From Veils and Chains to Nets and Scales: Some notes on the Strawberry Commodity and the Ironies of Body and Place

E. Melanie DuPuis

Sociology Department

UC Santa Cruz

Commodity Chain Analysis has been one of the most powerful intellectual tools in the Sociology of Agriculture in the last three decades. The process of tearing away the veil of the commodity fetish and showing "how our food is really made" -- from Manufacturing Green Gold to Fast Food Nation -- has provided the systematic analysis to inspire the rise of social movements around healthy, socially just and sustainable food and against "factory farming."

But commodity chain analysis, as several have noted, has some weaknesses as well. It tends to be production-centered, ignoring culture and, particularly, the body (Guthman and DuPuis, forthcoming; Lockie and Kitto, 2000; Dixon, 1999; Goodman and DuPuis: 2003: DuPuis, 1998). It tends to obscure space and ignore place-based forces (Leslie and Reimer, 1999). In addition, by its very linearity, it tends to reduce explanation to set linear, determinist relationships, determined primarily by struggles between capital and labor as placeless class actors, with consumers relegated to the realm of false consciousness (Goodman and DuPuis, 2002).

Making commodity analysis both more multi-actored and more place-based requires a re-thinking of the commodity chain as a linear logic, and as commodity chain analysis as simple "unveiling." Why are these somewhat tedious re-theorizations of commodity chains important? Because if you think of the world as chained and veiled, then you are looking for a particular empirical unit of analysis: namely authenticity and false consciousness. By moving beyond chains and veils to nets and scales, the unit of analysis changes: one begins to see a commodity embodied and emplaced in terms of hybridities and ironies. This paper is a mere beginning, a set of "notes" on how nets and scales, that is looking at a commodity as embodied and emplaced, has lead me to "see" different things about a particular commodity in a particular place: the strawberry in Santa Cruz County.

Needless to say, because geographers start with space, they have been at the forefront of making commodity analysis more place-based. Indeed, geographers have been persistent critics of the idea that capitalism is simply a process of creating homogenous space (Harvey, 1985, 1989; Scott and Storper, 1987; Storper and Walker, 1986). Instead, geographers have found that even the most aggressive globalizing forces are fixed in places. As a result, geography has turned to the study of the formation of local agglomerative economies and their "relational assets" (Storper, 1997). Like the alternative food system literature, the geography literature on agglomeration emphasizes local networks (Saxenian, 1994) or "clusters" (Porter, 1990), locally segmented labor markets (Massey, 1984; Piore and Sabel, 1984), local knowledge or regional "systems of

innovation" (Lundvall, 1992) and the social forging of ties of trust (Storper and Salais, 1997).

From this perspective, Leslie and Reimer (1999: 411) and others have called for a more spatialized commodity chain or "circuit."

> " It is important to reflect upon both the unique spatialities of products and also the geographies of chains, which are by no means linear, and involve complex webs of relationships between spaces. A consideration of the spatiality of commodity chains has important consequences for both policy and politics."

Whatmore and Thorne (1997) and others, borrowing from Latourian science studies, have looked at commodities as embedded in and created by networks of actors, beyond the categories of capital and labor and situated in particular places as spatially agglomerated production spaces. Other geographers have incorporated the concept of spatial scale hierarchies into commodity analysis, showing how commodities are implicated in the creation of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (DuPuis and Block, in submission) and in the struggle between local and global politics, as well as the spatial hierarchies of places in between.

Feminist geographers have added the body to scale analysis, although not without contention (Marston, 2000). This paper will incorporate a more embodied and emplaced approach to the commodity. In other words, the paper will expand theorization of the body from veils and chains to nets and scales. However, rather than "adding on" the body (Guthman and DuPuis: forthcoming; DuPuis, 1998), culture (Dixon, 1999),

state/nation, space, and long term historical struggles (DuPuis, 2002) to the commodity chain, this paper argues for a different (although undoubtedly not final) resolution to the problem. While respecting commodity chain analysis for what it is -- a line of workers, buyers and sellers through which the commodity passes "hands," the alternative proposed here brings to the fore the place-based contradictions, hybridities and ironies present in the making of a commodity.

This is not to deny the importance of commodity chain analysis as one important angle through which to view a commodity. However, the analysis of footloose capitalism, playing one region off another in competitive struggle, creating placeless apple juices with origins a mile long, needs to be complemented with analyses in place, specifically how a commodity goes about making a place, and vice versa. My overall project therefore looks at strawberries as a placed and embodied commodity chain. This paper is therefore a set of notes on how one might begin to look at the scale of the body and how the body is linked to place.

This analysis must take into account more recent work on scale in geography which critiques more reified ideas of place and re-conceptualizes spatial fixity as processual contests over scale and territory, rather than fixed and unexamined ideas of "local" and "global" reified in the static notions of city, state and nation. They have also begun to question the unexamined uses of the terms "local" and "global" as fixed places in dialectical relationship with one another (Swyngedouw, 1997). Geographers often refer to the process of scalar contestation as "territorialization": how particular economies get

organized at particular scales, whether they are local, global or something in-between. As a result, "spatial scales constitute a hierarchical scaffolding of territorial organization upon, within, and through which the capital circulation process is successively territorialized, deterritorialized, and reterritorialized" (Brenner, 1998: 464). Using this perspective to study place requires a methodological approach that looks at each geographical scale as "a contested arena in which the spatiotemporal contradictions of the capital relation are continually reproduced and fought out" (1998: 465). The focus therefore is on processes of territorialization: inclusion and exclusion of particular bodies as carrying particular practices in particular places. Different bodies carry different practices and therefore it is impossible to think about territory without thinking of the body, and vice versa.

In the same way, Guthman and DuPuis (forthcoming) argue that understanding obesity requires looking at embodiment as a political process, what they call "the dialectic of dialectics." (See Fig. 1) Embodied territories also involve an exploration of contestations and contradictions and how those contradictions remain unresolved or resolved through spatial fixes. However, more integrative approaches must include the consumer as another local political interest, not as a dupe of false consciousness but as a political actor (DuPuis, 2002; Goodman and DuPuis, 2002), although not as "enlightened" rational agents freeing themselves from the veils and chains of capitalism but as situated political actors (Haraway, 1988) making choices within the nets and scales of economic and cultural contradictions and ironies.

In this paper, I will look at how a particular commodity, the strawberry, contributes to the creation of bodies in a particular place, Santa Cruz County, and how this place goes about creating strawberries. In export-oriented systems like strawberries, the place of the producer is most likely not the place of the consumer. Santa Cruz County, however, is a fascinating counter-example. Not only is it a major producer of strawberries, there are many strawberry eaters there as well. It is, in Harrison's terms (2004), both intensive productive space and intensive reproductive space, although those spaces tend to be divided into South and North County. It is one of those rare places where one can follow the commodity chain as it occurs in a single governmental jurisdiction (another is milk), meaning that chain and scale overlap.

