Author: Anona Miles Whitley

Title: What's for Breakfast?: The Tensions Between Students' Conceptualizations of Sustainability and Daily Food Choices

Course: Anth411 Section 1G and 1U (Methods of Cultural Anthropology) Fall 2007 -- Nancy A Abelmann

About the Author: I am an undergraduate in Anthropology and Latin@ studies. My interests seem to flutter around aimlessly and unpredictably, but I have identified FOOD as an interest that is always present in my academic and personal life. Maybe this is because no matter what reality I am thinking about, eating is one of the most basic parts of a person's "being in the world". I enjoy cooking, cycling, dressing with mad style, outdoors nature stuff, and non-team sports. After I graduate I will go west... My middle name comes from Miles Davis; that's pretty cool.

Keywords: sustainability, food, sustainable agriculture, ASAP

Abstract: My research intends to look at how undergraduate students who are involved with a university sustainable agriculture program conceptualize sustainability, and how this conceptualization is lived out in their daily food consumption choices. Sustainability works to secure a viable food production system for the future using methods that are safe and healthy for the environment and for humans. Sustainability is shaped by other discourses, such as environmentalism, anti-capitalism, eat local, organic foods, labor justice, vegetarianism, safe food supply, Slow Food, etc. Students who incorporate sustainable agriculture into their academic study are assumed to have strong opinions about sustainability, and these opinions are shaped by the students' past experiences, family history, former education/knowledge, and social and physical positionality. I hypothesize that students will conceptualize sustainability in similar ways because it will be in strong articulation with the sustainable agriculture program. However, each student will also draw from other discourses that may have affected her or him more personally. Sustainability will be lived out in students' daily food choices, but this will vary slightly among students according to their "personal semantic networks", the other discourses they draw upon, and depending on how accessible sustainable food choices are to them as undergraduates living on the university campus (Strauss, 2005: 209).

Initial Exercises:

Reading Response
Strawberry Fields, Inc. is a self-proclaimed natural food store in downtown Urbana, Illinois. I chose a sunny, late-summer Sunday afternoon to observe the local. First I sat outside the store at one of six small tables intended for customers of the store’s onsite cafe, and later moved inside in order to watch interactions at the two open check-out lines. When I arrived at 3:40 there were 17 cars in the parking lot, including mine, and six bikes. Business was slow, but there were usually at least three customers inside the store.

There were two employees working as cashiers, one of whom I knew as a fellow anthropology undergraduate student, and another young man working at the cafe counter. S.F.’s cafe, which used to double the size of their store, is currently being renovated and all that is open is a small bar where one can purchase coffee, smoothies, and other drinks to-go or to be sipped outside. The employees were casually dressed in black S.F. t-shirts, one in jeans and two wearing camo cargo shorts (probably only coincidentally). They were polite and helpful toward customers, but not overly friendly or talkative. Once I was mistaken for an employee by a customer, even though I was spacing out in a corner and not wearing an S.F. t-shirt.

The inside of the store is well-lit, modern, organized, and clean. Fresh breads are available from the bakery daily. The store carries fresh local and non-local produce, as well as frozen meats, a variety of different dairy products, and eggs. The bulk aisle has been expanded relatively recently, and stocks standard pantry items like flours and beans, as well as natural food store favorites like sesame snacks, spirulina-carob protein squares, and almost every variety of nut. A few aisles toward the left side of the store are devoted to herbal supplements, vitamins, toiletries, and naturally derived household products.

Outside I was sitting at the table next to a 70+ year old woman who was hunched reading the store’s free copies of Remedies, Better Nutrition, and Central Illinois Health magazines while eating bananas. Nearby, a middle aged woman sat with a coffee and a book, and a student aged man sipped a bottled juice while writing. There were a few more female customers than male; the majority were white, but black, South Asian, East Asian, and Latino customers were represented (from what I could observe). Customers appeared to be mostly families, students, and baby boomers, and most were upper-middle class. Most drivers drove pseudo stationwagon/SUV type vehicles, and most bicyclists wore helmets. Few cars sported anti-war bumper stickers; none were hybrids. Most people wore casual clothing, except for an Asian man in a suit and an older white couple wearing dressy church attire. Most were thin or average weight, and a couple
people were overweight.
I watched a mother with her elementary school aged son buy Dr. Otker's organic pudding, bagged baby carrots, bananas, blue corn chips, peanut butter, Brown Cow yogurt, bulk granola, and juices. A male student bought Annie's organic instant macaroni and cheese, Rice Divine, and lettuce. One man arrived on a Harley wearing a Harley Davidson t-shirt and tight jeans; he did not seem like the average S.F. shopper. He bought chocolate Almond Breeze, carrots, and bulk walnuts. Two muscular Latino men with tattoos who only bought vitamin supplements also did not seem like average S.F. shoppers. Most people bought items that could have easily been found in any supermarket. Dr. Otker's organic pudding, organic baby carrots, Almond Breeze, and bulk walnuts can always be purchased at Meier. All shoppers bought small quantities: three bags of groceries maximum. This gave me the impression that they make frequent small trips to S.F., or buy groceries from several different stores each week. Those who bought only items available at S.F. (and not at larger supermarkets) probably made a special trip for that particular item.

There was not much interaction to be observed at S.F. Next time, I will probably pick a busier time to go, and I will spend more time watching people select their groceries instead of just watching traffic in and out of the store and at the check-out. I want to watch people in order to make more assumptions about why people shop at S.F. instead of other grocery stores. I noticed that people bought products that are available elsewhere at a lower price, such as La Croix sparkling waters, which are two six-packs for $6 at Shnucks, and more expensive at S.F. People also bought products that are available at Common Grounds food co-op, which is a natural foods store in Champaign. I am assuming that Strawberry Field's owes its appeal to more than its claim as a "natural food" store.

Initial Exercises: Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP)
Analysis of a Text http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/

The "About ASAP" page begins with the one sentence, bold-faced statement: "Since 1988 the Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program has been addressing sustainable agriculture at the University of Illinois, College of ACES." The immediate focus is on time. 1988 seems relatively recent when compared to the history of the University, and to other programs which date back to at least before most of the
undergraduates were born. In the last decade issues about eating locally grown foods, organic foods, etc. has been a topic of much public debate, and "alternative" eating has become a craze in popular culture. In stating the date, ASAP might be saying that they were concerned about these issues before they were trendy. At first I thought that the statement says that they are addressing specifically the College of ACES, but now I think that they are addressing someone else FROM the College of ACES(?).

