extends "making" beyond sustenance and practicality to include the beautiful and the spiritual:

> I believe there is also a close association between the appreciation of natural beauty and spirituality that in turn motivates a deeper internal psychological process. The two inform one another and relate to a type of homesteading that is mostly aesthetic and nature based (and less about frugalities, production outputs, dropping out of society), etc. For this reason in particular, I have a deep need to have gardens, buildings, landscapes be to some degree 'hand-crafted' to be more beautiful than productive, but also to be of an elegant ecological design—thus the interest in permaculture. There is also

> the possibility of participating in a more communal way . . . shared meals, fermented beverages, and so on, which is spiritual.

For these Spiritual Homesteaders, the link between religion and spirituality gives both structure and meaning to their lives. The degree to which nature versus religion influences the choice to embrace a lived ethic varies greatly, yet appears to be the primary motivating factor for the neo-homesteaders who were interviewed as part of this typology. Finally, it is worth noting that the value of these homesteads appears to provide mutualistic reinforcement—here Jack Reishi describes this valuable interplay: "I think not only does one's interest in spirituality influence one's motivation to homestead and produce their own goods, but that homesteading itself informs one's experience of spirituality." In the next section we'll examine this interplay in the context of stated values.

The Spiritual Homesteader—Values Series Insights

Like the Educated Agricurious, the Spiritual Homesteaders demonstrated a strong desire to affect their community, including larger issues related to the environment. Even Lawrence Yoder, who doesn't engage in local or national politics, expressed concern about environmental change, for which he offered anecdotal evidence: "The seasons are inconsistent—you don't know what the weather's going to be anymore and that's a problem when it comes to crops." Both John Madden and Jack Reishi acknowledged environmental activism rooted in their spiritual values and cited participating in climate rallies, letter writing campaigns, and environmentally motivated political commentary.

The notion that environmental activism is the highest form of social activism is not new; scholar and homesteader Scott Nearing used to drive home the "big questions" of life and death by emphasizing that "the questions at the gate of Paradise will be social ones, for St. Peter represents Jesus, and Jesus preached a social gospel" (S. Nearing 1916). Here John Madden

describes a presentation he gave to local college students on "Society and the Environment in the 21st Century:"

> I gave a presentation over at SUNY Canton with a guy who did a sustainability course…. It was a very tough audience over there. They actually questioned me for forty-five minutes after the thing, and I had already spoke for over an hour, which was great. I connected with them, but I think they were kind of hostile about the whole thing; they felt like I was attacking their way of life… I didn't tell them everything was going to be okay or that a 'green economy' was on the way. What I did tell them was that things are going to get tougher and that they will have a huge burden on their shoulders, like it or not.

It was easy to imagine the somber tenor of the room as John Madden described the college speech he delivered. During my time on the Madden homestead, I found myself trying to reconcile the many environmental views that Madden simultaneously held—how could he feel that society was doomed on the one hand, but also entertain a seemingly utopian view of community and a hopeful future for his children. Yet again, it seemed a pattern of paradox, one that reinforced ambivalent values had taken hold.

These homesteaders are living their ethic and making their contribution, homestead by homestead. They understand that they're not going to create single-handed environmental or political reform, but feel that they can take charge of their own lives by taking responsibility and by producing their own food, energy, shelter, and community. This is perhaps the greatest statement that these Spiritual Homesteaders can make, and is an authentic testament that contrasts with the 41% of Americans who identify themselves as "environmentalists" but can't necessarily identify substantive changes that they're making to live their ethic (Hayward 2010).

For the politically-involved Spiritual Homesteaders, it was clear that adopting a countercultural political and environmental agenda is emotionally daunting, especially given the gravity of the environmental challenges that lay ahead. The notion that the homestead can serve as a natural restorative environment was a point underscored by Jack Reishi: "So my homestead

becomes a place in the world, but also a type of sanctuary or retreat—as a place to restore one's inner balance and focus on addressing tough political questions. Not sure if I told you, but every couple of months I do a type of holotropic breath work . . . these meditative sessions are an important part of refocusing me on my work, politics, and political action."

Of course, the great danger of the homestead as a sanctuary is that it becomes a permanent retreat from society with little ability to effect change beyond the bounds of the homestead. In the context of my research, it is difficult to gauge either the number or effect of reclusive Spiritual Homesteaders, although the initial pilot study and the number of rejections I received to interview Spiritual Homesteaders suggests that the private and introverted spiritual homesteader is a notable element in this sub-culture.

As I listened to Spiritual Homesteaders describe "nature" it became clear that, while they viewed the natural world as fitting a definitional framework that was objective and indisputable, in reality, *their* nature was a cultural construct laden with social and political biases. At one point, Jack Reishi's daughter mentioned that she was vegetarian out of respect for nature. John Madden regularly suggested that technology "hurts nature," while his wife regularly qualified foods as being "all-natural." There was also a tendency to dismiss practices such as clear-cutting forests as bad, but if it were framed as clearing land for the establishment of a garden plot, that would be seen as acceptable, and consistent with these homesteaders view of nature.

While the *Ordnung* of the New Order Amish may seem contradictory, it was Lawrence Yoder who offered the least-conflicted view of nature, evoking a clear and non-negotiable hierarchy: "By nature I mean land, and all it provides. We are caretakers of the land, but it is also our responsibility to mold the land in a way that is both responsible and productive." These

widely and wildly different views of nature suggest that even for Spiritual Homesteaders, nature is defined along a continuum, ranging from a colonial taming of nature to a mutualistic and harmonious relationship consistent with deep ecology. However, absent from even the deep ecology view of nature, which regards humans as equals in the natural world, was an absolute preservation approach to nature; a position that is attributable to homesteaders' utilitarian dependence on the land for food, energy, and shelter.

Finally, it is worth examining the intersection of voluntary simplicity and spirituality. All of the interviewees cited a connection between their choice to pursue a "simple life" and their spiritual values. Even Lawrence Yoder referred to his Amish lifestyle as a choice, citing his *rumspringa*[10], after which, at age 16, he committed to the Anabaptist church. By subscribing to voluntary simplicity, these neo-homesteaders were simultaneously seeking a more spiritual and rooted life while rejecting the culture of consumption. Of all the interviewees, the homesteads of the Spiritual Homesteaders were the simplest, the least mechanized, and the most clutter free, further demonstrating the commitment to voluntary simplicity. In the next section we'll examine the Techsteaders—neo-homesteaders who employ technology as a means of meeting their goals of self-sufficiency and reducing their ecological footprint

The Techsteaders

> The USA Solar Store was born on my property somewhere around 2000. We were sitting around a campfire and kicking it around about what an independent solar living chain might look like . . . we knew that the neo-homesteading movement was about to take off and we saw photovoltaic prices falling. The next day Dave Bonta went home and started the company, which has grown to be a chain of about 24 independently owned stores . . . That's what makes this homestead special—it's a place where great ideas are born.

[10] *Rumspringa* begins around the age of 14 to 16 and ends when a youth chooses baptism within the Amish church, or instead leaves the community permanently.

That was my introduction to Bob Kratz[11] who lives in the northeastern corner of the Adirondack Park on his 40-acre homestead with wife Nancy. Despite being a relative newcomer in the homesteading movement, Bob has developed a cult following in the region, and a reputation as the "go-to guy" for all technical questions related to homesteading. In fact, his expansive knowledge and the persistent questions from other neo-homesteaders has prompted Bob to write a book on the technical aspects of homesteading, such as sizing photovoltaic arrays, determining appropriate windmill heights and calculating thermal mass for masonry stoves.

While Jeffery Jacob acknowledged the use of technology in his homesteader typology study, there was relatively little investigation of these technologies since they were little more than a novelty for most homesteaders of the 1970s and 1980s, the period in which his research was based. Attesting to this limited use is the fact that Jacob found that only 3% of the respondents in his study employed photovoltaics and only 1% used micro-hydro options (1997). The opening quote by Bob Kratz highlights the technological shift in homesteading as energy conservation and self-reliance technologies fall in price, and neo-homesteaders as a collective sub-culture become more affluent. It is this convergence of affordable green technology and relative affluence that has led to the emergence of the Techsteader.

From a research perspective, the Techsteaders are in many ways easier to evaluate than other neo-homesteaders, because of their participation in the green marketplace. According to Ogden publications (parent company of *Mother Earth* News), in 2014 the "sustainable lifestyle sector" grossed $290 billion dollars in revenue, and includes 27 million rural property owners. The average age is 49, with an average household income of $93,013, and a 16-acre average property size (Ogden 2015). It is important to note that these statistics do not represent a perfect

[11] Bob & Nancy Kratz is are pseudonyms

characterization of the Techsteader typology, but instead suggest the emergence of an older, wealthier and more (formally) educated group of homesteaders. In terms of establishing common characteristics, all of the homesteads examined under this typology relied on solar or wind power for electricity, incorporated green building materials in the construction of their homes (thermopane windows, high-density foam insulation, high-efficiency light fixtures), and used green household products (non-toxic cleaners, recycled toilet paper, high-efficiency appliances).

While it would be easy to use the statistics to characterize Techsteaders as traditional consumers who have simply augmented their lives with green technology, this typology revealed the emergence of a new type of homesteader—one that may be more engaged in consumer activities than homesteaders of the previous generation, but who also appears to be highly engaged in their community, local agriculture, and in promoting smarter, more sustainable ways of living. Equality as strong as their interest in local issues is their global perspective, exemplified by David Brower's axiom, "think globally, act locally."

The Techsteader typology represented 38% of respondents in the initial pilot study and included three homesteading families. In addition to Bob and Nancy Kratz, participant observation interviews were also conducted with Paul and Karen Long who live with four young children on a 220-acre mountain homestead, just over the New York border in southwestern Vermont, and Tara and Nick Spinosa who homestead in the central Adirondacks on a 100-acre property.

Techsteaders—Background Series Insights

This section opened with an introduction to Bob and Nancy Kratz who have been homesteading for 15 years. Bob works as a firefighter in Burlington, Vermont, and commutes once a week for a three-day shift, then rushes back to the Adirondacks to be on the homestead.

Nancy is a second grade teacher nearing retirement. Bob and Nancy's story is consistent with other conversion narratives: they were both previously married and didn't entertain the thought of homesteading until well into their 40s. While the Kratzes fit neatly within the Techsteader typology, it's clear that cultivating community is one of their primary goals as homesteaders. Bob, displaying his practical tendencies, discusses the importance of community when it came to building their 2,800-square-foot cordwood home.

> So you can imagine us, a couple of suburbanites from Plattsburgh moving out to this insular farming community, not knowing anyone, and having zero track record homesteading. But slowly people noticed what we were doing—they saw us out harvesting the cordwood for the house, or tending my bees, and that went a long way toward giving us street, or dirt road, credibility.

Bob Kratz continues:

> When we started building the neighbors had just finished building their house across the road. So, when we met them, we actually ended up hiring their son as a laborer. Tracy, his father, would always just show up with his tractor digging, moving dirt, whatever. To the point where I started feeling guilty, because I was taking too much advantage. And, a sort of a bad thing is that he's a guy who won't let me pay him back. I'm like always, "What do you need, what do you want, what can I do?" And he's like, "Oh, I'm good, I just come over here to play," he says. And I'm like. "Man, someday you're going to call in a really big favor, I know it."

As Bob was building his cordwood home and cultivating community in his neighborhood by day, his evenings were spent on the internet researching green technology—everything from sizing batteries for his solar array, to more novel technologies like the "eco-freeze" refrigeration technology that uses super-cooled salt water to make a modern ice box:

> I have just as big a homesteading community on the internet . . . I stumbled onto this guy and read the articles he had posted on some homesteading forum and called him. Here I am, Joe Shmoe, ringing his phone and he answers. I tell him, "I read the articles and it's brilliant. I think this is really cool, and I'd love to learn more about the eco-freeze." Next day, they invited Nancy and I over for lunch . . . turns out they only live 50 miles away. Yeah, so here I am walking into this guy's house—don't know him from Adam but he's

> all excited and so am I. That's the thing; technology lets us become better homesteaders faster, by making our circle of resources a whole lot bigger.

The Long family shared a similar conversion narrative; here Paul Long describes his suburban roots, followed by a point of transformation:

> I was twelve when we moved to the average American suburbs and I hated it. I couldn't get back into the woods; they were all choked with vines, and poisonous snakes, and poison ivy. That's just not what people did there. They didn't play in the woods. But then, fast-forward to college, and an international studies trip to Brunnenberg, Italy my junior year—that was definitely the transformative moment for sure. It was the time to see the kind of farming that I couldn't find in the US, that sort of spoke to my imagination in all the right kinds of ways . . . . And a lot of it was just higher education too, you know, going to college, enjoying philosophy, and exploring values. Again not very happy with values out of context, I'm trying to find ways to contextualize those values through a way of life.

Paul continues describing what he witnessed, and why he was drawn to in the Italian Alps farming community of Brunnenberg: "The way people were eating, and living, and healthy, and outside—not having to pretend where and make up ways to get exercise; it was all right there. And the whole notion of the ability to survive, to solve a challenge was part of it." Over the next decade, Paul worked toward his dream of acquiring land, and met his wife Karen along the way. The couple engaged in a frugal life, putting all discretionary income toward paying the mortgage on the land. Here Karen describes the early sacrifices: "Paul really wanted land, and he came and found this land. And it had a little cabin (12x16 feet) with a few books. And it would be more than enough for us. And we needed to insulate it and heat it with a woodstove. It didn't have any electricity or running water, but we weren't two dumb people. It didn't matter that much, you know?" Over the eight years between the time they acquired the land and when they moved into their new home, there was plenty of time to contemplate what their new home should be like, technologically. Here, Karen describes the tension:

> Don't get me wrong, we were totally cramped in the cabin, and it was cold and drafty and falling down. But we also knew that when we moved into the new house, we would face tough choices about how connected we should be to the outside world. Part of the reason we live on the side of a mountain two miles from the nearest road is so that we're able to make that separation. Then, one night shortly after we moved into the new house, we let a student from the college live in the barn and he brought a small solar panel and a couple of florescent lights. We were in awe, but we were also scared knowing that, as Paul calls it, we could be headed toward a "technological cascade."

Avoiding a total "technological cascade" was a goal for the Longs, but there was also the reality that life with three small children (now four) was different, and raised issues of safety around oil lamps, and the need to be able to charge Paul's work computer and cell phones which were their only connection with the outside world. During my time at the Longs' homestead, I witnessed both the intrusion and the comforts of their technologically advanced home. There was Karen's frustration with Paul constantly answering work emails, now that they had internet at the homestead, and Paul's rebuttal that it prevented him from having to go to the office. We also spent an evening in the basement trying to troubleshoot a faulty solar inverter, and nearly a day trying to find an electrical short in a new pasture fence. However, despite the presence of this technology, it was the mindfulness and the clear distinction between "wants" and "needs" that separated the Longs from other Techsteaders. As we brushed the light snow from the photovoltaic panels, Paul paused and said he had something to add to my earlier query about electricity. "It's not that electricity's bad, it's that electricity has the ability to turn luxuries into needs."

In many ways the Longs offer a sharp contrast to Tara and Nick Spinosa[12], who only recently added a 7.5 kilowatt grid-tied solar system to their home and are enjoying the benefits of "free" electricity. Tara explains: "We had wanted to go solar for a long time, but it's just so expensive! When we sold the bookstore (her previous business) I bought a new Subaru and this

[12] Tara and Nick Spinosa are pseudonyms

PV system. It can run basically everything—television, power tools for Nicks shop, an electric sauna, and we still have extra power to sell back to the grid." The contrast between the Long family resisting the technology cascade and the Spinosa family embracing and freely using electricity, certainly represents a major point of departure within this typology. However, on matters of place-based politics, the Techsteaders showed surprising alignment.

Techsteaders—Socio-political Series Insights

Homesteading within the boundary of the Adirondack Park presents both practical benefits (an abundance of natural resources) and formidable challenges (both environmental and regulatory). While all of the neo-homesteaders interviewed for this typology expressed strong support for environmental legislation at the national and global level, local and regional policies were sometimes viewed as a hindrance, and even antithetical to the sustainability goals of these neo-homesteaders. One particularly poignant example comes from Bob Kratz who described the regional regulatory challenges they faced when he and Nancy proposed powering their home with a residential-scale wind turbine.

> It [wind turbine] was over 40 feet tall, which is the Adirondack Park Agency limit. Everybody is equal in the eyes of the APA. And they had all these rules and all this legal stuff you had to go through, like, if you're a multinational corporation with a team of lawyers. It was a pain in the ass to go through. So, a homesteader, you know, like what the hell!
>
> They originally wanted us to have five professionally prepared photographs, digitally enhanced, to scale, of what our wind turbine would look like. They gave us the names of five survey companies that do that kind of work. Only one returned my call and they wanted $1,200 per photograph to do these. This was just so we could apply. The wind turbine only cost $5,000. So I was going to spend $6,000 to get a bunch of pictures that they might say no to. So I got digging through the Adirondack Park Agency's regulations and way in the back, long forgotten, it said that you could put up a simulator and take pictures and use that. Well, I bought the wind turbine and installed it; I put it up and took pictures of it, took it down, and then submitted those pictures. And they're like, "Well, what is this?" And I said, "Well, it's a 1:1 scale model."

But my logic was, I bought the wind turbine, paid the $5,000 for it, put it up, took the pictures and submitted it. If they rejected it, I could sell the wind turbine and get most, if not all, of my money back. And I would have just been out of the frustration of putting it up and taking it down. Where, if I had gone the picture route, I would have just had some really nice pictures. When they looked at those pictures they said, "Ok, we want to see it up for ourselves." So I had to put it up again just so that they could come and verify exactly what it was.

So, I put it up. I drove them around to all of the places where I took the pictures from. I literally had to drive them to the backside of Johnson Mountain to prove to them that you cannot see the wind turbine through the mountain. It was nuts. Actually, when we were going around that day, the first stop was on Pickett's Corner Road, and I said to the two women, and they were nice, I said, "If you can point to my wind turbine right now, point at it, I'll stop, I'll quit right now if you tell me you can see it." And she pointed, and she said, "Yeah, its right over there." And I said, "No." It just blended in, you can't see it. My little wind turbine is like a tiny little lawn ornament compared to these big commercial wind towers. When we were down at the Park Agency for our first meeting, I'm like, "Do you realize one of those blades is longer than my wind turbine is tall?" I'm like, "We're not talking a monstrosity here." It was crazy.

How many times will we be down there at their meetings, though, and talking about our projects and I'd have to explain our whole homestead idea and what we wanted to do, and carbon neutral as much as possible, and working towards zero? I had to keep reminding them, "Do you realize our standards are higher than yours?" I said, "You would let me put eight repossessed mobile homes on this property, heat it with burning oil, and you would say you have no jurisdiction." Like come on, get out of my way, let's raise the bar, you know? See, I personally think that it's a privilege that I get to live in the Adirondack Park and I really want to protect it.

Another common theme within this series was an understanding of the interconnectedness between creating sound food policy and developing a national health plan, which contained many uncertain details at the time this interview was conducted (December, 2013). Here Paul Long describes the nexus between these two issues in the context of homesteading:

I think a lot of it is trying to find the lessons from the homestead, of which there seem to be more and more, that actually relate to some of the societal issues. Food is so primary in the national dialogue. The kinds of wisdom and practices that you find on the homestead are more applicable than they were a decade or two ago in some ways . . . you know, organics, humane treatment and non-GMO.

> As far as what trickles down and what you feel on the homestead, from a policy angle, I think the things that impact us the biggest are with healthcare. I think whatever healthcare reform happens bodes better for the homesteading community than not. In a lot of ways, it's that healthcare is the limiting factor that holds the ability to make a lot of decisions. But we need to start with the food system; people love to divorce those two, but they're part and parcel. And let's not forget the labor side of putting food on the table, looking into the whole food regulatory environment, the degree to which that's going to push, even child labor laws; that's going to be interesting. Interns and apprentices, those regulations, I think all of those pieces are huge and highly relevant to homesteaders and small farmers.

The emphasis on food, food systems, and health varied greatly among the homesteaders interviewed in this typology. Bob Kratz expressed recognition of its importance, tempered with the more immediate need of constructing a home.

> We'd love to grow all our own food, but the reality is we just spent every minute of the last decade building our home. We're going to build a bunch of raised beds this year and next year we'll try a garden . . . I could see us getting more involved in the local food movement, maybe even as organizers, just not right now. Contending with the politics of building codes was enough for a while.