This paper will therefore analyze how strawberries are linked by a chained and often veiled set of producer consumer relationships but also how those relationships take place with particular bodies in a particular place. The paper will focus on Santa Cruz County, a unique place because it contains within one close political jurisdiction very strong producer and consumer politics.

To truly understand the commodity in the politics of scale, it is necessary to look at commodity politics as a form of territorialization: the ways in which the commodity creates place and place creates the commodity. From this perspective, "strawberry place" is a temporally and spatially fixed constellation of political alliances organized in relation to particular resources organized as "second nature." Drawing from the these concepts, we look at a particular place – Santa Cruz County -- a specific production territory for a

particular commodity: strawberries. This study draws upon my previous work on milk, specifically the politics of territorialization of milk market orders. Market orders were a product of the mass-production "Fordist" politics organized by an interventionist state during the New Deal (DuPuis, 2002; DuPuis and Block, in submission). From this perspective, territories and scales are "contested social constructions" (Herod,1991: 84) and the ontology of scale, from the 'local' to the 'global', is not preordained but can be reconfigured through socio-political struggle (Smith,1993; Swngedouw,1997 a;b). To do this requires considering that "the 'local' is never purely local but… created in part by extralocal linkages and practices over time" (Watts, 2002, 23. Cited in Castree, 2004). With this processual theorization, the ontology of scale, from the 'local' to the 'global,' is contingent rather than predetermined and fixed (Swyngedouw, 1997). These notes therefore take body the body and place as processes rather than as fixed "things." Embodiment and emplacement are continually under negotiation, and it is this negotiation that is netted and scaled within contradictions and ironies.

These emplaced contradiction and ironies are also netted within global "flows" (e.g., Castells 1996; Held 1999). Castells in particular has recognized a fundamental and unprecedented shift in global networking, where local communities with extensive exposure to global policies and economic "flows" are becoming more and more entrenched in systems that reach far beyond nation-state borders (1996). In this case, linked localities create trans-national community impacts, all of which need to be taken into account. It is important to evaluate how global economic and environmental agendas create flows which shape the conditions of local environments by enforcing transitions to

alternative means of agricultural production. It is also important to examine how local actors work within these nets, scales and flows.

Santa Cruz County as Strawberry Place

The overall project, therefore, is about strawberries as a commodity, but it is also about strawberry place: specifically the strawberry place of Santa Cruz County, my home. It will show how Santa Cruz County makes strawberries and how strawberries make Santa Cruz County. It will show the contradictory political relationships which exist at each level of the scale and between scales. The larger project – to which these notes are a small but hopefully tasty nibble -- will analyze the strawberry through the hierarchy of scales, showing the politics of strawberry placemaking at each one. This will include the global and local politics that have made Santa Cruz County a strawberry production center and how global and local politics preserve or threaten the continuation of the county's strawberry production. The local forces include local struggles over water resources and land use, as well as different political visions of the future of the county. Global forces influencing the nature of Silicon Valley high-tech industries also affect pressures for housing development in Santa Cruz County. In addition, new global trade agreements, new markets and new competition from other production regions will affect the continuation of strawberry production in the region.

The County is part of a larger Central California Coast region that already has many global links. First, it is a global exporter of specialized vegetable crops, such as lettuce

and artichokes, along with strawberries. Second, it is dealing with land pressures related to its proximity to Silicon Valley, the premiere world high-tech corridor and a place which is almost obsessively sensitive to the vagaries of the electronics commodity chain. In addition, Santa Cruz City is a major recreation and retirement area. Importantly, the area is defined, and has a strong role in defining, a particular style of living, a kind of hippie/yuppie/surfer/alternative "hip" that is both a way of defining place and a source of commoditized style in its own right. As a source of style and as a recreational area, Santa Cruz City is a commodity in its own right, a commodity that is a large source of revenue for the City itself, in the form of a tourist tax that supports the largely socialist government's social welfare programs (Rotkin, 1991).

The political economy of the strawberry production chain in South County is entirely different from the tourist and electronic industry forces that have such a strong impact on the northern part of the county. The global aspects of the strawberry chain is extremely dependent on the continuing legality of a particular fungicide, methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting chemical that is currently under global debate due to its scheduled ban in 2005 in the Montreal Protocol. Santa Cruz County strawberry growers, through the Strawberry Commission located in Watsonville, have been at the forefront of the dismantling of these mandates (see Gareau's study).

The development of the MeBr-based strawberry production system in the 1980s led to significant changes on the Central Coast, transforming it from an orchard and vegetable crop production area to become the dominant strawberry production region in the United

States. California's share of the total strawberry production in the U.S. has increased from 58% in 1970 (Bertelsen 1995: 24) to 83% in 2000 (National Agricultural Statistics Service 2002: V-33; 1994: 193, but see Appendix 1. in "Supplementary Documents" section of this proposal), producing a total of $538 million in fresh market strawberries, and $70 million in processing strawberries (California Agricultural Statistics Service 2002). The Central Coast is the dominant production area, although Santa Maria and some Southern California counties also have significant production areas.

Also, strawberry production in the region is heavily dependent on the continuation of the availability of a large, often undocumented, labor force, and therefore depends on a national politics that assured the maintenance of relatively porous national borders. This production complex relies heavily on Mexican labor originating from sending communities in the states of Michoacan, Jalisco, and Guanajuato. Some of these laborers have moved both into strawberry farming and into middle-class technical management for larger firms. These groups have gained greater representation in local political institutions. Their interests, and the interests of the significant and growing number of Latino youth, are both articulated with and go beyond the strawberry industry. The established Latino residents are politically and socially distinct from the more mobile harvesting labor force.

Finally, local and regional environmental social movements against pesticides and industrial agriculture increasingly question whether or not this form of agricultural production is to be desired in the region. The environmental and health risks of this

methyl bromide go beyond ozone depletion. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency categorizes this chemical as a Category I Acute Toxin. As more housing is built near strawberry fields, there have arisen increased public concerns over pesticide drift. Based on this high toxicity and potential for farmworker and community exposure, and increasing political pressure from residents, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation is also considering increasing restrictions on the use of this chemical. Therefore, even though the strawberry industry is actively fighting the methyl bromide ban (e.g., Chemical Market Reporter 1998) and local regulation, and while federal and global lawmakers may provide some regulatory relief from Montreal Protocol mandates, it is quite likely that this chemical will become increasingly less available to growers in the next 5-10 years.

In addition, many citizens in the more prosperous northern section of the county are building a new vision of county agriculture based on sustainable practices and local markets. Environmental and food activists are forging increasingly strong political alliances with local organic growers to redefine and re-envision agriculture in the County. For example, in February, 2005, activists invited "everyone who eats" to a County-wide Food Forum in which participants create projects to work toward a new vision of the food system in the County.

