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**Growing Culturally Relevant Food at the Urban Farm:  
An Examination of Sovereign Foodways, Place-Making Practices,  
and Autonomous Identity-Shaping**

by

Dahlia Zail

May 2023

Pitzer College, Claremont, California

Readers: Susan Phillips and Melinda Herrold-Menzies

## **Abstract**

This paper examines channels of culturally relevant food production on the urban farm. It further investigates the connection between this production and the shaping of sovereign foodways, as well as how urban farm models provide space and resources for place-making practices and autonomous identity-shaping. This thesis shifts away from the notion of access to culturally relevant food and instead focuses on the multi-fold context that any food item takes on through its production, distribution, and consumption. This allows for a nuanced understanding of the role that culturally relevant food can play in immigrant foodways. Through case-studies at three urban farms in the Inland Empire region of Southern California, which utilize a qualitative approach of interviews with farm staff and community members, this paper uncovers how urban farms are managed in order to produce culturally relevant food and how this production influences community members' foodways. This research demonstrates that urban farming shapes sovereign foodways, creates space for place-making, and resources autonomous identity-shaping. In allowing people to take ownership of and maintain agency in their food systems, define their surroundings, and have access to food that meets their cultural needs and desires, urban farms operate beyond the bounds of neoliberal ideology and uphold cultural valuations of food, making them effective and celebrated community spaces that contribute to stronger, just food systems. Ultimately, this paper makes a substantive statement on the significance of cultural valuations of food and the importance of food and its context to human lives.

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## Land Acknowledgment

Urban farms are spaces that occupy land, and land in this country, state, and region belongs to the Indigenous peoples whose land has and continues to be stolen from them. My college campus occupies land, my college house occupies land, the library in which I worked countless hours on this project occupies land. Every day my being occupies this Indigenous land. By virtue of my existence, I am a settler on this land. All of this and each of the urban farms featured in this project exist on the traditional and ancestral land of the Tongva (Gabrieleno), Payómkawichum (Luiseño), Yuhaaviatam/Maarenga'yam (Serrano), and ʔíviłwenetem Meytémak (Cahuilla) Peoples. These peoples continue to foster their connection to this land, practice their traditions, and steward this land in the face of continued colonization and forced removal.

In thinking critically about the history of the Indigenous land on which I have lived and learned throughout this project, I want to extend my sincerest gratitude to one of my interviewees, Julian, who belongs to the native Yaqui Tribe. Julian approached our conversation with warmth and openness and allowed me to highlight his organization's efforts to preserve native culture through art, language, and mutual aid and how that manifests in work at the urban farm.

Lastly, I want to say that acknowledgment is not enough. My hope is that this land acknowledgment encourages readers to support and celebrate Indigenous communities, in all of their strength, vibrancy, and resilience. Importantly, I too hope to empower readers to patron local Indigenous organizations. Acknowledging land is not the same thing as returning land. As we collectively strive to remedy the history of Indigenous displacement, I implore you, the reader, to think about how you can use your own voice, food, and dollars to take action.

## Acknowledgments

There are so many people without whom this thesis would not exist. I want to start by thanking my thesis advisors for their unwavering support and guidance. Professor Phillips, thank you for pushing me to explore the depths of what this thesis could be, you guided me into creating a meaningful project that is reflective of all the complexity it necessitates. And Professor Herrold-Menzies, thank you for advising me with your consistently uplifting spirit since the day I transferred to Pitzer College and for granting me the ability to design my own track in food systems. Thank you for providing crucial edits, thoughtfulness, and meaningful directive advice in the process of writing this thesis. I want to thank all of the people who work tirelessly on urban farm sites to produce food for people - you lifted me up through the process of getting to talk with you, walk with you, and ultimately learn from you. To Erica and Stephen from Lopez Urban Farm, thank you for showing me what the revolution looks like. Thank you for sharing your incredible wisdom. And to the farm staff at Huerta del Valle, Andres and Maria, and the anonymous folk, thank you for your honesty, your thoughtfulness, and your insights. Thank you for creating such a resilient community hub, a space of such wonder, it inspired this whole project. To Elinor, thank you for inspiring me with visions of what the future of food could look like. And to all the community members I interviewed, thank you for sharing your lived experiences with me, thank you for your vulnerability, your beautiful words, and your candor. Thank you to my translator, Danilo Estigarribia Gamarra, without you, my research at Huerta del Valle wouldn't have been possible, and that would have been an incredible disservice to this project. I want to say a huge thank you to my partner, who spent numerous hours with me on the phone and at the dinner table toggling back and forth between ideas, thank you for listening to countless thesis statements and title options and for your constant support. To my dad, thank you for always reminding me to follow my heart and lead with passion. And to my mom, thank you for imparting to me critical writing skills and a fierce work ethic (and for the grammatical edits). To my grandmother, thank you for your insights and thoughtfulness. And another huge thank you to my best friends/housemates who provided me with the occasional brainstorming session but more importantly good food and laughter over the course of this intense semester. I am proud of this project, and it is because of all of you.

## Introduction

For as long as I've studied food systems, I've said I'm not interested in urban agriculture. I would tell people I'm studying sustainable agriculture and food systems, and they'd ask, "Oh, so like urban agriculture?" And I'd say no, I'm not really interested. In reflection, I think I had an idea of urban agriculture as a less legitimate type of farming. I wanted to focus on *real* farming. I didn't understand; I didn't understand what urban agriculture was or could be. I didn't understand how much meaning and significance it could have to communities of people or how much production it could contribute. I didn't know how real it was.

I knew that I wanted my thesis to be based in this place where I spent my most formative educational years. And I knew I wanted it to involve farming. Given the lack of rural farming in proximity to Pitzer College, this project soon turned into one focused on urban agriculture. I had to justify to myself that it was worth doing something place-based to forgo studying I was something more interested in. This was all before I started talking to people. It was before I saw these urban farm spaces. I am hesitant to present some cliché like, "My eyes have really opened up," but they have. And not in this grand, remarkable sense where I now feel ready to devote a career to urban agriculture, but in the sense that I can *see* these spaces for what they are. If there's one thing I want a reader of this paper to walk away with, it's how important these urban farms are to people.

This thesis is not (explicitly) about nutrition, and that is intentional. Considering how certain foods will fuel one's body is never a bad thing. However, to boil food down to the building blocks of our biological lives, and only that, eradicates an entire world of what food stands to mean to human spiritual, cultural, and social life (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). In turn, it also delegitimizes non-Western epistemologies that may place the significance



of food differently than is standard in Western culture. This thesis employs the notion of food as a piece of identity, culture, and soul.

What separates food from other consumer goods is well articulated in the following quote (Winson, 1994, p. 4):

In the process of consuming food and drink we take them inside our very bodies, a fact that gives them special significance denied such externally consumed commodities as refrigerators, automobiles, house paint, or television sets. Moreover, unlike many other goods that we produce and consume in capitalist society, food is an essential commodity; we literally cannot live without it.

- Anthony Winson, *The Intimate Commodity*

We literally cannot live without food. We bring it into our corporeal bodies, and it becomes us. Associate Professor in Urban Food Sovereignty, Chiara Tornaghi (2016), comments on this relationship, naming food as the most intimate and necessary human-nature relationship. She also speaks to the notion of food becoming us, noting that food not only contributes to the production of material body, but to emotional and cultural body as well. Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy (2015) speak to the importance of food as identity-shaping stating that “variations in cultural valuations of food are understood as a key way in which humans define who they are” (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015, p. 41). Taste, desire for certain foods, stems from our most early childhood memories. Bisgoni et al.’s (2005) research demonstrates that we will always use our mother’s cooking as a reference point for how food should taste. Monterrosa et al. (2020) discuss food practices as understood primarily from parents, through both explicit and implicit

learning. Further, it is clear that memory and early childhood play a significant role in our relationship with food as preferences and food customs develop. In this sense, food connects us with our core memories.

Food influences our cultural identities and in the same respect, our cultural identities influence our food. Cultural prescriptions and ideologies have a significant influence on food choices, production, and meaning. A core implication of this is the way culture defines what is food and what is not food (Briones Alonso et al., 2018). To exemplify this notion, a government program in Micronesia tried to increase vitamin A intake by promoting leafy green vegetables and it had very little impact (Englberger, 2010). Why? Because in that part of the world, people see leafy greens as fodder, not as food (Englberger, 2010). As elaborated by Briones Alonso et al. (2018), culture also defines critical phenomena of who eats and when they eat, citing connections to gender dynamics, working relationships, and household labor, amongst other culturally determined factors. Similarly, religion, an aspect of culture, has an impact on food practices through the institution of rules and meanings attached to certain foods (Monterrosa et al., 2020). Food is also one of the most important parts of religious ceremonies (Sibal, 2018). Sibal (2018) also communicates the importance of food in social relationships, stating “Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries” (Sibal, 2018, p 1). Monterrosa et al. (2020) bring food prohibitions to the table as elements of food culture - usually determined by age, sex, and hierarchical position. Some common prohibitions involve women’s bodies - targeting menstruation, pregnancy, and lactation. This brief discussion on the significance of food, identity, and culture serves to show a snapshot of the meaning of food beyond nutrition.

In planning out this thesis, I intended to investigate if urban farms' food production increases access to culturally relevant foods for community members. Through both interviews with farm staff/community members and reading literature on the topic, it became clear that the notion of access just scratches the surface. The answer to the question I initially posed was a simple yes or no. But in practice, the answers I got to my questions were not simple. The answers explored themes of culturally relevant food production, homeland re-creation, sovereignty, dignified access, and intergenerational cultural identity-shaping. My thesis changed course to allow for the insights and experiences I gained while researching. This final project examines how culturally relevant food production occurs on the urban farm. Further, it investigates the influence of these practices on the shaping of sovereign foodways, as well as how practices on the urban farm provide space for place-making and autonomous identity-shaping. Through my research, I arrived at the following thesis statement. **Urban farming shapes sovereign foodways, creates space for place-making, and resources autonomous identity-shaping. In allowing people to take ownership of and maintain agency in their food systems, define their surroundings, and have access to food that meets their cultural needs and desires, urban farms operate beyond the bounds of neoliberal ideology and uphold cultural valuations of food, making them effective and celebrated community spaces that contribute to stronger, just food systems.**

This thesis statement necessitates a conceptual understanding of the terms used in it. Culturally relevant food, as a key term, often operates as a stand-alone concept in which foods are understood only for the immediate role they play in diet and are stripped of their context and meaning (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). The notion of access to culturally relevant food quantifies if a person can reasonably acquire a food of cultural relevance, often for this food to

act as ingredient-replacement (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). This thesis adopts a different meaning of culturally relevant food, one that defines food that is produced, distributed, and consumed in culturally relevant ways. Another key term in this thesis is foodways. Lum and Vayer (2016) define foodways through the following statement; “Foodways places the production, procurement, preparation, consumption, and sharing of food... at an intersection among culture, tradition, and the environment” (Lum & Vayer, 2016, p 1). Another definition comes from Davey and Seal (1993) “Foodways is a term used...to describe not only *what* is eaten by a particular group of people but also the variety of customs, beliefs and practices surrounding the production, preparation and presentation of food within that group” (Davey & Seal, 1993, p 182). Rath and Assmann (2010) describes foodways as a term that within itself serves as an indication that there is something more to food than “just food.” The similarities between the terms of culturally relevant food and foodways lie in the valuation and consideration of both culture/tradition and tangible processes in food systems. They differentiate in that the term culturally relevant food is a designator - it defines what something is. A particular food is, is not, is kind of, is potentially, etc. culturally relevant. Foodways, on the other hand, describes. It describes food systems, all of the practices involved, as they are influenced by and influence culture, tradition, and meaning-making. Further, sovereign foodways are defined and owned by people and communities and operate outside of domestic and global trade policies (Macias, 2022).

Urban agriculture has resurfaced as a mechanism that aims to build community, provide access to fresh produce, and practice urban climate resilience. In line with this, urban agriculture will be of increasing importance in the face of climate change as it is enlisted in mitigation and adaptation efforts in urban areas (Dubbeling & de Zeeuw, 2011). The USDA defines urban

agriculture as “the cultivating, processing and distributing agricultural products in urban and suburban areas. Community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic facilities, and vertical production are all examples of urban agriculture. Tribal communities and small towns may also be included” (USDA, n.d.). There are many forms of urban agriculture, and this thesis focuses particularly on urban farms as sites of urban agriculture. The selection of the urban farm site is intentional beyond logistical considerations. The model of the urban farm is distinct from that of the community garden when it comes to community access and economic systems. The community garden model typically entails members paying a yearly fee and working alone or alongside family on their garden plot, being the sole receivers of the benefits from the plot. As the sole laborers on the plot, community garden members can individually direct how their space will be utilized. The urban farm can take on many forms, some having individual leadership, others being spaces where community members all influence happenings together. In any case, the ratio is not one-to-one, as it is in the community garden. There may be one, or more than one, person controlling happenings at the farm, and many that receive the benefits. Taking into account these distinctions, examining urban farm sites is significant in investigating if and how these spaces can produce and support community agency and ownership and facilitate identity-shaping and place-making practices.

I first became curious about urban agriculture’s production of culturally relevant foods while volunteering at Huerta del Valle in October 2022. Meandering around the farm, I was pleasantly surprised to see a number of tropical plants growing in the greenhouse and some banana trees dotting the back corner of the property. Knowing about the demographics of the Inland Empire, where 55.8% (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.) of the population is Latinx, I wondered why these plants were growing here and what it meant for tropical plants to be growing in a

community-led urban farming space in Southern California. Was there an intention to provide culturally relevant food to the community? How did this intention look in practice? Was that potentially intended impact being realized in the community? Over the course of a couple of months, I formalized these questions, which now serve as the guiding research questions for this thesis. How does culturally relevant food production happen on urban farm sites? Do the production and the channels it occurs through contribute to creating sovereign foodways and the ability to engage in place-making practices? How do the practices at urban farm sites contribute to community members' capacity to autonomously shape their identities through food?

In doing this research, I returned to Huerta del Valle to answer some of these original questions. This thesis features case studies on three urban farms in the Inland Empire: Lopez Urban Farm in Pomona, CA, Huerta del Valle, specifically their site in Ontario, CA, and Root 66 Community Garden in Rancho Cucamonga, CA. The case study on Root 66 is limited because the urban farm at their site is currently under development. I include this case study alongside those of Huerta del Valle and Lopez Urban Farm to provide insight into how urban farm projects operate at their inception. I intend for this thesis to provide grounding for future, more extensive research and to provide place-specific models for developing urban agriculture sites that can foster community-led spaces and increase sovereignty in community foodways.

Through this research I found that culturally relevant food production on urban farms and the channels through which it occurs can serve to support sovereign foodways, place-making practices, and autonomous identity-shaping for immigrant communities. This influence is markedly different across the three urban farms, especially considering the variation in models. At Lopez Urban Farm, the practices of facilitating immigrant/community-led spaces, engaging in non-neoliberal market structures, growing food in culturally relevant ways (chemical-free,

small-scale), exposing and educating about unfamiliar foodstuffs, and providing space for practicing and educating on cultural traditions are key factors that contribute to sovereign foodways and the ability for immigrants to practice place-making and shape their cultural identities. At Huerta del Valle, the urban farm operates independently and also acts as a financial support to the community garden. In this sense, the urban farm at Huerta del Valle can be seen as supporting culturally relevant food production as it takes place at the community garden. The community garden model further influences place-making and identity-shaping practices for community members. The urban farm at Huerta del Valle also contributes to sovereign foodways as an immigrant-led space where community members can maintain agency in their food production and through the production of food using culturally relevant practices. The intention for the urban farm at Root 66 is for the produce to go to the Food Access Booth at the Pomona Community Farmer's Market. The farm will contribute to sovereign foodways through its produce being offered without a price in a dignified community space. The influence of Root 66 farm on identity-shaping and place-making practices is yet to be seen, though testimonials about the Food Access Booth demonstrate that cultural identity preservation already takes place through culturally relevant produce offered there.

This research fits well into the scope of the food sovereignty movement, which in part gives this work its significance. The findings of this research have the potential to impact the building of sovereign food systems as they are influenced by urban agriculture. Additionally, the call for more research on culturally relevant food production is clear - scholars who have embarked on a journey to further define/examine culturally relevant food are calling for others to do the same (Morgan & Trubek, 2020, Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). This research is

place-based in a region that is not well studied and provides insight into the position of urban farms within the Inland Empire.

## **Background**

The history of a place will inevitably invite rich context into any research project. The place that this thesis research focuses on is the Inland Empire, a region of the state of California, which encompasses San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Just east of Los Angeles County, five million people reside in the area. What is now a region known for the major hub that the logistics industry has created, the Inland Empire has a rich agricultural history, which I will explore in the following section as I ultimately attempt to outline for the reader how the Inland Empire transformed over the past centuries into what it is today.

The Indigenous people that inhabit this land known as the Inland Empire are primarily the Cahuilla, Serrano, Luiseño, and Gabrielino-Tongva people (Patterson, 2015). These peoples inhabited the Inland Empire region beginning 3,500-5,000 years ago. They were the first people on this land, and further, the first to have an anthropocentric impact on the region, through their careful management of the landscape for the procurement of resources (Patterson, 2015). These management strategies included landscape burning. Indigenous people continue to inhabit this land, which has been and continues to be their territory and ancestral land. (*reference land acknowledgment on page 4*)

While the Spanish Crown claimed possession of the Pacific coast in the 1740s, the Spanish did not invade California until 1769 (Rolle & Verge, 2015). It was then that Indigenous life was irrevocably impacted, through the invasion and colonization of their peoples and land. In 1821, Mexico seized control of California, including the Inland Empire (Patterson, 2015). In



1836, Californios seized power from the Mexican Government and began state-making. California was then seized again in 1847 by the United States (Patterson, 2015).

During this time, agriculture in the Inland Empire region was diversified, but in the 1870s the proliferation of citrus groves in Southern California began (Giovannini, 1985). The number of orange groves in the Inland Empire grew rapidly in the decades following the 1870s, as railroads, primarily transcontinental ones, opened up markets for citrus outside of the Los Angeles area (Patterson, 2015). In the 1880s and 1890s, with the influx of immigration as well as land ownership turnover in the Inland Empire, specialty agriculture grew in its importance (Patterson, 2015). Citrus production dominated the San Gabriel Valley, western San Bernardino, and Riverside, but other specialty crops such as olives, avocados, and walnuts began to be grown in other areas of the Inland Empire (Patterson, 2015). Orange, and other specialty crops, continued to be a factor of major growth in the Inland Empire until the 1940s (Patterson, 2015). These agricultural systems relied on the labor of Latinx and Asian workers, as white landowners created and upheld an agricultural elite (Patterson, 2015).