All of the interviewees in this typology felt that local building codes were a major challenge for homesteaders looking to employ local materials or alternative technologies. As Paul Long describes, "A lot of the building regulations are huge, in terms of the ability of homesteaders to do what they want or not. The degree to which the code construction industry influences these—that's huge, the ability to use rough-cut lumber, which is a challenge in some parts of Vermont, and definitely in New York." However, the challenge extends beyond simply negotiating codes written for conventional homes, it also creates a financial challenge for homesteaders who attempt to access credit. Here Paul Long describes the interaction with his banker: "When we went to the bank, the branch manager was happy to discuss reeling in another mortgage until she started hearing scary words and phrases she didn't understand, like, photovoltaic, and off-grid, and a few she clearly understood, and silently cringed at—wood heat,

owner built, seasonal road, and code variance. In the end she denied the loan, telling us it was too risky." Fortunately, after much searching, the Longs were able to find another bank that was willing to take the risk. The other homesteaders interviewed in this typology expressed similar frustrations with local building codes and accessing capital, which is further discussed in the economic series.

In conducting this research, I was continually struck by the level of civic engagement demonstrated by neo-homesteaders across typologies. However, Tara Spinosa stood out as having the earliest, most clearly defined political trajectory that incorporated lived ethics through homesteading and a deep concern for global environmental problems. As we sat over lunch discussing the environmental ethics of homesteading, Tara stood up and ran to the attic, saying "…you need to see my second-grade project!" A few minutes later she returned with a faded, hand-made construction paper book, held together with tattered yarn. The date on the cover was April 4, 1967 and inside was a collection of juxtaposed images: oil spills and majestic eagles; polluted cities and pristine forests; modern cars and Amish buggies. Tara remembered making the book, and identified it as, "A tipping point, or transitional moment in my life… most of those pictures were cut out of *National Geographic*… I knew then that I wanted to be an environmental activist and that I wanted to homestead, even though I probably hadn't learned either of those words yet."

Tara's husband, Nick, works part-time as a builder, but is also the town justice (New York does not require a law degree to be a town justice). He traces his civic involvement to when he and Tara first moved to the area and were looking to become engaged with the community;

> Yeah, it's interesting how homesteaders get labeled as rural recluses . . . I certainly knew for me that when we first bought the property, we said we would like to be involved

somehow in the government . . . because we want this town to be a good place. Not that it was bad, but be a part of making good changes, and it would be better for our children and their children and so on. We thought about being on the town council and that didn't pan out. And one of the first town hall meetings we went to, there was a fistfight so we decided that really wasn't the way for us. Those were the battle days of the APA, you know?

Eventually the town justice position came up and I thought it'd be a good way to help the community and achieve some balance in my life. . . this court system stuff is all cerebral, everything and offers a nice contrast to building and homesteading which is mostly physical. I mean, I built houses and built buildings for many years and yes, there's always challenges, don't get me wrong, but really it gets pretty repetitious after your fiftieth house, or fiftieth roof system. You kind of just say, "Okay, here we go again." And the challenges of the court system for me are just daily, it's not even on a yearly basis, it's daily. The laws are changing, and of course the dynamics of the people are changing, so for me it's kept a good balance. The physical and cerebral stuff keeps your brain moving.

Beyond simply providing balance in his own life, Nick cited the community aspects of being a judge, and the role that humility and compassion play in his relationship with his neighbors while upholding the law. "So I wear my old boots to court, full of holes as a reminder of my own hardscrabble past; it is a reminder that people make mistakes when they are in a desperate situation." After a long pause, Nick continues, "There's moments when you have to be a little tough on people, but most of the people you feel a little bit of sorry for . . . and sometimes they show up really mad, and I ask them, 'Are you mad at me, or mad at the law?' My job is to be fair and make sure that the law makes the community stronger, not weaker."

Techsteaders—Practical Series Insights

Perhaps the most loaded word in the neo-homesteading community is *efficiency*. It is used to deplore technology and underscore failing industrial food systems, but it is also seen as the key to making work enjoyable and as a tool for carving out precious leisure time for the arts, family, and spiritual practice. Throughout my participant observation experience, I observed

seemingly inefficient efforts (carrying buckets of water uphill several times a day when a couple sections of hose would have gotten it there with a fraction of the effort) justified as spiritual ritual, and green gadgets such as a solar-electric lawn mower used to rationalize the expansion of lawns. This theme of ambivalence within the technological sphere has been widely noted in the work of both Jeffery Jacob (1997) and Rebecca Kneale-Gould (2005) as signaling both irony, and the reality that total self-sufficiency still requires a high degree of reliance on the external consumer sphere. In response to this, one technique that these neo-homesteaders employ is to merge their participation in the economy with creative reuse, which Bob Kratz sees as an "offset" to their participation in consumer culture.

> Ok, so we're green and all, but you're right, we tend to spend our dollars on green products that still take plenty of petroleum to make, and God knows what workers' rights have been violated as this stuff goes down the assembly line. But you know what? We're fully immersed in the reuse economy. Take our hoop-houses that litter our property. I was just salvaging in suburbia and all these people were getting rid of trampolines so I'd take a trampoline and basically cut it in half, so you know the ring, and then take metal from the legs to make them taller and then just attach them together. And then just ran saplings for purlins and throw a tarp, or clear plastic over that and you've got a hoop house for next to nothing. We saved this stuff from going to the dump and saved money too. Now that's efficient!

One area where discussion of efficiency was aligned under a single definition was energy use, in the context of matching conservation practices with the scale of technology necessary. Here Paul Long describes the process: "While we made the decision to go from a non-electric to a PV energy household, we were determined to make the system as small as possible, which would both force conservation measures, which is part of the homesteading ethos, and save us money." Bob Kratz, who is noted for his mathematic mind, described a similar end goal:

> I'd like to get into figuring out really how to make the systems work as efficiently as possible. I've got a couple of projects I'm just dying to get to and they're just going to be

> plain fun, or I think cool. My garage, the whole thing was laid out so that I could harvest rainwater off of my garage to water my garden. But, I also realized with the difference that I could harvest some of the rainwater and bring it into the house to flush the toilet. So, if I do that, every seven flushes would come from rainwater, saving me 444 watts. So, over the course of a couple of days, that would be like gaining an extra day of solar power every three weeks—it would be a lot, enough to shave a couple hundred watts off the size of your PV system.

All of the Techsteaders also cited changing their behavior based on environmental conditions. Here, Bob Kratz describes: "You know, you get into energy management where you go, 'Okay, the sun is shining, time to do the laundry, time to do this.' Then, "Okay, that's all done, the batteries are full. Oh, need a little water in the tank—top off the tank." And then by the time the sun is starting to move off of the panels, the day's work is done. It's perfect, you know?" Paul Long offers a contrast to the energy management system Bob Kratz described:

> As PV goes mainstream you see lots of arguments for going solar and a few holdouts who argue that the panels are ugly, or that we shouldn't have to think about where our energy come from. A few years back, there was even an article in the *New York Times*[13] that mentioned a problem with using PV panels is that they need to be brushed of snow in winter . . . do these same people have that same concern for brushing off their SUV in winter? Instead, these people will forgo the two minutes of exercise to instead brush off their SUV, drive to a job they really can't stand, and do that job for eight hours so that they can afford to buy petroleum-based electricity from the grid . . . at least I suppose they avoided the burden of having to brush the snow off PV panels.

The question of appropriate technology has been considered by these Techsteaders with a heavy dose of mindfulness; here Paul Long contemplates the balance of technology in the context of larger questions of fulfillment:

> I think you get to a certain point where it's not the "what's new" piece of green technology, but "where's the level of refinement and efficiency" in an appropriate lifestyle. That's more the quest right now. It's not having to look for new projects, it's

[13] This was a reference to a *New York Times* article by Kate Glabraith, "Solar Meets Polar as Winter Curbs Clean Energy" December 25, 2008.

> really trying to figure how to pare down, so it's the best fit for everybody. It's trying to recapture that order because it's—man, entropy happens so fast in this realm, and unexpectedly sometimes. In some ways, it's almost a constant vigilance of trying to make sure that [technological] entropy doesn't win over the homestead, or the family. When that feeling gets to be too powerful, that's usually when I feel like I'm not on top of my game. That's part of the answer in looking back, but as much as anything, it's more than contentment, it's more than fulfillment. Maybe it's more about gratitude of just being at a certain point. That's really important because if you don't feel thankful for it, not just for your own efforts, but for everybody working together and coming there, then you've sort of missed the boat. Sort of projects and emotions welded together, I guess.

While it is easy to dismiss the participation of Techsteaders in the green technology market as simply participating in an alternative and arguably "less bad" economic structure, the role of these early adopters as persuasive forces in the diffusion of innovation is worth noting. In the following section we'll trace the influence of Techsteaders in promoting green innovation and its impact on the homestead economy.

Techsteaders—Economic Series Insights

> Earlier today, I heard you use the term "eco-affluent" when you were talking to Nick. For the last couple hours I've been up in the workshop thinking about what that word might mean, and honestly if it applies to us. I think the reality is that our relative comfort, financial and otherwise, comes from living a frugal life for the last 30 years. We always used *MEN* (*Mother Earth News*) as a dreamy ideal, and I realize that in many ways our homestead looks a lot like those you see in that magazine. But here's the reality of where we started: We had one light bulb. We'd wash the dishes, wash it [the sink], clear it all out, and put the kids in the sink. We had blankets on all the windows. We didn't even have that addition so Levi's crib was up against that door, and we didn't have the stairs going down to the basement. Corey's bed was under the stairs going upstairs. Nick and I slept on a futon, and that was tough. But we were fine. It was close, it was tight, but it wasn't dark. Sometimes, we'd pull the blankets off on a sunny day, and the light came in. It was cold.

The conditions that Tara Spinosa describes above are certainly within the frame of how many homesteaders begin, especially if they subscribe to the Nearing mantra, "pay as you go,"

which argues for developing the homestead in a series of steps to avoid a *mortgage,* or "death pledge" (H. Nearing 1970). Here Bob Kratz describes the allure of debt-free living:

> What I'm finding a lot of is that there are a lot of people that like the "eco," they like the "green" of what we are doing. But there's just as many that come when they read they don't have a mortgage. My thing that I say a lot is *that I'm excited that there's not a bank on this planet that knows that my house exists* (emphasis in tone). It's amazing how many times I've had it come back to me. It's pretty cool when you hear yourself being echoed.

In pursuit of debt-free living, all of the neo-homesteaders named bartering as their *preferred* economic tool. Among the reasons cited for favoring bartering was, despite homesteading's focus on being a "jack of all trades," inevitably specialization emerges based on skills and available resources. This specialization may create efficiency, but can also create a product surplus, which can be bartered. Tara Spinosa cited bartering being "just about as liquid as cash," and offered this example:

> We needed to take the kids to the doctor, but I couldn't pay the bill. So, I went in and said, "I make baskets, do you want some?" I bartered off baskets; I think you even bartered some carpentry, Nick? [Nick interjects] I did something for Dr. Federman, did carpentry for medical care. So, you stress over these things and it's wonderful when you meet people who are compassionate, so it takes everything to make a real community economy work.

Paul Long described bartering as "just another card in the wallet, but one that's superior to a credit card or cash since for many homesteaders cash is the scarcest of all resources." Here Paul describes the exchange:

> We have friends that don't necessarily have money for stuff, but they may have skills. Our friend Tim is an electrician and we actually bartered a bunch of meat for coming and putting some stuff in that we wanted done, that was only half done. Like, the wire was there but we needed the light. He just figured out how much meat it was, and how much his time was worth, and we figured we got ten hours of electrician work. That worked out nicely. He got a bunch of meat and we got what we needed done.

In the previous section, we introduced innovation diffusion in the context of early adopters who seek out green technologies as a way to meet their goals of self-reliance and decreased ecological footprint, and as a way to make a political statement. Diffusion of innovations is a theory that helps explain how, why, and at what rate technology spreads through culture (Rogers 2003). This concept is key to understanding adoption strategies, diffusion mechanisms, and adopter categories in the context of the Techsteader typology.

While the concept of diffusion can be traced to German anthropologist Friedrich Ratzel and French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, the study of diffusion of innovation developed as a sub-field of rural sociology in the 1920s and 1930s and focused on technologies like hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and replacement of draft horses with tractors (Valentine and Rogers 1995). Adoption of technologies may be organizational, or in the context of this research, individual. The process of diffusion follows a five-step decision-making process: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption (Rogers 2003). Here Bob Kratz describes the process of adopting photovoltaic energy; I've organized the dialogue to reflect and highlight the various steps[14]:

> *Awareness:* In the late 90s I was in the Air Force and had plenty of time to think about what I wanted my life to be like post-military. The 90s was also the time society started to reengage with the idea of environmentalism
>
> *Interest:* I picked up a couple books on solar energy and tracked down back issues of *Countryside Journal,* and *Mother Earth News.* This was all pre-internet, or at least before I had internet, so it was a bit harder to track down information. However, I tracked down Rob Roy (author and early adopter of PV technology) and he convinced me that it was possible to go solar without breaking the bank.
>
> *Evaluation:* To begin, I had to wrap my head around this technology . . . that meant learning about watts, volts, amps, and ohms. Then I had to convert that knowledge to practical things, like how many light bulbs could we power, which is tough to do,

[14] Note, Rogers offers slightly different terminology in some of his work, but operates under the same definitions. This alternative terminology is indicated parenthetically: awareness (knowledge), interest (persuasion), evaluation (decision), trial (implementation), and adoption (confirmation).

especially when you start adding in all the complicated factors that come with this technology, like cloudy days and reduced battery capacity in cold weather.

Trail: We built a small cordwood cabin before the main house, which I'd recommend doing not just from an economic standpoint of allowing you to 'pay as you go,' but also because it allows you to try things out and figure out what you really need, which can be quite different. We lived on 900 watts in that cabin, which isn't a lot, but gave us the confidence to know we could live within the limits of a modest, economical system.

Adoption: Bottom line is PV works. I hear of people spending $200 a month on electricity . . . that's crazy! So we've got no mortgage and no electricity bills. Once people hear that, it's usually enough to get them thinking how adopting this technology and now with China online, building all these solar panels, you can find orphan panels from a large unit that would be less than a dollar a watt. That's crazy! I mean, it was four or five dollars a watt when we started. And we lived off of a 900-watt used array and then the price dropped so much, and I was talking to Dave Banta, and we couldn't not buy these extra panels. We went from 900 watts to 3,200 watts. Now we are swimming in power. If we were starting over right now, the wind turbine would not be worth the effort. I would just put that money towards more solar panels. Because that's what the math says. I'm really happy I have that wind tower because on an overcast day like today, if the wind is blowing that could be the difference of me running the generator or not.

While technological adoption is an individual process that moves from awareness to implementation and confirmation of that decision, diffusion signifies a group phenomenon that helps to explain how innovation spreads. According to Rogers, diffusion of innovation follows a bell curve, with innovators and early adopters constituting the left tail of the curve, the majority occupying the center of the curve, and the laggards occupying the right tail of the curve (2003). Continuing with the photovoltaic innovation diffusion example, the option for grid-tied lease and community power purchase options have widened the alternative energy net for those who were either already connected to the grid, or didn't have the money to purchase a photovoltaic system outright. This expansion of the technology sector has the ability to grow the adopter pool and shorten the total time needed for wider adoption of renewable energy (Rogers 2003). Just as important as the efficacy of the technology, is having a strong degree of homophily, where individuals (in this case, technology-oriented homesteaders) possess similar beliefs and values, and thereby promote diffusion among each other. However, one challenge that was highlighted

by all of these Techsteaders regarding their PV systems was that even the decision to go solar also meant the commitment to, as Bob Kratz put it, "to become a solar engineering expert." This was in reference to the lack of certified solar technicians, which is widely attributed to the failed 1970s "solar boom" (underpinned by government subsidies), that resulted in scores of "solar orphans," as they were dubbed in a recent *Chicago Tribune* article (Wong and Werhau 2010) However, the importance of these Techsteaders in clearing the green energy path for mainstream adoption of alternative energy technologies should be viewed as a primary contribution of techsteaders. As Nick Spinosa put it, "the lights on in our kitchen, and the absence of an electric bill in our mailbox, should be enough to convince others that this just makes sense . . . and I'm happy to have our homestead be the community solar energy showcase."

Techsteaders—Values Series Insights

While it would be easy to caricature Techsteaders as simply ecologically minded engineers employing technology to achieve their sustainability goals, the interviewees explicitly highlighted the *intersection* of traditionally siloed worlds as being an important point in realizing their more holistic values. The intentionality of this decision is rooted in the concept of *crafted interdependence* which Paul Long describes as "assembling a community that's diverse and also skillful- it includes the conscious choice to step out of the cultural norms, if you will, but you're not stepping into a vacuum. Or, if you are, you've got to reconstruct it and you have to do it rather quickly." Here Paul continues, highlighting the value of different skill sets in a world of crafted interdependence:

> If you're going to do it, it's about values from the beginning anyways. So any ability to go in and really not just think about values complexly, but also be challenged by those values by a number of other people and perspectives. I think that's a really important piece. Anything that somebody's exploring in terms of understanding, values is important, their place in society and crafted interdependence, where they're going to fit

> and where their niche is I think is important. But certainly anything related to not just individual vocational, hard skills, but the integration of those. So it's not just about learning one craft, but it's kind of evident and mixed and all of those crafts mixing and mingling into a lifestyle that makes sense.

As Paul described crafted interdependence, it was clear that he was thinking about his own community, and the many young people who have lived and worked on his land over the years. While he clearly sees homesteading as a way to build a meaningful, connected life, he didn't view the next generation's homesteading ambitions as being in line with the "purist" typology that Jeffery Jacob describes. Instead, Paul offered this interpretation:

> I think culturally now, certainly among the younger folks, there's much less interest in the strict self-reliance and much more on rebuilding communities in ways that seem appropriate. I think it's more genuine, and less about "me." It also, to use your words, is probably more "durable." Oftentimes, it seems that when people are trying to be totally sustainable, things fly apart . . . these are the same homesteads or the homesteaders that are less open to the compromise of morphing or evolving.

Bob Kratz shared a similar view on shifting values, citing an ambitious young homesteader who was living on their property. "I've taught Billy the technical skills and exposed him to some of the sweet technology that can take a lot of the pain out of homesteading, but I like that as much as he's thinking about how big a PV system to put at his cabin, he's also thinking about building his community and sorting out all the different things that each of them bring to the table." In recognition of the concept of crafted interdependence, Bob and Nancy Kratz began monthly homesteader dinners in 2013 as a way of cultivating community and getting folks to better understand the skills and resources that other homesteaders could bring to the table. Here Bob explains the concept:

> The goal of the dinners, which you inspired with all this talk about community, is to spread the gospel according to homesteading. These interactions help to kind of inform us about what we have in order to develop a more intentional community. It's about asking questions like, "What could I be doing that would benefit the community the most?" If

> you guys are all growing potatoes, then I am wasting my time growing potatoes. That's the kind of thinking I'm in to. I would love to hear somebody say, "What I really need is… or wouldn't it be cool if I had access to . . . ?"

Bob and I spend the afternoon logging with horses, with the conversation alternating between driving commands for the horses, and the challenges of cultivating community. Here Bob settles on the analogy that assembling a crafted community is like casting a play:

> Is casting community like casting a play? You know, you got to have all the right people in the right place; everyone plays their part. I've thought about this. If I was to build a true intentional community; you would need a mechanic, you need that guy. Could you find a doctor? Or a dentist? Or some other health professional? Actually, Jessica is, come to think of it. There would always be a need for somebody that's the handyman, the fix it guy, or the guy that has the repair shop.

Moving between the practical and the imaginative was equally important for these neo-homesteaders; here Paul Long connects the technological aspects to broader concepts of the natural world: "Even in technology-based homesteading the degree in which it still sparks inspiration or imagination is really important, and whether everyone is feeling engaged with the natural world or the community. The engagement piece is huge. I think most "homesteaders" get that one way or the other; we're all looking for something deeper where you might bump into it, but it has to be cultivated by the individual." Nick Spinosa shared a similar point, saying, "…all this green technology stuff is great, but let's not forget why we decided to carve out our life in the woods—it was to get away, to unplug. We can't forget that."

Collectively, the Techsteaders that I interviewed were grateful for the green technologies that they had chosen to adopt, but understood the importance of fostering a mindful and sometimes distant relationship with technology. The relational concepts included avoiding a "technological cascade," defining appropriate technology, and using technology to create space that allowed for the pursuit of other objectives such as cultivating nature-based relationships, and

fostering community. In the final section of this chapter we'll explore a more holistic view of these 14 participant observation interviewees, focusing on convergent themes.

A Holistic View of Typologies

While the creation of typologies is useful for developing a more sophisticated understanding of the neo-homesteading movement, it is important to also recognize this as a collective subculture that *shares* norms (ecological values, a penchant for simplicity, and place-based connection) and behaviors (home food production, a culture of making, and a reliance of informal structure for cultivating community and meeting economic needs) across typologies.

Notably, the overlap *across* the various neo-homesteading typologies exposes the opportunity for leveraging elements of commonality, and suggests that it may be possible to narrow the rural socio-economic divide by focusing on the common practical elements of homesteading. These practical elements include growing, gathering, and raising one's own food, and using wood or other local renewable materials for heat, energy, and construction. And while this common ground approach may avoid the thornier political elements that follow a conservative-liberal divide (e.g. gun control, reproductive rights, government authority, and land development rights), it provides an entry point for dialogue and participation by focusing on the apolitical and highly practical skills necessary to homestead.