Nevertheless, there is a coalition of interests between strawberry growers, landowners and Latino agricultural managers who see the strawberry industry as their way to reach middle-class status (workers), to maintain retirement income (landowners, many of

whom are older, retired former orchard growers), or to maintain their strawberry producing business in the region. Strawberry industry actors, through the Strawberry Commission have actively supported lobbying in front of the UN Ozone Secretariat for "critical use exemptions" that allow for the continued use of methyl bromide beyond the mandated ban.

The larger project of local/global relationships in strawberrymaking includes the work of two graduate students: Brian Gareau, who is working on a dissertation looking at the global environmental regulation of methyl bromide – a chemical fumigant important to the strawberry industry and an important part of the politics of strawberry placemaking at each scale, as explained below. Marcos Lopez is looking at the international competitiveness of the Santa Cruz County strawberry industry versus new competitors in Mexico, Spain and China. Some mention of these larger projects is necessary at the larger scales. However, a more complete analysis at larger scales must await the completion of their projects. The emphasis in this paper is on body and local place and the larger scales will develop primarily in terms of how local actors influence global politics and how global politics affect local actors in Santa Cruz County.

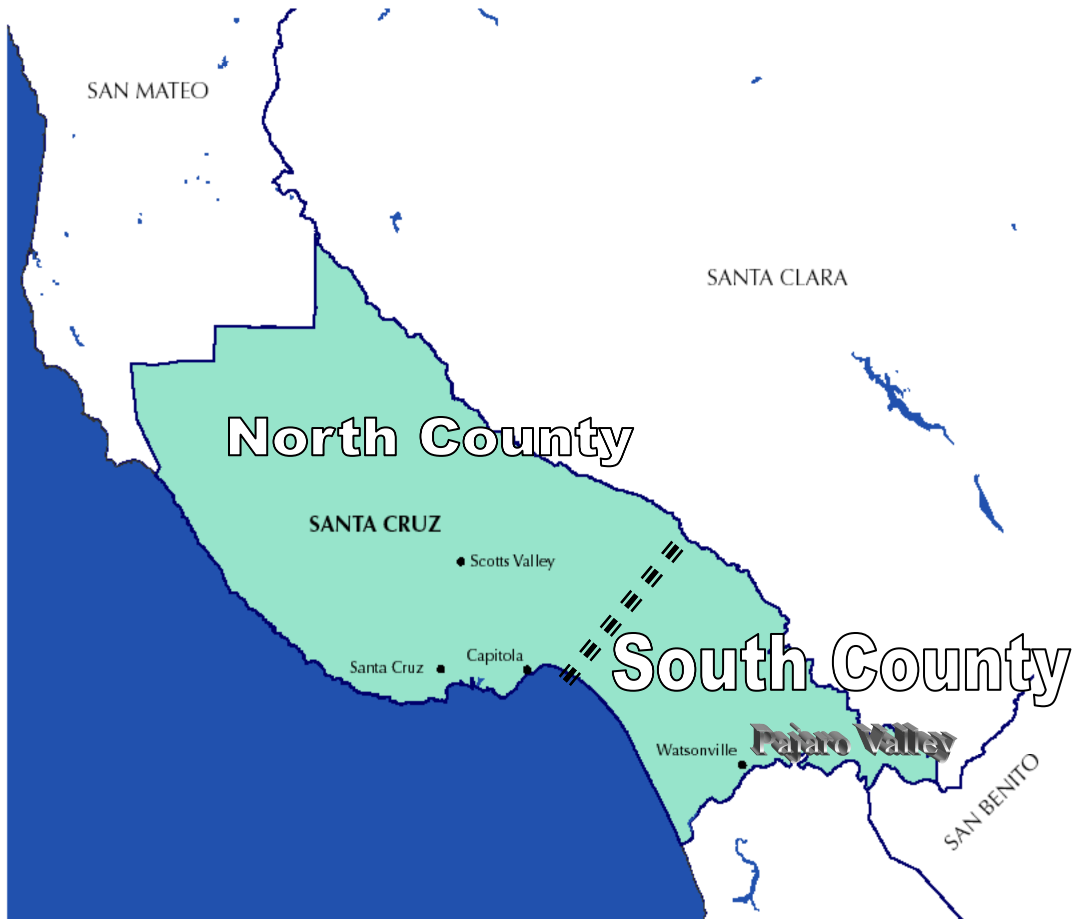


Figure 1: Santa Cruz County, California

The Body in Strawberry Place

Understanding how bodies create strawberries in Santa Cruz County requires understanding the politics of the body in this place. How does the body create strawberry place in Santa Cruz County? The following analysis is a first set of notes on strawberry place at the body scale. Many claims made here come from secondary material such as newspapers, websites, meeting documents and anecdotes from my experience with students who are children of farmworkers. More rigorous documentation of these claims will require careful examination of archival materials, interviews and ethnography.

The Laborer

The intensive strawberry production system is heavily dependent on manual labor: planting, irrigation, cultivation and harvesting are all extremely labor intensive in the current strawberry system (Wells, 1996). As the historian Carey McWilliams (1935) explained more than half a century ago, California agriculture in general depends on the available of bodies marked as "foreign": Chinese, "Hindoos,"(Sihks), Japanese, and Oakie bodies, along with Mexicans, have all at one time or another been critical to the maintenance of vegetable, fruit and specialty crop production in the State. Being marked foreign meant that these laborers were not accorded the rights of those deemed to "belong" to the State. In California's agricultural production places, each body is racialized, which involves the attachment of specific privileges or stigmas to various bodies and how specific bodies take advantage of their privileges or struggle against those stigmas. As the historian Don Mitchell documented in *The Lie of the Land* these

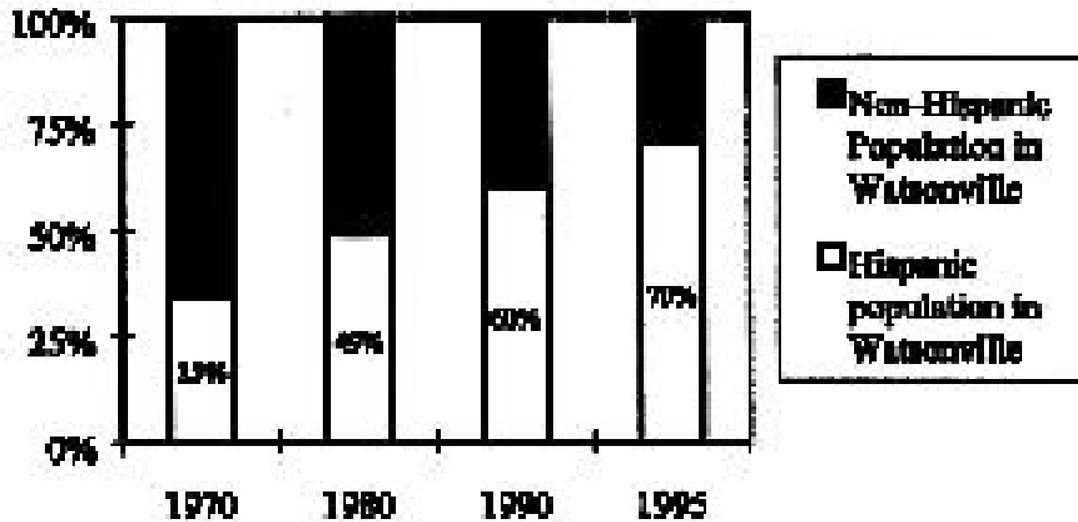
bodies are regularly erased from the landscape, either representatively in pictures of California's agrarian landscape, or in actuality, through unwillingness to house workers. However, as Matt Garcia documents in *A World of Its Own* (2001) workers in more year-round ag sectors managed to create spaces of their own.