The implications of WWII on the greater Los Angeles area were significant. Nearly a million people immigrated to the area while war-related industries boosted the local economy between 1940 and 1944 (Patterson, 2015). Additionally, during this time, many orchards were cleared both because of rampant disease in the fields and also because of the immediate need for residential construction to house the influx of people (Patterson, 2015). Inland Empire cities turned away from citrus production and towards employment in construction, the aerospace industry, and other related industries (Patterson, 2015). During the Cold War period, growth continued to proliferate in the Inland Empire through war-related industries, an increase in durable goods production, and white-collar jobs coupled with university enrollment (Patterson,

2015). The economic downturn of the 1960s in the US impacted the residents of the Inland Empire, as unemployment rates and the cost of living rose, amongst other factors. High property taxes in other areas of California during the 1960s and 1970s pushed more and more people into lower-cost housing areas such as the Inland Empire (Patterson, 2015). The 1980s and 1990s saw a great influx of immigrant populations, attracted to the Inland Empire for its low housing prices as rents and home prices increased in Los Angeles (Patterson, 2015). In the 1980s the Inland Empire population rose by 66 percent, 38.5 percent being Latinos. In the 1990s, Latinos became the largest in-migrating ethnic group. Leading up to the 1990s, around seven percent of the population was employed in military-related industries, which led to a dramatic rise in unemployment following the closure of multiple important employers, such as the Norton Air Force base (Patterson, 2015).

During the 1990s, offshore production of goods increased greatly, leading to significant increases in imports into the US, imports that needed somewhere to go. In 1995, the Port of Long Beach became the number one container port in the US (Port of Long Beach, n.d.). With so much product coming into the port, it needed to be transported and stored somewhere. Thus began the building of the logistics industry in the Inland Empire. In the mid-1990s, warehouses began to be built, and within a decade the Inland Empire was rapidly transformed into the “Warehouse Empire of the Nation” (Patterson, 2015). As of 2013, more than 45 percent of the United State’s imports were coming through the ports in Los Angeles, primarily the Port of Long Beach, and loaded onto trucks and trains to be deposited in the Inland Empire (Patterson, 2015).

As a result of this industry change, pollution levels have skyrocketed and chronic health issues in the Inland Empire population have increased. In January of 2023, dozens of labor, environmental, and community groups urged California Governor Gavin Newsom to implement

a region wide moratorium on warehouses, stating in their letter “Warehouse-induced pollution has created a state of environmental injustice and a public health crisis in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties” (Uranga, 2023). According to the American Lung Association, smog in the Inland Empire is the worst in the nation (American Lung Association, 2022). As jobs in manufacturing and aerospace industries disappeared and agricultural land was continuously converted for other uses, including warehouses, the logistics industry added thousands of jobs for the residents of the Inland Empire (Patterson, 2015). This employment is disproportionately made up of Black and Latinx workers. Wages in the industry are low, the work often precarious, and employment is rather unstable given anti-union sentiments in the industry, especially on the behalf of corporations such as Amazon (Patterson, 2015, U.S. Department of Labor, 2023).

Put plainly, the situation that now stands in the Inland Empire is one of environmental injustice. Warehouses continue to be built year after year, and marginalized communities, namely communities of color, continue to face the burden of immense pollution. Lack of access to food is a prevalent issue, Feeding America claims on its webpage that there are over 400,000 food insecure people in the Inland Empire (Feeding America, n.d.). While there are programs and institutions that exist to ameliorate this situation in the Inland Empire, they do not address more formative issues that created these problems in the first place, nor are they often community-led initiatives.

Given the Inland Empire’s rich agricultural history and current positionality, the role that urban agriculture stands to play in this region, in particular, is significant. In the last 20 years, alongside the proliferation of community-led environmental justice groups, food justice initiatives have begun to spring up (Sarathy, 2013). Uncommon Good, an Inland Empire based non-profit that works in part to provide local and fresh produce for the community, for example,

incorporates urban farming into their mission. Their website reads “When the economy crashed in 2008, poverty became even more dire in this region. Uncommon Good and the families it serves responded by creating an urban farming program to grow organic produce for families who otherwise could not afford enough fruits and vegetables. Called [CAUSA](#), which means ‘the cause’ in Spanish, it stands for Community Alliance for Urban Sustainable Agriculture.”

(Uncommon Good, 2022) Uncommon Good continues to provide food for the community, both through their community farms and through community gleaning.

The importance of urban agriculture in the area is also demonstrated by the Sustainable Agriculture Lands Conservation (SALC) project through the Inland Empire Resource Conservation District (IERCD). This two year grant is geared, in part, towards identifying urban agriculture priority projects and opportunities in efforts of agricultural land conservation (IERCD, n.d.). The IERCD also started an Urban Agriculture Stakeholder Group that I had the opportunity to be a part of through my fellowship at the Robert Redford Conservancy. This effort, alongside other work being done in the Inland Empire, works to combat the intense continued proliferation of the logistics industry in the area by prioritizing the protection of agricultural lands. These efforts recognize the importance of agricultural lands in this area for creating a resilient and sustainable future for the Inland Empire region.

The three urban agriculture sites that are included in this thesis are representative of the importance of urban agriculture in the Inland Empire. I will include more context on each of the farm sites in chapters three, four, and five. These are three of many sites of urban agriculture in the Inland Empire, which range from community gardens to backyard gleaning programs.

## **Methodology**

This research utilizes a qualitative research approach in pursuit of understanding 1) what goes on at the farm level in terms of intentionality and management with respect to producing culturally relevant food and 2) on the community level in terms of how the production of and channels of producing culturally relevant food influence place-making and identity-shaping processes, as well as how these processes support sovereign foodways. I conducted case studies on three urban agriculture sites, primarily through interviews, but also through visits to the farm sites and attendance at farm events. I engaged in qualitative, semi-structured interviews with four farm staff from Huerta del Valle (Ontario), one farm staff from Root 66 (Rancho Cucamonga), and two farm staff from Lopez Urban Farm (Pomona), all sites being within what is known as the Inland Empire, CA. I interviewed both staff members from Lopez Urban Farm at their farm site, two of the Huerta del Valle staff members at their farm site, and interviewed them all during their work hours. I recorded these interviews digitally. The other interviews were held over Zoom and recorded through the functions on Zoom. I interviewed the farm staff member from Root 66 at her home in Pomona. In addition, I digitally recorded and transcribed interviews with three community members at Huerta del Valle and four community members at Lopez Urban Farm. All community member interviews were conducted in person at the urban agriculture sites. At farm events, such as market days, I interviewed community members attending the events to harvest, purchase, or receive food. A list of interview questions is referenced in the appendix.

Chapter 1 presents a review of the relevant literature. This begins with a contextualization of the food sovereignty, food justice, and food security movements and goes into a comparison of food justice and food sovereignty. It then moves into background on urban agriculture, which includes issues within urban agriculture as practiced today. This is followed by a “definition” of

the term culturally relevant food and presents both traditional and radical notions of the concept. The next section features literature that argues the importance of food in shaping racial identity, specifically in the context of immigrant communities. The literature review concludes by presenting literature on the immigrant experience of place-making at sites of urban agriculture.

Chapter 2 is a case study on Lopez Urban Farm. This case study features testimonials from two staff members and four community members. Beginning with a background on Lopez Urban Farm, as gathered through multiple visits to the farm site, this case study delves first into staff member testimonies on decision making, community leadership, culturally relevant food production, and the market model. The second half of the chapter features testimonials from the community members on the topics of identity-shaping, culturally relevant growing practices, cultural education, and community building. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the practices at Lopez Urban Farm contribute to building sovereign foodways and resourcing place-making and identity preservation.

Chapter 3 is a case study on Huerta del Valle, specifically the location in Ontario, CA. It features four interviews with farm staff and three interviews with community members. This case study also begins with background on the farm site, compiled through information gathered in interviews and through visiting the farm. It takes a similar structure to the case study on Lopez Urban Farm, beginning with staff member testimonies on a number of topics ranging from culturally relevant production processes to market models. The community members quoted in the later sections shared their values and experience of culturally relevant food production at Huerta del Valle, as well as about their community garden plots and connections to homeland practices. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the power of community garden spaces in

place-making and identity-shaping practices and how urban farms can serve to support these operations.

Chapter 4 is a case study on Root 66 Community Garden, specifically on the urban farm that is currently under development. Through a conversation with the leader of the urban farm operation, this case study presents valuable insight into how urban farms can serve already existing justice initiatives. There is only one interview subject written about in this case study, further they are featured throughout and speak to the importance of food distribution mechanisms such as the Food Access Booth at the Pomona Community Market that operate outside of neoliberal bounds and actually work to get high-quality food to people that need it and how the urban farm is oriented to serve such an initiative. The chapter concludes with a brief look into the future of just food systems and sovereign foodways.

Chapter 5 concludes this thesis by comparing the three case studies to present the primary findings of this research. The findings of this thesis engage channels of culturally relevant food production and the role of community members in decision making, sovereign foodways, cultural identity preservation, homeland re-creation, and neoliberalism. This thesis concludes by iterating the importance of cultural valuations of food in the face of climate change and asserts the necessity of urban farm spaces for immigrant communities.

## **Chapter 1: Relevant Literature**

This chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature that this thesis engages with and builds upon. The scholars cited in the following chapter make critical commentary on topics in this thesis such as food sovereignty, food as identity-shaping, and homeland re-creation practices. The following sections are the backbone of this thesis, providing the crucial theory and knowledge for this project to be resourced, insightful, and influential.

### **Contextualizing Food Sovereignty, Food Security, and Food Justice**

This thesis is rooted in food sovereignty, however, the topics covered are also relevant to food justice and food security initiatives. Primarily, this review of the literature serves to distinguish the food justice and food sovereignty movements in the context of the United States. First detailing the histories of food security, food sovereignty, and food justice, this section primarily centers on how the contrasting movements challenge vs perpetuate neoliberalism and what that means for change-making capacities in creating sovereign, rights-based food systems.

Béné et al. (2019) postulate that the unanimous narrative around food systems is that they are failing, but the nature of this failure is perceived differently across scholars in the field. The authors broadly characterize these focal points of failure in the food system as yield, quality, distribution, and environmental impact (Béné et al., 2019) Further, there are groups of scholars who perceive either that not enough food is produced (yield), that food quality should be a greater focus (quality), that there is enough food but it is not well distributed (distribution), and that the primary issue with the food system is its drastic environmental impact (environmental impact) (Béné et. al., 2019). This section will investigate how the food sovereignty, food security, and food justice movements work to address issues in the food system.



Food security was first mentioned in a World Food Conference report published in 1975 (United Nations, 1975). The notion of food security appeared on the heels of the food price crisis of the 1970s and was developed in line with neoliberal globalization policies. In the World Food Conference report, food security at the world level is defined as the “availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs...to sustain steady expansion of food consumption...and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (United Nations, 1975, p. 14). It might be more instructive here to look at what is *not* communicated through this definition. As pointed out by Maletta (2014), this definition is “almost silent on the role of food trade... and quite silent as well on the question of access to food by households or individuals” (Maletta, 2014, p. 4). These missing pieces, in contrast, are fundamentally addressed within the food sovereignty movement. The well-acknowledged birth of food sovereignty was in 1996, made into a movement by the international peasants’ organization, Via Campesina (Jarosz, 2014). This was just after the 1995 Zapatista uprising in Mexico, which occurred partially in response to the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Jarosz, 2014). Initially a small-farmers movement of the Global South, food sovereignty arose as a rights-based movement that demanded substantive change at the national and local level and aimed to push back against global trade schemes, such as NAFTA, that posed to threaten countries’ sovereign abilities to produce food for their residents (Jarosz, 2014). While food sovereignty has been redefined by several institutions over time, the well-cited definition by institutions such as Via Campesina and by the Declaration of Nyeleni reads “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through their ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems” (Nyeleni Village, 2007, p. 1). In discussing food sovereignty, it is important to include a definition of what agency means in a

food systems context. Chappell (2018) defines agency, adapted from Rocha (2007), as “The requirement that citizens are empowered in defining and securing their own food security, and thus that there are competent sociopolitical systems wherein policies and practices may be brought forth by the will of the citizens...” (Chappell, 2018, p 57).

While the food sovereignty movement has gained traction within a global context, the food justice movement has had stronger roots within the United States to date (Clendenning et al., 2016). Food justice primarily addresses issues of race and class, working to address food injustices and disparities in access centered around these issues (Clendenning et al., 2016). Arising from a coalition of farmers, the food sovereignty movement inherently prioritizes those who produce and distribute food and maintains the goals of self-determination and ownership in the food system (Clendenning et al., 2016). Further, food sovereignty aims to protect the rights of those who work in the food system, as opposed to food justice, which has a greater focus on consumers (Clendenning et al., 2016). In thinking about addressing food systems in North America, by primarily addressing small-scale producers, food sovereignty is missing the race component that food justice takes on and is thus not as applicable to issues of urban food access (Clendenning et al., 2016).

This being said, both Alkon and Mares (2012) and Guthman (2008) point to how neoliberalism is reproduced through American food justice initiatives that reinforce the notion that problem solving must be done at the individual and community levels. Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as a “political and economic ideology that emphasizes the role of the free market and individualism in promoting economic growth and prosperity” (Harvey, 2005, p 2). Alkon and Mares (2012) interpret Harvey (2005), writing that neoliberalism “asserts the primacy of the market in attending to human needs and wellbeing” (Alkon & Mares, 2012, p 348). Alkon

and Mares (2012) also communicate various scholars' arguments that through a market-first orientation, neoliberalism creates subjectivities that perpetuate the notion that individuals are responsible for their own well-being (Alkon & Mares, 2012). In short, neoliberal models don't work in achieving just and equitable food systems (Alkon & Mares, 2012, Guthman, 2008).

While food movements, referred to by Guthman as agro-food activism, may directly attempt to work against specific aspects of neoliberalization, they too can be ignorant of the ways that they perpetuate neoliberalism. Guthman (2008) specifically points to agro-food activism as adopting neoliberal ideals through centering localism and consumer choice. Alkon and Mares (2012) also discuss the emphasis on citizen empowerment within US food movements. Even for those movements that support a greater role of the state in regulating food, the objective remains the same: educate people so that they can make better individual choices (Guthman, 2008).

Alkon & Mares (2012) and Guthman (2008) in turn argue that engaging in these neoliberal notions constrains food activism work in the US. Guthman (2008) writes "For activist projects, neoliberalization limits the conceivable because it limits the arguable, the fundable, the organisable, the scale of effective action, and compels activists to focus on putting out fires" (Guthman, 2008, p 1180). Alkon and Mares (2012) similarly argue that neoliberalism hinders the ability to perform even the most immediate goals of food activism. What the bounds of neoliberalism mean for food movements in the US is a limited vision of what the food system *could* transform into (Alkon & Mares, 2012). This relates to the Right to the City, as conceptualized by urban theorist David Harvey in 2012. Harvey (2012) writes that while much intention goes into promoting the construction of a better world, many of the proposed solutions are in actuality individualistic and do very little to challenge neoliberal market logics and neoliberal modes of state action. Harvey (2012) asserts that the fundamental piece of the Right to

the City, which is further a human right, is “the right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart’s desire” (Harvey, 2012, p 2), in turn arguing for the right to create substantive change that does not perpetuate status quo.

Alkon & Mares (2012) specifically argue that engaging in the ideas of food sovereignty allows for the radicalization of food justice projects that are capable of transforming the current corporate food system. In comparing food security, food sovereignty, and food justice, Alkon and Mares (2012) assert that food sovereignty is the only one that focuses on opposing neoliberalism as opposed to perpetuating it. A key point in their argument is that food sovereignty analysis holds neoliberal capitalism responsible for the fundamental problems with the food system. They argue that food justice is “less aware” of capitalism, as it places institutional racism as the primary perpetrator of hunger amongst communities of color (Alkon & Mares, 2006). While not dismissive of the legitimacy of institutional racism, the authors pose the adoption of food sovereignty frameworks as a way to advance food justice projects in the US (Alkon & Mares, 2012).

### **Urban Agriculture: A Brief Overview**

Urban agriculture has become a common term in the US through its connection to and enlistment in movements such as food justice and food sovereignty. The practice of urban agriculture stems from some of the world’s first civilizations, with archaeological evidence of agro-urban cities in ancient Egypt, Mayan Civilization, and Asia (Corrêa et al., 2020). Urban agriculture rose in popularity in the US during WWI and WWII, as the National War Garden Commission worked to promote patriotism through urban agriculture and the need for domestic food production increased (Mares & Peña, 2010). At the end of WWI, these gardens were named “victory gardens” (Mares and Peña, 2010). The proliferation of urban farms decreased following

WWII, with historians tracing the proximate wave of urban agriculture in the early 1970s (Mares and Peña, 2010). Today, urban agriculture is promoted with the intention of increasing urban food access, providing urban green space and further space for connection to nature, increasing urban climate resiliency through ecosystem services and spaces for biodiversity, and being a space for community building/strengthening (Levkoe, 2006, Egerer et al., 2018, Lal, 2020). The food justice movement places value on urban agriculture in its capacity to provide fresh and nutritious food that might otherwise be inaccessible to the urban poor (Diekmann et al., 2020).

Urban agriculture, however, from inception to impact, is not always wholly positive. On a health level, there are issues with soil contamination in urban areas, which can lead to potential hazards and contaminants in food produced in an urban agriculture setting (Orsini et al., 2013). Additionally, in the context of the US, urban agriculture as produced by alternative food networks can promote, intentionally or not, white/Western ideals of health and nutrition (Slocum, 2011). Clendening et al. (2016) also note that urban agriculture, while having the capacity to contribute positively to food sovereignty, also stands to reproduce technocratic and neoliberal ideology. This is sometimes the trend with agri-food action in the US, as Guthman (2008) points out that urban agriculture initiatives can reproduce neoliberalism through the emphasis on consumer choice. In line with this the romanticized notion of local food production and its being perceived as transformative in food politics can be misplaced (Guthman, 2008). Born and Purcell (2006) hazard against assuming that locally produced food is always desirable.

## **Beyond Access to Culturally Relevant Foods**

This section of the literature review addresses the pervasive notion of “access to culturally relevant food” that is recurrent within the literature. It then highlights definitions of culturally relevant food that account for the multifold processes, meanings, and complexities

around food. Ultimately, this section of the literature review explores the adoption of an expanded framework that involves foodways and understands variations of cultural valuations of food.

In practice, “access to culturally relevant foods” acts as ingredient replacement, which focuses on foodstuff as stand alone, devoid of meaning in cultural contexts (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). An excellent demonstration of this pervasive notion of culturally relevant food is dietary guidelines for ethnic groups in the US. In these resources, Westernized notions of health are upheld, and “ethnic” foods are proposed as ingredient replacements (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). For example, these guidelines are based on the assumption that a tortilla can be substituted for white bread. In this way, they allow for the consumption of culturally relevant foods, but only within the context of American notions of what you should eat and how much (Hammelman and Hayes Conroy, 2015). Each substitution found in these customizable dietary guidelines (Customizing the Dietary Guidelines Framework, n.d.) is there because it makes sense within Western guidance and nutritional expertise (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). Further, these resources make it clear that culture is only in discussion because it makes American health initiatives more palatable for the diverse population (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015). This doesn’t allow for food to be understood in a broader cultural context and instead suggests that these ethnic food items can simply be substituted for American ones (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015).