The mission statement, which is located below the bolded sentence, states that ASAP's purpose is to "facilitate and promote research and education which protects Illinois' natural and human resources while sustaining agricultural production forever." The sentence can be broken down into three parts: to promote research and education, to protect resources, and ensure agriculture as a viable enterprise in the future. The first goes along with the ideology of the research university in that it emphasizes discovery and production. The second and third parts alarm me, because they imply that the agricultural methods of the successful research university do NOT necessarily protect valuable natural and human resources, and do NOT always ensure its sustainability in the future. The ideology of the research university asserts that inquiry, investigation, and discovery are part of expansion, and this is an investment in the future, in generations, in community, and in the nation (Boyer Commission). It is logical to me, then, that the goals of the research university should be intrinsically intertwined with sustainability. My questions are: Why does ASAP need to exist as a separate part of the College of ACES? Shouldn't these values already be addressed by the entire department?

It is important to note that I have only looked at two paragraphs of ASAP's website. While reading this text, I am drawing conclusions based on other texts I have read about current, standard agricultural methods, food-politics, and arguments in support of sustainable food production. These explicitly detail problems with federal and state government, as well as corporate funding for agricultural programs in the U.S. The ASAP website has more interesting texts, including an account of its
history, which connects it to the history of the University's beginning as an agricultural institution. Also, there are links to faculty and staff who are involved with ASAP, partners of ASAP, events, news, etc. I would like to examen the website's texts more in order to situate ASAP within my understanding of Champaign-Urbana's "alternative foods movement". I believe that it could provide valuable links to the University's involvement in sustainable agriculture, as well as the historical meanings of sustainability in the area.

Initial Exercises:

A Practice Interview

Question: (5) UNDERGRADUATE students. maybe professors.

(4) 11/28

How do students and professors who are involved with ASAP, within the department of ACES, conceptualize sustainability, and how is this concept lived out in their daily lives through their food consumption choices?

(3) 10/29

How do undergraduate students in NRES Human Dimensions conceptualize sustainability? How is sustainability constructed in dialogue with their major, which is assumed to emphasize the relationship between humans and the environment, and how does this actually play out in their daily food choices within the constraints of life at the University of Illinois? I am not interested in analyzing people's behavior in regard to the contradictions between what people say they value and their actions; this is not intended to be a study about hypocrisy. What I am interested in is the way in which the students' own values, personal history, knowledge gained in the academic program, and physical and social positioning might be integrated in their daily lives. I believe that food consumption choices is an area where people actually live out their own complex construction of sustainability.

(2)

How do undergraduate students who are in programs of study that specifically emphasize sustainable agriculture and consumption construct their personal views about sustainability in dialogue with what they learn in these academic programs, and how does this construction play out in daily food consumption
choices within the constraints of life at the University of Illinois?

I am not interested in analyzing people's behavior in regard to the contradictions between what people say they value and their actions; this is not intended to be a study about hypocrisy. What I am interested in is the complexity with which people integrate their own personal semantic networks, knowledge, personal history, and social and physical environment in their daily lives. How do people conceptualize sustainability? Where are the tensions between an individual's concept of sustainability and the day-to-day?

Some more questions I'll throw out: Is sustainability a lifestyle? Where does class fit into this issue? Is "living sustainably" a luxury? Is this "progressive"? Is this a fad? What is it's future? What is at stake?

(1)

How do undergraduate students' personal value systems articulate with their courses of study, specifically the Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences with an emphasis on Human Dimensions (NRES) program and the Agroecology and Sustainable Agriculture program (ASAP), and how does this knowledge bear upon their day-to-day food consumption choices within the constraints of undergraduate life in Urbana-Champaign?

I have a feeling that students will be passionate about these programs, especially ASAP because it is more specific and "progressive" (I say that in quotes, because in this case it can be kind of paradoxical...). BUT students will have VERY different definitions of what it means to "live out" the mission and/or core values of these programs in daily life. I deal with this every day! An example: drinking a cup of coffee. Which coffee do I buy? Where? Supposing I buy the most shade grown fair trade organic yadda yadda coffee at the local co-op....its not cheap... I work at a coffee shop, whose coffee is imported from Italy and who knows where or by whom it was grown and picked...but it is free for me. I am a student, I have limited $$$, and I feel like I need caffeine to study. But, coffee isn't local in the first place. Where does this silly dilemma fit into particular sets of values and knowledge? I hope to run into these types of issues.

Maybe this question will address issues about how people's personal semantic networks, knowledge, personal history, and limits of social and physical environment exist in dialogue with
each other and how this impacts mundane daily choices. But that seems broad..

Plan: (4) 11/28
I plan to interview students and professors who are involved in ASAP. I will attend events coordinated by ASAP and do a textual analysis of the website. ASAP's community involvement and ASAP's relationship to the department of ACES will be of importance.

(3) 10/29
I plan to interview NRES Human Dimensions students. I have sent an email on their social listserv (the person in charge of the academic/official listserv would not forward my email). Also I will put up fliers in the NRES Human Dimensions building. I would like to interview people who are not in the program, but who are concerned with the same issues, such as the president of Just Food RSO. It might be interesting to compare students in academic programs that deal with sustainability and students who do not study it but show concern and action in non-academic venues.

(2)
I would like to interview students in one of the courses listed on the ASAP website as being "for students interested in sustainable agriculture". NRES 104: Intro to Env Social Science, and CHLH 199: Champaign Food Systems would be perfect because they are entry-level, which would ensure a large number of undergraduates, and they explicitly address sustainable agriculture. I still need to figure out how I would work this logistically; contacting faculty and students, etc. One class only meets in the spring, so that could be a problem.

Student interviews would be the best method to use. The idea of having students write a food diary is good, but I will need to think about how to make valuable assumptions from these details (Becker may help).

_Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies_, by Jared Diamond, is a book that I will check out in hopes that it will help me to understand sustainability within a historical and geographical context, and how this all fits in with race, class,
gender, etc. This is ridiculously broad, but it will be narrowed down after I read the book. Thanks Michael. Also, I have journal articles about Anthropology and Environmentalism which will provide insight into the broader implications of the little "window of study". And Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* is a popular book about sustainability that I can draw from.

(1) I plan to interview students in the NRES human dimensions and ASAP programs, and do textual analysis of the programs' websites. Also I will check into at RSOs related to the two programs. JustFood is one that is pretty active and connected to ASAP.

---

Data:

A Project Interview

Thursday, October 11

3:00 p.m.