The body has attached to it a specific relationship to the county: each body is either citizen or non-citizen, documented or not documented (or, more specifically, documented as belonging to another place, therefore not "of" the place, despite an existence in the County). These worker bodies also come from specific places, such as specific towns in Michoacan, and often this place of origin is a source of identity. As a result, Santa Cruz strawberry place involves bodies who carry within them another place of reproduction. What is a source of identity also becomes a way to assign responsibility for the reproduction of the body. The Mexican body celebrates its belonging to another place by placement of the Mexican flag on picking equipment in the field (a popular practice) or on trucks that sometimes also carry the name of the place of belonging in big letters on windows, ("Michoacan" is the one that occurs most frequently in SC County). Yet, that bodies' same identity of belonging is read by white bodies as one that "belongs" elsewhere – the body is here to work and does not have to be raised and educated, or cared for in old age (old age being that age when the body can no longer effectively work in the industry, about the age of 30 for a picker).

Because of strawberry's labor intensiveness, the availability of many foreign bodies is particularly indispensable to strawberry production. The rise of the strawberry

production system therefore increased the presence of these bodies in Santa Cruz County, particularly in the South County Pajaro Valley and the City of Watsonville. (stats). This "home" industry has therefore depended increasingly on bodies defined and actively maintained as un-homed (identified as not belonging) or even homeless (unhoused, living in cars, under bridges, etc).

Figure 1: Ethnicity of Watsonville's Population, 1970-95



Source: US Census 1990, 1980, 1970, and DOF 1995.

Figure 3: Hispanic Population Growth in Watsonville (from Gomez and Wong, 1997)

Strawberry place therefore creates the presence of a particular type of body generally defined as unhomed and "foreign." Strawberries also affect bodies, particularly the laboring body. Specifically, toxic chemicals involved in strawberry production create bodies at risk of exposure. This is well known because pesticide drift incidents of acute poisoning are covered by the media. It is also unknown because it is very difficult to document day-to-day exposures of farmworkers, leading to widely contested claims of no farmworker exposure to claims of serious daily exposure (Brodberg, 1992).

This lack of documentation is also a story of bodies and place. Whenever I say that I am working on strawberries, students inevitably ask me if I can get them "out into the field" to "talk to farmworkers." But strawberry fields are very much not white space; even

growers spend most of their time either in their trucks or in local restaurants, on their cellphones. Growers complain constantly that they don't have the time to walk their fields and the only growers I have seen on their land so far have been organic growers giving tours to my students. I have never seen a landowner (landowners are not generally growers) visit a field, especially since their field is just a small square on what is now a valley-wide expanse of monocropped strawberry fields.

The other impact strawberry work, particularly picking work, has on the body is in terms of the physical labor itself. The labor is, literally, backbreaking. Many of my students with parents or grandparents who worked in the strawberry industry talk about their now elderly relatives' continued struggle with back problems. There are many rumors about the use of injectable painkillers among pickers, although a doctor for the local neighborhood clinic denied this was common. A friend of mine with back problems spoke to me recently about getting a medical marijuana prescription for a marijuana-based salve that she said farmworkers used on to kill back pain. It is quite clear that strawberry labor is a physically painful and debilitative job. As a result, strawberry laborers tend to be those people who have no alternative source of livelihood for themselves or their families.

To understand strawberry place, however, it is also extremely important to understand how strawberries represent the sole source of livelihood for a large number of people in the County, "Livelihood" as a term describes the reproduction of a workers body and those of their family. It is very important to understand the importance of strawberries in

terms of the workers access to livelihood and therefore as a source of resources for family reproduction. This is particularly important in terms of the responses to challenges to strawberry place by other groups, both within and outside the county. Robert Gottleib documents the idea that workers, particularly male workers, accept unsafe conditions based on their masculine role as provider. The man of the family is considered, and considers himself, responsible for the family's care, even to the point of harm to his own body (Gottlieb, 1993). In this case, often both parents are involved in becoming "bodies of sacrifice" for their children.

I saw evidence of this indirectly in my Environmental Inequality class. Two students, children of farmworkers, did a skit in which, armed with a Pesticide Action Network report, they informed their father of the potential toxic exposures of strawberry work. They also mentioned the potential harm to the family from toxic residues brought into the house from the father's clothes. The father listened carefully and then decided that the solution would be for him to change clothes before he came into the house. The students reported that this skit represented a real conversation one of the students had with his father. Strawberry workers call strawberries "the Devil's Fruit" (Mitchell, 1996) but, like Faust, they have made a bargain with this commodity. It is important that those of us who do not occupy strawberry space to not judge the bargains with the devil which people make within the economic contradictions they live with. We all make our bargains with the devil, that is we all live within a set of economic contradictions, but some of us have more to bargain with. Farmworkers should not be expected to say what we expect them to say, any more than I could change my grandfather's fond memories of

working in a Canadian mining town called "Asbestos," work which gave him the money to emigrate to the United States and which had not been available to him through his family's farm income.

As a result, local public hearings on methyl bromide controls have included many farmworkers speaking on behalf of the continuation of this fumigation strategy because it is their source of livelihood and the path for their childrens' social mobility. For example, a newpaper article on the March 2000 public hearing on proposed new regulations on methyl bromide use, reported that the atmosphere "grew hostile at times, with farmworkers frequently jeering pesticide foes warning of health risks" and that "worker after worker said they did not believe the pesticide was harmful" (Malikoff, 2000). One strawberry worker is quoted as saying "The true poisons would be the proposed regulations" (Malikoff, 2000). In another piece, a worker is quoted as saying "Either I won't have a house or I won't have a job" (Pacini, 2000).