Chapter Four examines the practical and technical homesteading solutions observed and documented during the research process and explores a variety of both formal knowledge transfer mechanisms (agricultural extension, lay-publication, and my book, *The Woodland Homestead*), as well as less formal knowledge transfer mechanisms. Chapter Five then builds on the findings of Chapter Four to recommend how the *Adirondack* Center *for Working Landscapes*

might operationalize the findings to support the mission of promoting “durable communities” through policy and practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: Contributing to Neo-Homesteading: *The Woodland Homestead*

In June 2011 my doctorial research took an unexpected turn toward the social sciences and humanities as I struggled to balance my career as a classically trained forester with the realization that most environmental problems are, at their root, not technical problems as I had been taught and was teaching, but instead, human problems. This perplexing realization corresponded with a personal challenge I had made that year to lower my carbon footprint by producing 50% of my own food, and a desire to engage my community in this challenge at the same time. In short order I identified the myth of self-reliance and found myself relying on neighbors for advice, tools, and encouragement. My property was a 25 acre abandoned Christmas tree farm with low soil pH (4.5), high tree density (400 trees/acre), and a three month growing season. I quickly discovered that I was not the first to face this conundrum as a neighbor told me, "I wasn't farming, I was pioneering, just like in the old days."

The challenge of farming or homesteading in such an inhospitable environment resonated as an academic and practical question that I wanted to answer, "Is small-scale sustainability really possible in the Adirondack-North Country?" This casual inquiry led to invitations from other homesteaders to see how they had extended the growing season, or grown a forest orchard, or grazed their cattle in silvopastures. These visits suggested that an informal body of knowledge had developed in the region out of necessity, but that this particularly type of homesteading – woodland homesteading- wasn't represented in the homesteading literature, which almost always seems to be conveniently situated in a tree-free pastoral environment.

The second observation that I made during these early homestead visits was that not only were the homesteads that I was visiting ecologically diverse, the homesteaders themselves were more diverse and unique than was reflected in Jeffery Jacob's earlier work documenting homesteader typologies. In the interest of narrowing my dissertation topic, I opted to focus my doctorial research on these emerging neo-homesteader typologies, but retained the idea that someday it would be great to write a book documenting the innovative agro-forestry technique of these neo-homesteaders.

The opportunity to write this book came earlier than I imagined, when, at the encouragement of my doctoral advisor, Dr. Alesia Maltz, I submitted a book proposal to Storey Publishing (a premiere press dedicated to rural skills and environmental issues) pitching my typology research as a book topic. The publisher responded that while the typology concept was fascinating, they were more interested in *how* these neo-homesteading in a rugged and forested mountain-region were employing agro-forestry techniques to meet their sustainability goals. After consulting with my committee, it was agreed that the book clearly dovetailed with the overarching purpose of doctoral research and would be a valuable contribution to the cooperative extension literature which has been criticized by extension researchers and educators as being a poorly understood and underutilized practice in promoting multifunctional working landscapes (Gao, Barbieri and Valdivia 2014).

Given the richness of my early homestead visits that prompted the original research query, I decided that using ethnographically-based participant observation methods would accurately contribute to both the development of composite typologies (Chapter 3), and allow for documentation of the techniques and innovations that were of interest to my publisher. The decision to employ a participant observation approach to address both cultural and technical

questions at the same time encouraged a more holistic examination of neo-homesteading and produced both theory-based and practice-based outcomes.

Recognizing that a book documenting innovative neo-homesteading techniques would ultimately fall into the hands of a geographically diverse audience, I felt the need to validate the methods I was advocating under a variety of conditions and provide accurate cautionary notes. This was particularly true in the context of agro-ecological systems that are complex and site specific (e.g. silvopasture systems and forest gardens). I addressed this dilemma in two ways; first, after noting a particular approach or innovation during the participant observation process I would conduct an exhaustive literature review related to issues I thought a particular method might create or perpetuate. For example, in some cases, altering light conditions in a silvopasture can cause certain toxic plants to germinate which could harm livestock. In the absence of literature I would then consult other knowledgeable homesteaders, farmers, and extension agents to build the most accurate descriptions possible. The second way I addressed the validity of the methods and innovations I observed during the participant observation process was to set up replicate experiments on my own homestead. For example, when exploring *hugelkultur* planting beds the interviewees in my participant observation research disagreed on the "proper" construction methods. I replicated the various methods, tracked their development over two years and then described the more successful methods in the book. Setting up these trials also gave me the opportunity to report back to the study participants, thereby contributing to adaptive knowledge.

Building a Book

I constructed *The Woodland Homestead* with three objectives. First, I wanted the book to be accessible and interesting to a variety of readers with both scientific and non-scientific

backgrounds; I envisioned the book (with dog-eared pages and coffee stains) being on the handmade bookshelves of the neo-homesteaders I was interviewing. In other words, I wanted this book to be *used.* Second, I wanted to write a book that would be viewed as a contribution to agricultural extension knowledge and crafted in the tradition of Cornell University's Liberty Hyde Bailey who developed Cornell Cooperative Extension system in 1892, and believed that all extension work should focus on "advancing the larger cultural ideal of self-sustaining agricultural communities" over pure profitability (S. J. Peters 2006). And third, I'd like this book serves as inspiration to other AUNE graduate research can and *should* contribute to both theory and practice.

Enter: *The Woodland Homestead*

In January 2013 I sat in my publisher's conference room in North Adam's Massachusetts with hundreds of homesteading titles stacked floor to ceiling and boxes of agricultural extension bulletins spread along an oversized meeting table. We spent the day combing the literature and comparing it with the list of proposed topics that I had included in my book proposal based on the methods and innovations I had observed during my pilot study. At the end of the day the editors and content managers agreed- *The Woodland Homestead* concept filled a gap within the homesteading how-to literature. This was, for all intents and purposes, a rapid appraisal and literature review of extension and lay publications related to homesteading, and this book proposal had passed the test! In many ways this validation of *The Woodland Homestead* concept by the publisher was the practical (and commercial) endorsement of an epistemological approach that my dissertation committee had endorsed (or at least agreed to) during my dissertation proposal defense. This alignment of the practical and theoretical ultimately gave both structure and purpose to the book and the larger dissertation.

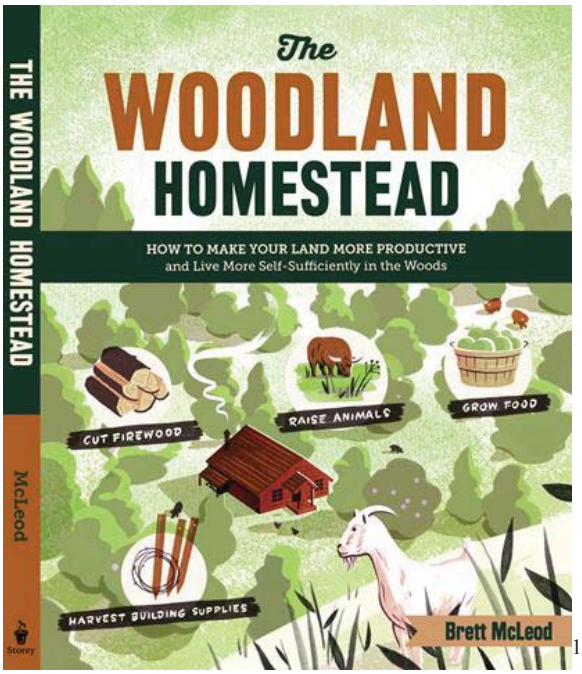
Throughout the participant observation portion of my research I was careful to document both the *why* and *how* of homestead practices. In reflecting on this process, I believe that articulating between *practice* and *purpose* ultimately contributed to deeper philosophical insight that contributed to the development of the typologies. At the same time, examining the practical skills and innovative neo-homesteading techniques often served as a place of comfort that allowed my emic role to develop. In one notable exchange with Nick Spinosa I asked a series of questions related to his spiritual values as a homesteader. As he struggled to explain, I could feel him becoming uncomfortable, and being able to transition back to the task at hand (sharpening an axe with an electric sander) allowed him a safe space to retreat from the more personal questions. I used these moments as opportunities to delve into the technical aspects of his work taking photos of his techniques and document details of his sharpening process for the book. Invariably, the deeper, more personal questions would reemerge in time as the researcher-interviewee relationship developed.

While developing the manuscript for the book, I was continually reminded by my editor to make the writing "more accessible." This required searching for less technical synonyms that didn't compromise the accuracy of the descriptions and adopting a conversational tone. I also devoted a significant amount of time to noting the techniques that other homesteading authors and extensions educators used to convey knowledge in a more accessible way. Ultimately, I settled on the following techniques to clearly convey ideas, linked-concepts, and techniques: process diagrams, composite scenarios, expert profiles, homesteader profiles, and summary charts. To illustrate both the techniques used in creating the book and highlight the innovations documented throughout my participant observation research, I've obtained permission from Storey Publishing to include these layouts as part of this dissertation (permission included in

Appendix C). The remainder of this chapter will examine both the process for creating a book that's useful and accessible to neo-homesteaders and an examination of some of the techniques and innovations employed.

Attracting an Audience

Making a topic accessible to a lay audience was a primary objective. This meant that despite moderately technical details within the pages of the book, creating a cover that invited the reader in was essential. The cover is also used to attract interest by reflecting topics of current interest. It was for this reason that a saanen goat was selected for the cover, as well as the highland cow, both heritage breed species that are popular choices for smallholders. The style is meant to capture both nostalgia and appeal to modern homesteaders with its use of both vintage fonts and watercolor. Nearly as important as the book cover is the preface which my publisher described as being the point where a reader will decide: "can I actually do this?"



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PREFACE

Why anyone chooses to homestead remains a mystery to many, especially my mother. Why would a person choose to give up the comforts of modern living and consciously return to a point in time when life was tougher, grittier, and less forgiving? I've wrestled with this question myself; it seems even more valid when you're chasing hogs down the highway or building a log cabin with an axe because that's what Granddad did. However, long after the blisters have turned to calluses and the neighbors have been paid off with eggs for the hogs rooting up their yards, I'm left with a simple conclusion: it's just a better way to live.

However, this conclusion isn't entirely my own. I've had the pleasure of integrating homesteading and my particular flavor of it — *woodland* homesteading — into my work as a professor of forestry and natural resources at Paul Smith's College, and as a doctoral student at Antioch University New England. The lessons that come out of this book represent not just my own trials and tribulations but also ideas from over a dozen woodland homesteaders who have chosen to live, work, and play in places that most would write off as "too wild," or "not farmable." The result is a collection of ideas and techniques from the most innovative and resourceful folks you've ever met — people who see an impenetrable clump of trees as low-cost animal housing, or a high-graded stand of timber as a community woodshed. This ability to develop perspective, see opportunity where others do not, and then offer ingenious and innovative solutions is the mark of a woodland homesteader.

Realizing your dream of a woodland homestead is tough work, requiring both sweat and patience. The productivity of your woodland can be highly variable and will be dependent on climate, soils, and how the land was used by previous owners. What this book offers is a new lens for taking stock of your woodland, with the goal of unlocking its untapped potential. This perspective minimizes commercial production of forest products and instead focuses on maximizing utility for you, the woodland homesteader. By combining new perspectives with old ideas, we're likely to reveal homesteading's most fundamental lesson, eloquently summarized by Wendell Berry: "When going back makes sense, you're going ahead."

Composite Profiles

One key feature of *The Woodland Homestead* is the use of composite profiles which are referred to as "case studies" throughout the book. The purpose of these composite profiles is to illustrate how homestead goals can be part of a reinforcing system that is sustainable and efficient. Because these case studies represent exemplars, examples were drawn from multiple participant observation experiences, as well as outside readings. The locations for these composite profiles were changed to reflect a national audience for the book, but included careful research to ensure that the species and techniques mentioned were applicable to that region.

The Tucker Homestead case study below was meant to highlight a common land use scenario where abandoned farms have experienced old field succession and are now being purchased and repurposed as small farms and homesteads. This case study provides an alternative approach where animals are employed to help clear the land and sustainable woodlot management provides a perpetual source of carbon-neutral home heating fuel.

THE TUCKER HOMESTEAD

A DREAM TO BLEND FARM AND FOREST

The Tucker family of northern Virginia purchased an abandoned 40-acre homestead that was once largely pastureland but over the last half-century had been reclaimed as forest. The Tuckers considered cutting the trees and hiring an excavator to remove the stumps and reclaim the pastures. However, this option was less than appealing because it would not only have been cost-prohibitive but also would have meant giving up all the benefits the young forest provided, ranging from privacy to recreation and wildlife habitat. Instead, the Tuckers looked to develop a homestead that blends their farm and forest ambitions.

Concerns related to both health and sustainability drove the Tuckers to rate home meat production as one of their primary goals. The Tuckers would also like to minimize infrastructure costs and inputs associated with animal husbandry, and to produce 100 percent of their own heat using firewood from the property, but they are not sure that the land can meet their wood needs in perpetuity. While hardwoods dominate the property, nearly 20 percent of the land contains pasture pine that has been attacked by the white pine weevil. Finally, the Tuckers would like to rehabilitate an old apple orchard for cider production.

GOALS

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION (MEAT)

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
Reduce basal area to 20 square feet/acre, leaving crop trees in silvopastures, use pigs in portable pig tractor to excavate stumps, and use feed seeding techniques to establish pasture.	The Tuckers created silvopastures by keeping the best trees as crop trees for forage, shade, and eventually lumber. The UGS were removed for firewood. For more information see page 000.

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION (DAIRY)

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
Select large-crowned crop trees to provide shade for dairy animals, and use portable fences to allow cows and goats to glean drops in the orchard area.	Large sugar maple trees were retained not only to create shade but also to preserve the option of the Tuckers developing a sugarbush in the future. Moving cows and goats through the orchard area was an effective way to make use of drops. Once drops have been consumed, it is important to move animals to fresh ground to avoid damage to fruit trees. For more information see page 000.

MINIMIZE ANIMAL HUSBANDRY INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
Conifer areas should be left as a living barn; existing trees will form a living fence.	The living barn averaged 8°F warmer in winter while offering adequate ventilation. The living fence system saved nearly $1,000 over a conventional fencing system. For more information see page 000.

SUSTAINABLY PRODUCE 100% OF FIREWOOD NEEDS

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
An inventory of the property determined that the forest can currently only provide 80% of the Tuckers' firewood needs; employ stand improvement and coppice methods to increase firewood production.	Intense competition among trees meant that few trees thrived. Thinning and other stand improvement activities increased productivity. Species capable of coppice reproduction were selected throughout the woodlot. For more information see page 000.

FIND USE FOR PASTURE PINE

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
The stout, branchy form means that only half-logs (8') can be cut from these trees. The tops, however, may be inverted and used as tables, stools, and chairs.	The smaller logs were easier to skid using the Tuckers' draft horse, Lady. A neighbor offered to saw the logs on a portable sawmill in exchange for 50% of the lumber. The weevilled tops were used, sold, and traded as rustic furniture. For more information see page 000.

REHABILITATE ABANDONED APPLE ORCHARD

Available Resources & Techniques:	Outcome:
Wild vines, an encroaching overstory, and competing shrubs all prevented this orchard from producing fruit.	Releasing the trees through the removal of competition over a two-year period restored the productivity of the orchard. The trees now produce, on average, 5 bushels per tree per year. For more information see page 000.

Homegrown Innovations

On-site participant observation allowed for the opportunity to see how neo-homesteaders addressed common problems displaying resourcefulness and ingenuity. On the Malone homestead, Tom had erected a simple wood-splitting device using an old tire to keep firewood upright as its split with an axe, which is both safer and more efficient. While this is just one example, the homesteads I visited were full of simple innovations that simply lacked dissemination mechanism. Despite knowledge transfer being at the center of agricultural extension, it is also recognized as a formidable challenge (Disterer 2001). The reasons I encountered in research for *not* sharing or transferring knowledge included: perceived loss of authority and/or loss of comparative advantage; dismissal of an innovation as being unimportant; lack of motivation to disseminate information. All of these observations have been documented in the extension and knowledge transfer literature, but I believe are manifested quite differently on homesteads that focus on self-sufficiency, versus farms that are focused on production and profit. Generally, homesteaders were more open to knowledge transfer and were excited by the fear that others might employ *their* ideas. Farmers or neo-homesteaders looking to make the leap into farming were much more guarded, presumably because their techniques and innovations provided them with a competitive advantage. However, perhaps the greatest barrier that I encountered was a belief that a particular innovation simply wasn't important. In the case of Tom Malone's splitting block that used a tire, he seemed puzzled by my interest. It is worth noting that I first documented this in an issue of *Northern Woodlands* (Summer 2014) magazine and received numerous emails and letters thanking me for such a simple and practical solution, including a note from a high school shop teacher who believed that this method had made the school firewood fundraiser both more efficient and safer.

In addition to widely available publications such as *The Woodland Homestead*, other mechanisms exist for promoting knowledge transfer. One common approach is the use of "share fairs" that focus on teaching particular techniques and innovations to a wider audience. Akin to this, the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes* hosts an annual Rural Skills & Homesteading Festival that focuses on the dissemination of knowledge through hands-on workshops. What can emerge from these experiences are "communities of practice" that have the ability to develop open sharing and reinforce a network of social obligation (Disterer 2001).

During the participant observation interview process I made a point to ask where techniques or innovations originated. While relatively few innovations were original many were evolutionary, simply improving on past techniques or innovations. Jack Reishi, our cordwood building spiritual homesteader described how he developed his mortar pointing technique from other homesteaders:

> Other guys were taking perfectly good putty knives and grinding and bending them. One day I thought to myself, that sure does look like a cooked butter knife. Much to my wife despair, I sacrificed a knife out the kitchen and bent it to create a perfectly ergonomic tool… I've showed this to other cordwood builders and it seems to be catching on.

Throughout the book I attempted to integrate these subtle but important details. I also relied on over 600 photographs that I took during the participant observation interviews which became the illustrations for the book. In working with the publisher, we identified artist Steve Sanford, a sketch artist for *Outdoor Life, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal* to develop the pen and watercolor images. Sanford's attention to detail and accurate representation of natural features play an important role in accurately describing both the tools and techniques.

BUILDING THE PERFECT SPLITTING BLOCK

Splitting blocks serve several important purposes. First, by splitting on a wooden block, you're preserving your axe by avoiding rocks. Second, splitting on a block is safer since it gives the axe a known landing spot well away from your feet. Third, a splitting block can save you from having to bend over as far. Your back will thank you!

Begin by selecting a block that is a minimum of 15 inches in diameter and 12 to 16 inches high. The knottier, the better; the knots will prevent it from splitting prematurely. Any species will work, but I prefer elm or sugar maple.

Find an old tire that's just slightly larger than the diameter of your block. Drill four 1-inch holes in one sidewall, evenly spaced (this will allow water to drain). Use four 3-inch lag bolts with fender washers to screw the sidewall of the tire to the top of the block.

You now have the perfect splitting block that will hold your wood securely as you split it. No more standing up fallen pieces or chasing runaway firewood!

If you're splitting small-diameter wood, you can pack the pieces inside the tire; they will support one another while you are splitting.

Beside your tire-topped splitting block, you may want to have a second block without a tire for large or odd-shaped pieces. I also recommend putting a slight angle (about 10 degrees) on this second block so that you're able to match an uneven piece of firewood with the angle of the block.

BUILDING WITH CORDWOOD

While it's hard to deny the value of a cord of wood for keeping you warm, cordwood can also be used as a simple and efficient alternative building material. Cordwood building is simple; debarked firewood-length logs (8 to 24 inches long) are stacked with an insulated mortar to create a wind- and water-tight wall.

SOURCE AND CUT YOUR LOGS

It's imperative the wood be completely dry before you begin, so start this process at least one year in advance of construction. Softwoods are generally preferred over hardwoods (which are prone to greater expansion/contraction); cedar is among the most desirable woods since it's rot resistant. You can use either rounds or split wood; just make sure all pieces are cut to the same length.

MIXING MORTAR

Once your wood is dry and you've built a solid foundation above grade, you're ready to mix your mortar. Like cooks, most cordwood builders have their own recipe, but this one is the most common: 9 parts sand to 3 parts sawdust to 3 parts builder's lime (not agricultural) to 2 parts Portland cement by volume.

LAYING UP THE WALL

With the mortar mixed to the consistency of thick mud, you're ready to begin building, or "laying up" the wall. Start with a layer of mortar at the base (about 2 inches thick), and press the cordwood until firmly bedded. The logs shouldn't touch one another, and mortar should fill all the air gaps.