I interview Lily at a quiet cafe on campus. This time, I make sure my recorder is working properly and that we are free from distraction. I buy a small fig gelato for Lily and a house coffee. I had been introduced to Lily before at the same cafe by a mutual friend. She and I have been e-mailing for the past week in order to coordinate the interview. I always feel awkward when I am interviewing someone I barely know, and I have trouble articulating my questions. Lily is easy-going and willing to talk. I do not think she is only telling me things that she thinks I want to know. I consider nearly everything she says to be relevant to my questions, and I figure that if I miss some specificity, I can ask her about it later. Lily sometimes talks fast and slurs her words.

*Me:* So my question is, how do you define sustainability? Like, what does it mean to you?

*Lily:* Well my main focus is, what I'm interested in really, are transportation and food, thats what I'm mainly interested in, but... I know its a really broad topic. But for me.. thats what I'm really into.

This opening question, and Lily's answer sets the stage for the rest of the interview. The conversation centers on transportation and food for the next 57 minutes. Mostly food, and I think I lead the conversation more in that direction.

*Me:* Ok.. so... umm.... transportation and food... what would be,
like, do you have an ideal situation?

Lily: Well, I believe that cars need to be minimized and I believe that people should think about their food choices in terms of how it fits with sustainability.

My second question is a clear example of how poorly worded and vague my questions are. They get a little better, and I stutter less. Most of the time, I begin a question and Lily interrupts me and finishes by talking about what I was going to ask. When there is a lull in the conversation, I ask more pointed questions, trying to pay attention to "markers". Lily is never impatient.

Lily talks about her involvement in ASAP, and with a campus RSO that focuses on food and justice, and its failed attempt at an organic garden. She talks about the RSO's split between the vegetarians and the whole-foods people. She believes that vegetarianism is not necessary for sustainability, if the meat is raised sustainably. But she is not defensive, and says that she understands the vegetarian's viewpoint. She, however, is concerned about taste. (I withheld opinions--meatless food is quite tasty.) She also is concerned about tradition.

Me: So.. back to.. you said that taste matters to you?

Lily: Yeah.. I mean, that's part of the philosophy of Slow Food--I was talking to the president of Slow Food in Chicago--that's how Slow Food approaches the whole issue of sustainability. Winning people on taste. It's not only good for the environment, but interesting, and traditional, and conserving heritage--it's all taste based and thats the truth--it tastes a lot better. ...Like once you eat really good food--like once you have a loaf of artisan bread, I can't buy Pepperiidge Farm anymore. It's not even worth eating.

The mention of Slow Food brings together taste and tradition, along with other issues, such as environmentalism, that come up later. I begin to think about how social class might play into Slow Food philosophy. She talks about the misconception that local foods are more expensive, and time consuming to prepare.

Lily: That's the thing about Slow Food.. it attracts... I mean event though I like Slow Food, it's definitely an older, rich demographic.

Lily mentions that she is a student who works and is busy, she does not have a lot of money, so she chooses a locally grown squash over "local Camembert style goat cheese for $6 a wheel".
She says she was raised eating American food and fast food, and that her family has a history of diet-related health problems. She cites sourcing as being a huge problem, specifically in the south, where she grew up. I keep sourcing in my mind to ask about later. Now I ask about health, and she says "I'm definitely a lot healthier because of local food, because it just makes you a lot more aware of what you're eating. And, um, it keeps you out of the processed foods." Her family history provides a model of what not to eat.

She talks about the difficulty of preparing food while living in the residence hall, but says it is manageable. The problem with the dining hall is that the food is cheap and processed. It is "commodity meat" and lacks taste. Again, sourcing is a problem.

Me: Sourcing—-you mentioned this a few times, what do you mean by sourcing?

Lily: Yeah, like getting the food that's grown locally to the actual people is hard.

We shift gears, and I learn something that changes my project plan a little.

Me: So.. so your major isn't ASAP--

Lily: Yeah, there's really no real agroecology major. They're trying to develop more curriculum. If you're an NRES major or crop sciences you can sometimes tailor it. I feel like in any major in ACES you can tailor it to sustainability because there are a lot of classes. It's really weird, because there's like this duality. You've got people who are American Farm Board, Monsanto, Cargill, and then you have these hippie people. (laughs) So it's really kind of a fun college to be in in that way. We have like the.. well, we have professors who hate each other, like the NRES department doesn't like the crop sciences department and vice versa.

This duality could be an important part of my research. It's something I'll follow up in other interviews and now. Also, it is helpful to learn that there is not an ASAP program per se. I think I will concentrate on NRES Human Dimensions.

Lily mentions that a serious bout of salmonella made her interested in eating local foods, because local foods are safer. Food law, which deals with food safety, is something she is
interested in. She says that "conventional foods" are not safe, and that local foods are because they can be easily traced to the producer.

This is the point at the interview where I lose some interviewer stance and get slightly passionate. I tell her I am enraged by the injustice of food politics, and that my far-off dream is to have a farm. Lily tells me that she does not want to work on a farm, that she is a "city person". A new term "urban permaculture" comes up.

Me: What is urban permaculture?

Lily: Like growing things basically in an ecologically integrative way in an urban environment. Like, have things that grow on your windowsill that, like, are self-sustaining ecosystems that are edible--that sort of thing. It's a concept from Australia and it's gaining some traction, and I think Priscilla Walker's done some work in it.

At the time, I think this is a cool idea. While I am transcribing, it strikes me as funny. Haven't people been growing things on their windows for a long time? Is this really a new concept? When I was a kid, I was growing alfalfa sprouts every week and sprouting avocado seeds. This seems like a perfect example of a "normal" practice made into a presumptuous academic endeavor. Maybe what we really need to do is go visit our grandparents. However, then I find out that Lily is referring also to a back-to-wild concept of growing foods in their natural ecosystem.

Lily begins talking about foraging on campus; she will not forage because she is concerned with pesticides, although there are edible plants. She expresses disdain for the University's use of land, and the need to make the land conform to a normalized, suburban beauty ideal.

Lily: I wish they wouldn't have so many grassy areas on campus.

Me: You wish they wouldn't?

Lily: Yeah, I wish they'd plant tomato plants. I guess it's good for playing frisbee, but it's not very ecologically friendly.

Me: So that's another thing you are worried about--like back to the native kind of plants?
Lily: Well, if you ever go to Meadowbrook park, it's really beautiful--it's a prairie. Or any prairie restoration--you realize what we've really lost, in terms of taking things over and growing all this boring grass. And I sort of have this fantasy about having a prairie on the quad (laughing) ...maybe not a full blown prairie, but not just using grass, or not using such modeled looking flowers. It's kind of pathetic--they have to be sprayed and coddled.