The new methyl bromide regulations are designed to keep bodies away from strawberry place and pesticides through "buffer zones." As Harrison (2004) has shown, buffer zones are a way in which agricultural production regions become spatially separate from residential areas. However, the size of buffer zones is a key arena of contestation in agricultural areas, especially on the Central Coast, where living uses and production uses intensively vie for space. However, farmworkers' and their families' reproductive space is most highly affected by buffer zone legislation. Housing closest to fields, often old family farm cottages, are generally occupied by farmworkers. Some of the farmworkers

who came to protest the buffer zone regulations in this case were clearly ones who would lose access to their sources of personal and family reproduction – work and/or housing -- because their proximate-to-field space would then fall into the new, no-body buffer zone. With both North and South County median housing prices over half a million, access to a house – a place of reproduction – is crucial. Watsonville strawberry workers compete with retirees and Silicon Valley workers for housing. The most common solution for these workers is to crowd many people into the worst housing units, clearly not good conditions for those with families. Losing housing therefore makes family reproduction in the area untenable. Workers who oppose the methyl bromide buffer zones are therefore making choices within the slim list of alternatives offered to them.

Most activists, however, attribute worker opposition to buffer zone rules to pressure by growers to state the industry line, or lack of knowledge about the harmful effects of pesticides. As the current president of the United Farmworkers put it: “Agribusiness has a 30-year history of opposing the United Farm Workers through messengers who pretend to speak for farm workers. Such is the case with major strawberry growers who present the industry's views in local newspapers through their Latino foremen and supervisors” (Rodriguez, 1997 http://www.ufw.org/asredst.htm). However, there is a problem with declaring the workers’ voices in hearings as simply obedience to their employers and fear of reprisals. When explaining farmworker support for industry positions on pesticides, others argue that farmworkers are simply not informed of the long-term effect of their pesticide exposure (cite). However, as the student skit above demonstrated, there are times when workers chose to support the industry despite their knowledge of the risks.

Their lack of alternate choices, their Faustian bargain with the Devil's Fruit which involves the physical sacrifice of their bodies, not their ignorance or obedience, cause them to support industry positions. This has been true for workers in many dangerous industries, including mining, meatpacking, skyscraper construction, etc.

Acknowledging the Faustian bargain is not meant to condone the bargain itself. However, acknowledging the bargain means that the worker is no longer understood as simply ignorant or obedient, but respected for the choices he or she has had to make under impossible circumstances. The circumstances then become identified as the problem, not the worker.

This does *not* mean that we should deny the physical harm to bodies that comes about through strawberry production work, and the activism against pesticides that does exist within the farmworker community. There is farmworker involvement in anti-pesticide social movements, particularly labor camp residents and those farmworkers living near farms who are actively protesting pesticide drift (Harrison, 2004). The United Farm Workers support for pesticide controls also show that farmworkers are concerned about toxic exposure. It is worth analyzing when farmworkers are supportive of the industry and when, and under what circumstances, resistance occurs.

One situation in which farmworker and industry interests do *not* coincide involves the role of agriculture in the future of the county. While farmworkers support the continuation of the industry in terms of their own livelihood, most do not support the

industry as the future for their children. A local article on the Pajaro Valley Migrant Head Start program begins: “Watsonville’s migrant workers know that education is their children’s key to leaving the fields” (Lyons, 2000). The article quotes a farmworker father who arrives to pick up his daughter: “I hope she receives an education. Working in the fields is very difficult work. I don’t want her to have to do this. I hope she does well in school.” (Lyons, 2000). Several other quotes by other farmworker parents make the same point: they want their children to succeed academically in order to avoid the physically difficult labor that is farmwork. As a result, while the key coalition for the continuation of the agricultural status quo *in the present* is growers, landowners and farmworkers, against environmentalist, the key coalition for long-term agricultural preservation *in the future* is between growers and environmentalists, exactly the two groups that are in contention in terms of agriculture as it is carried out in the present. Farmworkers have other interests in the future, namely the social mobility of their children out of agriculture, while landowners’ interests involve the amount of income they will be able to gain from their investment, and its future value.

It is important to also understand that strawberry place has been a path to social mobility for some migrant workers: what many would define as “a better life” or “the American Dream.” Some of these workers have been successful. As one white government worker told me: “There are Mexicans who have two good jobs who can afford their house better than I can afford mine.” Many of these better off Latinos work at the higher levels of strawberry industry organization. Some Latinos are also substantial growers, some are managers in the larger agricultural operations in the County, and some, like the irrigators,

are skilled technicians who are well-paid and send their children to the local university where I teach.

The irony of Santa Cruz County is that is it a place that attracts people for its beauty, interest, fun and hip-ness, but it also attracts workers desperately seeking sources of current livelihood and future social mobility in the strawberry industry. How the County maneuvers between the maintenance of its image as the home of the hip and privileged and the fact of the presence of the desperately powerless migrant and established Latino middle class is the story of its politics of place. It is a story that one who lives here sees carried out on an every day basis, as both veil and chain, as well as net and scale. For example, just yesterday I passed signs advertising the "Migration Festival." This, of course, is the annual celebration of the movement of butterflies between Mexico and Santa Cruz. The equally tremendous movement of people between these two places is not acknowledged or celebrated, although this is also "migration." To live in Santa Cruz is to live with these ironies.

One way that this ironic maneuvering takes place is through a racialized politics of belonging. The Mexican body is not only identified as not belonging, it is also classed, in terms of its relationship to security/insecurity and privileges/stigmas of livelihood. Racial, citizenship, documentation, identity and class, however, are not entirely overlapping categories. Middle class Latinos, even those who manage production, are not "farmworkers" in the strict sense. Many have been in the County for several generations, some as cannery workers in the previous but now dying food processing

sectors, others since the original Spanish rancheros. A good number of these long-term residents are, or have children who are, highly educated, professional people. Some of these residents have married into other groups, and their children negotiate between these racial worlds. The children I am most familiar with are the Latino-Jewish teenagers at my temple (or kids who are both brown and Jewish in general), who have a very hard time negotiating the white dominated public space of the Santa Cruz City downtown ("the Pacific Garden Mall" as it's called). Yet, because their bodies are racially associated with the large number of undocumented workers who are stigmatized, strawberry place makes all darker skinned people in the county (particularly youth) into migrant workers (or, even worse, gangmembers), in some form, leading to local problems of racial profiling (by police) and hate crimes (by the shadowy but very much present local white supremacist groups, who, in the case of kids I know, have two targets in one body: the Brown Jew).

There is another group in Santa Cruz County that deals with the farmworker/migrant worker body: the social service sector. This was first brought to my attention by a friend of mine, a nurse who has worked for various hospitals and social service agencies. When I discussed with her the possible decline of the strawberry industry in the County, she commented that this would be a major blow to the middle class in the county as well, since many of the government and non-profit social sector workers were employed to deal with the social services needs of migrant workers. The irony here is that the foreign farmworker body, in progressive Santa Cruz County, is sometimes treated as "belonging" to the County, especially when it is redefined as a "client" that allows for access to a

middle-class government or non-profit livelihood. In this case, citizenship is sometimes bypassed. In the case of the a recent affordable housing project in Beach Flats, a major Latino neighborhood in Santa Cruz City, the policy was not to ask for documentation of citizenship. As long as a person had resided in the housing torn down in the redevelopment process, that person had access to the new apartments in the housing development (Rotkin, personal communication). The stream of income from the tourist taxes mentioned above also pay for social services carried out by middle-class professionals in the City.