With your first course in place, you can begin continue building the wall layer by layer. Make sure the wall doesn't bow in or out, and that the areas around door and window frames are completely chinked with mortar. Before the mortar dries you'll want to smooth, or "point," both the inside and outside of the wall using a butter knife with a slightly upturned blade. Use the knife to both smooth and compress the mortar, adding to both the strength and appearance.

LET IT DRY SLOWLY

It can take up to three weeks for the mortar to completely dry. It's best if it dries slowly, and you can control the rate by misting the wall daily with water. (For more information on cordwood construction, see resources.)

Point the mortar between logs with a small trowel or a butter knife that has an upturned blade. Individual logs should not touch; they should be separated by a thick layer of mortar.

Promoting an Agro-Ecological Approach to Working Landscapes

One of the important messages in *The Woodland Homestead* is that small-scale agricultural systems can be integrated with forest systems to increase ecological resiliency as well as increase livestock efficiency and productivity. Silvopasture, or the intentional combining of trees and grazing areas, is a strategy of particular importance in the Adirondack-North Country because the region lacks pastureland, but has vast acreage of low-productivity forest land that could be used for silvopastures, thereby contributing to a working landscape.

The Woodland Homestead is the first lay-science book to chronicle the process of establishing silvopastures and will be distributed to county-level cooperative extension offices throughout New York State as well as Vermont. In introducing silvopasture as a relatively new concept, it was important to address misconceptions about the practice as well as emphasize techniques that could result in either damage to the ecosystem or compromise the health of livestock. In the case of slivopasture, it was important to describe how it is different from unmanaged forest grazing where livestock are simply placed in a forest without managing forage or controlling for erosion/root damage. The legacy of unmanaged forest grazing is one that still makes many foresters weary of promoting silvopasture, hence the emphasis on management by employing portable fence technology, frequently moving livestock to fresh silvopastures, and adhering to conservative grazing standards.

Finally, I explored the use of associated agroforestry tools to describe how systems could be better integrated. This included an examination of coppicing trees for forage and fuel, as well as promoting “living barns” which are mid-successional forest patches that are retained (and maintained) as animal shelter.

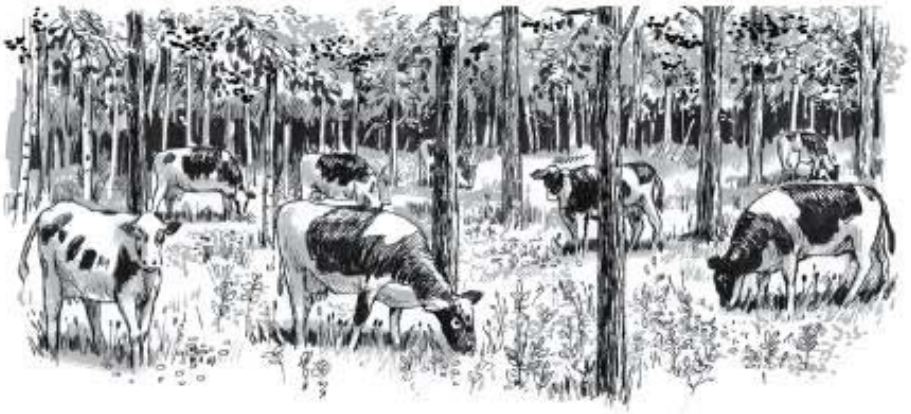
SILVOPASTURE

Broadly, the intentional combining of agriculture and forestry to create a sustainable and integrated multiuse system is known as agroforestry. This chapter will primarily examine an agroforestry system known as silvopasture, which combines livestock, trees, and forage production on the same acreage — an arrangement that's well in line with the ambitions of many homesteaders.

Much of the commonly available information on this topic address silvopastures in the context of taking open land and planting trees. In this chapter we'll focus on converting a forgotten woodlot to a productive and well-managed silvopasture system. One obvious advantage of going from forest to silvopasture, instead of silvopasture to forest, is that your crop trees already exist. One disadvantage is that you'll have to contend with brush and stump removal in an effort to create a hospitable environment for growing forage. As with most homestead projects, the gratification associated with creating silvopastures is not instantaneous. In my case, I opted for making the conversion using as few inputs as possible and looked to employ my livestock along the way.

PASTURE OR SILVOPASTURE?

To begin, you'll want to ask if a silvopastoral system is right for you. The diversified benefits associated with silvopasture also pose a tradeoff in terms of maximizing efficiency. Since the number of trees in a silvopasture is a fraction of the number in a forest, wood production is reduced. Pasture forage, too, may be reduced, since the shade cast by trees means slower forage growth than would be found in an open pasture. However, in many cases the benefits of being able to integrate livestock while producing tree-based crops outweigh the costs.



Through careful management, silvopasture combines livestock, trees, and forage production on the same land.

As is true for any other management activity, assessing the appropriateness of a silvopastoral system begins with an inventory. Silvopasture trees can be grown for a variety of purposes, including timber, firewood, fruit, nuts, syrup, and Christmas trees, just to name a few. Your inventory will tell you what potential "crops" you have. Remember, the easiest trees to grow are the trees you already have.

In some cases, the tree species growing on your property may not be suitable for use in a silvopasture. On my own property, I elected to create a silvopasture in one area and a traditional pasture in another area, based on the shallow rooting behavior of the balsam fir that predominated in what is now the open pastureland. Had I retained the modest density of trees required to constitute a silvopasture, I would have ended up with a pixie-stick mess after the first heavy winds, since balsam fir depends on dense, touching crowns for vertical stability. In addition to root stability, another important factor to consider is shade tolerance. When shade-tolerant species are released from neighboring tree crowns that provide shade, the released tree can suffer sunscald or other forms of stress that may result in mortality. Unlike shallow rooting, the stress associated with release can be mitigated by releasing the tree over multiple growing seasons. If the tree species or forest condition isn't conducive to a silvopasture arrangement, you may want to consider clearing the land to use as traditional pasture but incorporating other agroforestry techniques such as windbreaks or riparian buffers.

You may also discover that your potential silvopasture doesn't have a single crop but instead has multiple crops, based on the species that exist. This could mean that your silvopasture is a source for apples, maple syrup, and firewood — a combination that is more common than you'd imagine. As important as the tree crops are the livestock species you select. They should match your silvopasture in both scale and forage type.

REASONS TO CONSIDER SILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS

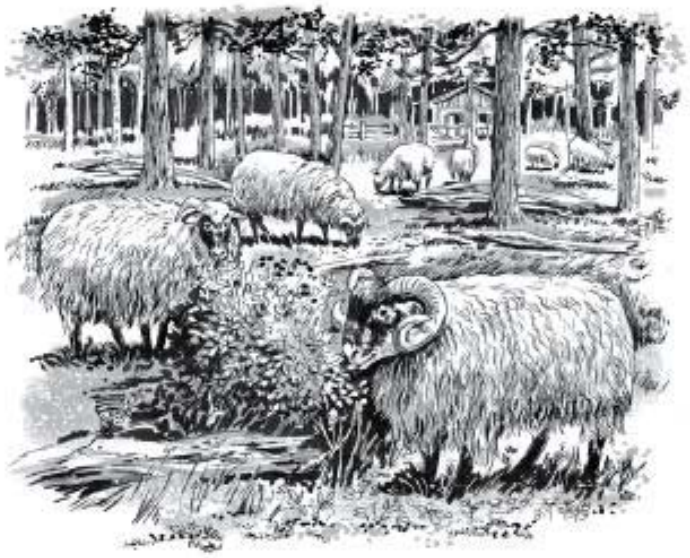
Beyond the obvious benefit of being able to harvest both forest and agricultural products from the same land, silvopastoral systems offer less-recognized benefits that promote sustainability and make your homestead more productive. These include:

GROWING MORE FOOD WITHOUT MORE LAND. As populations grow, demand for food will also increase. Neglected woodlots and forgotten forests present the opportunity for crafting a productive working landscape that's capable of yielding a variety of products simultaneously. In addition, modern, portable fencing systems enable small-scale growers to better control the location and duration of grazing, which increases productivity and reduces feed costs while ensuring that no particular plot is overgrazed. That said, realize that some plants may be harmful to particular livestock; take the time to inventory and research any questionable plants before allowing your animals to browse or graze.

PROMOTING HERITAGE BREED LIVESTOCK. Burgeoning interest in heritage breed livestock is well matched with the browse and forage conditions that are often created in silvopastures. Unlike factory farm livestock, which is bred for rapid growth based on a strictly controlled diet, heritage breed livestock has the ability to thrive in the diverse forage conditions representative of silvopastures.

SHEEP BREEDS FOR SILVOPASTURE SETTINGS

Cotswold	Good woodland foragers that favor young vegetative sprouts	Pleasant, mild flavored meat; wool is excellent for hand spinning
Hampshire	Poor consumption of low-quality forage; picky eaters, thus a safe bet around crop trees	Large, fast-growing meat source; the milk is often sought after for cheesemaking
Romney	Excellent woodland foragers; extremely hardy	Coarse wool, ideal for making warm and durable work sweaters
Scottish Black Face	Good foragers; will graze most grasses and sedges	High-quality meat produced even on relatively low-quality forage; horns are sought after by craftspeople for tool handles
Suffolk	Poor consumption of low-quality forage; picky eaters, thus a safe bet around crop trees	High meat-to-bone ratio; fast growing and often used in 4-H and FFA competitions



Scottish blackface sheep are great grazers, but will also browse, making them great candidates to help establish and maintain your silvopasture.

standpoint, it's a low-cost and efficient way to address what are usually two of the most expensive items on the homestead.

LIVING BARN AND PATHWAY MANAGEMENT

Although you don't have to paint or fix hinges on a living barn, it isn't entirely maintenance-free. As with a "real" barn, it's important to control where your livestock go, or don't go, in the living barn. Without pathway management, you'll quickly discover that your livestock will move around haphazardly, knocking down smaller trees and creating unwanted gaps or openings. One way to address this is to allow your livestock into the living barn for just a couple of days, noting the paths they choose most often. Your animals will want an escape route on all sides, but you'll notice that there's usually one area that they naturally gravitate toward. Once they've been given the opportunity to carve out a couple of paths, make the paths more obvious by clearing any obstructing debris.

In laying out the living barn's "alley network," or pathways you want to encourage your livestock to use, make sure you do your best to preserve the core as a protected bedding area. This is particularly important if you have a small living barn that offers few bedding locations. Generally, it's a good idea to feed outside the living barn. Leftover hay and bedding can become compacted and smother tree roots. One way to encourage the use of established alleyways is to place hay feeders near the entry and exit points.

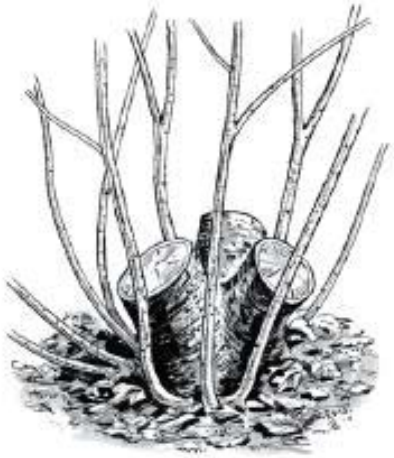
Living barns can also be modified to offer greater livestock protection and to encourage the use of prescribed entry and exit routes. One approach is to build stump fences between the entry and exit points. This creates a windbreak while at the same time controlling livestock movement. An alternative to building a stump

The living barn offers protection from both wind and sun. Control entry points and create additional protection by piling brush around the perimeter of your living barn.

sprouter through the 20-inch-diameter class. This sort of species-level data can be extremely useful in guiding your coppice strategy.

In the event that species-level coppice data doesn't exist for the trees in your woodlot, there are several considerations that hold true for most species. First, avoid very young trees and old growth. Sapling-stage trees may lack the necessary root structure and carbohydrate storage capacity to successfully coppice. You should also avoid mature trees, particularly those with thick bark at the base. One of the primary functions of bark is to protect the tree's cambium; however, as the bark thickens, it becomes more difficult for the dormant buds to stump-sprout.

Three trunks of a 15-year old coppiced birch



Gray birch stump, 10 weeks after coppicing

Two 15-year-old coppiced gray birches and one 18-year-old coppiced American beech add up to a face cord on myporch.

Homesteader Profiles

Throughout *The Woodland Homestead* there are a variety of homesteader profiles based on the participant observation interviews. These profiles address chapter topics and allow the reader to understand how other neo-homesteaders incorporate various aspects of woodland homesteading. Separate consent was granted for these profiles, independent of the typological constructs. In addition to homesteader profiles, expert profiles were also included throughout the book.

HOMESTEADER PROFILE

ATLAS HOOFED FARM

DAN AND SARA BURKE

Dan and Sara Burke are the owners and operators of Atlas Hoofed It Farm, in Sugarbush, New York. As small farms go, the Burkes' farm is about as unconventional as it gets. Their 80-acre spread is a former missile silo site that was decommissioned during the 1960s. Dan and Sarah decided that turning a site devoted to destruction into one that produces healthy, local food was a transition of the highest order. Standing between them and the missile silo was a low-quality forest, replete with invasive species.

Using a combination of Scottish Highland cattle for browsing and an army of nearly five dozen pigs, the Burkes have been able to reclaim this denuded site, reducing invasive species by using intensive grazing. One of the primary challenges of reclaiming the land was that much of the topsoil was scraped off prior to its development as a military installation. To amend the soil naturally, the Burkes practice multispecies grazing, where pigs periodically turn the soil, mixing organic and mineral material. The pigs also play an important role in controlling unwanted plant species such as sheep sorrel and goldenrod.

Believing that efficiency is the absence of waste, the Burkes have established a pre-consumer food scrap network whereby Dan does a daily run to local supermarkets, restaurants, co-ops, and colleges to collect pre-consumer kitchen scraps and day-old breads for their pigs. In a week, Dan is able to collect nearly a ton of scraps, thereby saving perfectly good food from going to the landfill and reducing the farm's feed costs 50 percent. The businesses also appreciate this arrangement, since it saves them the cost of disposal.

HOMESTEADER PROFILE

RAVENWOOD HOMESTEAD

BRUCE AND NANCY KILGORE

Bruce and Nancy Kilgore's homestead, known as Ravenwood, is an artistic and functional expression of what's possible on a woodland homestead. The Kilgores' house is an innovative blend of cordwood construction, post-and-beam construction, and passive solar design. The walls of the home are made of cedar, which was collected from the slash piles left after logging jobs in the area. The roof trusses are made of massive 22-inch white pine timbers that support a living roof that doubles as crop space.

The Kilgores resurrected the woodland apple trees not only for the fruit but also for the bees. Bruce notes that after he introduced bees to his woodland orchard, the size and quantity of apples increased significantly. In addition to producing apples and honey, Bruce also has a 200-tap sugarbush on his property, which he taps along with trees on his neighbors' land as part of a syrup cooperative.

Known for his thoughtful integration of systems, Bruce offers some sage advice to those looking to create symbiotic and efficient systems for the wooded homestead. First, he suggests that before you eliminate one ecosystem component, you should consider what impacts it has along the way. For someone looking to produce fruit, honey, and syrup on the same land, this is going to mean retaining as many early successional species (basswood, aspen, and birch) as possible, because they are, in most cases, the first to flower in the spring, providing an important food source to bees. He also notes that all of his wood from tending the sugarbush becomes fuel wood for firing the evaporator.

Finally, Bruce and Nancy advocate for working with your neighbors and bartering homestead goods along the way. This may mean trading syrup for meat, or honey for labor. The idea is, as Bruce describes, a network in which neighbors lend one another their goods, time, and knowledge as currency in the woodland homestead economy.Taking the advice of the legendary Helen and Scott Nearing, the Kilgores practiced a "pay as you go" philosophy, building in stages, using cash and sweat equity. When asked about the advantages of that approach, Bruce Kilgore grins, saying, "There's not a bank or mortgage company in this word that knows my homestead exists."

THE RAMP RESEARCHER

JIM CHAMBERLAIN, PH.D

EXPERT PROFILE

JIM CHAMBERLAIN WORKS FOR THE USDA FOREST SERVICE AS A FOREST PRODUCTS RESEARCHER IN BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA. But he doesn't study sawlogs, veneer, or any of the common commercial products that you might associate with National Forestlands. Instead, Jim studies wild leeks, or ramps. What began as a simple inquiry into how and where people harvested leeks has evolved into a career that aims to understand both the cultural and ecological aspects of this fascinating plant. And, as interest in harvesting ramps grows, Jim is charged with developing strategies for sustainably cultivating this native edible.

When asked what common mistake novice ramp hunters make, without hesitating Jim says "timing." By timing he means that oftentimes people harvest ramps too early. In the early days of his research he noticed that many of the ramp festivals in the south where held in April, even though the ramps weren't fully developed until May. This then led him to begin studying the relationship between leaf size and bulb size, a relationship that many homesteaders had anecdotally noticed, and Jim was able to substantiate with empirical data.

Jim's optimistic about the future of ramps as a managed forest crop. Currently he's experimenting with growing ramps in raised beds lined with landscaping fabric as an alternative cultivation method for drier sites.

Although the popularity of foraging for ramps and other woodland crops helps to preserve important cultural knowledge, it can also inadvertently promote overharvesting. For those interested in sustainably harvesting ramps from the wild, Jim offers a simple rule: carefully harvest ramp clumps, but only take one-third and return the other two-thirds (rhizome intact) back to the ground. You can even promote the expansion of your ramp patch by transplanting the remaining two-thirds to a competition-free zone a few feet away.

WHEN ASKED WHAT COMMON MISTAKE NOVICE RAMP HUNTERS MAKE, WITHOUT HESITATING JIM SAYS "TIMING."

Expanding the List of Non-Timber Forest Products

While I refrained from using the term "Non-Timber Forest Product" (NTFP) in the book out of concern that many smallholders don't identify their property as constituting a "forest," many of the uses I describe in the book from foraging to sugaring are technically classified as NTFPs. From both a utilitarian and economic perspective, NTFP's are significant. While the economic role of NTFPs was long ignored, and assumed to be a negligible economic element in rural communities, a study which appeared in *Nature* in 1989 argued that recognizing and developing markets for NTFPs in the tropics was an important step in combating deforestation (Peters, Gentry and Mendelsohn 1989). For a short time, it looked like this localized focus on NTFP would be an important conservation strategy both in the developing world and rural corners of the developed world. Eventually, however, issues of greater scale, like climate change and its myriad new initiatives overshadowed the highly localized, and comparatively diminutive scale of NTFP production. Recently however, there has been resurgence in NTFPs, marked by a more culturally diverse range of participants that includes both long-time forages who have relied on traditional knowledge, and a less experienced suburban and exurban demographic who rely more heavily on books and other secondary resources (Pierce 2014). In recognition of this diverse participation I devoted much of the book to identifying new NTFPs that could be sustainably harvested, thereby contributing to both the informal and formal economy that are central developing functional, working landscapes.

While sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) is a common species for homesteaders to tap for syrup and sugar production in the northeast, other deciduous species offer promise. Like silvopastoral systems, or *hugelkultur* tapping alternative species is largely unrecognized with few resources available, even through agricultural extension agencies. While some of the neo-homesteaders in my research were familiar with tapping less common maple species and even

birch, this portion of the research relied on “snowball” referencing to obtain brix estimates and descriptions.

OTHER TREES TO TAP

Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)	From southeastern U.S. to southern Canada	1.5–2%	A generalist species, red maple can be found in both wet and dry areas, and is actually more common than sugar maple. Sap generally has a lower sugar content than sugar maple, and less sap, but yields quality syrup.
Black maple (*Acer nigrum*)	Great Lakes and Upper Midwest	2–3%	A close cousin to the sugar maple, black maple yields high-quality syrup.
Silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*)	Eastern half of the U.S. and extreme southern Canada	1.0–1.5%	Most commonly found on wet sites, silver maple has a comparable sugar content to red maple, but sap yield can be highly variable
Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)	Eastern U.S. and Canada, as well as the Pacific Northwest	1.5–2.5%	Commonly planted as an ornamental tree (and considered invasive in some states), Norway maple yields a sap suitable for syrup production, but the sap may become milky earlier than that of other maples.
Bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*)	Pacific Northwest	1.0–2%	While having lower sugar and sap yields than eastern species, bigleaf (also known as western maple) has a unique use for a species traditionally regarded as a "weed tree without commercial use."
Canyon maple (*Acer grandidentatum*)	Rocky Mountains, south to Texas	2–3%	Canyon maple has a similar sugar content to sugar maple, but has low sap yield per tap.
Box elder (*Acer negundo*)	Most widely distributed of all maples; most of continental U.S. and Canada	1.5–2%	Found on marginal sites, box elder has a low yield, but represents a use for a species that has little commercial or utilitarian value.
Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*)	Upper Midwest and Northeast	2–3%	In addition to producing sweet nuts and beautiful lumber, butternut makes delicious syrup; just be sure to filter out the pectin sap, which causes it to prematurely thicken before boiling.