Me: It's really interesting how we shape our spaces.

Lily: It looks like suburbia to me, you know? That's what they, like, designed it to be.

She says this is bad because most students are from the suburbs, and she "thinks the university is a place where you go outside where you grew up at". She claims to be an "extremist". She would like strictly pedestrian streets, and calls fraternities and sororities "bad uses of land". I ask her opinion of the new grocery store that is being built on campus. She says that at least it will have a produce section, and that it is better than having students shop at Walgreens. It may not be entirely sustainable, but it will be a more healthy option that is accessible to students. For Lily, health is a priority. She is not opposed to new buildings on campus--the new high-rise apartments are "better than sprawl".

Lily alludes here to her ideas about the University's role in sustainability, and to the role of the University in student life and personal development. I wish I had followed this up. An anti-suburbia attitude is something I will look for in future interviews. It fits with the idea of a student counter-culture. I believe that counter-culture and alternative food movements are related.

Most of the discussion is focused on food, but now we talk briefly about transportation. Lily does not own a car, and does not have a driver's license. She is looking forward to studying abroad in the Netherlands next semester because of their "progressive" attitudes toward bicycles. She will also take classes about food law, sustainability, and food safety economics, which is not offered at U of I.

According to Lily, most Americans worry about fat and calories too much, and are unaware that eating "real food" is the key to a healthy diet. She talks about the shift from "traditional diets" to processed foods. Marginalized people are "preyed upon by these
food companies", and if people could just go back to a "traditional diet" they would be healthier. Slow Food’s philosophy stresses a return to tradition, which could help marginalized people, but Slow Food is mostly an upper-class movement. To bridge this gap, Slow Food should be more concerned with food policy. Welfare should provide "real food" instead of cheap, unhealthy commodity foods. Again, she mentions her southern family's diet related health problems.

Lily talks about how college guys typically eat unhealthy foods. One of her friends was diagnosed with clinical scurvy; he ate only Doritos for a year. Cooking is a critical part of eating local foods and to being healthy, and it is not difficult to learn, nor is it expensive or time consuming.

During the summer, Lily eats 80% local foods, and the other 20% are staples such as almond butter, coconut, and avocados. Squash and sweet potatoes are available for some time in the winter. Zucchini and greens are staples in the summer. Given the time and the resources, which she does not have as a student living in the residence hall, Lily would love to pickle and preserve foods so she could eat 80% local all year.

Me: **Can you walk me through** a typical day this time of year, for example?

Lily: Well, for breakfast I'll have oatmeal, which is not local, sometimes.. or I'll have yogurt, which is local. Or other times I'll have avocado, which is not local. So it really depends what I have in my fridge. But definitely my breakfasts are pretty light. And then for lunch, if I can make it back, I'll eat something at home, but normally I can't make it back, you know, I'm so busy during the day working all these jobs, so I'll eat out. I rotate where I eat out a lot. ...I try to keep that minimal--it's expensive to eat out. And for dinner--I definitely fix more elaborate dinners. Sometimes I go to my boyfriend's place and we'll make a big dinner, like different cuts of meat, sometimes we'll do vegetarian. ...Tomorrow I'm going to make local Italian sausage with greens and mustard and goat cheese, and Saturday I'm gonna make a Kobocha pie, and maybe Kabocha ravioli... with sage.. but of course the wonton wrappers I'll be using are probably not going to be local. Um, I try to be reasonable.

--------

This was a productive interview. I have several issues that I want
to look for in future interviews with Lily or with other students. We covered broad topics, and it would be useful to ask more specific questions. One logistical thing I learned is that there is not ASAP program; this changes some of my methods.

Some issues, concepts, things to consider:

- role of suburbia
- University's use of land
- what does the University mean to an individual's personal growth?
- student counter-culture
- health
- food movements, such as Slow Food
- social class
- what does it mean to be "progressive"?
- gender

Data: #8 The Archive

The Archive

My search began in the Student Life and Culture archives in the main library, looking specifically at The Illio yearbook and the Daily Illini newspaper. I chose a 1987 D.I. because it was the oldest year that was immediately accessible, and because it seems like the 80's was a time when people began talking a lot about about healthy and environmentally friendly foods. Discourse about food consumption in the newspaper was about the same as it is today: beer ads, late-night pizza deals, 10 cent hot wings, hot dogs at KAMS, etc. However, I got excited when I came across an article from Thursday, April 9, 1987 titled "Strawberry Fields Relocates, Revamps". Strawberry Fields, which is a natural foods store that opened in 1980, used to be located north of the university on Main Street in Urbana, until the university bought the land there in order to build Beckman Institute. The article chronicles the legal processes that went on when the university bought the area, which the owner of Strawberry Fields was not happy about at first because they did not offer him enough money to move the store. The store on Green Street in Urbana was "closer to a lot of things" according to the manager, and was designed to attract more Campus-town shoppers. Dean Woodrum, owner of Strawberry Fields, liked to hire students because of their convenient part-time schedules. The new, larger store needed to hire about 25 employees, which was about 10 more than in its old location. Woodrum pointed out that students were happy working at the store because they got
food discounts. In 1987, students were important consumers of Strawberry Fields' "natural" food. Was this because it was conveniently located near campus? Were there other shopping options nearby? Or were students just health-conscious consumers?

The article states:
"Strawberry Fields sells natural products such as cheese, grains, produce, herbs, spices, and fresh-baked goods. According to Mary Keith, assistant professor of foods and nutrition at the University, natural or organic foods can be defined as foods that are grown or made without the aid of laboratory produced chemicals. But everyone has a different perception of which foods are considered 'natural'. Strawberry Fields has been successful because more people are becoming health-conscious and are eating 'natural' foods, according to Dean Woodrum."

The first sentence lists foods that are "natural". It does not list meat or eggs. Did Strawberry Fields sell meat in 1987, or did it cater to a vegetarian crowd? Today it sells organically raised meats and cage-free and local eggs. The store is a favorite for vegetarians, but is also a good place to pick up better-than-meat-packing-plant cuts. "Natural foods" is still a popular discourse today, but now we are talking more about where the food is produced in addition to how it is produced. This article says nothing about locally produced foods. "Eat local" is the catchphrase today for health and environmentally conscious consumers. Is "natural" yesterday's version of "eat local"? I also question whether health conscious eating was becoming more popular, or if this is more related to the changing definitions of what healthy eating is. The idea that people have different ideas about what foods are considered "natural" is exactly in line with my project, where people have different ideas about what "sustainability" means.