Both Cities and County therefore contain an unusually large number of social service agencies that deal with feeding, education, housing, and health care of migrant workers. Government is the largest employer in the county, employing 20% of the workforce, compared to 13% of the workforce for the State as a whole (US Census estimated figures). Because there are some months in which some parts of the mostly Latino seasonal workforce is not employed (not just in strawberries but in the seasonal tourist industry), these service agencies become part of the structure that maintains the foreign farmworker bodies who are unable or unwilling to return to Mexico during unemployment phases. Clearly, social service sectors contribute to the making of strawberry bodies and strawberry place.

The Consumer

Another body that is made by and makes strawberries is the consumer. Consumption is growing steadily, rising 38% between 1990 and 2000, in part due to new information

about antioxidants and other nutrients in strawberries (Cook, 2002). Added to this is the fact that children tend to list strawberries at the top of their list of choices for fresh fruit (Feenstra, 2005). One important consumer to think about is the mom buying for her children. Much more research needs to be done in this area, but it is clear that from research done so far that consumers buying for their children are continually torn between what is healthy for their children and what their children will eat. Strawberries become a very favorable solution: good tasting, fresh and therefore presumably healthy (Feenstra, 2005). However, the experience with Alar indicates that consumers will readily reject fresh produce if they suspect toxic residues. Any consumer who reads the public information available on toxic residues on produce will quickly learn that strawberries are near the top of that list as well. Consumers may then bypass strawberries in search of some other magical fruit that is both tasty, fresh and low toxicity.

Another factor is expense: how much of one's income is one prepared to spend to feed one's body? Organic food costs more than conventional equivalents. In the case of strawberries, the reasons are multiplied by the fact that organic strawberries don't ship well and that the organic varieties that do ship well tend to be rather tasteless (Bogenholm, personal communication, 2004). While I don't claim to have yet done adequate numbers of interviews with consumers, what few I have done confirm the struggle between taste, freshness, toxicity and cost. Many moms are willing to spend the money for organic strawberries but they have to taste as good as conventional.

Santa Cruz, as a space of both intensive production and intensive consumptive reproduction, is a place where strawberries are both grown and consumed within a few miles of each other. Yet, unlike Gilroy (garlic) or Half Moon Bay (pumpkins), Watsonville has not made itself into an agricultural tourist attraction. Unlike the Gilroy Garlic Festival or the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival, the Watsonville Strawberry Festival is a hybrid celebration that attracts primarily local Latino residents but which tries in a very hybrid way to cater to white tourists or northern residents as well. One example of the hybrid nature of the audience and how festival organizers handle this fact is the music program schedule. Earlier shows in the schedule feature the white alternative "Americana" music made popular by the local radio station: KPIG. Much of this music comes from similarly hybrid white-Latino places such as Austin, Texas, but is centered on white musicians who often sing about borders of culture and class. The next segment of the music program features local young "Rock n Roll en Espanol" groups, which cater to local Latino youth who shun the more accordian-centered traditional music. As these groups come on, the audience becomes more Latino and local, and whites begin to get on the buses back to the parking lots to go home. By the time the local traditional Mexican groups come on the stage, about dusk, the audience is primarily Latino and local and the festival is no longer a tourist celebration but a local community event.

As the festival shows, there is a disconnect between local strawberry production and local consumption. Santa Cruz City murals tend to depict the beauty of the local landscape. In these murals, there is a nod to the strawberry landscapes of the South; however, the

depiction is often romanticized or minimized. Workers are either invisible in these landscapes, or traditionalized into peasant-type bodies. The ubiquitous plastic in the actual strawberry fields is absent. These murals are sometimes beautiful and often draw upon the styles of famous Mexican muralists who depicted peasants in Mexico. However, the respectful use of Mexican artists in this case becomes a "Frieda-ization" – a kind of hip Mexicanization that incorporates white romantic notions of authenticity as a way to veil the harsh realities of strawberry production.

The story of local organic strawberries is, on the other hand, intertwined with Santa Cruz hipness and taste. Special organic varieties grown for local markets are, honestly, some of the most delicious food ever created by God or human. Local growers also bypass the refrigeration step and send strawberries to local markets fresh from the field, which has a wonderful effect on taste. Varieties are small but dense and flavorful and can almost remind you of the "fraise de bois" you come upon in the outdoors. Local organic strawberry growers, like many organic growers in the county (and a number of chefs and local bakers) are treated, honestly, like rock stars. I highly suspect that the two major local organic growers, Vanessa Bogenholm and Jim Cochrane, will, like many of our local wonderful bakers, enter the political arena (the way local bar owners used to do in the past). Once again, the ethnography here needs to be done, but my informal conversations with consumers of Swanton (Cochrane) and VB (Bogenholm) strawberries show that they buy these berries out of a combined loyalty to these people, to taste and to politics, especially with Swanton being a UFW union employer.

Cochrane and Bogenholm are constantly featured in the media as "the" solution to the problems of strawberry place. These people have done it, why can't the rest of the growers go organic as well? This rather straightforward question has its ironies as well: the organic strawberry is primarily a local market, and this market is "taken." This market is also primarily white, in that white growers have taken the places in the Santa Cruz Farmers' Market and many of the newer organic strawberry growers are Latino. These Latino growers have not been able to gain access to the Santa Cruz City Farmers' Market. They are therefore traveling to markets further out from the County. The irony here is that the production spaces in South County are primarily Latino but Farmers' Market spaces in the North County are primarily white producer spaces. Even organic growers who see themselves in partnership with their Latino workers use the ubiquitous white hippie or indie sales girl to sell their produce at the Santa Cruz City Farmers' Market. The exotic hippie/indie sales girl body is part of the style culture of Santa Cruz. They basically rule the stores of the Pacific Garden Mall downtown (and many are my students, Sociology Majors working their way through school, or finding their way after graduation). They are a major tourist attraction, continuing the tradition of beautiful bodies/beautiful landscape that at one time made Santa Cruz the site for the Miss California Pageant.

But consumers also include institutions purchasing food for their feeding purposes. Santa Cruz County has a number of these corporate hotel institutions. Even though corporations have status as individual human beings, they are distinguished from humans in that they don't have their own bodies. Even so, anyone who has headed to the mounds

of fruit at catered receptions in the various Marriot-type establishments knows that the bright shiny red apple-sized strawberries are a sign that the establishment did not scrimp on feeding you well, that they have cared about your body, in the same way that they have given you starched sheets and soft towels.