This is in agreement with perspectives that suggest altering diet preferences to create nutritious and sustainable diets. This idea relies on culturally relevant foods as ingredients and suggests that culture is something that should be changed through assimilation and modernization. Béné et al. (2019) argue that transitioning to sustainable and healthy diets

involves challenging culturally appropriate food preferences. They argue for two “necessary” transitions, “(i) transitioning towards more healthy diets, thus recognizing that some elements of particular national diets may have to be challenged and in that context that the criterion ‘culturally acceptable’ is not always the recipe for healthy diets; and (ii) transitioning to more environmentally friendly diets where the consumption of particular types of foods may be discouraged” (Béné et al., 2019, p. 126). This argument outlines some common conceptions of culturally relevant foods as unhealthy and unsustainable. Instead of working to provide culturally appropriate food, Béné et al. (2019) suggest an alternate course of action - disregarding them in pursuit of health and sustainability.

However, expanded definitions of culturally relevant food that involve the multi-fold cultural meanings of food and foodways exist within the literature. The root of this expanded definition is in the scholarship of Hammelman and Hayes-Conroy (2015) as they radically define cultural acceptability through an examination of the literature. In their paper, they broadly categorize aspects of culturally relevant food, as they are discussed in the literature, as human rights, means of production, means of consumption, knowledge, and decision making power. Through their review of the literature, they argue that cultural acceptability must be understood as more than just substituting certain foodstuffs for others, writing that “various scholars demonstrate that culturally acceptable food may include modes of production and preparation, land connections, traditional farming systems, cultural relationships... additionally, scholars argue for the inclusion of cultural values relating to the sharing of food, eating, and cooking...” (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015, p 43). The concluding line of their paper is particularly instructive. “Taking culture seriously here means taking the time to understand how cultural acceptability develops and progresses, how it is enacted and contested by different groups at

different times, and how all aspects of the food system matter to its elaboration” (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015, p 44). These statements align with notions discussed by Alkon and Mares (2012) as they speak to the capacity of food sovereignty frameworks in moving beyond notions of culturally relevant food access to account for “the cultural importance of food in sustaining social relationships as well as the ways that food can be implicitly used to erode social relationships, cultural meanings, connections to place, and the exercising of rights” (Alkon & Mares, 2012, p 358). They also state that the adoption of a food sovereignty framework will lead “to a more comprehensive focus on entitlements to land, decision making, and control over natural assets” (Alkon & Mares, 2012, p 358). Additionally, Cachelin et al. (2019) speak to how “a food sovereignty approach that values the importance of multicultural foodways is an essential element of food justice” (Cachelin et al., 2019, p 419).

### **Race, Immigrant Communities, and Food Shaped Identity**

A significant component of this research tracks how food shapes racial and cultural identity. An important scholar on this subject is Rachel Slocum, Ph.D. of Geography, who has written a number of papers on race and geography. In her paper, “Race in the Study of Food,” Slocum (2011) points to the role that food habits and tastes play in producing and maintaining racial identity. Further, she claims that “scholars understand food preparation and consumption as central to the development and preservation of racialized identity and belonging...” (Slocum, 2011, p 305). In line with this, Burdick (2014) writes on the topic “Decisions about what to eat are of utmost importance to preserving cultural and racial identity across geographic spaces and temporalities” (Burdick, 2014, p 1576). Slocum (2011) also points to resilience practiced through food for migrants and racialized communities. In particular, cooking and eating are revealed as



means through which to resist imposed assimilation and racialized heteropatriarchy (Slocum, 2011).

As discussed by Burdick (2014), food is often used as a tool by the West through which to oppress and colonize racial groups. He points specifically to the case of the colonization through food of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, highlighting examples such as European eradication of the wild buffalo population and forced farming on reservations (Burdick, 2014). Similar to Slocum's testaments to the resistance inherent to food choice, Burdick (2014) writes that Indigenous people have fought against this "food-based colonization" and worked to decolonize their diets through reclaiming their culinary heritage.

Food as identity-shaping for immigrant populations is particularly salient. As Mares (2012) states, migration is dislocation, and "in the midst of dislocation, sustaining and re-creating the cultural and material practices connected to food are powerful ways to enact one's cultural identity and sustain connections with families and communities who remain on the other side of the border" (Mares, 2012, p 335). Burdick (2014), referencing Slocum (2011), points out the relevance of "nostalgic gastronomy," defined as the process through which one recreates their memories of home through food. Continuing, he says that this nostalgic gastronomy has allowed immigrant groups "often in the face of oppression, alienation, and isolation to bridge a 'sensual gap' between the homeland and the United States" (Burdick, 2014, p. 1579). This "sensual gap" is facilitated by immigrant people practicing culinary traditions from their home countries while in their host countries (Burdick, 2014). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2017) similarly writes about the importance of food to cultural memory for immigrant people. Turkon and Weller (2014) affirm this, discussing the way that food functions as a bridge between immigrant people and their homeland. Similar to Slocum in her arguments on food as identity-shaping, Burdick (2014)

writes “Immigrant populations have pushed back and reasserted their cultural identity through the continued production, consumption, and sale of foods, dishes, and products unique to their cultural identity” (Burdick, 2014, p. 1579).

Although in a globalized food economy, access to foods from one’s home country should theoretically be easier, immigrant people still face a host of barriers when it comes to finding familiar foods that maintain their cultural identities. This is in part due to the price that specific food items might be in America as opposed to in their home countries. In a study of Latino immigrants in Maryland, Munger et al. (2015) describe through testimonials the experience of immigrant people who are unable to afford culturally affirming food, and must instead rely on cheap staples for all of their meals. For some immigrant communities studied by Munger et al. (2015), food pantries, school breakfast and lunch programs, and friends are essential components of ensuring that families are well fed. The authors comment that relying on these resources may limit access to culturally preferred foods, in turn making it challenging for parents to instill traditional food culture and taste in their children (Munger et al., 2015). This speaks to another facet of the immigrant experience, for those who have children who may have been born in the United States. Turkon and Weller (2014), through their research on immigrant foodways in Ithaca, NY, designate food as a means through which immigrant people can pass on their cultural identity to their children once in their host countries.

However, it is necessary, as Koc and Welsh (2002) communicate, to not essentialize authenticity in the context of immigrant diets. In a modern and globalizing world, food choices for immigrant populations are shifting, in flux, and are no longer limited to the social and cultural contexts of their country of origin (Koc and Welsh, 2002). The authors speak to the importance of maintaining cultural identity, but also to the need to examine immigrants' sense of

belonging and identification with a given host society, particularly in the adoption of new foodways as they weave into those of home countries. They write “If we learn and define who we are through what we eat, the multicultural cuisine may offer us a glimpse of widening notions of identity, self, and belonging...” (Koc & Welsh, 2002, p 10).

## **Place-Making in the Urban Garden**

There is a rich history connecting urban agriculture and immigrant communities as they work to build connections to their host and home countries. This history is explored by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014). In her book, *Paradise Transplanted*, she analyzes the historical trend of garden making in Southern California as a story of conquest and colonization (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). In each era of migration and further domination in California history, gardens took different shapes, reflecting the subordinate group, normally exploited racialized labor forces, in the landscape. The citrus industry was one of the first industries in California to employ migrant labor. In this era, Mexican citrus workers lived in *colonias*, segregated settlements, and often had their own gardens (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) details the history of immigrant communities and the proliferation of home gardens and what she posits, most significantly, is that through building gardens, immigrants are agential, as opposed to passive, misplaced, and willingly adaptable (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014). She suggests seeing the immigrant as *the gardener*: “gardens [are seen] as an expression of immigrant agency and creation, with immigrants using homeland seeds and plants to anchor themselves in a new place, bringing together culture and nature to materially remake a strange new environment into a familiar home” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014, p 5). Ultimately, she states that through gardening, immigrants may resist marginalization.

*Paradise Transplanted* provides a model for this thesis. In particular, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) documents how the two urban gardens that she did case studies on reflect the affirmation of cultural identity, create spaces of belonging, provide nourishment and medicine, and ultimately re-create homeland practices and culture. She defines these processes in the fourth chapter of *Paradise Transplanted* as “homeland re-creations.” Her broader work challenges dominant theoretical approaches of immigrant scholarship, assimilation and transnationalism, by arguing that these approaches overlook how immigrants intentionally practice place-making in the project of creating a new home (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). She writes about how people use the space at the gardens she studied to plant crops that remind them of home but also about how immigrants embraced vegetables they were unfamiliar with. She also documented another component of place-making in the way that community gardens serve to provide space for immigrant people to teach their children about connections with the soil (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017). She ultimately concludes by stating that “community gardens are... minizones of autonomy and restoration, where there is room to congregate with others and engage in the materiality, practice, and affective meaning-making of home” (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017, p 26).

Hondagneu-Sotelo is not the only scholar to write about place-making practices of immigrant communities as they involve urban agriculture. The research of Mejia et al. (2020) centers the Village Community Garden and Learning Center in Rochester, Minnesota. The findings of their study affirm that growers at this community garden “want to grow commodities native to their homeland that they can sell in their communities and at local markets” (Mejia et al., 2020, p. 15). Their research specifically speaks to the importance of community garden spaces in moments of crisis (Mejia et al., 2020). This is in part due to the disruption of supply chains, which was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mejia et al., 2020). These breaks in

supply result in higher prices for culturally specific foods as well as generally decreased access to them. Mejia et al. (2020) point to the ways that community gardens can supplement this need, “growers state that the produce from the community garden supplements their food supply and provides places to grow produce from their native countries” (Mejia et al., 2020, p. 16).

Similarly, Colson-Fearon and Versey’s (2022) study of urban agriculture and food sovereignty in Baltimore designates that urban agriculture, specifically urban farms, can align with a food sovereignty framework in allowing for community member access to and control of their own food production. In their 25 interviews with community stakeholders, key themes that arose were health promotion, affordability, community control, and environmental sustainability (Colson-Fearon & Versey, 2022). Specifically, they note how urban farm settings allow for people to both educate and be educated about traditional practices and new foods in strengthening intergenerational communities (Colson-Fearon & Versey, 2022). Diekmann et al. (2020) speak to the potential of gardens in supporting cultural practices that relate to both foodways and spiritual/healing practices. The authors also call attention to the connection between gardening and cultural food values in understanding agency within the food system in a more broad context. They write “Acceptability offers a way to integrate the cultural significance gardeners attach to growing their own food with the material contributions of gardens to gardeners' diets and/or food budgets” (Diekmann et al., 2020, p. 169). Further, they emphasize the findings that low-income gardeners care about having agency in their gardens. The way this agency manifests is through growing culturally relevant foods, which demonstrates how homeland re-creation through growing culturally relevant foods is a physical manifestation of agency in the garden space. It is important here to note that most of the connections that have been drawn between urban agriculture and culturally relevant food surround community gardens,

which are spaces where community members have individual control of a given plot of land.

Focusing instead on urban farms, which potentially have stronger economic and productive models, investigates whether spaces that operate differently from community gardens can have the type of positive impacts they are associated with.

## **Chapter 2: Case Study on Lopez Urban Farm**

Lopez Urban Farm is hard to miss. Well, for most people. Located right on Mission Blvd., a main street in Pomona, CA, the gates are often open for people to drive into the small parking lot which edges pretty much straight onto their row cropping area. I somehow managed to miss the entrance, and as I headed into my first thesis interviews I felt incredibly embarrassed about the 10 minute walk I had done from where I ended up parking my car, around back by the elementary school. Upon arrival, I quickly found Erica, the farm's volunteer coordinator, whom I had been in contact with about the visit. She introduced me to Stephen Yorba, Lopez's lead farmer, who, after a bit of chatting, agreed to do an interview with me. Even though I had scoured the internet for everything I could find on the place, Stephen was my real introduction to Lopez Urban Farm, and for that I feel immensely grateful.

We sat on two plastic chairs, not the type of plastic chairs that sit in the garage, only there to pull out for when there's people coming over for dinner. They were plastic chairs meant for the outdoors, brightly colored, maybe five or so of them arranged in a circle, with ample space to lean back. They were clearly meant for gathering.

### **Background**

Lopez Urban Farm is a three-acre urban farm located in Pomona, CA. It is a relatively young urban farm, only having been established about two years ago. The farm falls under the umbrella non-profit Community Partners 4 Innovation (CP4I), which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit located in Pomona, CA. The non-profit currently has two projects located in Pomona, Lopez Urban Farm and Esperanza Community Farm. Lopez Urban Farm is also a project in partnership with Pomona Unified School District. The back end of the farm has large farm boxes, which function as plots for students at Lopez Elementary School. On my tour of the property with

Erica, she said that students come to the farm on Thursdays, led by Stephen and farm interns, to grow their own produce in the plots. The farm also hosts a wide variety of other community programming. In the back of the farm along a section of fence are a couple of sensory boards, near a shaded mud play area. Erica runs a “sensory space,” in which she engages neurodivergent children with sensory activities. The farm also hosts Urban Farmer Training for kids ages 2-12. Every Wednesday, the community is welcome to the space for “El Puestecito,” during which there is a market offering produce as well as warm food and activities such as a crochet lab. They also host open harvest days on Saturdays from 10 am-2 pm. This program is relatively new and allows families and community members to harvest their own produce at the farm. The farm also hosts holiday events for days like Dia de Los Muertos and Christmas. The farm is open from 6 pm-8 pm every day for access to the Bodega, a shipping container refurbished into a donation center at the front of the property. The inside of the bodega is warm and string lights dangle from the ceiling - the donated items are displayed in a store-like manner, with food on shelves and clothes on hangers, for people to choose what they need.

Lopez Urban Farm is a food producing space. This is obvious upon arrival at the farm. When facing out towards the elementary school, the entire right side of the property is organized into rows of crops. On the left is an orchard as well as a food forest, where there are crops such as amaranth, mallow, sugar cane, and chard. In the back there is a pollinator area and in the center, under the shade of huge oak trees, are some tables used for events and classes. In the winter season, the rows are vibrant with leafy greens like arugula, kale, lettuce, bok choy, cilantro, and mizuna. Other winter crops currently in the ground are carrots, beets, and radishes. In the summer, they grow pepper and tomatoes, amongst other warm weather crops. Given the nature of California’s mild climate, Lopez Urban Farm is in production essentially all year round,



only really having major climate challenges in August and September when the heat is most intense.

Following the discussion of the farm as food provisioning: Lopez Urban Farm is a farm and not a garden. This point was made explicitly clear by Stephen even in the first few moments of chatting by his truck. Given how much emphasis was placed on this idea, it is important to contextualize for the reader what this signifies at Lopez Urban Farm. Stephen said, “I think why I like to use farm is because it's what's in people's mind when they use the word garden. To us this is, this is a revolutionary act. This is a justice act. This is subversive work. This is not gardening. This is something more than that. It's a revolution. So there's that aspect of it too, you know? Sometimes gardening is like cute and nice. Oh, you're building a garden! You know, it's that in people's mindsets. But practically, I would say, definition wise, we are, we are growing food, we're producing food for public consumption. And we're offering it to the public for consumption through our market and other access points.”

The economy of Lopez Urban Farm when it comes to distribution is simple: pay-what-you-can, take-what-you-need. This economic model was created intentionally to be dignified but accessible. The food is grown in Pomona for Pomona by Pomona - this notion being central to all of the farm's operations. The intention at the farm is not to make money off the food (Stephen made the case that there is very little money to be made in food anyways). In turn, the bulk of the funding for the farm is received on the back end through grants and donors. There are potential implications for a model that is not self-sustaining. Stephen commented on this, noting that self-sufficiency is something to be cognizant of.

Stephen spoke a lot about the broken relationship between people and their food and how the work at Lopez aims to restore this relationship. In line with this, food sovereignty is at the

forefront of all components of the work. In our conversation, Stephen defined food sovereignty simply and succinctly as “that right... to be able to make decisions about our food.” Lopez Urban Farm works to be an expression of food sovereignty, a place where people can maintain agency and ownership over their food system through connection with the food production process. Throughout this case study, testimonials and analysis will show how community members maintain ownership and agency through their engagement with Lopez Urban Farm, as well as how the model at Lopez Urban Farm allows for deeper practices of place-making and identity-shaping.

### **Staff Decision Making and Growing Culturally Relevant Food**

Stephen had background knowledge of the concept of culturally relevant food, as did Erica, the other staff member I interviewed, which, while not necessary, helped to get at the ideas I wanted to explore. In preparing for my interviews, I tried to shape questions that would paint a picture of how decisions on what to grow are made by farm staff, in particular, who influences decision making.

On both Erica’s and Steven’s behalf, the answer to the question of how decisions of what to grow at the farm are made was initially logistical. They told me they grow things that grow well in this area, they grow according to the seasons, they grow what they can get the biggest bang for their buck on. They both spoke about the benefits of greens, efficiency and productivity, commenting on the ability to plant one row of, for example, kale, and get multiple harvests. Stephen specifically commented on his unwillingness to “mess with” exotics, heirlooms, or crops that are hard to grow in this climate. Both of them noted that the farm does not have the space to grow high amounts of calorically dense food, so they prioritize growing food that is nutritious and as filling as possible. On this topic, Erica said, “As much as we want to provide food to

people for free, this food does not serve the purpose of adding calories to your diet if you're in a deficit. Nutrients absolutely. So you have to keep that in mind too, what is the most nutrient dense food we can grow because we can't grow calorically dense food." Erica also mentioned that the farm sometimes receives seedling or plant donations which then dictates what will be grown. Stephen wants to grow things that "move quickly," in other words, that have a high demand. I asked what moves the quickest and he responded, "you know, the roots, like the carrots. Beets, carrots. Your salad greens. Some people really like the mizuna and the kale. Kale's a big hit. Cilantro and your radishes." These testaments display that, first and foremost, Stephen wants to grow food, and he wants to grow it for people. With food production very much in mind, the work at Lopez could be characterized as fitting within the framework of food security, which, to remind the reader, ultimately calls for the production of more food. However, the processes accompanying and influencing the production of food make Lopez Urban Farm take on more meaning than solely as a farm that provides food as a means of nutrition.