One question I often ask in interviews is whether the interviewee thinks that "sustainability" is a trend. All have answered that no, it is not a trend, and they have expressed concern that it might be thought of as a trend. Sustainability is taken to be a serious and urgent topic, and I agree that it is important. However, I still wonder where it fits into the greater series of trends about food choices: what is healthy? what is natural? what is better for the human body and the environment? I think that the archives could be valuable for the purpose of looking at the trends of these discourses. For example, when and where does the discourse about "natural foods" emerge? My hunch is that this discourse will eventually converge with other discourses about environmentalism and sustainability, and newer discourses will
form, such as today's "eat local". An analysis of the old D.I.s would be fascinating, the only problem is that it would take days to look through every issue.

**Data:** Interview with Agnes and Pepa at the Vegetarian Cooperative Living House near Campus

**Data Continued** Friday, 2:30 p.m.

Directly after my hour-long interview with Agnes and Pepa, two NRES Human Dimensions students, I went home and typed my observations. I tried to use Becker’s pure description method as best I could. Now I have probably more than 10 pages of typed, single-spaced notes, including the interview transcription, and I think it is too much to post. Writing this assignment is difficult, because after writing a "pure description", nothing else seems as real!

The interview took place at the Vegetarian Co-op House where Pepa lives. The house was old, clean, and outfitted with thrift-store furniture. Non-residents and residents came in and out of the house. It was welcoming and comfortable.

Agnes says that NRES Human Dimensions studies "the connections, or the disconnects, I would say, between humans and nature." Pepa talks about her interest in the dichotomy that has been created between humans and nature, which she perceives is at the root of environmental problems. Pepa is anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist.

**Me:** How does this [your philosophy on the relationship between humans and the environment] manifest itself in your everyday life?

**Agnes:** Well, I don't drive a car, I have a license, but I don't drive. I bike wherever I need to go. ...I just feel like I'm trying to do my part. And I'm not even doing my part, but it's not like... I don't know... it's not like a heroic thing. People are like "Oh you bike everywhere? Oh that's awesome!" and it's like, no, that's just how people should.. how people should think of it.

**Pepa:** ...first of all, you are in a vegetarian cooperative. I don't eat meat. I don't eat fish. I don't eat dairy products usually. I think that is probably my most direct connection to--I think eating is a really important act for us, to maintain our physical bodies, um, I think being vegetarian really shows that I care about the environment. You talk about... it's just a waste of energy, it's just a lot of things. Um, I don't buy clothes at department stores anymore. I don't go
shopping. I don't buy things I don't need. Re-use.

Just like in my previous interview, transportation and food are the most immediate connections students make to everyday environmental activism. This makes sense, because they are major arenas of consumption for people living in the U.S. Students are consumers of knowledge, and I am assuming that NRES students knowledge consumption will match the ways they consume in other areas of their lives. I asked Agnes and Pepa to talk about their ideas about sustainability.

Pepa: What does that mean? Sustain what? For what amount of time? I think that for the way we're living right now--I just read a fact, well I don't know, a proposed fact, that it would take five or six planets to consume the way our society consumes.

Agnes: I think it's the common issue for a lot of industrialized societies where now they're... beginning to see the impact of mass production... and then we're expecting other countries, like China, for example, is in the midst of a lot of industrialization, an era where we maybe have already gone through in terms of mass production, and we're expecting them to cap it off and to think about, you know, pollution and things like that? That's fine, but how can we ...as a country expect other countries to think about sustainability when we’re not going to allow them to do the things we’ve done in terms of industrialization?

Pepa: I look at my ways of--like studying environmental science, eating vegetarian--I think a lot of it has to do with, like, why does anybody do anything? ...I think the goal is happiness. Everybody wants to be well, no matter what they believe in, where they come from. And I think that's a really important thing to consider when we're talking about sustainability. Ok, what's the goal? What's the outcome? Why do we industrialize? Why do we manipulate food production? Ok, so we are producing more food. Ok, so people are profiting from it. That makes some people more happy--that gives material wealth. Basically, what I'm trying to say--to summarize: when it comes past taking care of your basic needs--food, water, your nature needs, your environmental needs--people aren't much happier as the result of success. And that's what I'm interested in. Because I come from a rich-ass suburb, and these people with, you know, excess everything, and no one is really better off as a result. It just turns into this rat-race of competition, always wanting more, and having to have, and keep on going. The treadmills of consumption and production--that's what fuels this environmental degradation. Sustainability
can only occur when an ideology changes.

This part of the interview was rich and fascinating because it brings up some of the philosophy behind ideas like sustainability. When Pepa says "Sustainability can only occur when an ideology changes," I think she means a different idea of happiness, comfort, and pleasure that is not defined by neo-liberalism and capitalism. This was the tone for the entire interview. Agnes and Pepa talked about the dichotomy within the NRES department (which is part of ACES). Pepa says "I feel like the human dimensions people are the ones who are like "I wanna change the world!". They aren't satisfied with society, you know, like, the hippies, the idea makers." Agnes points out that he other NRES students' slogan is "I raise hogs!". Social class comes up, as well as "underdeveloped" verses "developed" nations.

Pepa: ...It seems like an environmentalist is very, like... a rich person thing to be--it's a status thing.

After Pepa said this, I went in a different direction, and then wished I had followed it more. Luckily, Agnes brought it up. It is apparently an important issue.

Agnes: Um, and so back to socio-economic class. These issues--it's hard, because you say, like, I'm vegetarian, I, like, buy local products when I can and buy organic--like, that's a privilege too, you know? Like, in the society we live in, you know, it costs more to think about those kinds of things, and to practice those kinds of things. It's much cheaper to buy a loaf of, I don't know, like, white bread, super enriched, nasty stuff, than to buy something whole grain.

I asked the fairly open-ended question:

Me: How do you feel about, like, living within this community that started as an agricultural school, and in Champaign-Urbana, being a student here?