OTHER TREES TO TAP, CONTINUED

Species	Distribution	Sugar Content (Percent)	Tapping and Syrup Notes
Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*)	Eastern U.S. and southern Canada	1.8–2.5%	The syrup of the black walnut has a unique nutty flavor. The lumber is extremely valuable, so target UGS (not AGS) for tapping.
English walnut (*Juglans regia*)	Eastern U.S.	1.8–2.5%	This hardy walnut is suitable for USDA Zone 5. Syrup has an intense flavor similar to that of black walnut.
Paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*)	Northern U.S. and Canada	0.3–0.9%	Paper birch has the highest sugar content of the birches, though it rarely reaches over 1% sugar.
Yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*)	Eastern U.S. and southern Canada	0.5–1%	Yellow birch commonly grows alongside sugar maple. The sap from the two species can be blended when boiling since the sap runs for each frequently overlap.
Black birch (*Betula lenta*)	Eastern U.S., with the exception of the most Northeastern latitudes	0.3–0.9%	Better known as the "birch beer tree," this species is equally suitable for tapping, though sadly, the syrup doesn't taste like birch beer.
Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)	Eastern U.S., with the exception of the most Northeastern latitudes	N/A	Relatively little data exists on the sugar content of sycamore. It's syrup has a butterscotch flavor.

Honoring Liberty Hyde Bailey: Homesteader, Author, Scholar, Policy Maker

This chapter opened by acknowledging the role of Liberty Hyde Bailey who is credited with developing Cornell University's Cooperative Extension service and writing the first agricultural extension bulletins. While a common narrative prevails that the formation of the Agricultural Extension Service was about increasing productivity and efficiency, a closer examination of Bailey reveals a much more holistic vision that included social, ecological, and economic impacts of new techniques and innovations (S. J. Peters 2006). Bailey argued for thinking of the effects of agricultural practices "across the land" and suggested the need to find ways to teach not just large farms, but also the smallholders, who needed assistance the most (Banks 1994). Bailey's world view, one that placed education, social justice (via access to knowledge), and stewardship of land at the center of his agenda has offered me a hopeful example of how the various components of my own research fit together in a way that is both professionally congruent and personally fulfilling.

When I first read of Bailey's feats I was impressed by his energy, pragmatism, and long list of contributions. Growing up on a homestead in Michigan, Bailey earned money by grafting apple trees in his community, which evolved into a distinguished career as horticulturalist. However, Bailey was not content to keep the findings to himself; instead he believed that science had a responsibility to disseminate the findings in a way that was useful and approachable to farmers (S. J. Peters 2006). His clear and insightful writing garnered the attention of the MacMillan and Company who offered to publish anything Bailey wrote. Between 1896 and 1901 he wrote 11 books, many of which were popular enough to warrant more than a dozen editions. Later, Bailey wrote the *Country Craft Series* and *Rural Science Series* for MacMillan that was targeted towards smallholders and homesteaders (Banks 1994). However Bailey's writing, even

if it focused on practical horticultural or agricultural advice, was part of a larger social agenda to use the productive potential of land to alleviate poverty and promote conservation; it was, a working landscape vision.

Later in his career, Bailey developed a keen interest in rural sociology and agreed to lead a National Commission on Rural Life at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt. As Bailey and his Commission traveled to the most remote corners of the country to interview rural residents they identified problems and patterns that ultimately informed a national plan. The plan included recommendations that eventually led to the establishment of the U.S. Postal System with rural delivery, a nationwide agricultural extension program, and a plan for rural electrification (Banks 1994). To Bailey, who faced criticism for not focusing enough on a single scholarly topic, and was routinely chided for bringing too many "cow kids" to Cornell, interdisciplinarity represented the intersection of change. It is this intersection that serves as a model to my own work, demonstrating how interdisciplinary research, lay science publication, and, as we'll explore in the next chapter, a center that focuses on linking rural policy and innovative practices, can contribute to the vitality of the Adirondack-North Country.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Case for Working Landscapes

The approach discussed thus far has focused on the role of self-acting smallholders and the durable communities they pursue as an alternative to large-scale, top-down socio-political structures. In this chapter, I'll expand our scale of analysis from the homestead and community level to the larger bioregional level. Beginning with a bioregional scenario-planning study (*Adirondack Futures*) that aims to construct a desirable and attainable vision for the future of the Adirondack-North Country, I'll explore the *working landscape* concept as a strategic entry point into the larger conservation debate. The findings of the study are then used to identify knowledge and policy gaps that that will be addressed through the author's action research at the newly-established *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes.*

Adirondack Futures: In Pursuit of Durability

Confronting the future begins by acknowledging the range of current challenges faced in the Adirondack-North Country. With regard to land use, the continued acquisition of Forest Preserve land by the State of New York is not financially sustainable, nor universally desirable given the strict provisions of the "Forever Wild" clause (Terrie 2008). In other words, the pure preservation model is antiquated and doesn't contribute to regional durability in an economic or social sense. The second observation, which I view as an opportunity, is that traditional eco-centric environmentalism is quickly fading, and being replaced by a more sophisticated view that recognizes environmental issues as fundamentally *human issues*. The third issue, related to the first two, is arguably more subjective, yet equally important: residents of this region demonstrate a strong place-based connection rooted in both aesthetics and a utilitarian commitment to foster a working landscape.

Of these three observations, only the first—fiscal sustainability—seems to garner attention from policy makers, yet it is the second two—gentler neo-environmentalism and a strong place-based connection—that function as the civic glue in communities. Noting this, a regional NGO, the Common Ground Alliance (a group dedicated to fostering dialogue in the region), announced a new visioning project led by former corporate visioning experts and systems planners, James Herman and David Mason. The goal of their project was to strategically advance the conversation in the region; in other words, how do we develop a shared scenario for the future of the Adirondack-North Country, and what might it look like in 25 years?

As both a researcher and participant, I wondered if this participatory research might begin to address the latter two issues (neo-environmentalism and the importance of place-based connection), in the context of the durable communities concept, a nascent idea I was developing at that time but has since been endorsed by the Adirondack Futures project. In a recent update on the researchers' website they embraced the durable communities concept saying: "We like the idea and suspect it will go over much better with many North Country residents than *sustainable*, which unfortunately is also associated in some people's minds with liberalism, climate change and a plot by the UN[16] to take over all private property" (Herman 2013).

With the support of the Common Ground Alliance, Herman and Mason led 13, day-long workshops with more than 500 people attending, and conducted 150 interviews in 2011–2012 (Mason and Herman 2012). Participants represented nearly every demographic imaginable, from college students to auto mechanics and doctors. Utilizing several different systems analysis techniques (all related to scenario planning) the researchers asked respondents to rank each of the six endstates, as well as an exhaustive list of "future conditions" that corresponded with various

[16] This is a reference to the UN Champlain-Adirondack Biosphere reserve that was created unilaterally in 1988.

endstates. Responses for each of the endstates were then analyzed in terms of both "desirability" and "attainability." Of the six scenarios presented, the three that follow (presented in ascending order) were ranked highest in terms of desirability. These are composite descriptions of the excepts, which in their original form were approximately 1,000 words each and were considered in concert with nearly 500 distinct future events that were ranked in terms of whether they contributed or detracted from a given endstate. A longer, more detailed description accompanies Scenario C, given its significance for this research.

2037: A Usable Park Endstate (Scenario B)

> The Park is not a museum piece or a time capsule. In fact, the economy and the environment beneficially re-enforce each other. People come to this world-famous Park because it is such a beautiful place and a place with amenities that support people living and playing in harmony with nature. Even in a bad economy, people will take time off for recreation and people will retire. These two big trends are the engine of the Park economy's upturn. It is a vibrant, robust place where human energy is harnessed in the form of recreation. The wild parts of the Park have become wilder and the developed places, like the major highway corridors, more developed. Huge improvements in fuel efficiency allow cars to remain cost effective for transport even in such a spread out area. Expanded flights at airports around the edges of the Park have facilitated access by visitors from afar (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012).

2037: Adirondack County Endstate (Scenario D)

> The Blue Line was declared a single county, and State Agencies were required to align with it. More than money, this was about giving residents an identity associated with the whole Park and a voice that can be heard above the din of Albany. All county leadership is directly elected. For the first time, the people of the Park think of themselves as a group and have stopped fighting village vs. village and town vs. town. Together, they wrestle with its future and define a path ahead. Instead of playing the victim of rules imposed by an elite population elsewhere, residents have a sense of "us" and take responsibility for sorting out their affairs internally. To the extent there was any loss of local identity, it was offset by adoption of a Park-wide identity. Cooperation between towns based on arts, sports and education adds to a sense of identity that was for so long tied to narrow local concerns (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012).

2037: The Sustainable Life Endstate (Scenario C)

What made this Park different from the beginning is the life of the communities inside it. It is not a ring-fenced Park with no one home. Our cultural human values are just as important as our natural values. A healthy diverse economy supports a healthy environment. A sense of community is important here, living close to the land respectfully, not separately; living better without big growth. The old divisions between natives and newcomers faded as the values they share became more apparent.

The diversity of employment and the shortening of supply chains have made the Park more sustainable and resilient. Local food and local renewable energy create a more closed-loop economy, keeping money in the Park. Eco-friendly recreation and agro-tourism bring in people and income. Neo-homesteading is a lifestyle that individuals and communities aspire to. Local becomes the new organic. Overall, these strategies reduce our population's carbon footprint significantly. The Park is a model of sustainable community and draws in green businesses and a new generation of young people who find the vision attractive.

Widespread broadband, cell phone, and global delivery services make it easy to live here and stay connected. In the modern mobile society, people move regularly. The Park's "brain gain" more than compensates for the departures, however. People who already know the Park move here, as friends join friends. Fine small, networked schools are a feature, not a problem. Hamlet life has more walking and biking, more local stores, and, in general, healthier people. Inter-village bus transport is heavily used. A greatly enriched arts scene thrives. Construction focuses on reuse of existing structures and energy efficiency retrofits.

Most of the money spent on fossil fuel–based heat used to leave the Park. With widespread installation of biomass heating systems in homes, institutions and municipal buildings and the sourcing of fuel from local forests, that money now stays here. Agricultural and private forestlands hold plenty of fuel stock resources that are sustainably harvested. The forests also yield enough saw logs that new small saw mills have popped up. Community solar farms, retrofitted old hydro dams, home-scale wind, geo and solar thermal, and private solar all round out the renewable energy picture. An upgraded smart grid supports distributed power production and local use. It takes a lot of new production to make up for the old fossil fuel infrastructure, but people have become much more aware of the real cost of their energy use in the process and use less.

The local food industry in the Champlain and St. Lawrence Valleys adds a lot to existing commercial farms. Regional cooperatives allow scaling up and bring prices to an affordable level, often in year-round CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) arrangements. Extended season farming fits well with the renewable energy efforts. Products of these farms now reach northeast cites. Most schools have gardens, teaching the next generation about healthy eating and healthy communities. Education is a major component of realizing this endstate and NGOs and cooperative extension have an increased shared role (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012).

Linking Desirability and Attainability

The process of visioning the future of this region through the use of these three endstate scenarios proved useful in demonstrating a variety of strongly held beliefs about the "right" future direction, despite uncertainty. Additionally, Mason and Herman argue that by providing a semi-structured venue for the process, participants are able to enlarge the range of ideas under consideration, challenge commonly held notions to explore new and potentially viable outcomes, and provide a way to forge a consensus on a path forward while keeping alternatives in mind as contingencies (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012).

However, what was so remarkable about their process is that in a region marked by socio-economic bifurcation and conflict, a clear winner emerged. The endstate ranked most *desirable* was labeled Scenario C, The Sustainable Life. Yet, what was truly intriguing was the fact that The Sustainable Life endstate was also ranked the most *attainable* (Mason and Herman 2012). As Herman and Mason note, what is most desirable is rarely seen as the most attainable. This intersection of desirability and attainability provides an imperative for capitalizing on the culture of neo-homesteading as a catalyst to building durable communities under The Sustainable Life endstate, while still acknowledging that the emerging strategy is likely to include components of other scenarios. Herman and Mason posit that it is probable the scenario will also include an emphasis on tourism development, as articulated in The Usable Park endstate and a consolidation of government as suggested by the Adirondack County endstate. Finally, the authors acknowledge that embracing any of these endstates through a narrow and literal vision is likely to be more fragile than a more inclusive vision that seeks durability in the context of social, economic, and ecological diversity (Mason and Herman 2012).

The visioning project in the preceding section offers a hopeful path that challenges residents of the Adirondack-North Country to think differently about the future of their communities. What emerged was not the polarized vision of environment *or* economy, but a more human agenda that acknowledges the community's mutual dependence on the region's resources. This section explores *how* this region might move toward durability in political and practical terms. The ideas range from formalizing work that has already begun, to admittedly more formidable challenges that will require a change in individual and eventually, collective ethos.

The strategies and tactics included in this section are those which have garnered the greatest support from New York State's Cleaner Greener Community Initiative, better known as the "Homegrown Sustainability Plan," a project to which I've contributed as an "expert participant." By focusing on issues and tactics that have been vetted by communities, sustainability experts and policy makers, the bridge from theory to practice is effectively narrowed. However, the construction of durable communities in the Adirondack-North Country is an idea marked not only by quantitative indicators and performance targets, but by a well-integrated vision of a community that inspires pride, stewardship, and collective values. For that reason, this chapter argues for changes that are both technical and social in nature. Finally, while a variety of components to the durable community concept could be examined, this section focus on what I consider two of the most important aspects; *working landscapes* which examines local food and energy production as a democratic ideal, and the emergence of the *Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes* as a contributor to a new rural paradigm.

Working Landscapes—A Democratic Ideal

Many of the ideas presented in this dissertation stemmed from a single question: what good are healthy forests in the Adirondack-North Country if we don't have healthy communities? That question has evolved into a perennial theme of this research and inspired the belief that working landscapes may lessen the tension between economy and ecology. Working landscapes are defined as areas of land that are actively used in agricultural and forestry production, and which may also support the associated livelihoods of tourism, outdoor recreation, the creative economy, and commerce in rural communities (Morse 2010). The vision espoused by this definition is consistent with "The Sustainable Life" endstate, as well as the durable communities concept. Perhaps one of the most unique characteristics of this region, and a defensible justification for looking beyond the Adirondack Park, proper, is that the Adirondack Mountains are flanked by agricultural valleys to the east, west, north and south. Such an arrangement is ideal, considering that within the Park, there are approximately two million acres of private forestland. Conceivably, this arrangement lends itself to a model of sustainability and reciprocity by which the valleys become the region's "foodshed" and the forests become the region's "woodshed." There are a number of political indicators, which suggest the time is right for developing this bioregional working landscape model.

From a technical standpoint, working landscapes offer the ability to provide food and renewable energy in relative proximity to the communities where they're consumed. The benefits of such a model can be measured in terms of food miles traveled, dollars retained within the community, or tons of carbon sequestered. Less tangible, but equally significant is the notion that local production of food and energy resources is among the most democratic of pursuits. Households, communities, and bioregions are able to attain not only a higher degree of self-sufficiency in terms of meeting their needs, but also increased autonomy as reliance on corporate

or governmental entities is decreased. The durable communities concept dovetails well with both the democratic ideals expressed by food and energy sovereignty and the larger goal of promoting sustainability. In fact, it has been argued that democracy, in the context of land-based resources, offers the best chance for achieving sustainability at multiple scales (Morrison 1995; Prugh, et al. 2000).

A Case for Land

While the focus of this discussion so far has been on a localized approach to cultivating rural communities, it is important to note the degree to which globalization affects the region. For example, the majority of wood harvested in the Adirondack-North Country is shipped to Canada, because no medium or large-size sawmills exist in the region (ANCA 2013). Additionally, international investors continue to purchase large tracts of land, which leads to land speculation and volatility in forestry markets. On the agricultural side, zoning in its current iteration encourages sprawl, threatening available farmland. Despite these challenges, we are at a threshold of opportunity. Currently, the region is benefiting from investments by the New York State Energy Development Authority (NYSERDA) in biomass heating systems for schools and hospitals, as well as a host of initiatives meant to encourage small-scale sustainable agriculture (ANCA 2013).

Net growth of forest in the region outpaces forest harvests by just over 100% (USFS 2010). This surplus of forest resources has led some to conclude that regional sustainability for heat and electricity is possible if woody biomass were to be adopted as a primary fuel in the region. Central to the durable communities concept is local sourcing of fuel and energy. Just as solar energy is appropriate to the Southwest, or tidal power to the Pacific Northwest, woody biomass is appropriate for the Adirondack-North Country.

A number of ecological and economic conditions make such a proposal viable. A history of high-grading the forest (removing trees with the strongest genotypic and phenotypic traits) has reduced forest health and value. By harvesting low-grade, damaged, diseased trees, not only would the old paradigm of "taking the best and leaving the rest," be reversed, but local jobs would also be created. Additionally, the use of woody biomass is considered to be "carbon neutral," as it does not represent new carbon releases from underground sinks (Jenkins 2010).

Following the lead of Vermont, several municipalities have begun implementing biomass heat and energy projects. Since 2011, two regional schools have switched from fuel oil to burning wood chips or pellets. Such a decision reverberates through the community. The AuSable Valley Central School District expects to save in excess of $100,000 a year by switching to biomass heat. At the same time, the local forest projects industry is receiving a boost, just as paper demand hits an all-time low (Lynch 2011). Regionally, such projects are an important part of remaining economically viable. This is especially true in light of low-cost natural gas that is available for heating and energy in other parts of the United States (ANCA 2013).

Within the Adirondack-North Country there are approximately 1.1 million acres in farmland (ANCA 2013). The regional goal is to maintain that acreage, yet grow the number of farmers (including smallholders and homesteaders) so that the number of agricultural properties increases from its 2007 census level of 4,288 to 4,500 by 2020, and 4,800 by 2035 (ANCA 2013). In order to maintain the agricultural land base given current trends (second home development, parcelization, and fragmentation), not only will existing agricultural lands need to be preserved to the extent they can, but many of the long-abandoned small farms and homesteads will need to be revitalized for productive purposes.

Much of the land that was originally cleared for early homesteads and small farms in the Adirondack-North County is being reclaimed by neo-homesteaders who contribute to the working landscape in a variety of ways. In some cases, re-aggregation of land (for agricultural and forestry purposes) is reversing the old paradigm where fragmentation of land led to fragmentation of purpose. In other cases, communities are intentionally diversifying crops and livestock to create efficiency and simultaneously practicing crafted interdependence. We've also seen this small-scale neo-homestead/farmstead model lead to innovative land practices (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012).

One example of a landscape-level response is the adoption of silvopasture systems (see Chapter Four), which integrate forests and livestock. In essence, it is a hybrid system between well-managed pastures and well-managed woodlands (Chedzoy 2011). The advantages of such a system, particularly in a region with extreme weather, like the Adirondack-North County are numerous. In addition to providing a more diversified product line (timber and livestock), silvopastures also provide shelter for livestock, habitat for wildlife, greater soil stability, and rapid tree growth as a result of ample growing space and fertilization by livestock. Importantly, the creation of silvopastures is a key part of implementing sustainable agriculture. Instead of using mechanized equipment for forest tending opperations, livestock such as goats, sheep and cattle are used to browse and establish the silvopasture, representing a more integrative agroecological approach (Chedzoy 2011).

However, to reduce the working landscape challenge to just their biophysical and technical dimensions ignores one fundamental shortcoming—a lack of farmers, which the Educated Agricurious group of neo-homesteaders may eventually fill. Another potential solution may lie in a January 2013 proposal by the Adirondack-North Country Association. The proposal

calls for expanding the current farm intern programs at regional high schools and colleges, with a focus on small-scale, diversified agriculture. In terms of marketing the products, placing food hubs in existing food deserts would offer the opportunity to address health, economic, and environmental concerns simultaneously. While the primary purpose of the proposed food hub would be to connect small famers and homesteaders with consumers, the proposal also includes certified food processing areas and would be used as an educational center for teaching rural skills (ANCA 2013).

Yet, as desirable as a self-sufficient bioregion sounds, it is important to recognize the significance of the region to the outside world. Located within a day's drive of 60 million people, this region is a major tourism destination. Despite this, the region has struggled to carve out a regional identity, particularly for its natural products. Rural sociologists point to the importance of regions like the Adirondack-North Country in developing Geographical Indication (GI), which is defined as "a place-based name that conveys the geographical origin, as well as the historical and cultural identity of an agricultural product" (Bowen 2010). In pursuit of this, Cornell Cooperative Extension has developed the Adirondack Harvest program that both aims to cultivate GI through branding, and create access to healthy, regional food regardless of socio-economic class (ANCA 2013).

Working landscapes offer an alternative to the old paradigm that treats land as either a preserve or a commodity. Instead, by crafting an explicit link between the regional economy and a resilient environment, a vision for a durable future is able to emerge. The success however, is dependent on participation; meaning that the value of one's working landscape is *not* necessarily proportional to one's landholding. Smallholders and homesteaders offer an important

contribution to the larger working landscape by serving as both physical conduits of knowledge across the working landscape.

The Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes—Linking Policy and Practice

It was the Adirondack Futures project that highlighted not only the serendipitous alignment of *desirability* and *attainability* under The Sustainable Life endstate, but also acknowledged the role of neo-homesteaders and other smallholders as being an important component in the sustainability puzzle. In the previous section we examined the barriers and opportunities associated with the concept of a working landscape; in this section I'll explore how the literature and research conducted in this dissertation have led to the formation of the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes.

While I didn't realize it at the time, my AUNE doctoral service learning project in conjunction with Adirondack Futures initiative served as a motivating force in the development of the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes (ACWL). When the Adirondack Futures project published the results in 2012, the community response was hopeful, but appropriately begged the questions, how could The Sustainable Life endstate be leveraged to move the region closer to the vision? In 2013 the Common Ground Alliance reconvened to suggest strategies to advance The Sustainable Life endstate. While the data indicated a clear winner, elements of other endstates were also desirable, and were later incorporated as appropriate. Through a series of community forums, major barriers were identified and it was determined that a live tracking website could be a useful tool. The website, (www.adirondackfutures.net) uses news articles as "evidence" to document any event that contributes to a more durable future for the region. This website—organized into 16 categories, ranging from agriculture, to the arts, and education—documents "evidence" under the appropriate categories and then ranks the influence (direction

and strength) of each event for each scenario. This format allows for real-time, systematic analysis of what gaps exist in achieving the endstate goals.

It was by using the Adirondack Futures web applications, the North Country Sustainability Plan, the pilot study of neo-homesteaders in the region, and my participant observation ethnographic work that a clear gap emerged in relation to the desired Sustainable Life endstate. Capitalizing on this need, the ACWL serves as an intentional response and highlights the role of action research as an important catalyst to change. A summary of the gaps and the response are summarized in table four.

Table Four: The ACWL Concept: Barriers & Opportunities

Gap or Barrier to The Sustainable Life Endstate	***Opportunity to Address Gap through ACWL***
A regional interest in working landscapes as a land-use concept that bridges scale. Few resources for operationalizing the concept regionally.	Expertise of Paul Smith's College faculty to demonstrate practical, multi-scalier, interdisciplinary approaches. Research findings and techniques are relayed to public through workshops, seminars, and open-source publications.
Little presence in Adirondack Park by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) leading creating an agricultural knowledge and service gap.	Under a joint partnership with CCE an extension office is established at the ACWL offering a more central location.
Lack of experimental research sites for pilot projects related to sustainable forestry, agro-forestry, and agriculture	2,200 acres of land including experimental forests, recreational
Few opportunities for smallholders to learn scale-appropriate sustainability skills.	Sustainable living series co-hosted by CCE
Sustainability as a concept does not resonate with many stakeholders.	A focus on "durable communities" and tangible elements of working landscapes makes sustainability relevant.
No neutral public venue for discussing policy and community issues related to working landscapes.	Provide no/low cost space for community meetings—open to all groups.
No commercial food processing hub in the central/northern Adirondacks.	Secured funding ($100,000 reimbursement grant) through NY Dormitory Authority for development of a food-hub commercial kitchen.
Lack of diversity; limited arts and cultural opportunities.	Focus on lost arts, traditional skills, and cultural exchange.

Operationalizing the ACWL

In December 2013 I presented the findings of my research to the Executive Cabinet of Paul Smith's College, outlining both the existing gap, and the opportunity for Paul Smith's College to demonstrate leadership, and promote a new, cutting-edge approach to sustainability that focuses on connecting policy and practice at a bioregional level. The Cabinet approved the Center in January 2014 as a pilot project. It was agreed that the former New York State Visitor Interpretive Center that Paul Smith's had recently acquired would be an ideal location, given its proximity to the College, its historical role as a community asset, a 20,000-square-foot educational and conference space, and 2,200 acres of land. With the facility operational and in good repair, efforts were able to immediately focus on policy issues related to working landscapes. A Memorandum of Understand (MOU) with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the inaugural event, "Forest, Farm, and Fork: An Opportunity Symposium" served as the inaugural event. The symposium, which coincided with Earth Week 2014, focused on moving the debate beyond traditional environmental entrenchment by highlighting conservation partnerships and offering case studies to demonstrate the working landscape concept. Importantly, the event received bilateral support from congressional representatives and the New York State Assembly. The keynote address made by U.S. Representative Bill Owens (D-NY), who served on the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, highlighted the importance of smallholders as agents of change and noted the provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill that intentionally benefit a grassroots working landscape model.

The symposium attracted diverse attendance: 36% of attendees were self-described smallholders or farmers; 24% were community leaders; 20% were representatives of non-profit organizations; 10% were foresters or natural resource managers; and the remainder were students

from Paul Smith's College, St. Lawrence University, Clarkson University, and other community members. Symposium workshops were hosted by USDA Rural Development, USDA SARE, Farm to School Coalition, Northern NY Agriculture Development Program, North Country Regional Economic Development Council, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Adirondack Futures Alliance. The workshops served two primary purposes: first, they allowed landowners to learn about grants, technical assistance, and cost-sharing programs from state and federal agencies; and, second, they allowed policy makers to hear directly from landowners about the kinds of assistance they believed would contribute to working landscapes and a more vibrant bioregion. In terms of linking the themes of this dissertation research, the explicit focus on connecting neo-homesteaders and smallholders with grants, technical assistance, and cost-sharing is a key point that implements a primary recommendation consistent with Jeffery Jacob's work; namely that smallholders can be important catalysts for change, and that this support is essential for advancing sustainability at the household and community level (Jacob 1997).

As the inaugural event of the ACWL the Forest, Farm and Fork Symposium also served as an important opportunity to formalize the Participatory Action Research component of the Center. Participatory Action Research or PAR, is an approach to social research in which the people being studied are given control over the purpose and procedures of the research (Babbie 2014). It is offered as an alternative to classical social science research, which runs the risk of being an "elitist model" that implies superior knowledge over the participants, reducing them to "objects" of research (Whyte, Greenwood and Lazes 1991). The PAR component was essential in letting the participants guide and identify issues of need. The development of this democratic approach is particularly important in the context of the Adirondack Park, a region that has long

been recognized by centralized decision-making and top-down control of natural resources (Porter, Erickson and Whaley 2009).

PAR as a process is similar to other adaptive models, in that it follows a spiral feedback pattern beginning with planning, then acting, coupled with observing, and then reflecting (Kemmis 1988). In developing the ACWL Forest, Farm, and Fork Symposium, we were fortunate to have participant surveys from CCE events as well as the Adirondack Rural Skills and Homesteading Festival, which identified areas of interest and also provided a forum for meeting other smallholders in the region. This information helped to refine workshop topics. During the opening address of the symposium, it was made clear to participants that the ACWL is designed to operate and evolve based on stakeholder input as a way to both encourage ownership and participation in the event survey. The event survey also included a section devoted to developing communities of practice and asked what skills or topics they would be interested in contributing to.

Results from the PAR process were then used to develop programming for the next year. Table five offers a summary of these findings using the Borda count method which is a consensus-based voting tool that awards points in relation to the number of responses, with the first choice option being equal in points to the total number of choices, and the last choice option is one point. This approach is often viewed as a more democratic survey method, since each vote is weighted instead of a simple ranking (Sandholm 1999).

Table Five: Workshop and Event Rankings using the Borda Count Method

Ranking	*Proposed Workshop or Event*	*Status Update 2/15*
1.	Farmers' market with diversified products	Implemented 2014; summer 2015 will focus on a "fill the fridge" campaign which will highlight the ability to purchase all food groups at the market. Food stamps and WIC now accepted.
2.	Food preservation workshop and community canning space	$100,000 NYS Dormitory Authority grant to begin building commercial kitchen Summer 2015; CCE Master Canner workshop to be offered.
3.	Solar technology for the smallholder	Homestead and farm tour scheduled for October 2015 (exemplars include several homes from the typology research).
4.	Gardening in the North Country: techniques for food security in a cold climate	CCE Master Gardener workshops and hoop-house building workshop, spring 2015
5.	Agroforestry: Growing food and fiber	Silvopasture, living fence, and natural animal housing workshop, summer 2015
6.	Biomass heat and energy options and policies for the region	Representation on ANCA "wood basket" Council.
7.	Small-scale livestock production/butchering	Included at Rural Skills and Homesteading Festival
8.	Multi-scalier silviculture	Game of Logging training at Rural Skills and Homesteading Festival; joint Audubon/ACWL event: Creating Habitat through Forestry
9.	Non-timber forest products	CCE workshops 2014-present: wild edibles; pack-basket construction; traditional log work; medicinal plants;
10.	Maple and birch syrup production	Establishment of Adirondack Maple School (August 2015) and International Birch Syrup Conference (June 2015)

This PAR approach to determining topics and areas of focus facilitates the mission of the ACWL by allowing the community to identify knowledge gaps and suggest topics that may offer practical contributions to a working landscape and represent the formal elements of the Center's purpose. However, equally valuable is the less tangible contribution that the Center offers as a

hub for community building. In addition to the practical skills and knowledge sharing the ACWL offers, the Visitors' Interpretive Center where the ACWL is physically located, is also a community outdoor recreation venue that serves as an informal community meeting site, a display space for local artists, and an auditorium for cultural performances. This blending of purpose *is* community, and promotes durability by being grounded in the local relationships with our families and neighbors, and with the natural resources that sustain us. Admittedly, this approach is as much about reframing the environmental debate in the region. By focusing on *people,* and giving equal weight to outcomes as incomes, the duality between "them" and "us," and "conservation" versus "preservation" is beginning to erode. In its place has emerged a gentler neo-environmentalism, with smallholders on the front line. Evidence for this point include the bipartisan enthusiasm that the Center has generated, as well as the diversity of participants who are attending events at the ACWL.

In September 2014, the New York State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources recognized the ACWL for its work in promoting the durable communities concept (Young 2014). The recognition by this Republican-led commission, despite having early political endorsement from U.S. Representative Bill Owens (D) suggests both the political appeal of the Center and the durable communities concept. The ACWL concept has also received notice in popular publications such as *Acres USA* (Digiuseppe 2014) and *Mother Earth News* (Kincaid 2012).

However, for all the attention garnered by the ACWL, it was the adirondackfutures.net wire feed that brought the concept full circle. Originally it was this progress-tracking website that inspired the development of the ACWL and now, seeing the Center cited as a point of evidence that contributes to The Sustainable Life endstate further endorses the value of the

concept. Perhaps most inspiring, however, is that given the anticipated rate of events needed to achieve the desired endstate, it was originally estimated that organizations such as the ACWL would emerge circa 2022, providing a hopeful sign that progress is in motion (Mason 2014). Given the fear and pessimism that accompanies most environmental news, events such as this offer hope and suggest that the current trajectory does not guarantee an unhopeful destiny.

Looking forward, the ACWL faces a variety of challenges and opportunities. In terms of challenges, the organization must contend with institutional pressure to identify and create a revenue stream to maintain programming. One opportunity appears to be able to expand and diversify the way we conceive of working landscapes in the context of the Adirondack-North Country. A strong tourism component suggests that promoting sustainable, nature-based tourism as a primary and mutually inclusive element of working landscapes is essential given the history of recreation tourism in the region. Aligned with this trajectory is the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), which has expressed an interest in expanding its relationship with the ACWL as mission partners. This realignment of opportunity and a penchant for the practical suggest that sustainability under the ACWL could evolve, and advance a new and practical model that replaces the traditional "sustainability stool" (consisting of social, ecological, and economic components), with new legs that are both more concrete in their content. These more durable legs—sustainable agriculture, forestry, and nature-based tourism—would play to the region's strengths and be fortified by cultural cross-bracing that contributes to regional identity and historical continuity.

The ACWL also has the opportunity to respond to emerging science in the region. Cornell University's Uihlein Maple Research Center embarked on a pilot project with Paul Smith's College and the ACWL in 2014 to experiment in birch syrup production. While

significantly lower in sugar content than sugar maple (0.5% vs. 3.0%), this unique value-added product can sell for up to $320 per gallon (Farrell 2014). In recognition of this the ACWL will host an International Birch Syrup Research Symposium in June, 2015 to discuss both the ecological and economic dimensions of marketing this unique non-timber forest product. In terms of maple production, the Adirondack-North Country represents an untapped opportunity—less than 1% of all tappable sugar maple trees in the region are utilized for sap production (Farrell 2014). In response to this, the ACWL has launched the Adirondack Maple School (www.adirondackmapleschoolcom), a summer program that focuses on profitable sugarmaking, as well as value-added culinary uses. The Adirondack Maple School emphasizes interdisciplinary learning by bringing together both forestry faculty and culinary arts instructors, thereby blending art and science.

Since the ACWL is sited on Paul Smith's College lands that have been used for forestry research for nearly sixty years, there is also an opportunity to engage in long-term ecological monitoring that could contribute to our understanding of how different working landscape practices influence ecosystem resiliency. This opportunity for students and faculty to engage with this living laboratory dovetails with a major revision to the sustainability curriculum at Paul Smith's College that will create a Bachelor of Science degree in Durable Communities and Working Landscapes (formerly, Sustainability Studies).

Finally, the ACWL has the opportunity develop a commercial kitchen incubator, which is a shared-use, licensed, and inspected kitchen that is available for use by gardeners, farmers, and local caterers who wish to process and package local foods. With $100,000 in grant funding from the New York State Dormitory Authority, this facility will serve not only as a commercial

kitchen space, but as an educational center where users can gain training and mentoring to learn about local food preservation and the creation of value-added product lines (Harris 2013).

Collectively, these actions demonstrate rich opportunity and a recalibration of community responsibility and engagement. By focusing on universal issues and developing a more congruent patchwork of public and private lands, the Adirondack-North Country stands to emerge as a functional working landscape underpinned by durable communities that signal a more hopeful future—even in the face of global climate change, increasing global inequity, and global social unrest. In the final chapter, we'll reexamine scale in the context of the ideas presented in this dissertation and summarize the unique leverage points that this interdisciplinary research exposed.

CHAPTER SIX: Smallholder as Stakeholder

The final chapter of this dissertation is intended to offer a synthesis of the major research themes in the context of this research's greater objective: to promote durability in a region that is well-endowed in natural resources, but is socio-economically brittle. Building from the findings of the previous chapters, I'll explore how smallholders not only can contribute to durability, but also are an essential component in remaking communities. These five characteristics of durable communities which emerged from the research are: mindfulness and observation; diversity (human and technological); crafted interdependence; self-regulation; and adaptive management.

Mindfulness and Observation

Mindfulness is defined as is a state of active, open attention to the present, which allows individuals to draw distinctions about their environment (Bishop 2004). The assumption that mindfulness is an inherent component of cognition contrasts the role that modern society has played in insulating people from the environment. Modern homesteading is often interpreted as the art and practice of being mindful, of being truly awake to the changes in both the physical environment and the mind of the homesteader. Scholar and homesteader Stephanie Kaza defines mindfulness in the context of what she calls the "green practice path," which focuses on practical and effective action. Kaza argues that attaining and implementing the tenets of mindfulness is based on clear intention, community engagement and shared wisdom (Kaza 2008).

Kaza's interpretation is aligned with the notion of promoting durability. Practically, mindfulness is manifested as awareness in helping one to identify their strengths, assets, and

vulnerabilities. This in turn allows one to more effectively prepare for disruption, respond appropriately, and emerge more resilient as an individual and community. In considering global environmental change, the importance of active mindfulness is heightened as circumstances morph rapidly, and secondary effects proliferate. The pointedness of closed-loop homesteading systems where environmental externalities can't simply be passed along to someone else, or relegated to "away," infuses mindfulness into the neo-homesteading lifestyle. From a practical standpoint, acute awareness to change is inextricably tied to prosperity on the homestead. During my participant observation research, I observed mindfulness in action as homesteaders noted subtle weather and seasonal changes, changed forest harvest plans based on invasive insect infestations, planted more southerly perennials as a way to hedge climate change, and adopted silvopasture systems as a way to maintain more diverse grazing lands. However, mindfulness is also a mechanism that allows for resilience of the individual. I watched as homesteaders listened to their bodies for health clues, and responded by taking breaks under an apple tree in the July sun, or making chaga tea at the threat of a cold, or sleeping atop a round bale of hay while pregnant cows grazed clockwise around the bale, just to "recalibrate" with their animals after being away for a week.

During my time documenting innovative practices by neo-homesteaders, I was struck by how observation and mindfulness were ultimately manifested as ecological literacy. One such example was during my time with homesteader Tom Malone who described the agroecological changes that he had observed using pigs to convert a plantation of non-native conifers to a functional silvopasture system. Included in his morning ritual was a trip to his evolving silvopasture to identify and inventory plant and insect species, as well as edaphic characteristic, and the health of his grazing livestock. In an attempt to validate some of Tom's anecdotal

claims—including the claim that orchard grass (*Dactylis glomeratahas*) has the ability to increase soil pH (a claim he made based on associated plants and successional observations), I consulted the agronomy literature, as well as Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (UNHCE). While CCE was unsure of the claim, the UNHCE informed me that the theory of pH manipulation by orchard grass was a newly emerging idea that they were interested in examining. This example illustrates the ability to observe, assess, and adjust one's understanding, perhaps even before phenomena are noted by the experts. This is a trait that will be essential in responding to social, economic, and environmental change in the future, as both hard and soft indicators become part of our collective auricle.

Cultivating mindfulness was also important in the Adirondack Futures visioning project, which included two intentional steps in overcoming false perceptions. The first challenge described by Herman and Mason was to deconstruct the notion that conflict and duality are a part of the Park's identity that is culturally ingrained and can't be changed (2012). This ethos was underscored during a particularly contentious land-use period in the 1990s, during which former Adirondack Park Agency Commissioner Ross Whaley said Adirondackers would "rather fight, than win" (Porter, Erickson and Whaley 2009). The second step in cultivating mindfulness was a short lesson in change theory, which demonstrates the synergistic effects of seemingly minor events that contribute to a change in trajectory. By using a series of historical examples, Herman and Mason are able to recalibrate awareness in the context of possible future endstates (2012).

Diversity: Human and Technology

One common feature of all the endstates considered in the Adirondack Futures study is the relative certainty that this region will see more diverse communities in the future. This

diversity is likely to be both a function of technology, environmental change, and demographic shifts both within the Park and globally (Mason and Herman, Adirondack Futures Endstates 2012). Diversity in the context of the Adirondack-North Country has long carried a negative connotation rooted in duality: insider-outsider; poor-rich; economic development-environmental protection. However, the demographics of the region are shifting as prisons close, white collar workers telecommute to spend more time (and money) in the region, and retirees drive up the median age by five years as soon as you cross into the Blue Line (APRA 2014). There are also more complicated trends—public school enrollment is declining at 2.5% annually, while certain hot-spots in the region attract lifestyle-oriented young people, include the Educated Agricurious profiled in Chapter Three. Long-term projections for the Park suggest an overall population decline greater than even the 2,100 person decrease from 2000 to 2010 (APRA 2014). Still, even the best estimates carry a long list of caveats, not the least of which is the possibility of "climate refugees" migrating to the region.

Diversity is an essential component in creating durability, because it has the capacity to function even when elements of that capacity have eroded, thanks to redundancy, and in the case of human systems, the foresight to embed additional capacity in light of uncertainty and out of humility. In the context of durable communities, both hard elements (infrastructure) and soft elements (people and ideas) are essential. Given the value of having diversity of knowledge and diverse perspectives for solving problems, it seems illogical that we often default to "groupthink" which makes it difficult to perceive both vulnerabilities and opportunities for communities. The concept of groupthink is particularly dangerous because it replaces objective, critical thinking with a compulsion by the decision makers to have each other's approval (Irving 1973). In the context of fighting brittleness and promoting durability in the Adirondack-North Country, this

concept is especially pertinent. Both sides in the environment-economy duality have engaged in groupthink that is further tempered by unwavering solidarity (e.g. "we will not compromise the health of the Adirondacks" as was the slogan of *Protect the Adirondacks* or, conversely, "We'll never relinquish our land rights to a hostile government" as was the slogan of the *Adirondack Minutemen* of the 1970s). These non-negotiable normative positions serve as a surrogate for critical debate and send the message to new community members that allegiance trumps constructive discourse and critical thinking. In light of this, the question becomes how to encourage a diversity of perspectives that could ultimately contribute to the durability of communities? One possible approach may be to recognize diverse perspectives and diverse identities as *essential* components of resiliency, just as we would recognize the value of biological diversity in contributing to the strength and durability of an ecosystem.

While the analogue holds true for social and ecological systems, the same could be argued for economic systems. The history of the Adirondack-North Country is replete with examples of "group*act"* whereby an exploitive practice devolves to create a "tragedy of the commons" that's expedited by a race to the bottom. This collective and unsustainable economic approach was mostly clearly demonstrated in the Adirondack-North Country during the logging boom of the 1870s, the mining boom of the 1920s, and the auto-tourism boom of the 1960s, particularly around Lake George, where tourism infrastructure was developed without oversight (Terrie 2008). In each of these examples the promise of prosperity trumped the precautionary principle and established a singular narrative that quieted diverse or critical voices at the expense of the future.