Part of this meaning comes from the other channels through which decisions on what to grow are made. It is clear that at Lopez Urban Farm the community is more important than solely as receivers of produce. In part, this is through the community itself forming the farm leadership. While Steven acknowledges that not every decision on the farm is made by the community (though he wishes it was), his philosophy around community leadership is clear. Either you build the space with community, or you build it and community comes - either way, the community is involved and never distinct from the space. He stated, "It's hard to see ourselves as separate from the community. We, this just is community." He referred to the leadership at the farm as a circle, in which the group makes decisions, as opposed to just him. He said that this broader team is a reflection of the community, speaking to the proximity within which all of the team members

live to the site. While he was upfront about the work that still needs to be done in terms of community engagement, he also stated that, at this point, they (farm staff/leaders) have listened enough to know what the community wants and needs. Ultimately, he said, “in terms of making food choices of what to plant, I would say that bubbles up from the community into the farm, into our leadership. Then to me, who actually presses the button on what... seeds we’re gonna buy.” This comment is a testament to how individual leaders of urban farm spaces can support community autonomy and agency. A recurring theme in this case study: Stephen does not dictate, he listens. Importantly, community members also influence what is grown on the farm in a more direct sense. Stephen talked about how people come to him all the time and ask him if he’ll grow something and he’ll tell them, “Let’s plant it. You plant it.” Erica verified this in my interview with her, commenting on Stephen’s general approachability and openness to suggestions. She referenced this both in terms of staff members’ suggestions, but also in terms of requests from the general community. She said, “There’s people that come into the farm, even if they don’t volunteer, that say hey I want to do this, I want to do that and Steven is very open to those things and generally will make it happen.” This follow through on community requests is foundational to the work at Lopez, as Erica further impressed at the end of our interview. My last question to her was, in so many words, “Any last thoughts on the work at Lopez in connection to producing culturally relevant foods?” And she responded by reiterating the importance of this process which she had brought up earlier. “I think one really important part is that we are constantly evolving as a farm which means that if somebody comes to us and says, you know, this is something from my family, that is from my community and where I come from and I have difficulty finding it, I want to grow it here or I want you to grow it here, that is always available. That is always a yes.” In this practice, the staff at Lopez Urban Farm give space, physically and

metaphorically, for people to advocate for their desires and define their own foodways. In giving this space, community members are able to engage in place-making practices and can shape their tangible surroundings, also gaining access to food that influences their cultural identity-shaping. While the community members are not the gardeners or farmers in the same sense that Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) describes in her research on immigrant place-making in community gardens, they still have the opportunity to define what is grown at the farm. This may pan out differently in terms of maintaining culturally relevant connections to the practice of farming, however, it does result in the capacity for immigrants to define how they experience the land and what food they have accessible to them. This potentially contributes to their ability to engage in homeland re-creation on the farm in a similar way to the gardeners in Hondagneu-Sotelo's study, without being the gardeners themselves.

Erica and Stephen both talked about growing cilantro, radishes, and peppers because people are always looking for them (they move fast and grow well, as mentioned above). These crops are specifically relevant in Latinx cuisines, which is the majority demographic of the area. In this part of the conversation, Erica made an impactful statement about culturally relevant foods in connection to their abundance. She said, "We don't all sit down and think about what is culturally relevant, but some of the things are. The things that are easy to grow and can be abundant, there's a reason why these things are culturally relevant, because they're easy to grow and can be done in abundance and so, cilantro grows really fast and a lot of countries use cilantro in their cuisine..." In this, she ultimately draws a connection between the intention of producing food and producing culturally relevant food as, sometimes, the most productive crops are in turn the most culturally relevant ones. This is an important statement on the importance of both not

over-analyzing nor essentializing cultural relevance and also on the way that culturally relevant food production can happen without intention.

Hammelman and Hayes-Conroy's (2015) paper illuminates the importance of including production processes in understanding culturally relevant food. The importance of production is further iterated in definitions of foodways as referenced in the introduction (Davey & Seal, 1983). I asked Stephen and Erica about how they perceive community members' interest in how the food at Lopez Urban Farm is produced. Erica answered directly, "Yes, most people do [have interest]. And not everybody and in some of the situations where we're not getting questions asked sometimes it's because of the language barrier. So I don't think they're not necessarily interested, I just think it's difficult to ask the questions. But yeah, mostly people are very interested in how we grow, when we grow, what we grow." This statement demonstrates the role that culturally relevant production processes play in producing food that meets the needs of the community that Lopez Urban Farm serves.

To Stephen, cultural relevancy means native plants. He said, "My main thing is native plants. That's my cultural relevance... What is native to the area? What is native to this region? And we need to be growing that." Following this, he spoke about culturally relevant food production in regard to Indigenous peoples. He talked about growing amaranth in the food forest/wild space, proudly stating that after a successful seed, the farm will have amaranth forever. He talked about both the challenges of selling a product like amaranth that is unfamiliar to the population, and also to the power of having food producing plants like amaranth and oak trees in providing space for Indigenous people to teach and practice their traditions. Again, this opening of space, physical and metaphorical, at Lopez Urban Farm contributes to people's ability to engage with their food-shaped cultural identities. Stephen mentioned a program a few months

ago in which someone from an Indigenous organization in San Diego came to the farm to teach people how to make acorn tortillas. He also talked about Julian, who co-founded a local Indigenous organization called Indigeknowledge, and who works with the farm often. Ultimately, and most significantly, in this part of the conversation Stephen made it clear that what he does is open up space for others to make cultural meaning on the farm. “We’re really trying to build these cultural... We want to make sure that we’re supporting all of them. And the way we do it is by partnering with folks, because I can’t do that. I can’t start any of this stuff. I can’t speak to that. But, I can listen, find someone and welcome them into the space.” This notion of Stephen as a listener comes up again here. Community members create the place of Lopez Urban Farm, and this is because farm leadership prioritizes such practice.

## **Farm Practices**

The pick-your-own-produce days at Lopez give people an opportunity to connect deeply with their food production. Stephen articulated that he puts on these events with the intention of repairing the rift between people and their food, mending the broken relationship mentioned above. To him, these events are an opportunity to bring people one step closer to their food, even further than providing it at the market. He also speaks to the educational potential of having people in the field like this, commenting, “Some people have never seen food in the field. They have no idea how a carrot grows. I get students who just stand here like I’ve never seen, you know, broccoli as a flower.” In line with this, he comments on how getting people onto the farm creates conversations about food and restores a lost connection with it. Speaking to this connection building, Stephen made the following statement, “So this is the act of bringing food closer to us and closer to us so that we have a relationship - and think of a relationship. The intimacy of a relationship. You know, where we're growing again, we have choice again. And

what we eat and what we grow and we go to the kitchen and we cook again, and family comes in and we're cooking. And we all eat around the table and we have conversations again... That's why I want people to harvest their own food.” Stephen is not only talking about supplementing and supporting cultural traditions that already operate but also about a resurgence of food culture and community around food. What Stephen is saying could also be characterized as an image of foodways as they are recreated and reformed so that people are more connected with their food, identity, and each other. Additionally, creating a space for people to pick-their-own-produce could result in a greater sense of ownership for community members over their foodways. At the very least, bringing people closer to their food production allows them to know *what* is happening so that they can decide whether they want it or not - a key component of agency being knowledge.

Education plays a role in what goes on at Lopez Urban Farm, and this relates directly to both place-making and shaping host country influenced identities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2014, Koc and Welsh, 2002). Through exposing people to unfamiliar foods, people can autonomously create their food-informed identities in their host country (Koc and Welsh, 2002). Stephen talked about the importance of being introduced to unfamiliar foods in relation to culturally relevant foods. He reminded me that a crucial part of any conversation on culturally relevant food cannot make assumptions. He said, “We also can't assume that okay, we're in a predominantly Mexican community so they're all going to want cilantro, radishes, and tomatillos. They may like other things too. I get a lot of mothers coming in for kale... they're learning new things and they're trying new things.” This comment displays what Koc and Welsh (2002) iterate about the importance of not essentializing authenticity, and in turn the importance of giving space for the adoption of new foodways by immigrant communities without the assumption of passive



assimilation. This also relates to Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) in her statements on the wrongful assumption of migrants as willingly adaptable. In the sense that both Koc and Welsh (2002) and Stephen speak about, adaptation can be intentional on an immigrant's behalf and can potentially contribute to a sense of belonging in the host country. Clearly, Stephen's personal experience points to the active curiosity of the community members he engages with as they shape identities that are no longer limited to the contexts of their home countries.

### **Market Model: Operating Outside of Neoliberalism**

As described in the background section, the economy at Lopez Urban Farm is pay-what-you-can, take-what-you-need. In some cases, this means that the food is provided for free. Lopez Urban Farm distinguishes itself from other spaces where people can access food donations in multiple ways. While taking food without paying is always a welcome option, the economy at Lopez Urban Farm allows people to give back in a dignified way through volunteer efforts and trade. Erica spoke to this, articulating, "There's also this option for people, who if they feel like part of their self-worth is to give back, then they have the opportunity to do that and I think that is also a very humanizing experience if that is something that is really important to you."

In creating a distribution and economic model that doesn't rely on money as the sole form of payment, people are able to maintain a feeling of involvement and ownership in their food system. People who come to Lopez Urban Farm maintain the *right* to access food, both when they can and can't compensate for it monetarily. This distribution model is an example of sovereign foodways, in which consumption is not limited by means. This model operates in contrast to neoliberal models, in that it allows for the decentralization of monetary compensation and works towards an economy that prioritizes shared labor, community, and the *right* to food.

Another component of sovereign foodways demonstrated at Lopez Urban Farm is that people affirmatively and consistently get to *choose*. People can either come to the market on Wednesday and choose what they want to take home or come on Saturday and harvest the produce that they want. Erica phrased the importance of this distribution system well, saying, “One thing we always try to do, unless we absolutely have to, we’re not handing somebody a bag, full of whatever we put in it, it’s a very dehumanizing experience. So everything we have here, even in the bodega, is set up like a store. You come in, choose what you need, and you can take it and go.” She followed this up, commenting on traditional need-centered food distribution, “it takes away your choice, you’re basically saying that because you can’t afford to go to a grocery store and buy the things that I’m providing, you don’t get a choice anymore. We feed animals that way. There is no agency.” Applying the analytical framework of Alkon and Mares (2014), these food donation agencies can be seen as perpetuating neoliberal ideals that place the responsibility of food procurement in the hands of the individual and further fault people for not having the means to purchase food, as opposed to the model at Lopez which works against this notion of individuality and towards community-based systems.

### **Community Member Introductions and Routes to Involvement**

This case study thus far has centered Erica and Stephen as Lopez Urban Farm staff, in terms of describing the intentions of work on the farm and the manifestations of those intentions as they relate to food production, as well as on their perceptions of community experiences. The second component of my research involves investigating how community members' foodways are influenced by the model at Lopez Urban Farm. To investigate this, I interviewed three community members at Lopez Urban Farm as well as one of the teachers, Julian from the organization Indigeknowledge. I met these community members through attending two of the

Wednesday night Puesticitos and one of the Saturday pick-your-own-produce days. All of the interviews were conducted on the farm site. I will be using pseudonyms for the community members who requested anonymity. I will refer to these community members through their pseudonyms: Jennifer, Leah, and Mary. I will refer to Julian, who consented to my using of his name in this paper, by his proper name.

All four of the community members have different stories in terms of their involvement with Lopez Urban Farm, which in turn contribute to the role that the farm plays in their lives and in shaping their food systems. Jennifer became connected to urban agriculture in Pomona during the pandemic, just through reading about “the little farms here in our city.” She officially became involved at Lopez through helping with the operations at the bodega, and now comes every Wednesday to the Puestecito to help with the bodega. She said that she occasionally takes home produce, but getting food from Lopez Urban Farm is not influential on her consumption. Leah connected with Lopez through relationships at the local farmer’s market. She had recently moved into the area due to personal circumstances and was living in a women's shelter. She became a volunteer at Lopez, noting, “I saw what they were doing, back home in India, I’m a farmer’s daughter. It spoke to me so I became a regular volunteer. So I never let the thread go.” This testament describes Leah as engaging in homeland re-creation practices, as they are explored by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014). As it currently stands, Leah continues to live in a women's shelter and comes to volunteer on Wednesday nights, primarily welcoming people into the space. Unlike Jennifer, Leah relies heavily on the food she takes home from Lopez Urban Farm for her diet. When I asked her how the food she takes home influences her diet, she responded, “It’s the only thing I can eat. I’m a vegetarian. I have no cash resources... But this is what I cook, whatever is left or whatever they harvest, yes on other days too they harvest and I take and I cook it and eat

it, I have an induction plate and that is all I need.” It is revealed through this statement that the food provided by Lopez Urban Farm directly impacts Leah’s consumption and further autonomy over her consumption. Because of Lopez Urban Farm, she is able to sustain the diet she chooses. Mary got involved with Lopez Urban Farm during the pandemic in 2021. In 2021, her family was on a nutrition program called WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), as her husband was the only family member working. She mentioned that she first got into contact with Huerta del Valle, later finding Lopez Urban Farm. They enrolled their child in the urban junior farmer training program a couple of years ago, and semi-regularly attend the Puestecito, pick-your-own-produce days, and holiday events. Mary has a background in sustainability and conservation, as well as in regenerative studies, which makes her a unique interview subject with considerable knowledge on the topics we discussed. Finally, Julian, who could be perceived as either a farm staff or a community member, got involved in teaching at Lopez Urban Farm almost two years ago. I qualify him as a community member because his primary organization is Indigeknowledge, though it is clear that he is part of the broader leadership circle at Lopez. He said that he started working at Lopez Urban Farm because it was close to Lopez Elementary School, where his siblings were attending school. He liked feeling like a close-by resource for them in a space that can be “crazy,” to use his words. He teaches classes at Lopez, both for the community and for children at Lopez Elementary. He also facilitates other people, some Indigenous, coming to Lopez to teach. He is of Yaqui descent, which are the Indigenous people of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico. Often his classes surround teaching about various facets of Yaqui culture, with the mission of his organization being to preserve culture through language, art, and mutual aid. Along with teaching classes and being a leader at the farm, Julian does take home food from the

farm and spoke about times when he was financially struggling and turned to Lopez Urban Farm to supplement his weekly diet.

### **Culturally Relevant Food and Autonomous Consumption**

My interviews with community members ranged in depth and topics covered, but each community member had both valuable lived experience and insight to speak on. First, we talked about how food produced on the farm supplements community members' consumption and further their cultural ties to food. Jennifer said she does not acquire food that is culturally relevant to her through Lopez Urban Farm, though after a minute of pondering she mentioned that when they grew chamomile it reminded her of the tea her mom would make her as a child. This may, albeit weakly, speak to the potential for urban farm spaces to influence the practice of “nostalgic gastronomy” as presented by Burdick (2014). She said that sometimes she does take food home, but she tries to be cautious about it because if it isn't used right away, it goes bad. She also mentioned taking home cauliflower and roasting it, but noted it was not something she grew up eating. Leah, who reported produce from Lopez Urban Farm as having a significant impact on her diet, uses the produce in her “cheated cultural dish.” She detailed what she uses the produce from Lopez for, “[I] put some onions and ginger and garlic with my semi-steamed vegetables, everything that's there. Sometimes it's turnip greens, sometimes radish greens... and then at the end of it I pour olive oil on top and then put my spices, I actually dig a hole in the middle and start putting my spices in that... So it's like my cooked semi-salad plus Indian greens, mixed vegetables... If I wanted a gravy based Indian curry, then I put yogurt in it.” In this sense, the work at Lopez Urban Farm allows Leah to maintain agency over her consumption in a way that she stated she wouldn't have otherwise been able to, given her financial means. Because Leah can access the food that she desires through dignified means, she is able to support

her dietary values and connect to her cultural identity. Mary talked about using produce from the farm for cultural dishes but also mentioned that she likes to explore other cuisines through the introduction to new produce at the farm. “We got cilantro, for us like cebolla, cilantro, onions, garlic, or anything like that. But I was curious too because I want to explore other cuisines... we were like oh, you know, I’ve never used that in a dish but I’m curious... why not give it a try?” This statement bolsters claims on the importance of de-essentializing authenticity in immigrant people’s diets, in that immigrant people may not always want to eat foods that are traditionally from their home countries. The quote from Koc and Welsh (2002) referenced in Chapter 1 describes how multicultural diets (as explored by Mary) show widening notions of food shaped identity in a globalized world. Further, this exploration allows Mary to define her food shaped identity in the context of the US. I followed up by asking her what she was going to use the produce in her bag to make. She said, “For sure, first thing I go for is the onions and the cilantro, you know, you already start making salsa. So, that’s more the priority items.” Julian talked about getting amaranth from the farm, which he characterized as a food of his people. He also seemed to have a similar experience to Leah, in that he said that he could use produce from the farm to make cultural dishes by maybe tweaking a recipe. He said, “I could make a cultural soup, Waka Vaki...which is like beef pretty much... with a lot of the stuff here, like radishes and all that... But as far as straight up cultural ancestral, traditional ingredients, no, not very much.”

Leah, Mary, and Julian all reported learning something new about food and growing food at Lopez Urban Farm. Leah learned about eating the tops of carrots, something she said people don’t do in India. Mary, as mentioned above, enjoys the aspect of being introduced to foodstuffs from unfamiliar cuisines at the farm. Julian talked a bit about using greens he wasn’t familiar with before. He also talked about having foods like beets introduced to his family through Lopez

Urban Farm, and also about the mechanisms through which on-site programs introduce community members to unfamiliar foods. He talked about pizza making events at pick-your-own-produce days saying “People tasting it in that way, like oh, this is my first time having this, but on the pizza, like they’ve had pizza before, it opens their eyes, like oh wow, I’ve never thought of a vegetable this way...” This introduction relates to autonomous consumption not just in preserving cultural identity but having the opportunity to engage with unfamiliar foods and shape identity in the host country.

Only Mary discussed an interest in the production processes at Lopez Urban Farm. She talked about how, during the pandemic, she was looking for food that was healthy and safe for her and her child in that it was organic and chemical-free. Chemical-free farming is important to her in part because of how people farm in Mexico, where her family is from. In this sense, not only does Mary care about production practices for health reasons, but also for cultural reasons. This statement connects with the observations of Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) in re-creation of homeland practices, in this case, the practice is farming without chemicals. It is also significant when analyzing the cultural relevance of production processes, as described by Hammelman and Hayes-Conroy (2015). In this case, it is culturally significant for Leah to have produce that is produced without agri-chemicals. This further relates to the definition of food sovereignty cited by Nyelini (n.d), in which ecologically sound production methods are referenced.

### **Cultural Identity Preservation**

Mary says she now comes to Lopez Urban Farm to help her child connect to and learn about food and how to grow it. She started our interview by talking about this, saying “For me, it was connecting my daughter to how to grow your own food. A lot of the things that kids are seeing is just, they see the food at the supermarket... and I want my daughter to get an

understanding, how this is growing, how it impacts the local ecosystems... I want her to understand that food is a whole system, not just, right there, I can grab that apple... I am trying to show her vegetables are not perfect.” Later in the conversation, she talked about her daughter’s favorite food from the farm, radishes. It is important for her to give her daughter the experience of pulling radishes out of the ground. I asked her if this is important to her because it’s something she got growing up, to which she responded affirmatively. She wasn’t born in Mexico, but spent a lot of time there over the summers and said, “I got to see, it [farming] was just part of the culture there too.” This testament engages Hondagneu-Sotelo’s (2015) findings on the capacity for urban agriculture spaces to provide the soil to educate children on cultural connections to land and food systems, and further how this impacts the preservation of cultural identity.

Julian talked about his grandfather and his excitement about and connection to the farm. He said, “My grandpa was so happy to pick a carrot out of the ground...” Later in the conversation when I asked him more directly about why his grandfather might have such a connection with the place, he said, “What we don’t even realize is in Mexico... They were taking all their food and growing stuff they couldn’t eat there. That’s why they had to grow [their own food] they didn’t have a choice. So it’s not about just growing stuff, but seeing so much different stuff, so much food, for him... I think just seeing the different types of foods and then, you know, an open space, that makes him think of back in the day... you know, he would tell me ‘Oh, I used to ride a donkey to the market to trade for different things.’ So he’s really about it.” What Julian references here is the transition in Mexico as international trade opened up with the passage of NAFTA, the transition from food being grown for Mexican people to the massive exportation of cash crops.