Pepa: I think, like, the drive down for people from the suburbs to Champaign-Urbana really blows my mind. I think about Illinois--Illinois right? We're the "Prairie State"! Yeah! "Prairie State! Ok, how much prairie's left? Um, less than 1% of the state? What happened to it? You drive by and it's cornfield, after cornfield, after cornfield... Wow, we fucking manipulate the shit out of this planet! We do what we want! What about prairie plants? People
think the prairie looks like an uncut lawn--mow that shit, it's prairie! Cultivate it now! Let's profit off of it! Let's profit off this planet! Like, we do not take into account any of the value--the ecosystem value--that's given to us, like, to society. I don't know, like, Illinois has the best soil in the world, you know? We've got great soil! Nowhere else can you find such good soil--but what do we use it for? Ok, we're making high-fructose corn syrup? Alright. Feed corn, so people can eat fucking meat whenever they feel like? Like, that's another status symbol--being able to eat meat whenever you want! But, I don't know... I just think that drive down is crazy.

Pepa got pretty passionate, and her answer tied together a lot of the themes of this and my other interview, namely: manipulation of the environment, inefficient land use for commodity goods, American consumerism, and capitalism. She also brought up the suburbs again, which seems important to her own relationship to Champaign-Urbana and her views about sustainability. I asked the golden question: Can you walk me through a typical day? Pepa's residency in the co-op is critical to her daily existence at the University, and to her views about sustainability.

Pepa: Yeah, sure. Well this is pretty much the most eco--at least in terms of living spaces, it's always good to cram more people in a limited space.

Agnes: Share things--share refrigerators, share utilities, you know.

Pepa: Bathrooms, and you know, if everyone has their own kitchen with its own piping--that's wasteful. You don't need to have your own kitchen. And you know, electricity--we buy all eco-friendly, compact fluorescent lightbulbs and everything, you know, if its yellow let it mellow (laughs). ...Um, someone purchases all the food from the food truck, someone goes shopping at the farmer's market. It's all divided up. And plus, because it's a lot of people, we have a really diverse produce selection and things in the pantry. So it's great--I love living in the cooperative. There's vegans that live here. I eat mostly--I can't imagine being not--I always eat vegan here. I only eat dairy when it's given to me, you know, when, like, my mom will make something. So I guess you could call me vegan.

Pepa's lifestyle, in her viewpoint, is one of the most environmentally-friendly options on this campus. It is a space where her personal consumption can be minimized because
resources are shared. Residents are committed to shopping for local food at the farmer's market, and for non-local goods from a the same supplier who brings food to Strawberry Field's natural food store. It is a space unique to Pepa's University experience. There is a disconnect between her food choices at the University and with her family; she says that she only eats dairy products when her mother gives her something that is made with them. This could be interesting to follow up. However, the explanation might be as simple as the difficulty of passing on delicious cookies made with butter. This interview was long and compelling, and I probably missed some things sin this wrap-up. I am convinced that NRES Human Dimensions students are a good student population to study because of the way their consumption of knowledge correlates with consumption in other areas of their life. Sustainability, as I have learned, is thought about in terms of changing viewpoints about consumption.

**Data:** The way space is used in the co-op and the way people live in this space is actually very much in tune with the co-op's and its members sustainable ideals. In order to capture this, I would make a video of dinner time at the co-op. Ideally, the video would show food preparation, dining, and clean-up. A shorter film might focus solely on dinner preparation or the after-dinner clean up, because these would show more action of bodies interacting with the way space is organized. After everyone is finished eating, the two people who have been assigned to cook, and anyone else who wants to help, bring the dishes back into the kitchen. Because there are often at least 10 people eating, they use the dishwasher, and it will save more water than washing all of the dishes by hand. The leftover food goes into restaurant-style containers. These can be as large as about one or two gallons. A strip of masking tape is stuck to the lid of the leftovers, on which is written the date and the name of whatever food it is. These are put into the fridge in the area labeled "Leftovers". This is all neatly organized. None of the containers are disposable and all of the food will ideally be consumed at some point. Organic waste goes into the compost bucket. Recyclable things are sorted into the appropriate bins. There must be a trash can, but it is not any larger than the other containers. Throwing something away seems like a matching game to anyone who is not familiar with the system. The general idea is that little, or nothing, is wasted at the co-op. This is central to their construction of sustainability. I would try to capture this in the short film. Another revealing short video would be a tour of the house. The
kitchen and pantry most directly relate to food. I would film the pantry and one of the members explaining what each section is (dry beans, grains, canned goods, frozen foods, etc.), where the food comes from, and how it comes (bulk, packaged, etc.). The bathroom is also interesting because they use only "environmentally friendly" toilet paper--an explanation of this would be good. Apparently everyone in the house also agrees to the saying "If it's yellow, let it mellow", and so they down on the amount of water wasted with toilet flushing. Basically, a video seems like it would explain itself. The way space is utilized can be described, but often it is best understood visually. A short film can help the viewer feel as if she is in the co-op. This video could have a Foucauldian feel to it: it could show how the discourse of sustainability, and more broadly environmentalism, works to discipline the body. If a person eats no animal products, all organic foods, local produce when possible, and she obtains, prepares and eats these foods in a way that minimize waste, maximize efficiency (bulk foods come in less packaging, come together or are local so as to cut oil use, are shared by 13 people in one refrigerator, etc.) the banal act of eating is one way that an individual embodies this sustainability discourse. Eating is an important and inescapable part of a person's daily life. While it concerns the body of the individual, it is one of the most social acts that people, more specifically college students, engage in, especially those who belong to a co-op, where eating is something around which their time is managed and space is organized.

Discuss: #10

My preliminary research has led me to believe that my original assumptions are incorrect. The questions and plan which were proposed are not congruent with my tentative findings or with the direction that the project is going. In other words, I seem to be missing the point! The initial question deals with how students in an academic program which specifically emphasizes sustainable agriculture (ASAP) conceptualize sustainability, and how their personal idea of sustainability is lived out in their everyday lives through food consumption choices. Upon talking with Lily, who is the web designer for ASAP, I learned that ASAP is not actually an academic program, but it functions as a group for students and professors who are interested in sustainable agriculture to become involved with research, conferences, newsletters, and as a link between farmers and the University. ACES is in the process of putting together an agroecology and sustainable
agriculture program, but none exists yet. (I will use agroecology and sustainable agriculture to refer to sustainable agricultural methods.) When I learned this, I dropped the plan of looking at ASAP students and shifted my focus to NRES Human Dimensions students, under the assumption that this program was the next best bet for dealing with sustainable agriculture. This was a mistake.