Why strawberry mounds have become the sign of bodily care is in part because they are generally considered expensive, but also for reasons that have nothing to do with the Marriot as a corporate actor. In the 1970s, those mounds of food tended to be chicken wings and cheese balls. Consumer demand for fresh food forced corporations to figure out how to represent themselves as paying attention to customers by giving them what they want. The irony here is the need to represent corporate space as caring for the consumer body – when corporations themselves are dependent on not caring as their source of profit. This has made the kinds of strawberries that the Central Coast strawberry complex could produce a particularly convenient and efficient way to represent care.

A veils and chains explanation would distinguish between the "genuinely caring" organic strawberry producer and the "pretend to be caring" conventional strawberry institutional caterer. A nets and scales analysis enables a more complex and ironic analysis. Strawberries produced by local Northeastern farms and by organic farmers are significantly smaller and less apple-like. While the organic strawberry network as a "network of care" (Whatmore and Thorne, 1997) is intertwined with multiple ironies, the ironies are different, richer and deeper than the irony of caring represented by the

corporate strawberry. Organic strawberries are both harder to pick and harder to handle. It only takes a few of the corporate megaberries to fill a box or to fill a customer, allowing hotel corporations to represent themselves as caring in an economically efficient way. Organic producers selling to local markets have a much harder job in their representations of care: they have to do much more than mound strawberries on a reception table: they must negotiate between workers, customers and retailers who constantly are questioning the transparency and justice of their production practices. This is real work, true caring labor and must be recognized as such, while not romanticized as genuine vs. false caring. The organic strawberry is not the "free" commodity liberated from the corporate chain, it is the commodity in which producers and consumers live the irony of the economic system on a day-to-day basis, with their eyes open.

The Child's Body

Because the County is both productive and reproductive, the discourse over food and body is both a discourse of labor and one of health. As with the political alliances over strawberry production in the present vs. the future, the politics of the children and health creates different political alliances from the politics of adult health. The child's body is a politics of the future, which is different from the politics of the present. It is a politics of "where will we go?" as opposed to "what do we do about where we are now?" (DuPuis, 2002). In particular, a special set of public conversations are now taking place because the County was ranked as one of the highest in the state in terms of childhood obesity.[1]

[1] The data used for the rankings is problematic. This paper reserves judgement as to whether or not childhood obesity rates are actually significantly higher in the county or not. It is certainly the case that County health institutions are presenting the County as

The body of the child has therefore taken on a major role among institutions planning for health policy in the County.

Figure 4: Picture taken from California Childhood Obesity Conference Brochure, (Conference Jan 9-15, 2005)

For example, the January 28, 2005 "Go for Health! Policy Summit on the Child Obesity Crisis in Santa Cruz County", health, nutrition and local food advocacy groups asked questions of a panel of political representatives: two local assemblymen, Simon Salinas and John Laird and U.S. Congressman Sam Farr. The conversation reflected the current political climate. The congressional representative made the links between child health

---

one with significantly higher child obesity rankings, especially among Latino male children in South County.

policy and agricultural interests: “Farmers benefit from child health programs,” stated Farr. The political link between child/family nutrition and agricultural subsidies is longstanding, most prominently in WIC and foodstamp programs. The New Deal government regime forged these alliances between agriculture and urban poverty interests (XX). However, with the rise of neoliberalism as a challenge to the welfare state, there is little room to forge further alliances between these groups at the federal level. However, the audience at this health summit was composed primarily of local social service bureaucrats, imbued with the welfare state assumptions about government services. As a result, the questions tended to revolve around what the federal government was going to do in terms of new laws and new money to solve local problems.

Assemblyman Laird, who heads (?) the State Budget Committee, was very honest about the fact that the State, which he described as being in its biggest budget crisis since the Great Depression, had no money to offer them. Farr concurred, but did not apologize for the lack of money. Instead, in true neoliberal fashion, he turned the responsibility back to the locality. Responding to a question about how to get a bill passed in the Senate that would [check] increase education and other programs to prevent child obesity, he answered: “51 votes in the Senate, 218 in the House.” After pausing a minute to let the current political balance in Congress sink in to the assembled, he added, “We don’t have to wait for Senator K, we can work on that at the School Board level. Don’t wait for Washington to bail us out.” While local bureaucrats repeatedly tried to push the responsibility for child health up the scale hierarchy, the Congressman repeatedly pushed the responsibility back down to the local level. In his answer to questions about school

lunch programs, he returned repeatedly to local agriculture and local politics: “You’ve got to get the growers involved in the kitchen. The kitchens are run by the school districts.”

This was both political realism and pragmatism on his part. In the current crisis of state legitimation (Habermas, 1975), the politics of scale also becomes a legitimacy struggle. Local bureaucrats, seeking legitimacy for their programs and positions despite their inability to solve hunger and poverty problems in the County, think of the problem in terms of lack of resources from higher levels. The Congressman, however, refused to take entire responsibility for the bureaucrats problems, arguing in neoliberal fashion that localities can take responsibility for their problems. In this way, the child’s body is made, and makes, the politics of scale in health and nutrition policy.

However, government social service providers are not local organizers, nor can they necessarily fill this role. Government service providers are often legally (Hatch Act) or institutionally restricted from the kinds of activities the Congressman suggested. Studies of environmental bureaucrats who work through the development of their own political constituency make it clear that this form of action is both difficult and dangerous to one’s career (XX). This leaves social service providers in a kind of “cargo cult” situation: the effectiveness of their activities, and the resources available to them, at any level of scale, depends on others, either higher levels of government or local supporters who have organized outside the boundaries of the bureaucracy.

The other child's body that is an arena of contest is the child attending schools located near strawberry fields. Much of the fight concerning buffer zones center on school buffer zones. Here the relationship between productive and reproductive space breaks down. In this case, the politics is not one in which workers must make choices between housing their families and exposing their families to possible drift. The Faustian bargain does not hold, therefore the politics of school buffer zones lead to somewhat different alliances. However, while school buffer zones carry different timing restrictions, they are the same 300 foot size as residential zones. In the future, activism concerning pesticide use near schools may provide the potential for greater cross-class and cross-race alliances.

Conclusion:

It is clear from these notes that the politics of scale at the level of the body is intrinsically linked to the higher scales, at each "site" of embodiment: the farmworker, the consumer, the child, the social service worker. My research will look at strawberry place at higher levels in the hierarchy, from the household, the farm, the local district and other local organizations, the township, the county, the region, the state, the nation and the global. I may also move "down" levels of scale, to the insect and microbial level, as strawberry place involves struggles with fungus, bacterias, viruses, lygus bugs, etc. As I attempt explanations at each level, my reactions are both positive and concerned: even at the body level, my work on this paper makes it clear that there is much work to do, particularly ethnographic and survey work with producers and consumers.