Julian has experienced Stephen's openness and desire to bring people into the space at Lopez Urban Farm. He said, "I mean, from my personal perspective, as a teacher, community member, and someone who's gonna work to do that for my own group of people, imagine being from the hood, you know, you're not super educated in some areas... I got a lot of book smarts but certain things I don't know, you know... and you meet someone like farmer Stephen who doesn't care and is like come teach, you know, come grow." Stephen and Julian are currently working on a project to revitalize Yaqui seeds at Lopez Urban Farm. The seeds are mostly blue corn, yellow corn, Yaqui basil, and some deer dancer gourds. Julian is excited to use these crops not only for educating on native foodstuffs, but also to provide corn for a pupusa making class, to teach about water, and share cultural stories. He also talked about how growing Yaqui corn will hopefully encourage more Yaqui people to come to Lopez, and shared with me his hopes of paying residents to grow corn at Lopez, with the purpose of providing them with income while also working to reestablish an endangered seed. The intention to grow culturally relevant Indigenous foodstuffs at Lopez Urban Farm also speaks to the capacity of these spaces to facilitate place-making practices. Further, Julian draws a crucial connection here between the growing of culturally relevant foods and the building of community, in this case, of the Yaqui people. Further, producing food can influence social relationships, another aspect of foodways.

Julian and Stephen seem to share a similar sentiment - they want to bring people in. Through his organization, Indigeknowledge, Julian finds Indigenous people and pays them to teach, and further works to help them establish themselves as teachers of their skills. Ultimately he said, "That's the goal, that's what I want, is just to put my people on." He talked about how he doesn't want to be centered and that for example, he wants to "grow Yaqui corn here this year, and then order a different culture's stuff and get a different teacher next year."

## **Building Community, Fueling Hope**

Recall the beginning of this paper, when I said that if I want the reader to walk away from this with one thing, it's knowing that these spaces are important to people. Every community member talked about how important this space is for them, for building community, and for creating peace in their lives. It became abundantly clear through this research that these spaces are important in so many more ways than in just food provisioning. Julian sees this space as vital for helping to engage marginalized, socio-economically impacted youth who are overlooked by those who have resources. He talked about how kids get into trouble when they're bored and he sees the programs and space at Lopez as a way to provide these kids with an outlet. He spoke about this again at the end of our interview, when I asked what the most important thing about the space is. He responded, "Producing food and then spaces for them to pull up to, just that time factor, like people being bored. I made a lady cry one time, she said let me give you money please, and I said no, I'm good, take your kid to get ice cream... I said for me, it's nothing, when I'm spending my time here doing this with this kid, he's not spending time out there... playing with guns... and she was like oh my god, and at that moment, I was like I have to keep doing this." This speaks to the ways that communities can take ownership of their futures utilizing urban farm spaces.

Jennifer talked about the peace she feels being at Lopez Urban Farm. She told me about a conversation she had with Erica, saying, "I told her, I really love coming here because it gives me a sense of peace, you know, whatever is going on at home, it doesn't matter here, you might get away..." Later in our conversation she said, "I just tune out the traffic, all the urbanness going by, here it's just a different vibe." Mary talked about how she and her family come here specifically to bond with the community. She commented, "I feel like the community in this area

is really strong. During Dia de los Muertos, what was beautiful is, I saw so many locals and we were so happy to be here, and at one point at the end of the event there was a moment where everybody just hugged and I have never seen that before...” She talked about the community of moms that forms during the summer, as they work to find something safe for their children to do during the heat waves.

Leah spoke a lot about the importance of the community at Lopez Urban Farm and about what the space is for her: a beacon of hope. She was open to talking about culturally relevant foods and such, but she wanted me to know that this space was more than that. She said, “It is a meeting place. It has no restrictions... it absorbs anybody from the street. But what it does to people who are here and keep coming back is a place, there’s warmth here... it’s more than the substance of it, it’s the idea that’s uplifting.” She continued, relating the farm to having the effect of a cathedral, something beautiful to give you hope for your life. She said, “This is something like that, a small... an inclusive place, somewhat green and it doesn’t ask anything of you. It just gives. It’s a, let’s say, a small kernel of hope... It’s the first word in that thing that you said, you mentioned community... It’s a community that gets built up, a place where you can stand as an equal... it uplifts you.” For Leah, it is the first step, after ~20 years in the country, of an America she didn’t think existed. She attributes the way that Lopez Urban Farm uplifts people to the building of community. People keep coming back.

## **Conclusion**

The work at Lopez Urban Farm itself is a revolutionary act, one that acts in specific disruption of neoliberal market models and that prioritizes the human right to good food over economic incentives. Culturally relevant food production takes place at the farm through community leadership circles, observation of consumer demand, and direct community requests.

A key phenomena in the conversation of producing culturally relevant food is the way that the farm staff open up space for community members to come in and practice homeland re-creation through requesting crops and both educating on and practicing their food related traditions.

Homeland re-creation at Lopez Urban Farm is a reflection of immigrant agency, as agency takes a physical form in the ground. This practice also allows community members to access foods and engage in processes that affirm their cultural identities. The distribution model at the farm creates a situation in which community members are able to remain willful and agential, constantly and affirmatively able to both choose and maintain ownership over their foodways. The volunteer experience at the farm, as well as the pick-your-own-produce days, provide opportunities for people to come into contact with the soil. For some, this is important in their mental health, while for others it is important in having space to educate their children and maintain intergenerational cultural identity. Some types of produce offered at Lopez Urban Farm are new to some. Further, exploring different cuisines is characterized as important for community members, both by themselves and by farm staff, as it allows them to autonomously shape their identity in the host country. Ultimately, Lopez Urban Farm is a community space. It is led by the community, for the community, and builds community through the facilitation of many events and the utmost intention of bringing people into the space to lead and share their cultures.

The case study of Lopez Urban Farm demonstrates how the work of culturally relevant food production occurs through community driven processes and further exposes how this contributes to sovereign foodways. Sovereign foodways are sustained at Lopez Urban Farm through components such as community leadership and non-neoliberal market structures. The space is important specifically for immigrant communities in opening up space for connecting to homeland practices and shaping food-informed cultural identities, in the pursuit of both

exploration and preservation. Lopez Urban Farm is a representation of the revolution and demonstrates the change-making capacity of work that operates outside of traditional neoliberal bounds. The processes at Lopez Urban Farm ultimately make it a cherished and crucial space of community and autonomy.

## **Chapter 3: Case Study on Huerta del Valle**

Being the original farm site I was interested in studying for this thesis, the case study on Huerta del Valle has a significant role in this thesis. However, the work of this case study was more challenging than I anticipated. As an intermediate Spanish speaker, I thought I could interview Spanish-speaking farm staff and community members, but quickly learned that I would need help. The work of this case study wouldn't be possible without the assistance of Danilo Estigarribia Gamarra, a translator and student at Pitzer College, who accompanied me on my visits to Huerta del Valle. The English translations accompanying the Spanish testimonies in this chapter were done by Danilo. The language barrier and communication challenges may render this case study less detailed and complete than that above on Lopez Urban Farm.

### **Background**

Through conversations with current Huerta del Valle staff, namely founder and executive director Maria Alonso, Lead Farmer Andres Vicario, as well as a staff member that chose to remain anonymous who I will refer to by the pseudonym Jonathan and an ex-staff member who also chose to remain anonymous and who I will refer to by the pseudonym Leo, I learned the extensive and at times tumultuous history of Huerta del Valle. At its inception, Maria's inspiration for Huerta del Valle was out of necessity for healthy food. In 2010 her son, who was 10 years old at the time, was diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She was given two solutions: have him go on medication or try to address the problem by changing his diet. She went for the diet option. She said, "Entonces, eso fue mi inspiración y de ver los resultados en cuestión de tres semanas, ver resultados en mi hijo, eso me dio más fuerza para decir vamos. (Then, that was my inspiration, seeing results in three weeks, seeing results in my son, that gave me the strength to say let's go)." In discussing the history of Huerta del Valle

with Leo, he recalled this passion in Maria, stating, “One of her original reasons for going to the garden...being very interested in finding a resource for healthy food for her son.” Leo met Maria at Linda Vista Garden, Huerta del Valle’s predecessor. Linda Vista Garden was a hybrid community garden/school garden at Linda Vista Elementary School in Ontario and Leo was volunteering there as a Pitzer College student. A few years into Linda Vista’s operations the school district told the garden leadership that they had to move off the property. Leo cites one of the reasons for this eviction as pushback from the surrounding community because of the smell and perceived dirtiness of the composting initiatives at Linda Vista Garden. The garden then moved to a site near Amy’s Farm (Ontario, CA), and after complications there, involving the knocking down of a power line and disruption of irrigation for the nearby cattle grazing operation, the garden had to move once again. This time, the city offered the land that the farm currently inhabits, a four-acre parcel in central Ontario, to Pitzer College in partnership with Huerta del Valle. In the moving process, Linda Vista Garden was transformed into Huerta del Valle and became an urban farm/community garden hybrid that Pitzer incubated and that was subsequently developed into a 501(c)3. As it stands, the front three-quarters of an acre of the property is made up of community garden plots. Community members can pay \$35 a year for a 20 x 10-foot plot. Part of the community garden agreement involves volunteering for two hours a week. There are 62 plots according to the website, but Leo estimated the number to be closer to 55 given the encroachment of growing trees in the space. Leo estimated that there are about one and a half acres in production for the urban farm, including row crops and fruit trees.

Leo, who after his time volunteering worked with Huerta del Valle both as a Pitzer employee and then as an employee of Huerta del Valle, added the concept of urban farming to the Huerta del Valle space. He said the idea of incorporating an urban farm model was to

fundraise through the production and marketing of crops. The intention was to, as opposed to solely relying on grants, be more self-sufficient through selling produce. He said, “One of the main complaints I remember early on is that people wanted stakes for their tomatoes and it was like, how do we buy these? How do we go get them? It's like, well, you know, the way that I learned from these other organizations is if you write grants, that's great. But if you grow produce and sell it and then use it to fund your community garden, that's even greater because that's more self-sustainable.”

Huerta del Valle, as it stands, is a non-profit organization, operating as a network of urban farms and community gardens. Over the years, Huerta del Valle expanded to other locations, though their original site in Ontario is the focus of this case study. In 2017, Huerta del Valle, in collaboration with the Jurupa Area Recreation and Parks District, developed 13 acres for farming in Jurupa Valley. This location opened in 2019 and has about 40 community gardening plots, according to Leo, as well as some farming and a native plant nursery. Additionally, they acquired an abandoned organic farm, Crestmore Manor Ranch, which is now the “incubator farm,” a space for graduates of the “Agriculturas del Valle” (beginner farmer training) program to rent cheap plots and begin growing their own crops to sell.

This program is one of many that are run as a part of Huerta del Valle’s organization. Through the Agriculturas del Valle program, people can sign up for a three to six-month series of courses that help them learn agricultural and business skills for them to be able to start their own agricultural businesses. This program within itself may be a testament to how community-led processes at Huerta del Valle contribute to sovereign foodways, where people can regain agency over their lives. Additionally, the farm has connections with multiple nearby institutions such as Pitzer and Scripps College and has a cohort of interns working on the farm every semester. They



also run an “abejas” (little bees) program for children ages 4-12, in which they learn about ecology and social justice and gain skills in nutritional and environmental literacy. The organization has a long history of composting, through which community members can bring food waste to be composted. They are also hoping to work with some local grocery stores and Pitzer and Scripps College to compost more waste on-site. Every week there are two markets at Huerta del Valle’s Ontario site, one on Wednesdays from 9 am-12 pm and another on Saturdays from 9 am-12 pm. At the Wednesday market, community members can purchase half-price food. There is also the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in which people can subscribe to pick up a box of produce every other week. There are many options for these boxes, including a full price box for \$35, \$25 discounted boxes for those in need, and mini boxes for reduced prices.

### **Staff Decision Making and Growing Culturally Relevant Food**

Jonathan, when asked about the process of deciding what to grow on the farm, said, “It has to do with what sells. So it really is kind of like marketing, looking at the market. And you know...a big part of the community that gets their food through Huerta is Hispanic or Latina or Chicano background.” Maria shared a similar sentiment about how choices on what to grow are made on the farm, stating, “Es una cuestión de equipo, es una cuestión de lo que necesitamos dentro de la comunidad, lo que más se vende, lo que más la gente pide. Más, sin embargo, a veces queremos explorar algo y pues decimos, ‘Andres, ¿qué te parece que hay que plantar esto?’ (It is a matter of team, it is a matter of what we need within the community. What is sold the most, what the people ask the most. However, sometimes we want to explore something and then we tell Andres, ‘What do you think about planting this?’)” In this sense, community needs are considered and acted upon at Huerta del Valle, which gives community members the opportunity

to define their foodways. Andres, who is the lead farmer at Huerta del Valle, spoke about what goes into making decisions on what to plant at the farm. He said that he grows what people will eat and that if people don't eat it, it will just stay there, meaning it will go to waste. There is also a survey sent out every year to Huerta del Valle community members, asking about which products they like the most, amongst other things, which is information that is used for planting the next year.

Through the above testaments, it is made clear that community members have some agency over what is produced on the farm, primarily through what they demand and what is perceived as their needs. However, it is important too to note that both Maria and Andres *are* immigrants, who are experiencing agency over the food production for *their* community. This model, where members of immigrant communities are direct leaders of the farm, is another type of sovereign foodways, where representatives of the immediate community, Andres and Maria, amongst other farm staff, are defining foodways.

Given that I interviewed a broad range of staff associated with Huerta del Valle, there was variety in terms of answers on how community directly influences production at Huerta del Valle's urban farm. This variety could be attributed to the difference in time that different staff members spend on the farm. The range of staff interviewed also have been working at the farm for differing lengths which could contribute to their perceptions of certain phenomena on the farm and their prevalence. On the one hand, Andres made it clear that if people want to grow specific crops that are important to them, they will do it in their garden plots. Jonathan on the other hand said that people will come to the farm and request that staff grow certain things. In speaking about this, he brought up a trend that was corroborated by statements from other staff members. He said, "I don't know the extent of it, but there's definitely been even folks who bring

us a plant or a tree or something that they in the future, I want some of this or y'all should definitely have some of this for the community because it's like a medicinal herb, a traditional herb or something." Although Andres said that people grow culturally relevant foods in their plots, he did affirm the notion that people come to the farm specifically to find herbs. When I asked him what the most common things are at the market, he said cilantro and onion, but also some herbs like huauzontle and chipilín. He said that these herbs are wild and eaten by Indigenous people in Mexico. Other herbs mentioned by Maria were chocolate mint and cedrón, which she said are not available or are hard to find at the grocery store. Andres, on the other hand, said that some of these herbs, like huauzontle, are found in the stores, but that it's different in the stores. He said, "la gente lo quiere más tierno, o sea, más pequeño. Y por eso vienen aquí, pues aquí vienen, se lo lleva" (people want it more tender, that is, smaller. And that is why they come here, they come here, they take it).

Multiple interviewees spoke about the almost coincidental/accidental production of culturally relevant foods at the Huerta del Valle urban farm. Jonathan talked about banana leaves as one of these foods, "people do come by, to the market, and they look at what's at the market but they also ask, oh, do you happen to have this banana tree leaves, for example? And then like, oh, we do have that. So then, well, it's not what is usually sold but we can, you know, go ahead and find it in the garden or the farm." He said that people ask for these leaves to cook Mexican and Central American tamales. He also said that there is a specific community member that comes especially for guava leaves. Leo talked about the banana leaves as well, affirming that people use the leaves grown at Huerta del Valle for their cooking. He also talked about corn at Huerta del Valle and how there wasn't enough to make tortillas, but plenty of leaves to use for cooking tamales. He also talked about an instance that exemplifies the not necessarily intentional

production of culturally relevant crops. He said that one year while he was working at the farm, they were growing these “super weird onions” that would clone themselves almost like a weed. Farm staff were chopping the tops and selling them as chives at the market until one day a Korean woman came and asked for as many of them as she could have, clearly familiar with the crop in a way that the farm staff were not.

Multiple farm staff commented on the quality of the produce as being what makes it significant and important to people, speaking more to culturally relevant production methods and metrics for defining good food. Andres said, “Hay mucha diferencia de la comida de aquí y de las tiendas, de las marquetas. Porque en las marquetas ya no tienen sabor como las que tienen aquí. O sea, ya no tienen el mismo sabor. El sabor. Prácticamente pierde, yo pienso que como unos 30 percent de sabor de lo que tienen en la tienda. Y porque llega aquí la gente, huelen el cilantro. Tiene todo el olor que debe de tener. O las zanahorias, el brócoli. Prácticamente es muy diferente” (There is a big difference between the food here and the food in the stores, in the marquetas. Because in the stores they don't have the same flavor as the ones they have here. I mean, they don't have the same flavor. It practically loses, I think about 30 percent of the flavor... what they have in the store. And because people come here, they smell the cilantro. It has all the smell it should have. Or carrots, broccoli. It's practically very different). Jonathan talked about the freshness of produce, saying that “I think what I've heard the most, is like, oh, but is this fresh? This is, like the freshness of it, is what I've heard mostly rather than thinking of something that got harvested thousands of miles away and stuff like that. You know, we know exactly where this came from.” Leo also talked about quality, in the sense that while there are certainly culturally relevant crops that can't be produced at Huerta del Valle (he listed jackfruit and mango), there are crops that can be and will be of better quality than those in the store. “But

nevertheless, when it comes to quality, there's no question that the quality of produce that people were able to generate from these farms and certain crops that can grow here.” Through these testaments, it is demonstrated that one of the primary services that Huerta del Valle offers is in offering produce that is fresh, which may be a culturally relevant food value. In this sense, it is not the stand alone food item that has cultural significance, but the context of the food, in this case, its harvest to distribution timeline. This speaks for Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy's (2015) statements on expanding the notion of culturally relevant food.

### **The Role of the Community Garden**

A general sentiment in my interviews with Huerta del Valle farm staff was that primarily, people grow culturally relevant foods in their individual garden plots, and this was the case from the beginning. Leo said that culturally relevant foods were planted more in the community garden than in the urban farm initially, with the caveat of crops like tomatoes and jalapenos. Talking about culturally relevant food in the early years of the community garden, Leo said, “I don't think that was the intention of the garden to grow culturally appropriate or culturally relevant foods, intentionally. But what ended up happening was that, yeah, people had seeds, they planted things, they grew, they saved the seeds, they shared them with other people. People brought cuttings of things like sugar cane or aloe or nopales, the cactus, or certain other crops and they propagated them in the garden and that was very, that was very common.” This is relevant given that Hondagneu-Sotelo (2017) also affirms that the community gardens she studied were used as spaces for growing foods that reminded immigrants of home. She did not explicitly state that urban farms couldn't play this role, but did not cover how this would or does occur. This case study further presented an unprecedented twist in that it became both about the impacts of the farm itself *and* how urban farms can support the practices at community gardens.