In talking to NRES Human Dimensions students, my focus shifted towards environmentalism. There are a slew of popular and often contradictory discourses that fall under the umbrella category of environmentalism: recycling, vegetarianism, sustainability, "eat local, act global", etc. The students whom I interviewed identified many of these discourses, but did not focus on any in particular. Their bottom line seemed to be that the earth is being completely destroyed by human activity; namely industrialism, corporations, government, and capitalism. Saving the earth involves a change in ideology. Humans must stop the vicious cycles of production and consumption so that they may live harmoniously as part of the environment, not in the human/environment dichotomy that exists today. When I asked about sustainability they responded: "To sustain what? For how long?" I realized that discourses, like sustainability, are meaningless to them unless they become part of a greater ideological change. However, it was also apparent that these students put certain discourses to work when they bike everywhere instead of driving, when they recycle and compost, and when they eat locally grown produce. The vegetarian housing cooperative where I spent time functions under the ideology that the equal sharing of resources, goods, and services fosters meaningful human community and conservation. The community of the co-op is centered around food and eating: members share in food buying, preparation, clean-up, and a daily meal. Vegetarianism is the link between a healthy body and a healthy environment. An analysis of the co-op strays from my original inquiry because it criticizes what they see as a skewed modern ideology of human/environment interaction. I am interested more in how discourses that relate to environmentalism, like sustainability, are conceptualized and acted upon within given parameters. It will, however, be valuable to situate sustainability within a broader framework of environmentalism and modern modes of production and consumption.

Instead of changing my plan, I should have changed my questions. ASAP does not exist as an academic program per se because it is not a track that students can designate in their undergraduate applications and follow through their college career by taking corresponding classes. However, as I learned
from Lily, it is possible for ACES students to tailor their education to focus on agroecology because there are many classes that discuss it. ASAP is an important organization because it connects students, professors, and farmers who are interested in sustainability to research and educational opportunities. My original questions put too much emphasis on the notion that academic programs are established and official; I did not consider ASAP to be that important to students’ connection to the university. A revised question should inquire into students and professors involvement with ASAP, within the department of ACES, and how their concept of sustainability is articulated in their daily lives through their food consumption choices. Many ASAP events involve food and eating: they schedule all-local meals at restaurants, thereby establishing links between the university, students, farmers, and restaurant owners, and they have farm visits. The ASAP website has a compilation of resources that help guide students in their food choices on and around campus, such as a search engine that lists places where locally grown foods are available.

In my future research, I will interview students and professors who are involved in ASAP, do a more thorough textual analysis of the ASAP website, and attend events organized by ASAP. All of these are part of the plan I deserted when I switched my focus to NRES Human Dimensions students. ASAP exists because students, professors, and farmers have a particular concept of sustainable agriculture that they want to promote. This vision involves the university and the community: scientists, academics, and local small business owners and farmers. Agroecology and sustainable agriculture is not included in the traditional ACES academic programs, and sometimes strands in opposition. All students I interviewed talked about the separation in ACES between the corporate-funded industrial agriculture side, and the sustainable, environmentally-friendly side. These students actually are conscious of how their daily food choices fit in with their ideas about sustainability. They buy locally grown foods, and eat at restaurants that serve sustainable food. Students learn to like squash because it is in season, stop buying bananas, and try new foods that are unfamiliar. They make exceptions for staple items that cannot be produced locally, but try to keep these at a minimum. They spend more money on locally produced cheese and meats, but eat them less often. They bike to the farmer’s market early on Saturday mornings, and they check the ASAP website for information on sustainable food options in the area. Students’ concepts of sustainability integrate human justice, food safety, health, and anti-capitalism: it is particular sort of politicized activism which ultimately works toward a broader ideological
change. Different discourses arrive at a similar criticism of the modern world in different ways, and sustainability is but one of these discourses.

Research Proposal: Statement of Research Problem

ASAP is the agroecology/sustainable agriculture program that exists as an official division of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, within the College of Agriculture; the program has paid faculty but no classes. It provides research and educational opportunities for students and professors who are interested in sustainable agriculture, and also connects with local farmers and business owners to promote sustainable agriculture in the community. Because ASAP does not offer classes, undergraduate students become involved with the program because of their own interest and initiative. Sustainability is constructed primarily to "protect Illinois' natural and human resources while sustaining agricultural production forever," as stated on the ASAP website (http://asap.sustainability.uiuc.edu/about). Students agree upon this statement, but they are also informed by other discourses and experiences. In my pilot research, one ASAP participant whom I interviewed became interested in sustainability when she got food poisoning. She now eats only locally produced foods, because she knows where the food originates and trusts the producers to sell only safe food. Personal experience shaped her construction of sustainability, as did the local food and safe food discourses. Other students choose local food in protest of large corporations and, more broadly, to counter the modern modes of production and consumption. Some believe that a vegetarian diet is the most sustainable way to eat, on the premise that plants are more efficiently produced than animal products. Students construct sustainability according to what is important to them; in addition, they live within the parameters of undergraduate life at the university. Students who live in dorms do not have kitchens and those with busy schedules prepare quick, easy meals. There are many options for shopping and eating out, but these may not be accessible to students, fit within students' budgets, or even offer sustainable food.

Statement of Proposed Research

In my proposed research, I intend to look at how undergraduate students who are involved with ASAP conceptualize sustainability by drawing from how sustainability is constructed in the academic
program and from their own "personal semantic networks" (Strauss, 2005: 209). How is this conceptualization of sustainability actually lived out in their daily food choices, within the parameters of undergraduate student life on the university campus? This is not intended to be a study about hypocrisy; but rather, one which looks into the complexity with which students integrate their academic pursuits and personal ideologies and experiences in their day-to-day existence.

Site Selection

As people are becoming more concerned about sustainability, many large universities are "jumping on the bandwagon" and devoting more time and resources toward research about sustainability. The University of Illinois should be concerned about sustainability because it is a large research institution and it has a renowned and well-funded agriculture program. It is close in proximity to Chicago--huge cities are concerned about sustaining themselves--and U of I is located in some of the richest farmland in the United States. I am choosing to look at undergraduates because the move to college is often a time when people begin to make food choices completely independently from parents, caretakers, and high-school cafeterias. During the last two or three years of undergraduate study, students usually do their own grocery shopping. Champaign-Urbana is, for most students, a new setting that poses different food-purchasing options than were available where the student previously lived. Some people are budgeting and calculating all of their expenses for the first time. As students awaken to new responsibilities, they also become privy to new philosophies and viewpoints, gain knowledge, and embark upon new personal quests, and develop new social networks. All of the newness and information/experience overload is part of identity making for undergraduate students.