My positive reaction is the fact that the method allows me to talk about and bring in factors making up strawberry place that other methods are often not "open" to. It seems to allow me to explain what I see happening in my own experience as a member of the community. It allows me to see ironies and contradictions as what they are, not as veils hiding the truth. Ironies and contradictions are the truth. As someone who has struggled with the constraints of method, this is a very satisfying process. The question I have, however, is how this scale explanation meets the eye of the reader. Does the mess of explanation make sense? This will be particularly of concern once I add levels to this analysis. Wish me luck!

References

Bertelsen, Diane. 1995. The U.S. Strawberry Industry. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.

Bogenholm, Vannessa. Personal Communication, Cultural Geography Research Group Field Trip, October 8, 2004.

Brodberg, Robert K., Harvard Fong, Tareq Formoli, David Haskell, Dana Meinders, Tian Thongsinthusak. 1992. Draft Report: Estimation of Exposure of Persons in California to Pesticide Products Containing Methyl Bromide. California Environmental Protection Agency. Department of Pesticide Regulation. Worker Health and Safety Branch. June 1992.

Brenner, Neil (1998) Between Fixity and Motion: Accumulation, Territorial Organization and the Historical Geography of Spatial Scales. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 16, 459-481.

California Agricultural Statistics Service. 2002. County Agricultural Commissioner's Data, 2001. Sacramento, CA: Department of Food and Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics Branch.

Castree, N. (2004) Differential geographies: place, indigenous rights and 'local' resources. Political Geography, 23, pp.133-167.

Castells, Manuel. 1996. The rise of the network society. Cambridge, Mass. : Blackwell Publishers.

Chemical and Engineering News. 1998a. "Methyl Bromide Alternatives Pose Challenges to Producers." *Chemical and Engineering News* 76: 46-49.

—. 1998b. "Methyl Bromide Gets a New Lease on Life-- And a New Pest to Fight." *Chemical and Engineering News* 73: 8.

Cook, Roberta. 2002. "Strawberries." Department of Agricultural Economics, UC Davis, Davis, CA. postharvest.ucdavis.edu/ Pubs/strawberriesfinal1Sept02.pdf -

Cox, Kevin R. (ed.), 1997, Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local, New York: the Guilford Press.

Dixon, J. (1999). "A cultural model for studying food systems". Agriculture and Human Values, 16: 151-160.

DuPuis, E. Melanie. 2002. *Nature's Perfect Food*. (New York: NYU Press).

______ and Daniel Block. In submission to Political Geography. Boundaries in History: U.S. Dairy Market Orders as a Historical Perspective on the Politics of Localization.

Guthman, Julie and E. Melanie DuPuis. Forthcoming in Society and Space. "Embodied Neoliberalism: Culture, Economy and the Politics of Fat."

DuPuis M, 1998, "The Body and the Country: A Political Ecology of Consumption", in

New Forms of Consumption: Consumers, Culture and Commodification,, Ed Gottdiener

M (Rowan & Littlefield, Lanham, MD) pp 131-152

Garcia, Matt. (2001) A world of its own: Race, labor, and citrus in the making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970. (Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press).

Gomez, Santos and Arlene Wong. 1997 (document undated. Date is date of pdf formed) "A Glimpse of Watsonville's Past." Pacific Institute for Issues in Development, Environment and Security, Oakland, CA.

Gottleib, Robert. 1993. Forcing the spring : the transformation of the American environmental movement. Washington, D.C. : Island Press, c1993.

Habermas, Jurgen. Legitimation Crisis. Boston : Beacon Press, [1975]

Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism as a Site of Discourse on the Privilege of Partial Perspective." Feminist Studies 14.3 (1988): 575-99.

Harrison, Jill. 2004. "Invisible People, Invisible Places: Connecting Air Pollution and Pesticide Drift in California." In E. Melanie DuPuis (Ed) *Smoke and Mirrors: The Politics and Culture of Air Pollution*. (New York: New York University Press).

Harvey , D. (1985). The Urbanization of Capital.(Oxford :Blackwell)

_________. (1989) The condition of Postmodernity (Oxford: Blackwell)

Global transformations : politics, economics and culture / David Held ... [et al.] Published Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1999

Herod, A. (1991) The production of scale in United States labour relations. Area 23, pp.82-88.

House of Representatives. 2000. Committee on Agriculture. *The Implications of Banning Methyl Bromide For Fruit and Vegetable Production*. Second Session. July 13.

Leslie, D. and S. Reimer (1999). "Spatializing commodity chains". Progress in Human Geography. 23 (3): 401-420.

Lockie, S. and S. Kitto (2000). "Beyond the farm gate: Production-Consumption networks and agri-food research" Sociologia Ruralis 40(1): 3-19.

Lyons, Jessica. 2000. “Faith of their Fathers.” Metro Santa Cruz, July 26-Aug 2 issue.

Malikoff, Marina. 2000. “Sides Clash at Pesticide Hearing.” Santa Cruz Sentinel, March 17.

Marston, S. 2000: The social construction of scale. *Progress in Human Geography* 24, 219–42.

McWilliams, Carey. 1939. Factories in the field; the story of migratory farm labor in California. Boston, Little, Brown, 1939.

Mitchell, Don. 1996. The lie of the land : migrant workers and the California Landscape. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, c1996

National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2002. Agricultural Statistics 2002. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture.

Pacini, David. 2000. “Rule Change Sparks Heated Debate.” Register-Pajaronian, March

18.

Porter, Michael. 1990. The Competitive Advantage of Nations. McMillan, London.

Rotkin, Michael E. 1991. Class, populism, and progressive politics : Santa Cruz, California 1970-1982. Unpublished dissertation.

SCOTT A. J. and STORPER M. (1987) High technology industry and regional development: a theoretical critique and reconstruction, *Int. Soc. Sci. J.* **112**, 215–32.

Smith, N. (1993) Homeless/global: scaling places. Pp.87-119 in J. Bird et al (eds.) Mapping the futures: Local cultures, global change. London: Routledge.

Smith, Neil. 1992. “Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale.” Pp. 57-79 in J.

Scott, Allen and Michael Storper. 1986. Production, work, territory : the geographical anatomy of industrial Capitalism. Boston : Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Storper, Michael and R. Salais (1997) Worlds of Production: The Action Frameworks of the Economy. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Swyngedouw, Erik, 1997, Excluding the Other: The Production of Scale and Scale Politics, In R. Lee and J. Willis (eds.) Geographies of Economic, London: Arnold.

Swyngedouw, E. (1997 a) Neither global nor local: 'Glocalization' and the politics of scale. Pp.137-66 in K. Cox (ed) Spaces of Globalization. New York: Guilford Press.

Wells, Miriam J. 1996. Strawberry fields : politics, class, and work in California agriculture. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press.

Whatmore, S., and Thorne, L. (1997) Nourishing Networks: Alternative Geographies of Food. In Globalising Food. Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring ed., Goodman, D., Watt, M., pp. 287-304. Routledge, London.