Given that the urban farm and garden are intertwined at Huerta del Valle, both physically and conceptually, the gardeners growing their culturally relevant foods in turn make up the majority of the market for produce from the farm. Leo said, “The idea was to sell. But you know, who are the customers? The customers, in theory, were the same gardeners.” The intention at the farm was to grow food that people couldn’t necessarily grow in their plots, or in the case of crops people could grow in their plots, to grow greater quantities of it. In this sense, the urban farm and garden complement one another - the community gardeners predominantly buy the produce, which goes back into the organization and ultimately ends up supporting the community garden.

### **Market Model in Practice**

Price plays a significant role at Huerta del Valle, in that not everyone can afford to purchase the produce. This, of course, is the intention behind having half-price market days and lower priced CSA boxes, but the intention is not necessarily impactful. Maria said, “Estamos en un área donde no es una buena área para nuestro mercado, porque no viene como mucha gente que sabe y le da el valor al producto. Entonces, la gente de la comunidad, aunque sepa darle el valor, pues no tiene para comprarlo (We are in an area where it is not a good area for our market, because not as many people come who know and give value to the product. So, people of the community, even if they know how to give value to the product, they don’t have money to buy it).” She said that this decreases the popularity of the farm. Other staff shared similar sentiments on the popularity and effectiveness of the markets. Jonathan talked about market accessibility, mentioning that the markets are held way in the back of the property and are hard to see. This economic model could be characterized by Alkon and Mares (2012) as perpetuating neoliberal market models that place responsibility for food procurement in the hands of the individual in that food access is limited by economic means. Further, it is instructive to analyze these

comments on the viability of the market in understanding how these models may not have the intended impact of getting good food to people who need it.

## **Place-Making Practices**

Staff members took time in our conversations to both talk about their personal experience on the farm as well as how they perceive community members' experiences. Andres spoke about his experience becoming involved with Huerta del Valle, recounting how he began as a volunteer and worked his way first to a part time position and then to full time lead farmer. He also spoke about what the farm means to him: “Yo empecé a trabajar desde, pues trabajaba en México. Yo soy de México, del estado de Guerrero. Empecé a trabajar desde... Yo empecé a trabajar desde niño. Yo nunca fui a la escuela. Desde los 10 años empecé a trabajar en el campo y ahí aprendí cómo sembrar. Y pues prácticamente allá nosotros sembramos maíz y okra. Es todo. Y pues todo lo que ya sembrar aquí lo he aprendido aquí. Claro que con el tiempo. No lo aprendí así fácil. Me involucré aquí en Huerta en el 2013. Y así sin porque sí me interesó y dije pues me interesa y quiero aprender. Y sí, invertí mi tiempo en voluntariado. Yo empecé como voluntario aquí en Huerta en el 2013, yo tenía mi trabajo. De mi trabajo, salía de mi trabajo, yo llegaba aquí, en lugar de llegar a mi casa” (I started working since... I started working as a child. I never went to school. I started working in the fields when I was 10 years old and that's where I learned how to plant. And...there we planted corn and okra. That's all. And everything I plant here I have learned here. Of course, with time. I didn't learn it that easy. I got involved here in Huerta in 2013. And so because I was interested and I said, well, I am interested and I want to learn. And yes, I invested my time in volunteering. I started volunteering here in Huerta in 2013, I had my job. From my job, I would leave my job, I would come here, instead of coming home). Later in the conversation, he said, “Para mí es importante este lugar, porque, primeramente, uno se siente

bien aquí, se siente uno libre... Y a mí no me importó el salario, porque yo ganaba más donde estaba. A mí me importó más prácticamente mi salud. Y pues yo sabía que iba a llegar algo bueno después, o sea, con el tiempo” (This place is important to me because, first of all, you feel good here, you feel free... And I didn't care about the salary, because I earned more where I was. I cared more about my health. And I knew that something good would come later, that is, with time). In working at Huerta del Valle, Andres has the ability to care for himself and define his surroundings. Further, as an immigrant, Andres is practicing place-making at the urban farm.

Leo spoke about place-making and homeland re-creation for immigrant communities at Huerta del Valle. He talked about the prevalent trend (while making efforts not to essentialize) of what it means to be poor in the US as opposed to in other countries. He said, “[to be] poor in another country frequently, for a farmer to live on the land from the land, and then in the US being poor, looks like eating fast food and living in a tiny apartment, not being on the land, being disconnected from the land.” He commented on how the urban farm model plays into this dynamic, saying, “but it was the growing of the crop and the harvesting process and then the freshness that really had the connection for them to their home country, to nostalgia, to their childhood. And that made it special. And being able to transfer that knowledge to the next generation... Transferring the knowledge of how to grow the plant, care for it, take it from the plant, process it, save the seeds, whatever and then keep that cycle going. That is the magic that happens in the urban gardens, or can happen. And you have the generational experiential learning that is facilitated in this really special way by the urban gardens.” In this, he spoke to notions discussed by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2017) in terms of community gardens as spaces for teaching children about cultural connections with the earth, and to Turkon and Weller (2014) in their statements on the transmission of cultural identity through food. This contributes to



intergenerational identity-shaping for immigrant communities in the pursuit of maintaining cultural identity in their host countries.

It is notable that Leo also brought up exclusivity at the farm. He talked about the predominantly Latinx community and how it facilitates a feeling of exclusion for those who do not belong to that ethnic group. He said, “I think at Huerta, that because the name is in Spanish and because leadership and membership is, you know, Spanish speaking, it really ended up feeling or being a place that kind of is a little exclusive rather than very open to everybody. It ended up a little bit more exclusive. And so if you weren't, you know, if you're not a Latinx person, it can, it can for some people feel like not a welcoming place.” This representation of Huerta del Valle as a Latinx space is affirmed through comments that Maria made about the surveys that the farm sends out to community gardeners/market goers every year. She said based on the survey, 80-85% of the community is Hispanic, predominantly Mexican but also from countries like Guatemala and El Salvador.

### **Community Member Introductions and Routes to Involvement**

I interviewed three community members at Huerta del Valle, whom I will refer to by pseudonyms as Stephanie, Jane, and Angela. All three of the community members that I spoke to have plots at the community garden and purchase produce from the farm. This is indicative of the interconnection between the two spaces - the customers at the market being the same people who tend to their own gardens, just feet away. I interviewed Stephanie and Jane at a Saturday market in March and interviewed Angela on a Friday morning while she was doing her volunteering hours.

Sitting between rows of turnips and lettuce, helping Angela with weeding, my translator and I asked a series of questions, and she was eager to talk about her history at Huerta del Valle

and why the space means so much to her. She told us she's been here for 13 years and that she was one of the initiators of the space. She proudly told us that her community garden plot is the second one from the entrance. In it, she is currently growing garlic, onions, and broad beans. She likes to grow hibiscus in the winter but said that she couldn't find her seeds so it's not currently growing there. In other seasons, she grows tomatoes, amongst other warmer weather crops. She said that she will buy cilantro and radishes, as well as occasionally cabbage or celery, from the market at Huerta del Valle. Stephanie also has an extensive history at Huerta del Valle, remarking that she has been a volunteer for almost 10 years. She has a community garden plot at Huerta del Valle's Ontario location as well as a larger plot at the Crestmore location. In these plots, her family grows a host of crops, such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, onion, radishes, thyme, and other spices. Jane is also a member of the community garden but when we spoke to her she was just leaving the market. On that day she had bought beets, spinach, peas, broccoli, and cauliflower. She told us she likes to come every Saturday to buy produce from the farm. She also talked about her plot, noting that her mother is the one who mostly tends to their garden at Huerta del Valle. She wasn't completely sure of everything growing but mentioned cauliflower and cilantro.

### **Cultural Identity Preservation**

Across the three interviews, community members cited sourcing food that contributes to their food-shaped identity and preservation of home country culture at Huerta del Valle. They mostly talked about this through the consumption of herbs. Stephanie talked about a vegetable/herb called *Papalo*, in English, Yerba Porosa. She said that in Mexico it is used for tacos and that it is very hard to find it here. She also mentioned the same herbs as Maria: cedrón tea and chocolate mint, as well as thyme. She said that she grows thyme in her plot because it is

too expensive in the stores, and if she grows it herself she can have it year-round. This relates to the study done by Munger et al. (2015) that analyzed the affordability of culturally relevant foods, in which they concluded that price barriers to culturally relevant produce often leave immigrant communities reliant on cheap staples. In creating access to the food that they want to eat in their community garden plots, immigrant communities actively work against marginalization forces at play. Stephanie talked to us about what she uses the herbs for, “Como el tomillo yo lo uso como para hacer un, se puede decir un caldo de res? Le pones jitomate, chile, cebolla y coces la carne bien cocedita y ya que quizás toda la verdura le pones el tomillo y le da un sabor tan rico, pero tan rico a la carne de res. No es tanto la carne, sino es el olor al tomillo. Le puedes poner un pedacito de carne, pero el tomillo es lo que le da todo el sabor. Eso es uno. Y la menta como para hacer agua, para hacer té, para hacer caldo de pollo, no sé, le da un buen sabor, mucho sabor que le da. Muy todo, muy rico (Like the thyme, I use it to make beef soup. You add red tomato, chile, onions and, you know, the really well cooked meat and then you add all vegetables and thyme and it gives it a really nice taste, so tasty. It is not much about the beef, but the smell of the thyme. You can add meat, but it is the thyme that gives it all the flavor. Then the mint to make water, to make tea, to make some chicken soup, I don’t know, it gives a good taste, a lot of taste. Too tasty!)” She also talked about how she uses cactus from the farm in cactus salad with cilantro, onion, and chiles. She also told us about the use of cactus in dishes that are typical in Mexico or in her home state of Puebla specifically. Talking about one of these dishes she said, “Ahorita que empieza la haba, el chicharro, todas las cosas tiernas que están verdes, se hace un tipo de tortitas de camarón y les pones a hervir las verduras, como son chicharros, habas, papa, nopales y haces una salsa roja. Haces las tortitas y las pones en la salsa y le pones cilantro. Es algo buenísimo y todo es de Huerta o orgánico (Now that the broad bean are

recently germinated, you can prepare a type of shrimp *tortitas* and you boil them with greens, like peas, broad bean, potato, cactus and you make a red sauce. You make the tortitas and then you add the sauce and then cilantro. It is something so good and everything is from Huerta, organic.)” This quote displays how community members can preserve their food-shaped identities through using the food produced at the farm and in their garden plots. It is clearly valuable to Stephanie that the food she uses in her culturally relevant dishes is also produced in culturally relevant ways, as she mentions that everything is organic. Again, this points to the importance of the context of any given foodstuff when talking about cultural relevancy. Cactus produced conventionally and shipped hundreds of miles isn’t the same to Stephanie as cactus that was grown organically and locally. This validates Hammelman and Hayes-Conroy’s (2015) statements on how cultural acceptability is not simply substitution. Other cultural valuations, such as how food is produced, are significant.

Jane also talked about important herbs that she finds at Huerta del Valle, such as passionflower, which she said is good for sleeping. She also talked about types of sage at Huerta del Valle that are hard to find at stores. Angela said that she uses the stuff she buys from Huerta del Valle’s market, such as cilantro and onions, as the base for many of her dishes. She said she’ll put them in chicken soup, or use onions and garlic for red, yellow, or white rice. She also talked about how she grows *jamaica* or hibiscus, in her community garden plot, which she said she uses to help with high blood sugar. These testaments speak to the ability that foods from both the community garden plots and urban farm at Huerta del Valle give to community members in having agency over their food consumption and preparation, and also the roles that the food can play in cooking cultural dishes that connect people with their identities.

There were common themes across the interviews, primarily, references to childhood practices from the community members' home countries, seeing the gardens as an opportunity to educate children, an investment in growing practices as they relate to health and food quality, and reporting of a sense of peace, calm, and connection to nature at the farm. While I tried to guide the conversations to talk about the farm at Huerta del Valle, in all three interviews the conversations mostly centered around the community garden, which is notable in comparing the two settings.

### **Childhood Practices and Homeland Re-Creation**

All three interviewees talked about their childhood or families at some point in our conversation. Stephanie said, "Pues mi familia es del estado de Puebla, Puebla, México. Y mi papá siempre ha sembrado sus hortalizas, siempre han sembrado. Allá, en ese estado, se siembra haba, chícharo, frijol, chile. Siempre hemos crecido con eso, con esas costumbres de sembrar nuestras propias hortalizas. Y aquí en Huerta, después de años de vivir aquí, encontramos Huerta y fue donde volví otra vez, como si estuviera en mi" (Well my family is from the Puebla State, Mexico. And my dad has always cultivated his vegetables, he has always grown. There, in that state, they plant broad beans, peas, beans, chile. We have grown up with that, with the customs of planting our own greens. Here at Huerta, after years of living here, we found Huerta and it was where again I came back [to those customs], as if I was in my ranch). Jane, when asked if there are foods at Huerta del Valle that are significant for her culture, said, "La verdad sí, porque yo crecí en México, en un lugar donde no había ni electricidad, ni nada. No había ningún medio como de traer ni siquiera agua a nuestras plantas. Para nosotros poder comer teníamos que plantar nuestros tomates todo lo más que pudiésemos para poder tener familia" (Yes, because I grew up in Mexico, in a place where there was no electricity, no nothing. There was no way to

even bring water to our plants. In order for us to eat we had to plant our tomatoes as much as we could so we could have a family). Angela also referenced her childhood in Michoacán, Mexico. She said, “Desde chiquilla, mi papá y mi mamá, siempre estuvimos cultivando. Siempre, siempre maíz, garbanzo, trigo. ...Maíz de todos los estilos, maíz para pozole, maíz blanco, maíz amarillo, maíz morado, todo tipo de maíz... Yo creo que aquí lo llevo en la sangre y...Esto me relaja y me lleva a mi infancia. Me recuerda a mi infancia” (Since I was a little girl, my dad and my mom, we were always growing crops, always corn, chickpeas, wheat... Corn of all styles, corn for pozole, white corn, yellow corn, purple corn, all kinds of corn... That’s why I think that here I have it in my blood... It relaxes me and takes me back to my childhood. It reminds me of my childhood). These testaments ultimately display homeland re-creation, as described by Hondagenu-Sotelo (2014). All of the community members connected their childhood agricultural practices in their home countries to their current practices as Huerta del Valle, and it is clear that these cultural practices are part of what gives their work at Huerta del Valle meaning. Being able to engage in food production may also serve to preserve cultural identity in the host country (Burdick, 2014).

Hondagenu-Sotelo (2014) and Colson Fearon and Versey (2022) also discuss community gardens as spaces to educate and bridge intergenerational gaps. Given that growing their own food was substantial for all of the community members in their formative years, it is unsurprising that multiple of them also discussed a desire to have food growing be a part of their children’s lives, also speaking to intergenerational identity transmission. Angela said, “Porque en ese espacio tengo la oportunidad de enseñar a mis hijos cómo crece una zanahoria. Cómo se desarrolla una cebolla... Ahí es un libro. Le digo, para mí es un libro para mí y para mis hijos. Porque en ese espacio, en ese libro, puedo enseñarles” (In that space [the community garden] I

have the opportunity to teach my children how one grows a carrot. How an onion grows... That is a book. I tell you, for me it is a book and for my children. Because in that space, in that book, I can teach them). She later affirmed that this education is something she got from her parents in her upbringing. She said, “Tal vez la gente puede aprender un poquito o mucho de lo que yo sé. Porque te digo, toda mi vida con mi padre y mi madre sembrábamos” (Maybe people can learn a little or a lot of what I know. Because I tell you, all my life with my father and my mother, we planted). Angela recounted the experience of bringing her dad to see her plot at Huerta del Valle. She said that because he was used to having acres and acres of land in Mexico, he perceived her land as “a toy.” But she said to him, “For me, that little piece is big.” This little piece allows her to connect to the earth and show her children how to grow food. Stephanie talked about the importance of educating her son through bringing him to Huerta del Valle, but from a slightly different lens of health. She said, “Es importante para mí ahora con la tecnología que miramos tantas cosas, que la comida está tan procesada y yo tengo un niño de nueve años y para mí es importante que él aprenda y que entienda que debemos de cambiar nuestros hábitos de comida, de comer saludable” (It is important to me now with the technology that we watch a lot of things, that food is so processed and I have a 9-year-old kid and for me it is important that he learns and understands that we have to change our food habits, to eat healthy). She proudly talked about how her son grew up gardening at Huerta del Valle. These educational practices perpetuate homeland re-creation at the urban garden sites at Huerta del Valle, as well as allow for preserving cultural identity into proximate generations, the importance of which communicated by Burdick (2014) and Colson-Fearon and Versey (2014).

Two community members talked about growing food at their homes as opposed to in the garden. Stephanie talked about how she does grow food at home, such as chayote, cactus, and

cilantro. She also mentioned that she will bring stuff that she grows to the farm for trading. Jane said she used to grow food at home, but now she doesn't have space and her yard doesn't get enough sunlight, which is why she came to grow at Huerta del Valle. She talked about wanting to have fruit trees at her house and how she really appreciates food producing plants as opposed to flowers or shade.

### **Culturally Relevant Food Production Values**

Both for their children and themselves, the community members I talked to have a vested interest in accessing healthy and chemical-free produce, as this relates to culturally relevant food production. This interest was demonstrated through commenting on farming practices, health, and food quality. When Jane was asked why she likes to buy food from Huerta del Valle, she said first, because of her connection to the farm through her community garden plot, but also noted that she buys food from the farm because it is chemical-free and fresh. Later in the conversation, we asked her why chemical-free produce is important to her and she said it is important for her health and in maintaining her weight. She compared this to produce from the grocery store, saying that while she could get all the same stuff in the store, it is not organic and freshly cut, and therefore doesn't have the same benefits. Aside from nutritional benefits, she also talked about the difference in taste between store bought produce and produce from the farm. "El sabor es completamente diferente. Siempre, como las fresas, cuando tú las compras en la tienda o en los fields, también a veces son grandes. Pero en realidad, las fresas que son cultivadas sin químicos son chiquitas (The flavor is completely different. Always, like the strawberries, when you buy them in the store or in fields, sometimes they are big. In reality, though, the strawberries that are grown with no chemicals are small ones.)" Stephanie talked about the difference in taste between the bananas at Huerta del Valle and the grocery store, saying they taste totally different,



the ones at Huerta del Valle being sweeter. Angela made similar commentary, also noting that while she can find the food she buys here in the grocery store, the flavors and the smell of the food are different at Huerta del Valle. When saying this, she told me to taste the flavor, picking off a leaf of purple broccoli in the row we were weeding. This is relevant in conversation of ecologically sound production methods as defined by peoples and communities. Later in the conversation, talking about how she wants her kids to grow up healthy, Angela compared tomatoes from the grocery store to tomatoes from Huerta del Valle, talking about the layer of wax on store-bought tomatoes and how it makes her and her family members itch. She also talked about how, given the predominantly Latino population in the area, it is easy to find the produce she is looking for, but it often isn't organic. These statements affirm the observations of farm staff as discussed above. They also show that food quality and production processes are significant to the community members at Huerta del Valle as a component of culturally relevant food. It is displayed in these statements that food from the grocery store and food from the farm is not the same to community members, even if they are the same ingredients. Once again, this supports the importance of a food's context in determining if it is culturally relevant (Hammelman & Hayes-Conroy, 2015).