Methodology

ASAP’s hub is its interactive website that members are free to edit and to which they upload events, blogs, and announcements. I will do a thorough textual analysis of the site in order to glean information about ASAP’s history, past and ongoing events and projects, and the way the site changes shape through members involvement. I will attend events and gather information about ASAP through participant observation. Since students' daily food
choices are my main focus, detailed interviews with students will comprise a large part of my methodology. Like Stacey, I will aim to understand the students' everyday reality: what are they actually eating for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? (Stacey, 1991: 111). A method of "straight description" has proven useful in my pilot research, and will continue to be important because it allows the researcher to cast aside assumptions and describe a reality not based upon implicitly understood categories and analytical frameworks (Becker, 1998: 76). This type of information gathering can be used in participant observation and personal interviews. During interviews, I will use Nelson's mapping method, in which I will ask interviewees to draw abstract maps of Champaign-Urbana and identify five significant places that have to do with their food consumption choices, (Nelson, 2000: 62-64). Certain spaces--restaurants, stores, farms, academic buildings, residential halls, apartments, etc-- will be marked as more helpful to choosing sustainable foods than others, and different students might identify the same spaces as being important. Students will draw different versions of the abstract maps, which will help me to understand how students see the relationship between the community and the university, a link which is emphasized by ASAP as important to sustainable agriculture. Asking students to keep a food diary will allow individuals to report their own behavior: this gives people agency because they are observing their own food choices, but it also proves to be unreliable (Bernard, 2004: 262). However, the incongruence that I might find between self-reported food choices and my own observations will help identify the tensions between the idealized behavior and the actual. If individuals feel pressure to report certain food choices and not others, I can draw conclusions about what fits within conceptualizations of sustainability and what does not.

Ethics

During my pilot research I conducted interviews with students who were eager to talk about how they view sustainability. Because I selected students who were involved in a sustainable agriculture program, they had positive opinions about sustainability, and it did not seem to be a sensitive subject. To begin talking about daily food choices, I followed Weiss' example and asked students to "walk me through" a typical day by recalling what they ate, and where they purchased or consumed the food (Weiss, 1994: 67). Most students did not hesitate or find this request too intrusive. It is important to allow students to describe their own versions of sustainability and recall their food
choices, instead of the researcher prescribing a version of sustainability and judging the interviewees behavior accordingly. I predict that students who participate in my project will enjoy discussing food because food is central to their conceptualizations of sustainability. My methods are not intended to show where students deviate. This project could potentially promote sustainable initiatives at the university, thus working toward the advantage of ASAP and the students involved.

Significance of Research

This project will highlight the difficulties that arise when students attempt to choose sustainable food on campus and in the community. My hope is to increase the university's involvement in sustainable agriculture by identifying obstacles and areas that need improvement. My first recommendation is that the university develops sustainable agriculture classes so that students can declare ASAP as part of their official undergraduate program of study. In addition, the university should fund a sustainable farm where students can learn about and practice sustainable agriculture methods, as well as purchase sustainably produced foods for personal consumption. On a broader scope, this project serves as a window into how people integrate new and old knowledge, experiences, values, academic pursuits, and personal advocacy to form the basis of a particular ideal. The intention is that the ideal will be lived out in a set of practices--that it will infuse a lifestyle--but of course, tensions arise between the ideal and the actual. What are these tensions and where are they?

Works Cited


Press. 60-66.


EUI Links: #7

There is not much that relates to my topic on IDEALS. I searched keywords, like sustainability, environment, food, eating, local food, organic, shop, grocery, green, agriculture, farm, class, counter culture, co-op, etc. I found many lists by Laura L. Barnes, such as the Sustainable Living Reading List (http://hdl.handle.net/2142/2380). Others had to do with green architecture, and environmentalism. They were from the Illinois Waste Management and Research Center. These could help me find other sources, but were not what I was looking for.

I noticed that many projects have titles that are not creative or descriptive, including mine from last semester. I looked through the EUI projects in order to find something that might help me methodologically. Some abstracts and proposed questions were unclear or seemed too broad. I came across Cristobal Valencia's project, "Making Change: Institutional Channels or Direct Action?". I chose to look at his project because the topic looks interesting, and because I figure I can learn something from the PhD students in the Anthro. department...and Cristobal is friendly.

He poses four clear questions about the "Chancellor's Committee on Latina/o Issues Report (2003)": was is distributed?, was it more than a symbolic act?, how is supposed to be used?, and, most importantly, IS it being used?

These questions are not random stabs at one larger question; they are clear and they progressively move the inquiry forward. This is good. His lays out his research methods well; the interviews are rich and pertinent to his questions.

What like most about Cristobal's proposal is that he does a good
job at situating it within a larger framework. He says that the "research is intended to advocate for changes in the campus environment and to find the best way to produce those changes," (6). He cites the AAA code of ethics and another source in order to justify the importance of ethnographic research in activism. This project is intended to address institutional initiatives of the University to see if they are affecting change in what is perceived as an "hostile environment" for students of color. If the initiatives are not working, which is assumed, then finding out why is a step toward making positive change in the University environment. Cristobal also situates his proposal within other EOTU projects, and wants his research to contribute to this ongoing dialogue about race at the University, Latino students, and other students of color.

This project is a model for the way that I need to refine my own. Clear, concise questions are a good place to start. I like the idea of locating my research within EUI, the University, Anthropology as a discipline, student life, life in the U.S. and in the world, etc. I am disappointed that I cannot link my project to others on IDEALS.

http://hdl.handle.net/2142/1814 Cristobal Valencia's proposal

Reflect: I love working with EUI because it gives meaning to my academic work outside of my own thoughts. Usually professors and maybe my parents are the only people who see my academic work. Papers that I have spent hours writing and thinking about will be deleted from my hard drive within a year. I feel enriched, enlightened—everything the university is supposed to do for students—but these feelings are internal and impractical. Undergraduates' academic work has little impact, especially at large research universities. This is sad, because we probably have good ideas sometimes. At least keeping track of what we do will help understand the process of learning. In 100 years someone will find thousands of copies of people writing the same descriptions of the same topics… and wonder…. why…. were… those people so inefficient?? Lets stop being inefficient and archive what we do so that we do not have to do it over and over and over and over…. The online environment is so compact. IRB is a good thing because it prevents things like the involuntary sterilization of women. Archiving makes sense, and compared to my facebook pictures, should not be too embarrassing. EUI hi-five!

Recommendations: The agroecology and sustainable agriculture program should be adopted as an official academic program with classes! I would
have applied to this program had I know it existed!