During my participant observation field work, I had the opportunity to not only observe how households functioned, but in many cases, gleaned valuable insight into how entire

communities operated. Without fail, the most innovative neo-homesteaders were those who engaged with both their community and the outside world. They displayed open-mindedness and a curiosity as to how others (including me, as the participant observer) would approach the problem. These were also the same neo-homesteaders who spoke of technology not as a panacea or a problem, but instead, described *appropriate* technology as a vehicle for diversity; a new wrench for tackling old, rusty problems.

Regionally, the Adirondack-North Country has been slow to adopt information technology. The primary reasons for limited broadband internet connectivity in the region include low population density, resulting in high per capita cost, the existing Forest Preserve which prohibits burying broadband infrastructure, and mountainous topography that prevents the use of line-of-sight wireless connectivity. However, the region had been identified at both the State and Federal level as a priority area for technology funding, citing a lack of connectivity for schools, universities, hospitals, businesses and municipalities (Gormley 2012). Among the first areas of the region to see the benefits of broadband internet were lakeshore communities that had both the financial resources and the ability to develop line-of-sight wireless connectivity across lakes. This change alone has altered the fabric of communities as part time residents who once only visited the region for a few days or weeks a year, are now able to telecommute globally and become permanent residents. This shift is particularly noteworthy because being able to physically remain in one area is regarded as a keystone to building community and will likely be an important part of crafting communities with continuity. However, perhaps those most in need of technological access are citizens living in highly remote and impoverished areas. These costs, while often financial can also be cultural, as shrinking the world to a laptop can be an important part of understanding, connecting with, and appreciating, the world beyond.

Paradoxically, technology may just be the linchpin that moves neo-homesteading from a counterculture ethos to a more ubiquitous and palatable cultural construct. In his examination of modern homesteading, Philip Ackerman-Leist debates the virtues of technology, noting that it can reduce one's carbon footprint by allowing work from home via internet, but runs the danger of transforming luxuries into needs (Ackerman-Leist 2010). In the end however, the greatest change in our quest for durable communities will not be technological in nature. Rather, it will need to be a rejection of our treatment of homesteading as an individualistic response to a imprudent cultural trajectory that is replaced with a new paradigm that abandons the notion of saving oneself and replacing it with a set of values that focus on civic involvement, cultural conservation, and an investment in our communities. Our relative ease of life will be tested as we rub up against ecological constraints. If orchestrated thoughtfully, collective power derived from the skills and values communicated by a diverse neo-homesteading ethic will ultimately deepen our understanding of ecological constraints and enhance durability in the face of uncertainty.

And yet, as generally palatable as such an idea is, how do we implement these ideas, particularly in areas such as the Adirondack-North Country that are noted for bitterness, a lack of diversity, and socio-political conflict? One possible answer may reside in a corollary model I developed for use by the United States Agency for International Development (US-AID) in the Dominican Republic during phase two of my tenure at AUNE. In this particular case, the Jarabacoa mountain community was in a deadlock decision over the future direction of their water resources. The result was a two-year stalemate that pitted community members and government officials against one another. Such gridlock, particularly at the community level, can be erosive to social capital (Woolcock 1998). In an effort to refocus the debate and cultivate social capital, I developed a strategy to reinvigorate dialogue and build social capital through a

series of hard-skill classes related to the most basic of needs—food and energy. A central issue in the community was a fuel-wood shortage that was at the root of the watershed issues. I developed a series of workshops in which citizens with conflicting values were assembled in groups to build fuel-efficient cooking stoves for use in the village. The act of building a physical object with real value to the community forced cooperation and emphasized a common goal. While this may appear to be a humble reunion of differently minded individuals, for many it was the first time they had interacted with the "other side" in a non-confrontational manner. Importantly, this positive interaction served as a catalyst for reinvigorating future dialogue regarding water resources.

While this project was focused in a remote region of the Caribbean tropics, the same approach could be implemented in the Adirondack-North Country and neatly fits under the purview of the ACWL. Imagine for example, a community-based firewood project that brought together entire neighborhoods (think of this as a "block-upy" movement) with the sole purpose of heating communities, one home at a time. The concept of such a project is reminiscent of the *bunt* community concept which notes that building social capital is a function of not only coincidental, but also planned interaction. Such intentional action focused around fundamental necessities such as food and energy, are emblematic of the types of activities that can erode long, unproductive stalemates (Pretty 2001). Additionally, a focus on rural skills is significant because it not only offers a preservation mechanism for important elements of rural culture, but serves to promote knowledge (and skill) transfer between community members who may hold diverse socio-political beliefs, yet share a common set of values espoused by the neo-homestead culture.

The diversity of beliefs within the neo-homestead culture, and its relevance to the construction and promotion of durable communities has been noted in light of recent natural

disasters. Hurricane Irene and Super Storm Sandy highlighted the inherent brittleness of our current systems. In a November 18th, 2012 feature, the *New York Times Magazine* explored the most recent iteration of the self-reliance movement, noting that militant-survivalists have been joined by conventional, middle-class families seeking out what is referred to as the "three pillars of self-reliance"—emergency preparedness, sustainable living, and financial security (O'Brian 2012). And while this movement is still considered essentially grassroots, evidence of its relevance can be seen by the recent launch of Self-Reliance Broadcasting which reaches a diverse internet radio audience of nearly two million (O'Brian 2012).

However, one important feature of this movement in the Adirondack-North Country is the presence of a burgeoning Amish community. While Amish inholdings within the boundary of the Adirondack Park are rare due to expensive land and relatively poor fertility, the surrounding valleys have seen a major influx of Amish families from Kentucky and Pennsylvania (Johnson-Weiner 2010). The presence of these communities is significant for several reasons. First, their agrarian lifestyle is consistent with the working landscapes vision for the region, both in scale and approach. Second, they bring religious and social diversity to a region that has historically lacked diversity. And, lastly, from a skills perspective, they are highly competent and devoted to practicing self-reliance. This last point, their deep range of anachronistic self-reliance skills has proven contagious in the region. Another example, explored in Chapter Three is the Madden Family of Russell, New York who have been learning from and living among the Swartzentruber Amish of St. Lawrence County, New York. The Madden family sought out the Amish community because they saw Amish sustainability as being more durable than technocrat sustainability which is highly reliant on green technology. For the Maddens, practicing an Amish lifestyle, complete with horse and buggy, has forced them to scale down the world in which they

live. Mr. Madden, who works as a carpenter and repairman, rarely travels more than ten miles for work—a result he attributes to scaling down his world and having "real skills" (Hunter 2011). The "real skills" that Madden refers to are based on hands-on skills that have real social currency and allow one to live more concretely in an ever more abstract world. The notion that technology on a global scale has made our world unintelligible, and by extension irresponsible, argues that the provenance of our material world should be brought closer to home not only because it makes good environmental sense, but because it promotes a sense of purpose (Crawford 2009).

This *reevaluation* and *revaluation* of skills diversity will likely be an important part of promoting durable communities. As historian Philip Terrie points out, the debate over conservation in the Adirondacks has been drawn along socio-economic lines, where blue-collar workers align with development and white collar workers align with preservation organizations (Terrie 2008). This bifurcated view pushes each demographic to operate in their own sphere, thereby devaluing the skills (hard or soft) of other community members. In durable communities, a range of skills, from blue collar to green collar are part of a larger, and thicker, social fabric stitched together to promote a diverse brand of crafted interdependence.

Most climate models cite the Adirondack-North Country as an affected, but reasonably hospitable environment over the next fifty years (Jenkins 2010). Somewhat paradoxically, climate change may create a more desirable living environment, especially in relation to more southern climates that are likely to experience water and food security issues (Jenkins 2010). The term "climate refugee" was first termed in the mid-1990s to describe famine-related migration in Africa (Myers 1995). And, while immigration to the region may not bring the unrest seen in the developing world, it is reasonable to expect that to some degree, the resources of the area may be

stressed by an influx of new residents who decide to relocate at least *in part,* based on climate. In a recent interview, local realtor, Sandy Hayes described the trend this way:

> In the 1970s, I sold a lot of 40-acre homesteads to city-slickers looking to live the "good life." Today people show up in the region for what I believe is essentially the same thing . . . the only difference is that they talk about it differently. They talk about escaping climate change, being "green," and enjoying nature. There are still city-slickers but also people from suburban and fringe areas . . . it's becoming more diverse. (S. Hayes 2012).

Like technology, diversity in the region will likely offer both challenges and opportunities. And while the region is not known for being progressive, former APA commissioner Ross Whaley, at a recent Common Ground Alliance meeting, revised his previous comments, stating that "people have discovered that winning is more fun than fighting (Whaley 2013)." This recognition that diversity, in all its forms—social, political, and ethnic—forces residents to live in a more inclusive world ultimately suggests a more hopeful future by default; where communities recognize the ability of diversity to reinforce the social fabric of community.

Crafted Interdependence

In Chapter Two we introduced the concept of *crafted interdependence,* a term coined by Philip Ackerman-Leist, as an alternative to the antiquated concept of "self-reliance." The notion of crafted interdependence represents a useful contribution to our understanding of the linkage between neo-homesteading at the individual level and the creation of durable communities by proving cohesiveness and coordinated actions. While early homesteaders were in pursuit of self-sufficiency, adopters of crafted interdependence recognize that community reliance offers greater resiliency through building social capital and identifying homestead-level contributions within communities (Ackerman-Leist 2010). Conceptually, crafted interdependence is intended to flip the focus of homesteading from the individual to community. This recalibration toward social emphasis is necessary, given the effects of population growth, fast-paced lifestyles, and

technology—all drivers that Ackerman-Leist argues "have eroded communities and tempted us closer to the perils of misguided individualism and numbing anonymity (2010)."

As a component of durability, crafted interdependence is conceptually appealing, but difficult to operationalize for a number of reasons. When considered in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it becomes apparent that for crafted interdependence to work at the community level, it demands elements from the top of the hierarchical structure (engagement, creativity, open-mindedness, friendship) in order to produce the basic outcomes (food, water, shelter) at the base of the arrangement. For some rural communities this may demand more social capital than is available. In this case, social capital refers to the networks of social relations that may provide individuals and groups with access to resources and support that can encourage civic engagement. Importantly, social capital itself exists along a continuum with "bonding" referring to social networks that reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups, while "bridging" refers to networks that are outward looking and encompass people across *diverse* social cleavages (Putnam 2000). "Linking" describes connections among people in positions of power that allow them to obtain resources from formal institutions (PRI 2005).

Crafted interdependence relies on social, fiscal and ecological capital. In some of the rural communities I visited during my field research, it was obvious that they were a long way from considering what must sound to them like a utopian concept. At one point during the participant observation process I asked Bob Kratz, who regularly cited "crafted interdependence" as one of the goals for his community, to describe the limitations of the concept:

> It works fine in some places, I mean it works if you get lucky, but I think about what it would look like in say the town we lived in before . . . that place was so poor and people we so concerned with getting their bail money or dealing with some family issue that the

idea of community, and especially the notion of creating community, just wasn't on their radar screen.

Still, the concept deserves recognition not as a panacea, but as an approach. During my field research, I identified numerous examples of crafted interdependence in action across a relatively wide cross-section of communities. The Educated Agricurious demonstrated a clear understanding of the work associated with the *crafted* elements of the concept. Here Shelly Haws describes how crafted interdependence became an intentional and integral part of her community vision:

> As I mentioned before we were able to get our land through the OSI (Open Space Institute). We looked (at) a bunch of different farms in the Champlain Valley but with the reopening of the Grange and a couple of friends making the leap from homesteading, and a few other friends being tired of working for other farmers, we knew that we'd be leaning on each other a whole lot. When someone has a business idea we ask questions like, does it contribute to our "farming neighborhood?" That's how we ended up with a creamery, a butcher, a vegetable grower, a sugarmaker, and a brewery within two miles of each other as I mentioned before. But it also extends to things like equipment. When we decide to get a new tractor or haybine, we think about it in terms of what we'd need to serve our neighborhood, not just our little farm.

To treat the concept of crafted interdependence as something new would be to ignore the fundamental purpose of the Amish *Ordnung.* In 1919, the Amish church collectively decided to prohibit electricity on the basis that it could lead to the deterioration of church and family life (Johnson-Weiner 2010). A similar line of logic follows for the prohibition of vehicle ownership, which argues that vehicles give access to the outside world, thereby reducing one's reliance on their immediate community to meet their needs. During my time interviewing Lawrence Yoder of the New Order Beachy Amish he remarked, "If I know I can't just drive to Malone (11 miles away) for what I need, I'm going to get together with my (Amish) neighbors and figure out who can provide what." This specialization within the community operationalizes the concept of

crafted interdependence and then further reinforces durability by teaching specialized skills to subsequent generations, thereby building redundancy into the system.

While Ackerman-Leist's concept of crafted interdependence was developed in the context of neo-homesteading, fundamentally, it is about thoughtful integration and coordination of resources at the community level. Creating a durable community in which elements of the system are effectively coordinated, however, is only half of equation. Integrating diversity creates the space for a wide range of options, opinions, and alternatives to emerge, and potentially drives innovation. However, it is integration that creates structure that allows for disparate views to emerge as thoughtful coordinated, action.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role of mindfulness and observation in crafted interdependence. Across neo-homesteading communities I was struck by the way community members read and responded to pulse. This response was rooted in both observation and deeply rooted, knowing, friendships within the community. In one of my participant observation adventures, I was walking with Bob Kratz down his road to get to the woodlot. As we were talking, I noticed he kept scanning between his neighbor's newspaper box and the porch, but never said a word. We returned to the house for a lunch of chicken soup, after which Bob poured the remainder of the crock into a quart mason jar, and told me that we'd be taking the truck back to our work site. As we headed back to work, Bob veered into his neighbor's driveway where he said we needed to drop off some soup and a half-load of wood from the truck. I unloaded the wood on the porch as Bob went to the door and delivered the jar of soup to an elderly gentleman. As we continued back to the work site I asked Bob what had just happened, he explained: "When we walked by this morning I noticed Charlie hadn't picked up his paper and that there wasn't

any firewood on his porch. I figured that meant he was feeling under the weather and could use some heat and soup!"

The same pattern of observing and then responding without request emerged repeatedly in nearly every community I visited. It came in the form of a spare horse wagon tongue that simply appeared alongside the broken one in an Amish community, it was a jug of lemonade that showed up during a hot day of haying in the Champlain Valley, and a car with a note taped to the horn that said: "noticed your broken axle . . . don't need our car this week, here you go!" These acts of community are not only kind, they also serve as mechanisms of redundancy that help to prevent collapse and reinforce the fourth element of community durability—self-regulation.

Self-Regulation

The apex of self-regulation is the ability to deal with anomalous situations or disruptions without fear of collapse (Rodin 2014). Under the conditions cited for crafted interdependence, this was manifested in both highly intentional actions, such as identifying roles of specialization, and more organic actions like reading and responding to the community pulse. However, for self-regulation to occur, it's necessary to have a system with tight feedback loops that allow us to detect thresholds before we cross them (Walker 2006). One challenge to globalization is that feedback mechanisms have become looser and more delayed as the developed world benefits from the developing world without internalizing the externalities. This means that in the developed world we operate under a system of weak feedback signals that reinforce the notion that things "must not be so bad" since, by and large, we haven't felt real, life-altering consequences. In terms of tightening feedback loops, neo-homesteading offers a useful construct as adopters of this self-regulating lifestyle strive to live within the means of their households and their communities. At the homestead level, tight, non-negotiable feedback loops often govern

daily actions. Those employing off-grid solar, for example, used the charge level of their batteries to dictate when they did laundry, used an electric water pump, or even when to watch television. If tight enough, these feedback loops can send clear, non-negotiable signals as Nancy Kratz described:

> When you're so tightly tied to the energy you have and it doesn't just flow from the power lines, you not only think more about where this stuff comes from, you change your behavior to fit within the confines of your system . . . I ended up cutting my hair last fall just because we didn't have that much hot water from our solar heater and I saw it as an easy way to fit back into the system.

However, some neo-homesteaders have fallen away from a self-regulating system with tight feedback loops. Many of the techsteaders in this research opted for grid-tied photovoltaic systems to prevent having to live within the confines of solar radiation and their battery bank. While this point isn't to denigrate those who choose to blend modern comforts with a traditional homesteading lifestyle, it does highlight the fact that even those most committed to living within the ecological and economic confines of their communities face the continual risk of eroding the self-regulating qualities that are the cornerstone of homesteading.

Self-regulation is not merely about preventing collapse; it is also about creating a system that can absorb change and fail safely. Creating durable communities will require economic risk as innovation is piloted, as well as social risk that is manifested as faith in the conviction and follow-through of ideas. When ideas and innovations succeed, cultivating support mechanisms will be an important part of both maintaining and building self-regulation. And when ideas and innovations fail, they will fail as quickly as possible, then people move on. Moving quickly beyond failure can preserve morale and can be leveraged to promote nimble adaptive management.

Adaptive Management

The final component of the durable community concept is an adaptive management framework that has the capacity to help neo-homesteaders adjust to change by developing new strategies, taking new actions, and modifying behaviors in light of stochastic environmental and social changes. Within the sustainability studies, resiliency, and ecology literature several different models have emerged to help explain how systems (specifically communities in this case) can change and adapt in desirable ways. While ecologists (Holling, Walters, et al.) are usually credited with formalizing the idea that ecological systems have a natural proclivity to recover after disturbance, it was the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter who noted this concept in the context of economic boom and bust cycles. Schumpeter proposed the idea of "creative destruction" to describe how disturbance can motivate the adaptive cycle (Schumpeter 1950). The work of Schumpeter would ultimately contribute to the development of adaptive cycle that considered exploitation, conservation, release, and reorganization (Gunderson and Holling 2002). Importantly, Gunderson and Holling emphasized that the same pattern existed for ecological, social, and economic systems.

More recently the adaptive cycle has been conceived of as two opposing models, a fore loop which is considered to be relatively predictable, and a back loop that offers the potential for either destructive or creative change, and thus an entry point for infusing durability. Some scholars have noted that this while the function of the fore loop and back loop is unique, transitions can and do occur between all phases except from the release or reorganization phase directly to the conservation phase (Walker 2006). These transitions are illustrated in figure four.

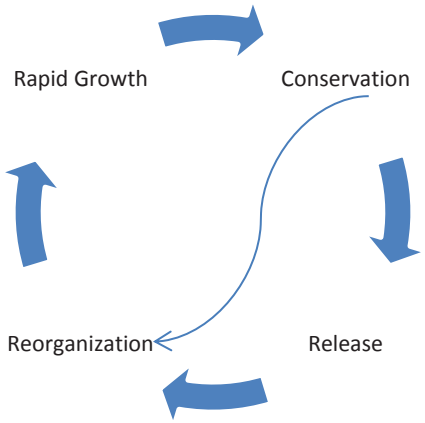


Figure Four: The Adaptive Cycle highlights the dynamic behavior of social and ecological systems and demonstrates both areas of greater relative stability (fore loop) and areas of greater relative uncertainty (back loop).

Moving from the adaptive cycle model that demonstrates processes of natural resiliency, to an adaptive *management* model (figure five) that offers entry points for effecting change, is often a response infused at the reorganization phase. This popular six-step adaptive management model is a useful tool for addressing technical problems related to sustainability, but may fall short in considering socio-economic dimensions that are central to fostering durable communities. Nonetheless, adaptive management remains a popular framework for promoting sustainable communities and is often presented as *the* model, instead of as *a* tool (Norton 2005). Interestingly, this framework has been used for nearly two decades by federal land use agencies under the U.S. Department of Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture that routinely face criticism for favoring technical responses to interdisciplinary issues (Arabas and Bowersox 2004).

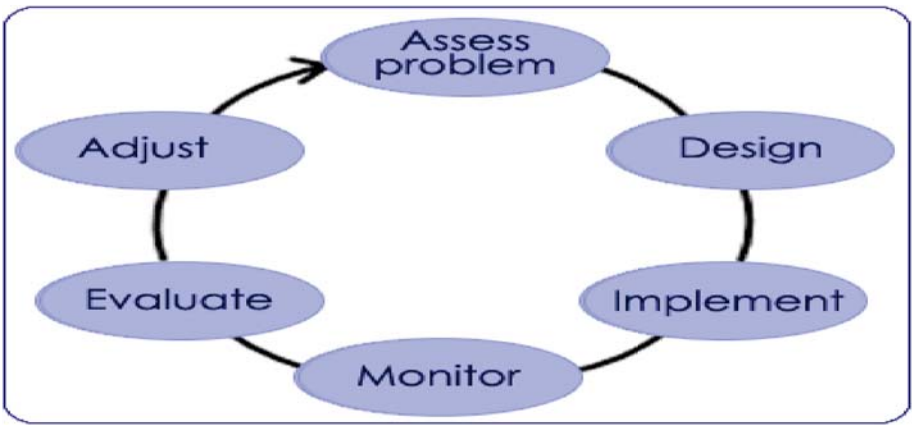


Figure Five: Six-Step Adaptive Management Model which is well suited for addressing discrete, technical dimensions of sustainability but may not sufficiently address social questions regarding agreement and uncertainty.