Price was also discussed by all three community members, with them ultimately reporting different experiences with the pricing at Huerta del Valle's market. Angela said that it's better for her to buy from the market on Wednesdays, referring to Saturday's prices as double prices as opposed to Wednesday's prices as half price (which is an interesting statement on perception). She said that for cilantro, it's \$1.50 a bunch on Wednesday, but \$3.00 on Saturday. She also said that she will only buy the bananas when they are at a good price. Later in the conversation, she said that the prices are more expensive at Huerta del Valle than in the store and

that it's a bit expensive for her. She said she can find 2 bunches of cilantro for \$1 in the store, but at Huerta del Valle one bunch is \$1.50. Jane on the other hand said she thinks the price is about the same between the market at Huerta del Valle and the grocery store, with the difference being that at Huerta del Valle, the produce is organic. Stephanie also talked about pricing but in regard to planting in her garden plot. She mentioned that organic food is expensive in the store, which is why they grow it themselves at Huerta del Valle, as they wouldn't be able to access it otherwise. These somewhat conflicting statements have similar messages - price is a factor in the contribution from Huerta del Valle to sovereign foodways. Regardless, economic means are something that community members have to consider when obtaining food from the Huerta del Valle market.

### **Huerta del Valle as a Place of Respite**

The community members also shared their physical and emotional experiences of being at Huerta del Valle. Stephanie said, "Sí, para mí es vida. Para mí es estar aquí en Huerta. Creo que soy voluntaria por mucho tiempo porque me encanta estar en Huerta. Me siento tranquila. Se me olvidan todos los problemas que pueda tener y es mucha tranquilidad, mucha paz" (Yes, to me this is life. To me, it is to be here in Huerta. I think I am volunteering here for a long time now because I love being at Huerta. I feel tranquil. I forget about all my problems that I might have and it is a lot of tranquility, peace). Jane talked about the experience of growing plants, saying that even just the process of watering a plant is happy making, that seeing a plant growing gives her something to look forward to, the fruit. Angela also shared her feelings of relaxation and peace at Huerta del Valle. She said, "Aquí soy. Feliz. Aquí me relajo. Aquí las plantas no me regañan, no me gritan, no me dicen Tengo que pagar renta, los bills, nada. Aquí soy feliz" (Here I am. Happy. Here I relax. Here the plants don't scold me, don't yell at me, don't tell me I have to

pay rent, bills, nothing. Here I am happy). Angela spoke the most about the connection to nature that she has at Huerta del Valle. She said she is at Huerta del Valle because of her love for the land and because of connection with the earth. She talked about how she was born in the earth, saying “Aparte, porque yo nací, cuando yo nací, nací en la calle, en la tierra... Caí ahí en la tierra. Entonces, fue mi primera conexión al mundo, la tierra. Porque no nací en hospital” (Besides, because I was born, when I was born, I was born in the street, in the earth...I fell there on the earth. So it was my first connection to the world, the earth. Because I was not born in a hospital). These experiences can be encapsulated in understanding foodways and the social processes in the production and consumption of food.

## **Conclusion**

Huerta del Valle presents a unique case in which the urban farm operates to financially support the community garden. In this sense, the farm operates both stand alone and as connected to the community garden. In a stand alone sense, it is important to note that the leaders at the farm are part of the immigrant community, which means that they are autonomously shaping and defining their community's foodways. Additionally, it is displayed through community member testimonials that the food produced at Huerta del Valle's farm meets significant cultural valuations of food for this community, of being grown without chemicals, fresh, and of high-quality in terms of taste and size. In this sense, the produce contributes to sovereign foodways and identity-shaping by giving people the ability to access food that is culturally relevant to them. It is also of note that community members are given avenues to provide feedback, such as through the survey sent out every year. This allows them to communicate and have ownership over what is produced at the farm. The goal of the urban farm, at its inception, was to financially support the community garden. How this looks in actuality

paints a slightly different picture. Maria spoke about the lack of money in the community, and how even people who understand the value of the produce at Huerta del Valle can't afford it. This being said, understanding this model is important to think about how community garden spaces can operate as defined by the community without needing to be reliant on outside funding. Further, through analyzing the urban farm at Huerta del Valle, this thesis must examine the institution it supports - the community gardens. It is without much question that the community garden spaces can work to ensure sovereign foodways, place-making practices, and identity-shaping. Throughout the course of this case study, particularly through community testimonials, it is exemplified that these spaces are used to grow, and similar to Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2015) arguments, are a representation of immigrant agency through homeland re-creation. In the community garden, community members are able to dictate production processes and how their food is distributed. These spaces are also used for more than growing, they are used for educating and fostering connections for children to homeland food practices. In the same sense that Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014) describes in *Paradise Transplanted*, the community members at Huerta del Valle feel a connection to their childhood and their homeland through the practice of growing food in their host country at the community garden.

Ultimately, the work at Huerta del Valle is crucial, and even with potential failures in the marketing system, this space is incredibly meaningful to the population of community members I spoke to. Both the urban farm and community garden, as well as the ways that they work in tandem, contribute to sovereign foodways as defined by immigrant communities and provide space for people to practice place-making and preserve and explore their cultural identities.

## **Chapter 4: Case Study on Root 66 Community Garden**

My intention in contacting leadership from Root 66 Community Garden was to carry out a case study, like the ones above on Lopez Urban Farm and Huerta del Valle. In pursuit of this, I first reached out to the staff member who runs the community garden at Root 66. In the early phase of this thesis, I planned on doing case studies on either urban farms or community gardens, as I had less conception of the sizable distinctions between the two models. In refining my scope, I decided to focus solely on urban farms. I almost dropped Root 66 as a subject of this thesis, until I learned from a brief call with my initial contact that staff at Root 66 are currently working to build an urban farm on the 14-acre site. This abbreviated case study serves to show how community farms are conceptualized and built. How do they begin, and is culturally relevant food production in mind at the inception?

To answer these questions, I interviewed Elinor Crescenzi, who, along with her team, is spearheading the urban farm project at Root 66. I met Elinor at her house in Pomona. The first thing I noticed when I arrived was boxes of produce sitting on the porch, crates of citrus and bok choy, some of it bagged, looking ready to be distributed. All I knew about the Root 66 urban farm at this time was that there was a major rabbit problem and that no harvest had been had, so I was immediately made curious by the abundance. The interview that followed addressed this curiosity and so much more.

### **Background**

My conversation with Elinor began by talking about Root 66, the land, the history, and her involvement. Root 66 is a 14-acre parcel of land, which in an urban context is quite large. It is in the easement of the power lines and is a long, skinny property that runs parallel to a channel. Elinor described the layout of the 14 acres, noting that action on the land parcel has

picked up substantially in the last couple of years as the primary steward of the land has continued to welcome partnerships. The northernmost five acres are stewarded by a local resident whose family has historically tended grapes. The resident has a small vineyard on this part of the property, and as Elinor described, is beginning to incorporate traditional farming. In the center is a rather underdeveloped area that may be used for large scale composting. The community garden plots are also in the center of the property. People from the community can apply to become members of the community garden and depending on the size of the plot pay a yearly fee ranging from \$110 to \$330. According to the application I accessed online, members are also asked to volunteer for two hours every month, helping out in areas such as composting, mulching, and clean-up/construction projects (Root 66, 2023). There are a couple of educational areas dotting the property for various programs that Root 66 hosts. In another part of the property is the urban farm project which hosts a small composting area and six fields. The southernmost part of the property is currently being planted as a food forest.

### **Building an Urban Farm**

Elinor talked about the inception of the urban farm at Root 66, first telling me about how her team, through a grant called Community Composting for Green Spaces, reached out to a huge number of farms throughout the Inland Empire, somewhere along the way getting in contact with Root 66. Over the last two years, she, along with her team, has launched 30 projects across the Inland Empire involving community composting and almost all of them involved a land revitalization project or farm/garden building. She said that in comparison to other teams across the state, hers has prioritized building green spaces and putting labor into building farm spaces. She noted that this has been made possible because of the Community Composting for Green Spaces grant which made funds available to go to the development of green space.

Elinor talked about the work that has gone into creating the urban farm, which began with bringing compost and wood chips to build up the soil in the area, over the course of the year. Some of the initial soil also came from Amy's Farm, another urban farm in the Inland Empire. Only recently did they build the six fields and install irrigation. The current farm management arrangement involves a farmer who used to be a farmer at Huerta del Valle and now works at Uncommon Good (both organizations have been mentioned in this thesis). He currently maintains plots at Huerta del Valle's incubator farm and has agreed to steward the urban farm at Root 66 as well. While Elinor expressed that the hope for the future is to be able to fundraise enough to be able to pay the farm manager consistently, the current deal is that her team will compensate him through buying produce from him. Working with this farmer, Elinor and her team have helped to plant the initial crop at the urban farm. There was not much intentionality, at least in what was communicated to me, that went into what crops were going to be planted on the farm. She said they planted mainly winter stuff, like beets and radishes. She noted that her team brought some seeds and the farmer brought some seeds, and that primarily the goal was to get stuff in the ground. Given the pest problem (rabbits) the next, most pertinent step, is to build a fence around the farm to keep the rabbits out. She said that as it currently stands, "He's mainly just been going there making sure it's getting watered and right now it's just kind of elevating the fact that if we don't build the fence then we'll just have a really well fed rabbit." She also said that once the fence is built, which her team is going to help with, she is unsure how much they will continue to be involved in the management of the farm.

At the end of our conversation, I asked Elinor what she thinks the difference is between urban farming and community gardens - why were they supporting this urban farming initiative? She passionately voiced her support for community farm models, naming some of the

problematic aspects around plot-based community gardens, such as neglect and theft. She talked about how in community garden models, people aren't forming relationships with each other, nor are they working to support each other's labor. She thinks that urban farming, on the other hand, leads to better relationships among people and creates more equitable food access. Additionally, she pointed out how you can grow a lot more food in the same space if you organize it efficiently and prioritize shared labor and collaboration.

### **Food Access Booth**

The intention is for the produce from the urban farm at Root 66 to go directly to the Food Access Booth at the Pomona farmer's market. After talking about the makings of the urban farm, most of Elinor and I's conversation centered around the work of creating access to high-quality food in Pomona and how the farm will support these efforts. For the last four years, Elinor and her team have been running a project called the Pomona Community Farmer Alliance, through which they host the Pomona Community Market, where they also run the Food Access Booth. The Pomona Community Farmer Alliance intends to partner with local farms in a way that creates a flow of high-quality food into Pomona. This work is revolutionary and activating. Elinor said, "The mechanisms of capitalism don't work to bring high-quality food into low-income communities... so we're of the orientation that we need to stop pretending that somehow they're going to start working and start examining the mechanisms that actually do work to bring high-quality food into low-income communities." In this statement, she echoes the sentiments of Alkon and Mares (2012) and Guthman (2008) regarding the importance of disrupting neoliberalism in order to make realized change in the food system. Elinor talked about mechanisms her team enlists in bringing high-quality food into low-income communities, mentioning intentionality and relationships. As it stands, multiple farmers have agreed to sell



their produce at the Pomona Community Market at their wholesale price, though this means a substantial amount of work for Elinor and the team at the Pomona Community Market. The team picks up the produce from the farms and does the labor of selling it at the market. She said that this work has allowed for the sales of pasture-raised meat, mushrooms, organic fruit, organic grains, and high-quality olive oil, amongst other things, at their wholesale prices at the market. Initially, they were engaging in this same collaboration with vegetable farmers but ultimately found that these farmers were consistently losing money selling to the public at their produce's wholesale prices. Because of this, they transitioned to the Food Access Booth, a model in which vegetables are offered without a price. People can donate, but it is not necessary and there are no limits on how much any one person can take. This is a model that doesn't rely on neoliberal market mechanisms in distributing good food. In terms of the produce that is offered at the booth, Elinor said, "We're distributing vegetables there from Amy's Farm, from Huerta del Valle, from two of Huerta del Valle's incubator farmers, from Uncommon Good, from Rebel Mountain, and then we also have produce that is coming in from the community... that people are harvesting and gleaning. We've had a couple of people even start to bring us in produce from their gardens that's too abundant for them." She talked about how the urban farm at Root 66 will serve this Food Access Booth. She said that they consistently run out of food at the booth, often having distributed 50-75 percent of the food within the first five minutes of opening, even partnering with so many organizations. This demonstrates that, simply put, there is a need for more food, and the produce from Root 66 will serve as that food.

Elinor also talked about the social network systems that can develop in market distribution models as opposed to other food donation models. Elaborating on the difference between these models, she described that in the traditional food donation model, once someone is

no longer in need of aid, they lose the crucial relationships and support systems they built in the food donation space. On the other hand, in a market distribution model, people can continue to be in the space even once they don't need as much support, and the relationships and community they built can stay with them. This speaks to how food activism oriented towards a sovereignty framework can make space for the cultural importance of food in sustaining social relationships (Alkon & Mares, 2012, Sibal, 2018).

### **Culturally Relevant Food at the Food Access Booth**

Given that the intention of the urban farm at Root 66 is for the produce to be directly channeled into the Food Access Booth, I asked Elinor questions about culturally relevant food at the booth. The first thing she talked about when I brought up cultural relevancy was the farmer's market model itself and how it feels comfortable and accessible for people who have home country traditions of shopping in open-air markets. She then talked about the demographics of the people who come to the Food Access Booth, remarking that "We see especially at the farmers market engagement with a much more diverse population than is even representative of the city of Pomona because the city of Pomona is predominantly Latino." She said that while a lot of Latino people come through the Food Access Booth, there is also a high proportion of non-English speaking Asian people, as well as some Muslims, specifically two Egyptian community members, and then "quite a number of African American folks." She spoke about how this relates to providing culturally relevant food at the booth, communicating that they offer more diverse foods than what is culturally relevant to the dominant Latinx population. In this, the importance of making space for autonomous identity-shaping through the exploration of new foodstuffs is crucial. She talked about the Asian greens that they currently offer at the booth, like bok choy, tat soy, and mizuna, as well as about Asian radishes, noting them as unfamiliar foods

for the predominantly Latinx population. She did say, on the other hand, that they sell “oodles of cilantro, that’s really popular among Latin American folks, Mexican American in particular.” Elinor also mentioned the cross-cultural collaboration that takes place at the Food Access Booth. Referencing Asian radishes, she said, “You will see people knowing what to do with them, people being excited about getting access to those, but also you have this kind of cross-cultural phenomenon happening where people are like what is this, what do I do with this? And then you’re having conversation with them about how do you prepare that.” This is a testament to the transmission of cultural information that takes place at the Food Access Booth. She talked about the ways that community members will engage with one another, offering suggestions and explaining to people how to use certain foods. She also brought agency into the conversation, suggesting that there is meaning and intention behind the practice of letting people choose what they want, as opposed to just handing it to them. This transmission of cross-cultural information and providing of identity affirming foods relates to both de-essentializing authenticity and the preservation of food shaped identity for immigrant populations (Koc & Welsh, 2002, Burdick, 2014).

Early on in the interview, Elinor mentioned the excitement people have about accessing chemical-free, organic, and fresh food. Later, I asked her how often people ask her or other staff at the Food Access Booth about the ways the food was produced. In answering this question, she talked about two phenomena. As I mentioned earlier, within the first five minutes of opening, more than half the produce at the booth is sold out, making these early opening hours extremely busy. She said people don’t ask because it’s too busy and there just isn’t time. She did say that in slower hours of operation, they do get questions about the food offered. She said, “I think when it’s been a little bit more of a slow time and even people who are already very much appreciating

it but not knowing about it, they've been able to ask questions and there's been a lot of excitement and affirmation around what they're actually getting." She followed this up with another insight on why people might not be asking questions: they already know, from the way the food tastes. She said, "People know. They know because maybe the first time they take it just realizing it's an opportunity for them to not have to pay for their vegetables, but then they eat it and... it's like wow, this is really beautiful food, this is really tasty food. It's really fresh. And so people kind of know what the quality is by virtue of actually eating it, you know? So I think in that way it's more believable."

### **Food System Future Visions**

Elinor and I spent the last bit of our conversation talking about the future, both on the scale of the urban farm at Root 66 and broadly in a food systems context. She told me about the vision she and her team have for a "Pomona Community Health Hub," which would operate in part as a storefront for selling locally grown produce. The goal for this space is to have onsite refrigeration so that local farmers can bring their produce directly there after harvesting. She talked about wanting to have the space open seven days a week to provide substantially more access than a once a week farmers market. The plan for the space is well developed, as they hope to include a cafe that cooks with any waste from the produce sales as well as an "incubator commercial kitchen" for small businesses and community members to use to cook, eat, and meet with one another. She also hopes that at the space they can work to promote "being able to receive subsidies and do other kinds of food access exchange programs, whether that's through volunteering or other public service, or you know, snap, market match..." While they are still in the early stages of developing this space, she said that the long-term goal for the Root 66 urban farm would be to supply this food access space. On a broader scale, she also talked about

increasing or shifting public funding to have community food-growing jobs be publicly funded as public food security programs. This notion directly relates to Guthman's (2008) and Alkon and Mares' arguments on the need for substantive political change (2012). She also spoke to longer-term goals for her and her team's work in Pomona, extending past the Pomona Community Health Hub. She said, "We are still looking to center a space here and ultimately weave in other strong basic needs. We're kind of oriented long term towards establishing a community land trust that is providing affordable housing, neighborhood food production, cooperative living opportunity..." Clearly the building of an urban farm at Root 66 fits in with a long-term trajectory for food justice work being done in Pomona. First, they just have to deal with the rabbits.

## **Conclusion**

The model identified in this case study is unique in that the intention of the urban farm is for the produce to directly support an existing initiative, the Food Access Booth, which offers fresh produce to Pomona residents without a price. The Food Access Booth engages in an economic model that operates outside of the constraints of neoliberalism and works to effectively provide community members with high-quality food. Elinor spoke directly about combating the notion that markets will eventually bring good food to places like Pomona. Thus, it is clear that the urban farm initiative at Root 66 will contribute to sovereign foodways by supporting the Food Access Booth, which utilizes mechanisms that result in autonomous consumption and agency in the food system. Additionally, accessing food from the Food Access Booth may influence identity-shaping in the host country, as is exemplified through Elinor's comments on accessing food with cultural ties as well as exploring unfamiliar foods. Connections between this

space and place-making are limited but may come with time as the farm develops and is opened up to the community.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter brings the three case studies, which thus far have been isolated from each other, into conversation and includes comparative analysis across the three sites. This chapter also formally addresses the thesis of this paper, ultimately commenting on the capacity of urban farms, specifically culturally relevant food production on them, in supporting sovereign foodways and facilitating place-making and autonomous identity-shaping practices. As will be expanded upon in the following pages, the management of the urban farms studied in this paper contributes to sovereign foodways by practices such as operating outside of neoliberal markets, empowering community members to be leaders and decision makers, growing food in culturally relevant ways, and giving community members the opportunity to connect with their food system and each other. These practices lead to autonomous consumption, maintenance of agency, and ownership over/connection to food production for community members, further contributing to their ability to autonomously shape their identities and define their foodways. These urban farms also offer space, physical and metaphorical, for cultural traditions as they relate to food, which allows for tangible impressions of agency in the ability to shape surroundings and practice homeland re-creation.