I believe a more inclusive framework for pursuing adaptive management in the context of durable communities can be drawn from the organizational development literature, and specifically from the work of Ralph Stacey, who pioneered the application of ecological complexity theory to better understand human organizational development theory. Stacey's "Landscape Diagram" is often cited by the business community, as well as NGOs, as a tool for identifying areas where change can be practically achieved, and for prioritizing action among complex, competing alternatives. Stacey's model has more recently been applied to the emerging field of human systems dynamics which focuses on how self-organizing systems can be structured to encourage resiliency (Eoyang 2014). When applied to the durable community concept one is able to identify areas of common ground, explore and develop a capacity for self-organization, and entertain the notion that the unorganized landscape can ultimately contribute to a resilient community structure.

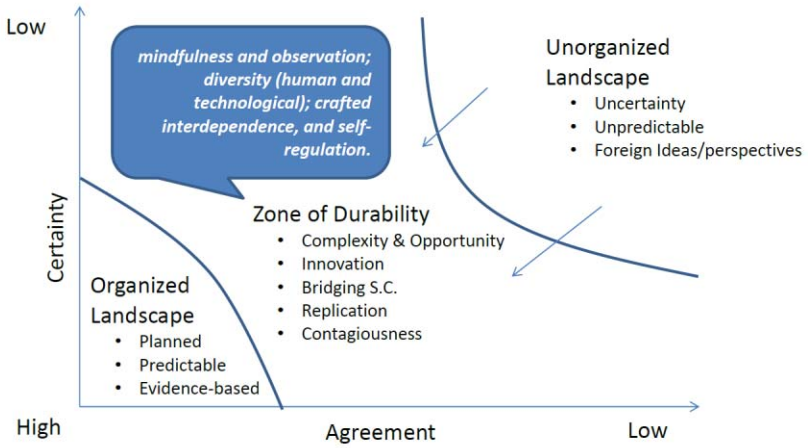


Figure Six: The Stacy Landscape Diagram correlates agreement and certainty which is central to developing innovative responses that promote durability.

Within the model, "landscape" is inclusive of the social community and its natural capital. Located closest to the intersection of the x and y axis is the organized landscape where stakeholders possess both collective agreement and a high degree of certainty for a particular action or decision. This area with both high certainty and high agreement should be considered the common ground in communities and should be treated as a foundation point, which I refer to as the "Zone of Durability". Within the organized landscape area, communities maintain essential elements of governance and monitor for continued effectiveness of basic functions.

The unorganizing landscape is an area of disagreement and uncertainty within the community. In the context of the Adirondack-North Country, this area is marked by ideas and debates that have historically been erosive to social capital, and is therefore often viewed as a "chaos" area to be avoided. However, this same space in the landscape also offers real opportunity for innovation and adaptation which can emerge in response to diversity. As conditions (social, economic, ecological) shift within the community, ideas and approaches that were once off the table may exhibit feasibility and acceptability. A community that recognizes

the dynamic nature of ideas and is willing to evolve and adapt have the capacity to recognize patterns and approaches that may exhibit new relevance.

Tucked between the organized and unorganized landscape is a self-organizing landscape ("Zone of Durability") that represents both complexity and the opportunity to cultivate resiliency. Incorporating principles of self-regulation, this is the area where communities will cultivate durable solutions. Notably, this portion of the landscape experiences only moderate levels of agreement and certainty, but in an era of rapid global environmental change, operating in this area of uncertainty is recognized as essential to communities. In terms of unique qualities, the self-organizing landscape both preserves diversity and encourages grassroots self-organization which depending on the action, may become a more formalized feature and blend into the organized landscape.

Developing an understanding of how innovation emerges in response to uncertainty and agreement can help to identify easily attainable opportunities that can be used to eventually tackle more difficult issues that lay within the unorganized landscape. It is also possible that in time, less-organized parts of the community landscape can become more organized. During my participant observation interviews, several of the neo-homesteaders gave examples of how ideas within the unorganized landscape had evolved toward the self-organizing landscape with the potential of becoming part of the organized landscape. Here Bob Kratz describes the transition:

> It started with us moving up here not knowing anyone. I have nice tools, but I don't have every tool. A neighbor reluctantly lent me some of his tools and low and behold, I returned them in better shape than I had received them. Several of us in the neighborhood had big building projects going on at the time so a loose tool loaner network developed. We've since talked about this idea and would love to have a community tool library, maybe even have it based at the town garage or something.

This narrative of moving from the unorganized landscape marked by uncertainty ("who is this new guy in the neighborhood?"), and untested agreement ("not sure if loaning tools is even a good idea"), to creating a more formal plan of a tool library with community-wide support that was ultimately punctuated with the suggestion that the tool library be housed on public property. And while this example is admittedly a modest one (but one that could be important in developing social capital), it is easy to see how this same process could apply to developing other adaptive responses in a community, whether it be global climate change, or an effort to formalize roles outlined by crafted interdependence. Collectively, this process demonstrates how ideas, particularly when they amplify positive patterns by demonstrating success at the self-organization frontier, can cultivate a culture where change perpetuates under the organic influences of self-organization.

Advancing the Bioregional Vision

Given the enormity of the challenges that lay ahead, it will be essential to nest neo-homesteaders within larger systems and across scales. An understanding of panarchy, or how events at one scale can influence or even drive what's happening at other scales is one of the most challenging, but essential challenges of operationalizing sustainability. Ignoring cross-scale effects regularly results in failure, particularly in production-based natural resource management systems (Gunderson and Holling 2002). Central to addressing cross-scale effects is a focus on understanding the dynamics of the systems that lay on each side of the scale under evaluation. It was recognition of this common failure that originally motivated my interest in examining neo-homesteading, a scale and sub-culture that has received little attention in the literature and is often caricatured, or ignored (Brown 2011). However, critics of the seriousness of neo-homesteading have a valid point when they highlight the insular nature of the movement that can

lack cross-scale effect. By debunking the myths of self-reliance and demonstrating mechanisms and institutions by which this movement is becoming more formalized, I've demonstrated a strong linkage between neo-homesteaders and the durable communities they pursue, which link in purpose and promise with the goals of bioregionalism.

Akin to homesteading, the concept of bioregionalism has ebbed and flowed in popularity, but not in promise. While interpretations of bioregionalism vary widely, it remains a relevant platform for advancing the durable communities concept to the next scale. One of the more applicable of definitions comes from Kirkpatrick Sale who argues that, "bioregionalism puts its primary focus on the development of self-reliant economic, social, and political systems. A bioregion is defined by its life forms and topography rather than by political boundaries. Self-reliance implies that systems of production must draw upon local resources. Thus bioregionalism necessitates an in-depth understanding of a region's geography and resources" (K. Sale 1985).

The transition to durable communities and sustaining bioregions will demand fortitude on the part of both citizens and elected officials. And, once we have tended to our own communities we will need to turn to our neighbors, not to scale up the durable community concept, but instead, to practice *replication* across the bioregion.

Durable communities are scale-sensitive. Once they have been scaled to the point where anonymity prevails, we will have diluted their very power. If, on the other hand, we replicate the tools and techniques that work in a way that is thoughtful and adaptive, replication becomes tenable. From a regional policy perspective, the concept of replication over scalability is already gaining popularity, and funding, through the New York State Energy Development for small-scale biomass facilities. On the food production side, Cornell Cooperative Extension has

refocused its attention on small and medium scale facilities, again favoring replication over scalability, with replicable projects receiving policy priority within the regional sustainability plan (ANCA 2013).

Home-Land-Security

Throughout this research I have asked my teachers, colleagues, and students to critique my ideas and challenge my assumptions. Their opinions and observations are both strengthened and validated by living in a place that struggles to balance both people and environmental protection. When I discussed the role of neo-homesteading, or the construction of durable communities in the context of my research, I was routinely met by a double-edged response. First, people tended to categorize neo-homesteading as a *distraction* that failed to acknowledge or address the enormity of the global environmental crisis. Usually this criticism came in the form of caricature that asked, "How do you think having a garden, raising chickens, or screwing solar panels to your roof will in any way address the bigger issues?" To these critics, such actions were big on symbolism, but small on punch. From a technical standpoint, their observations are entirely correct. In response to this, my counter-argument evolved to emphasize two key points.

The first is that multi-lateral governance has failed to provide the kinds of "big-punch" changes that these critics believe is necessary. What's more, those large-scale environmental issues that have worked are usually underpinned by strong grassroots support, thereby demonstrating the role of civically-engaged individuals (including neo-homesteaders). Second, I point out that the very *distractions* they cite (individual action), are the very actions that created current conditions. This point is usually met with a bit of resistance and an effort to reframe environmental issues in terms of "polluters" or "corporations," thereby absolving the individual

of responsibility. This I argue, is the real distraction. Usually, this point is reconciled by definitional clarity and an understanding that destructive individual actions can be scaled up (corporate groupthink), followed by the reminder that constructive individual actions can be scaled up too! At this point in the debate I usually pause and ask if there's anything *good* that they see in micro-scale approach I propose.

Invariably, it is met with two observations of their own. The first observation is that even if they feel individual action is woefully insufficient (a point I don't dispute), the notion that *they* can actually *do something* is empowering. It is at this point that I highlight the fact that while the action may be small, even so small as to merely qualify as symbolism, it is the right thing to do. In other words, moral imperative is not a consequentialist construct. After a long pause, there's an observation that masquerades as a question, such as: "how much food do you think I could grow on my half-acre lot?" They're hooked. A couple of laying hens or kitchen garden is the entry point not just to neo-homesteading, but to empowerment, as explained by Jessica Wilkes (Educated Agricurious typology):

> Your first tomato becomes a jewel. You made it. Well, you didn't make it, but you made it possible. And that's the point; it's about possibility, and pretty soon you have your first egg, and then you decide you want to divorce yourself from an oil bill, so you begin cutting and scrounging your own firewood. Before you know it, taking care of yourself and your neighbors has become your new hobby, and one that happens to be hitched to all kinds of other good things, from healthy eating, to community building and a healthier planet. It's a no-brainer, but more importantly, it's . . . fun.

Which brings us to what may be the most powerful element of neo-homesteading over other environmental agendas: while many traditional environmental platforms have been predicated under the commandment "thou shall not . . . ," neo-homesteading and the durable communities they contribute to, are built on a vision that argues, "thou shall . . ." By building a grassroots movement that's fixed in a tangible, meaningful, and *fun* lifestyle, you effectively

create a new cultural construct for environmentalism; one that need not be punitive. It is this friendlier ethos that I attempted to integrate into *The Woodland Homestead* by framing sustainability in terms of enjoyable, meaningful action that pursues harmony between land and homesteader. And, while it may not offer the scale of change that one might demand in a perfect world, it does offer a more hopeful trajectory for society that can use small but meaningful change as a counterweight to the large and overwhelming global environmental challenges that tend to instill paralysis instead of action, and fear instead of hope.

Although this dissertation has attempted to articulate a hopeful vision for the Adirondack-North Country, it would be folly to suggest that a sub-cultural movement will easily or instantaneously transform the region. Collective action problems, whether at the community or bioregional level, tend to be both costly and time consuming (Ostrom 1998). On the other hand, there is significant evidence that natural capital can be improved in the short term with no explicit attention to social capital (Pretty 2001). However, these traditional approaches typically lack durability, as behavioral changes are incumbent on an artificial system of incentives and regulations that result in old behaviors being readopted once incentives end or enforcement becomes lax (Ostrom 1998). This reality then, argues for not only cultivating social capital through the mechanisms discussed in this essay, but also argues for a culture built around a contagious vision that begins with the individual and extends to society.

Reflections & Future Directions

Interdisciplinary research occurs in a rich and diverse landscape that invariably leads to just as many questions, as insights. Just as the work of Jeffery Jacob served as the starting point for this research, it is my hope that other scholars will continue this line of inquiry in pursuit of both a better understanding of the neo-homesteading sub-culture, and its potential contributions

to society. To that end, this dissertation concludes with a set of observations that I hope will make the interdisciplinary terrain navigable to others.

The cornerstone of this research used participant observation field experiences that revealed authentic insights, both social and technological in nature. However, the *act* of intentionally studying this sub-culture also created momentum and legitimacy for the movement's participants, with Jessica Wilkes commenting that, "…simply acknowledging that our way of life matters, fills me with the determination to do more." This demonstrated legitimacy further contributed to the research momentum by encouraging participation in the PAR components of this research, specifically the development of the ACWL blueprint.

While this research was geographically limited to the Adirondack-North Country, employing a similar study in other communities (exurban, suburban and urban) represents a logical extension of the study, given demographic shifts and the need to address issues of environment and society in more populated and diverse areas. Part of this shift includes an acknowledgment that while early homesteading was identified as "a way of life," neo-homesteading is a "lifestyle" marked by choices that are influenced by both the pressure of the outside world, and an inner desire for personal fulfillment. As these external and internal pressures collide, crafting durable communities will be essential to negotiating the future as we face tighter ecological constraints. Understanding and documenting *how* communities realize durability and greater resiliency will be an essential to replicating sustainable practices across the landscape.

This research focused on those who are currently homesteading, yet the questions remains as to how many neo-homesteaders will continue to practice this rewarding and

incredibly arduous lifestyle? And, perhaps equally important, is the question of how does the homesteading experience contribute to later lifestyle choices, even if one is no longer homesteading? The pilot interviews and surveys suggested that for some, homesteading for even a relatively short period of time is a transformative experience; one that changed both their behavior and sense of responsibility long after leaving the homestead. Further research exploring the depth and arc of this experience would help to determine the significance of homesteading as an enduring influence.

This study also suggested three proto-typologies that emerged throughout the research process. While these proto-typologies were intended to identify sociological and demographic gaps across the neo-homesteading spectrum, they deserve further scrutiny both in terms of the number of research participants, and the assumptions associated with each proto-typology. While typologies represent a useful categorization tool, they inherently run the risk of becoming reductionist in their analysis.

In terms of engaging stakeholders at the community and bioregional level, additional research is necessary to examine the most effective Participatory Action Research tools for inclusive and representative engagement. The current approach employed by the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes focus on "common ground" issues such as local food and renewable energy. Still, participation is limited, sometimes excluding those on the economic fringe.

Moving forward, it is clear that the Adirondack-North Country faces myriad economic, ecological and environmental challenges. Yet, despite this, it still remains an incredibly hopeful landscape thanks to a vision that has coalesced around a lifestyle, and future, that rejects

brittleness in favor of durability. By focusing on common goals rooted in necessity—such as a working landscape that provides food and energy—and social capital that has the capacity to grow, the outdated environmental debates marked by extremism have given way to a gentler and more human approach that emphasizes balance—on all sides. It is my hope that this movement and this research, will further dialogue among stakeholders and inspire individuals to be agents of change in their homes, communities, and bioregions.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Agreement

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY
NEW ENGLAND

Informed Consent for Rural Studies Project-Homesteader

You are invited to participate in a study by Brett McLeod, Ph.D. student at Antioch University, New England. I hope to learn how homesteads and small farms contribute to sustainability in the Adirondack-North Country.

You were selected as a possible participant for this study because you either expressed a willingness to participate in this study based on an earlier pilot project. Or, you were recommended by another participant.

If you decide to participate, I will request a series of three "participant observation" sessions. Participant observation is a type of research where I, the researcher, work alongside you as you go through your work routine.

Permission to take both photographs and video/audio recordings is requested. You may choose to ban these activities at any time. The results of this work will be used to develop categories of "neo-homesteaders" and small-scale farmers.

While no risks are intended, from this research, allowing me access to your homestead/farm is entirely voluntary. There are no costs associated with participation in this research, nor is there compensation beyond the labor provided as part of the research. I cannot promise that you personally will receive any future benefits from this research. Prior to final submission, you will be given the choice to review the document, as well as review of any direct quotes.

Any information that is found in connection with this study and that can be identified as you will remain confidential, and will be disclosed only with your permission. If you wish, subject identities will be kept confidential by coding your responses and using a different name or location. Results from this research may be published.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Brett McLeod at (518)327-6990 or bmcleod@antioch.edu. The advisor of the research is Dr. Alesia Maltz who may be contacted at (603) 283-2342, or amaltz@antioch.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Katherine Clark at kclarke@antioch.edu. You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

Signature_____ Date_____

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Code for topics: (F) =Food; E=Energy Technology=T; ES= Environmental Stewardship; KT=Knowledge Transfer; CC=Citizenship/Community; TD=Typology Definition; RC=Resource Conservation.

Background Series

Does your family have a history of homesteading/farming? What is that history? (Breadth, depth) TD

How did you decide to homestead? Who helped sharpen your interest? CC

How did you come to homestead in this place? TD

Which of these descriptions best describes your situation?

Weekenders	Half-time employment away from their homesteads; free time is spent working on the property.
Pensioners	Lifestyle is upheld by pension, investments and social security.
Country Romantics	Part time, leisure is their primary pursuit.
Country Entrepreneurs	Small business (not agricultural) is their main source of income.
Purists	Provide for virtually all their needs through the homestead; reject consumerism and support the informal economy
Microfarmers	Became farmers later in life, now devote their working time to intense cultivation of cash crops
Apprentices	Learn back-to-the-land craft while working for an established farmer

If none of the descriptions fit "exactly" how would you describe your situation?

Definition and Value Series

If you weren't homesteading here, where would you be, and what would be doing? TD

What was the community like when you first entered it? How has the community changed? TD

How have you and your family dealt with the gap between the ideal and the realities of homesteading? TD

Economic Series

Do you or your spouse/partner have a job away from the homestead? How much time do you typically spend at your off-farm job? TD

How do you measure success in a given year? What is your desired level of production? RC-F

Do you barter or trade your goods? If so what, and how much? CC

Who has been instrumental in teaching you particularly valuable homesteading skills that have saved you time or money? KT

What are good tips you've learned in the last months, and what tips were you sharing with others? Where did these tips or ideas originate? KT

Are you connected to utilities? Which utilities? How do you view a connection to utilities in the context of your homestead operation? If you are off grid, what is the payback period? E

Socio-Political Series

Are you familiar with the Farm Bill? RC

Have you participated in any cost-sharing programs to improve your land? RC

Do you have any involvement with state and national politics? Do you write your congressmen? Are you concerned with the provisions of the farm bill? How important a role does national politics play in your homesteads operation? CC

Do you find that there are specific laws or policies that get in the way of goals? CC

What role has the immediate community served in building your homestead? CC

How much was here when you bought it? How much have you relied on outside labor? CC/T

Are individual skills important or are community skills important? What niche do you occupy (unique products, unique skills (harness maker, architect, carpenter, etc.) Who are some other individuals that occupy niches in the community, what do they do? CC

Describe an innovative technique that you've employed that may be useful to other homesteaders. T

Who has taught you the skills that you find most valuable? KT

Can you discuss how formal education has influenced the operation of your homestead? KT

Do your children attend public school? Why or why not? (for families with children)KT

Do you subscribe to any homesteading or do-it-yourself magazines? Do you use the Internet or other resources to learn new techniques and skills? KT

Practical Series (Big Picture)

What kind of education prepares a person for this sort of life?

What are the benefits of homesteading over a more conventional life? What are the biggest tradeoffs associated with this lifestyle? TD

How do you measure quality of life on the homestead? TD

How does this quality compare to your previous situation? TD

Would you be more satisfied to have stayed in the previous situation? TD

Do you think you will do this your whole life? TD

Can you imagine other work that would leave you as satisfied? TD

What do you think your children will do? TD

What is your favorite season? Why? How does this season compare to the others? How about your least favorite season? TD

If you had the opportunity to change one thing on your homestead, what would it be? TD

Appendix C: Permissions

January 13, 2015

Hi Brett,

Yes, I think that's fine to use your book content (including layouts) in your dissertation.

Illustration credits should read: "© Steve Sanford." 2015.

Thanks and best wishes,

Jennifer

Jennifer Travis

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Hello Shelia,
I'm writing to request permission to include a table (Page 53, table 5) from *New pioneers: the back-to-the-land movement and the search for a sustainable future* by Jeffery Jacob (1997). I would like to use this table in my doctoral dissertation entitled: *Neo-Homesteading in the Adirondack-North Country: Crafting a Durable Landscape.* I am pursuing my degree at Antioch University New England. The dissertation will be available both electronically and in hard copy.

Jacob, Jeffrey. 1997. *New pioneers: the back-to-the-land movement and the search for a sustainable future*. University Park, Penn: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Thank you for considering my request.

Regards,
Brett