### **Discussion**

One of the primary questions that this thesis addresses is how does the production of culturally relevant food happen on urban farms? The answer to this question varies across the three sites. At Huerta del Valle, decisions on what to grow are made primarily by Andres, the head farmer. As Maria pointed out, these decisions are influenced by what the community desires, making them geared towards serving the predominantly Latinx community. Additionally, there is an annual survey for community members to express their feedback about the farm.

Through this, community members are given a voice in happenings at the farm. Lopez Urban Farm also has a lead farmer, Stephen, who makes the ultimate decisions on what to grow. Similarly, along with environmental and cost factors, he considers community members' wants in choosing what to grow. He specifically referenced efforts to supply what is most in demand by the community. The role that the community plays in directly influencing decisions on what to grow is varied across the sites. At Lopez Urban Farm, community members directly make requests to the farm staff on what they would like the staff to grow. In this case, the community members' direct influence over what goes in the ground contributes to their sense of ownership over their food production. This influence contributes to their ability to practice homeland re-creation and allows them to define their access to foods that contribute to maintaining their cultural identities. This phenomenon, as noted in Chapter 3, is different from that at the community garden, but has similar results in terms of agency and place-making practices. At Lopez Urban Farm, community members are not necessarily the gardeners themselves but still have the agency and ability to shape their surroundings and pursue their desires. At Huerta del Valle, though the responses were varied, direct community requests are less common. The idea at Huerta del Valle is that community members grow their culturally relevant foods in their garden plots. However, culturally relevant food production still happens at the farm, though it may be more coincidental. Additionally, by aiming to grow higher quantities of foods that are culturally relevant and also grown in the community garden, such as tomatoes and jalapenos, the produce from the farm supplements culturally relevant food access. At both Huerta del Valle and Lopez Urban Farm, the farm staff grows food that will be enjoyed, bought, and chosen by the community it serves. These foods, in turn, may well have cultural significance for community members, especially when the communities in question are predominantly composed of



immigrant groups. It is notable, though, that the types of culturally relevant foods referenced by community members and staff members varied across the two sites. At Lopez Urban Farm, people talked about a host of different foods as substantive in the diet, whereas at Huerta del Valle the conversation mostly centered on seasonings and cooking vessels like herbs and banana leaves. As the urban farm at Root 66 is under development, there is less understanding of how decisions on what to grow are made. Elinor said that for their first crop, they brought a bunch of seeds to the site to just get them into the ground, which seems important for the inception of an urban farm. She listed a few typical Southern California winter vegetables like kale and radishes and mentioned that their lead farmer also brought some seeds. As the development of this farm progresses, it will be interesting to see how community demand and request influence what is grown on-site. It is certainly significant that at all three farm sites, there is no explicit intention to produce culturally relevant food. Staff members specifically talked about how it wasn't something intentional, but instead, something that happens through a series of varied processes and goals on the farm. This makes a statement on what happens when community ownership and influence are prioritized on sites of food production: culturally relevant food production.

How the production of culturally relevant food impacts community members' sovereign foodways was a discussion in all three of the case studies. This is mostly in the ways that it allows for autonomy over consumption and ownership over production processes. At Lopez Urban Farm, one community member in particular spoke to the role of produce from the farm in her diet, explicitly citing the way that produce from Lopez allows her to consume the food that she wants to eat, as a person with limited economic means and who is vegetarian. Through the produce at Lopez, she is able to define her consumption and cooking practices to align with her cultural food values. This phenomenon demonstrates this community member having ownership

over a component of her foodways, consumption, which also allows her to maintain ties to her cultural identity. Another community member at Lopez also spoke about the role that produce from the farm played in her diet at a time when her economic means were limited. Through acquiring produce at Lopez, she was able to maintain access to produce that was fresh and chemical-free, which was significant to her for health reasons but also in accessing food that aligns with her culturally relevant food values. The produce from Lopez Urban Farm gave her the ability to have choices which are significant, as a key component of sovereignty and ownership is self-determination. In a similar sense, the produce offered at Huerta del Valle contributes to community members' sovereign foodways through it being produced in a culturally relevant way, without chemicals, and being fresh. This was significant for all three community members from Huerta del Valle and demonstrates the importance of culturally relevant food production in sovereign foodways. Producing food in culturally relevant ways allows for people to feel more supported by and involved with their food system at Huerta del Valle. Through the leadership at Huerta del Valle being composed of immigrant people, this space contributes to sovereign foodways in it being defined by members of the community that it serves. Additionally, the community garden as supported by the urban farm, supports sovereign foodways in providing a space for community members to make decisions on the food they want to grow and how they want to grow it. Elinor from Root 66 also spoke to cultural food valuations, commenting that people who obtain food from the Food Access Booth value the food because of its freshness and taste. In offering organically produced vegetables, the Food Access Booth contributes to the ability of community members to make choices in their food system. In sum, the production processes at the farms studied were significant in ensuring community

members had agency over their foodways and the ability to choose food that is agreeable with their values.

The produce grown and offered at the different sites had varying impacts on autonomous identity-shaping. It was clear across the three sites that an element of community member experience is the introduction to crops that are not traditionally associated with their cultures. The availability of crops that are not culturally significant allows for people at the farm to autonomously shape their identity outside of the context of their home countries. Further, the practices at the three farm sites contribute to the ability of immigrant populations to shape their own food-informed identities outside of the bounds of their home countries. A community member at Lopez Urban Farm specifically spoke about introduction to unfamiliar foods as something she enjoys most about her experience at the farm. Stephen from Lopez Urban Farm talked about how people come to the farm specifically looking for foods such as kale, which don't have traditional cultural significance, and how this demonstrates the importance of not making assumptions about what people want to eat. Findings around introduction/access to non-traditional foods were less discussed in interviews and more of an observation made at Huerta del Valle. There were certainly several foodstuffs offered at the market that are not traditional Latino foodstuffs, such as bok choy and kohlrabi. Accessing these foods may contribute to community members' abilities to engage in curiosity and flexibility in their food shaped identities. In the case of the Food Access Booth, Elinor spoke about cross-cultural information transmission as a way of building community and shaping intercultural identities. Through learning about and being introduced to new foodstuffs, people may gain a greater sense of belonging and identification with the host country, a process that all three farms support. However, the space and practices at the farms also allow for the preservation of cultural identity.

At Lopez Urban Farm, this is accomplished through farm leadership bringing people to the community to teach about and practice their cultural food-related traditions. In having the physical and metaphorical space to imprint their cultural identities on the ground and in the community, community members are able to preserve their cultural identities and share them with others. Additionally, accessing food that meets their cultural specifications allows people to engage in food practices that preserve their cultural identities. At Huerta del Valle, identity-shaping through food is a critical factor in the community garden. In these spaces, immigrants can reinforce their cultural identities through growing foods that are used in the dishes they prepare to connect with their home countries and through the physical practice of gardening as it relates to their homeland practices. The term autonomous identity-shaping denotes identity-shaping that is boundless, a state where people can curiously and freely engage with their identities and ultimately make decisions on how they want to identify. The practices at the urban farm result in this state through offering opportunities to engage in new and traditional identity-shaping practices.

Place-making practices and homeland re-creation occurs at both Huerta del Valle and Lopez Urban Farm. However, it is possible, as also communicated by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2015), that community gardens may do more to manifest this type of place-making. Specifically, as communicated by community members at Huerta del Valle, the community garden plots can be used for connecting to childhood/homeland practices through the space provided to *be* the gardener. Additionally, the community garden model opens up the opportunity to shape the children of community members' cultural identities as they relate to the land, soil, and food systems. This is not to say that these practices don't occur in the model of Lopez Urban Farm. Through the intentional creation of space for culturally relevant foodstuffs at the request of the

community, people are able to practice place-making and homeland re-creation. Additionally, as communicated by one of the community members, the pick-your-own-produce days can provide the opportunity for parents to educate their children on their food systems and cultural values. The volunteer program at Lopez Urban Farm also allows community members to act as the gardener, and potentially connect with homeland practices, though this wasn't something specifically talked about by interviewees. Referencing Hondagneu-Sotelo (2014), homeland re-creation occurs as an impression of agency on the earth. This agency is maintained by community members on the urban farm and at the community garden through the ability to influence and connect with food production and allows for connection to cultural values and homeland practices.

This discussion necessitates a conversation on the economic models across the three farm sites and how they move beyond neoliberal market models. A crucial similarity among the models is in how they differentiate from other food relief efforts. At all three sites, community members are never handed a bag of food that they didn't choose themselves. In this sense, food access is dignified across the three sites - people are not told what they need, nor is it assumed that people who cannot access food are at fault and further they are not rendered unworthy of choice. Both the models at Lopez Urban Farm and the Food Access Booth actively create channels for food access that operate outside of neoliberal or traditional Western market models. Testimonies from farm staff and community members describe these models as largely successful in providing good food, something that would be expected from the analysis of Alkon and Mares (2012). Lopez Urban Farm and the Food Access Booth may have the ability to do more to ensure the just distribution of food than Huerta del Valle, which relies on traditional neoliberal market models and further where price is cited as a barrier to food access. It is

important here to define sovereign distribution methods, which specifically contribute to the ability of community members to define their foodways, in particular, what they consume and how they consume it. What we see at Lopez Urban Farm and the Food Access Booth are sovereign distribution methods. The distribution methods at Lopez and the Food Access Booth allow for community members to have agency over the quality and type of food that they eat, as opposed to market models which determine what can be eaten in accordance with economic means. The model at Huerta del Valle restricts some people from being able to access the produce, especially in cases where less expensive produce can be found in a typical grocery store. The economic models across the three sites can also be evaluated for their sustainability and ability to be successful in the long run. The models at Lopez Urban Farm and the Food Access Booth will only be sustainable if those who are “paying -what-they-can” generate enough funding, as ultimately, these markets must be able to survive within the forces of capitalist structures. It is also important to note that even though the model at Huerta del Valle intends towards self-sufficiency, the organization still relies on grants and donations in a similar way to the other models discussed. The fact that all of these organizations need outside funds to operate makes a broader statement on values in the broader food system. However, systems can and do change, as iterated by Harvey (2012) and Alkon & Mares (2012). Channels for substantive systematic change were brought up by Elinor at the end of our conversation when she talked about the potential for shifts of public funding to make jobs, like those at the urban farm sites, publicly funded and further made sustainable through government support. Just because this is the way we know should not limit our imagination of what should be or what could be.

It is demonstrated through testimonies from farm staff and community members across the three urban farms that these spaces are crucial community hubs. In this, it is clear that the

environment and space of the urban farm influences social relationship building. At Lopez Urban Farm, community members spoke to their feelings of peace and connection to nature at the farm, but more importantly, they talked about the uniqueness of the community that comes together in the space. One community member spoke to how Lopez Urban Farm invites and welcomes everyone, contributing to shared respect and mutual understanding amongst people in a radical way. At Huerta del Valle, community members also spoke about the importance of the farm in their lives and how they feel a sense of peace, calm, and connection to nature at the site. The feeling of community is strong at both the sites, as I observed families and individuals chatting, toiling in the dirt, and snacking on fresh vegetables together. Ultimately, urban farms provide a space for people to come together in a powerful way to share, celebrate, and engage with each other on common ground.

Another takeaway from this discussion is the interconnected nature of all of the topics discussed and analyzed in this project. While this presents some cloudiness, it is also a testament to all of the complexity necessitated by conversations on food, as it relates to identity, sovereignty, agency, community, the environment, eating, and growing. Identity-shaping is inherently a component of homeland re-creation practices. Homeland re-creation necessitates agency, agency is a key component of sovereignty and ownership. Food sovereignty is achieved when people have the ability to define their food systems, including having the ability to access foods that influence and preserve their identities. Culturally relevant food designation necessitates an understanding of context, foodways describe the context of food for a given group. These are just some of the many connections that can be made between the notions discussed in this thesis and are presented to remind the reader that while it is simpler to separate ideas for the sake of clarity, there is a world of overlap that exists in these pages. The urban

farms studied, just like the topics covered, also do not exist in isolation. In this paper, there are multiple examples of how these farms overlap and engage with each other. The sites of urban agriculture studied in this paper are building networks that preview what the future of food might look like.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of food outside of what it provides to humans in nutritional value is demonstrated in the testaments documented in this work. These testaments also demonstrate that the work at urban farms contributes to sovereign foodways, place-making practices, and autonomous identity-shaping for immigrant communities. Urban farm practices influence immigrant foodways by allowing people to take ownership of and maintain agency over their food systems. At the urban farm, people are involved in their food production, have increased autonomy over their food choices, and engage with food in a way that reinforces or allows them to explore their identities. People can use urban farm spaces to practice homeland re-creation by either contributing to urban farms or by engaging in community gardening. The foodways shaped at the urban farm provide a picture of what food systems could look like when they uphold cultural meanings of food without the bounds of neoliberal agricultural markets. Through operating outside of the notion of access to culturally relevant food, the analysis of this thesis is able to demonstrate the meaning that a food's context, in all senses, has to different cultural groups. This thesis also demonstrates that urban farm spaces are important to people, providing respite for immigrant groups from the challenge of outsider status in everyday life. Urban farms contribute to the creation of warm, respect-based, and wholly human social systems.

I intend for this research to communicate the need for expanding research on the role that food plays in lives and the cultural meaning-making that food influences and is influenced by. To



expand on the research, I would primarily work to interview additional community members to include more lived experience and ask direct questions on some of the topics that came up unexpectedly, such as homeland re-creation and identity-shaping. Though it is apparent that community members are engaging in these practices, I would like the opportunity to ask directly about these phenomena. I would build on this research by including more farms and potentially by including ethnic grocery stores in the Inland Empire. This would allow me to compare and further document the importance of the context of food (production, transportation, distribution, quality, price, cultural meaning, use in meals, etc) as opposed to just its existence.

Models of urban agriculture are of particular importance due to climate change and the need to radically change food systems to combat and face it. Urban agriculture will also likely play a role in ameliorating the impacts of impending compromised global supply chains. As we move into a future where food systems will have to be altered following a changing climate, we must combat notions, as they are addressed by scholars such as Bene et al. (2019), which argue that cultural meanings of food can be rendered insignificant. These suggestions are based on simplistic notions of the role that food plays in human lives. Regardless of the word chosen (sovereign, just, secure), food systems will not meet the requirements made by these crucial movements without the acknowledgment of the variety of meanings that food takes on. Investing in an understanding of these meanings means investing in justice.

## Appendix

### Interview Questions

#### Questions for Staff:

What are you currently growing?

How do you decide what to plant?

How much of your choice on what to plant is influenced by the community this farm serves?

Have there been any crops that have not been popular amongst people who acquire produce from your site?

Who receives/buys produce from this farm?

Are there any crops that you would call unique at your site?

What are some of your most used farming practices? Are you organic?

Where did you learn to farm/garden? How does this influence your work here?

Do you eat the produce from this farm? What are your favorite foods that are grown here?

How do people access food from this farm? Do you sell it or donate it?

Do you ever grow crops that are not typical here in Southern California?

Are there any special practices you must use to grow crops that are not perfectly suited to this climate?

Do you think the produce from this farm positively contributes to some community members' food access?

Do you think people who buy/get food from this farm care about the way it is grown?

What are some of the most popular/high demand crops/foodstuffs?

Do you think this farm provides food that would be hard for people to access elsewhere?

#### Questions for Community Members:

Are there foods here you can't get in the grocery store?

Are there foods that are important to your family that you still eat? Do you use produce from this farm in those foods?

Are there foods that you eat on specific holidays? Do you use any of the produce from this farm in those foods?

Are there any foods that you wish you could eat but don't have access to the ingredients for?

Where do you do most of your shopping?

Are there any foods that you find here that are more expensive at other places?

What are your favorite foods that you get from this farm?

Do the fruit/vegetables you get from this farm make up more than half of the total fruit/vegetables in your house?

Are there foods here that you are or have been surprised by?

What do you know about the way this farm produces food?

Does it matter to you how the food you eat is grown?

How often do you come here to get food?

Is it easy to get here for you?

Are you happy with the food you find here?

What did you buy today? What do you plan to do with that?

How would your diet be different if you didn't get produce from this farm?

Do you wish there were more farms like this in your community?

Do you grow any food at your own home? If not, would you like to be able to?

Do you ever find it hard to cook with the food you purchase/obtain from this farm?

Translated for farm staff:

¿Qué cultiva actualmente?

¿Cómo decide qué plantar?

¿En qué medida influye en su elección la comunidad a la que sirve la explotación?

¿Ha habido algún cultivo que no haya sido popular entre las personas que adquieren productos de su explotación?

¿Quién recibe/compra los productos de esta explotación?

¿Hay algún cultivo que considere único en su explotación?

¿Cuáles son algunas de sus prácticas agrícolas más utilizadas? ¿Son ecológicos?

¿Dónde aprendió a cultivar? ¿Cómo influye esto en su trabajo aquí?

¿Come los productos de esta granja? ¿Cuáles son sus alimentos favoritos?

¿Cómo accede la gente a los alimentos de esta granja? ¿Los vendes o los donas?

¿Alguna vez cultivó productos que no sean típicos del sur de California?

¿Existen prácticas especiales para cultivar productos que no se adapten perfectamente a este clima?

¿Crees que los productos de esta granja contribuyen positivamente al acceso a los alimentos de algunos miembros de la comunidad?

¿Crees que las personas que compran o adquieren alimentos de esta granja se preocupan por la forma en que se cultivan?

¿Cuáles son algunos de los cultivos/alimentos más populares/de mayor demanda?

¿Crees que esta granja proporciona alimentos a los que sería difícil acceder en otro lugar?

Translated for community members:

¿Hay alimentos que no pueda conseguir en el supermercado?

¿Hay alimentos importantes para tu familia que sigues comiendo? ¿Utilizas productos de esta granja en esas comidas?

¿Hay alimentos que consuma en días festivos concretos? ¿Utiliza productos de esta granja en esas comidas?

¿Hay alimentos que le gustaría poder comer pero para los que no tiene acceso a los ingredientes?

¿Dónde hace la mayoría de sus compras?

¿Hay alimentos que encuentre aquí que sean más caros que en otros lugares?

¿Cuáles son tus alimentos favoritos de esta granja?

¿Las frutas y verduras que compra en esta granja representan más de la mitad del total de frutas y verduras de su casa?

¿Hay alimentos de aquí que te sorprendan o te hayan sorprendido?

¿Qué sabes sobre la forma en que esta granja produce los alimentos?

¿Te importa cómo se cultivan los alimentos que comes?

¿Con qué frecuencia vienes aquí a por comida?

¿Te resulta fácil llegar hasta aquí?

¿Estás contento con los alimentos que encuentras aquí?

¿Qué has comprado hoy? ¿Qué piensas hacer con ello?

¿En qué cambiaría tu dieta si no compraras productos de esta granja?

¿Te gustaría que hubiera más granjas como ésta en tu comunidad?

¿Cultivar algún alimento en tu propia casa? Si no es así, ¿te gustaría poder hacerlo?

¿Le resulta difícil cocinar con los alimentos que compra u obtiene de esta granja?

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