Carleton University

**“Choking on the Smell of Money”: Resistance, Economic Development and the Hog
Industry in Rural Manitoba**

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts**

Institute of Political Economy

**by
Haeli Goertzen**

Ottawa, Ontario

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submitted by Haeli Patricia Nicole Goertzen
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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Abstract

This thesis is an attempt to explain how two corporately owned intensive hog operations came to be established in the town I grew up in, Hamiota, MB, and how residents reacted to a development that occurred in the absence of public consultations. In trying to understand how global agricultural restructuring contributes to power struggles in specific places, it is useful to try to link macro, structural accounts of restructuring with more localized, micro studies. To this end, I link the political economy of food and feminist political ecology literatures using Foucault's concepts of power and discourse. While this theoretical framework allows for an exploration of the nested scales of regulation and agency, expanding traditional definitions of political resistance points to Scott's theorizing about everyday resistance, in order to recognize the "quiet" resistance to intensive hog operations in Hamiota.

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Finally, I struggle to find the words to describe the role of my family in all of this. For all your humour, inspiration, encouragement, love and subversive elements, thanks Dad, Mum, Travis, Jesse, Sarah, Jordan, Grandma and Nan. I dedicate this thesis to my brother Ryan and my grandfathers John Cable and Henry Goertzen, all of whom departed my world before I could thank them personally for teaching me not to take myself or life too seriously.

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Introduction

The past five years in Manitoba have been characterized by a dramatic increase in intensive livestock operations, with the hog industry assuming an economically prominent position in the province. This thesis aims to study the confluence of livestock intensification in agricultural production, economic development in rural municipalities and the dwindling political power of rural dwellers. As two outcomes of globalizing tendencies within most agricultural sectors, vertical integration and increasing corporatization are changing the nature of agriculture and social relations in rural places. While rural decline poses a challenge on the Canadian prairies as a region nationally constructed on homestead agriculture, the economic development planning paradigm is presented and encouraged as a panacea by creating jobs and economic growth. For many rural municipalities faced with the challenges of global agricultural restructuring, options for economic growth are limited to rural tourism or controversial developments such as intensive livestock operations. Rural municipalities often consider themselves in competition for outside investment, which in turn affects the ways in which municipal officials operate in relation to their constituents. In some cases, the perceived pressure to attract investment for community economic development serves to deny the formal political participation of rural residents and to silence non-economic concerns about controversial economic development strategies. In particular, protests based on environmental and social concerns are subordinated to economic imperatives.

Reactions by residents to controversial economic development strategies differ in each municipality, with some men and women forming formally resistant groups, while

resistance in other municipalities is characterized as quiet or non-existent. This thesis aims to explore “quiet” resistance to intensive hog barns by focusing on Hamiota, Manitoba, a rural municipality in which two intensive hog operations were constructed in 2001 by Premium Pork, a vertically integrated corporation based in Lucan, Ontario. By examining “quiet” resistance, it becomes possible to explore the ways in which the discourse of community economic development operates to subordinate the subjects it purports to sustain. In talking to those in quiet opposition in Hamiota, various discourses of resistance arise that challenge the supremacy of the economic development strategizing. These discourses of resistance reveal complex concerns surrounding a perceived loss of autonomy within the community, potential environmental degradation as relations between people and land change, and the social transformation of Hamiota. More importantly, by exploring Hamiota residents’ narratives as a particular form of resistance to a dominant economic development discourse, this thesis comments on particular interactions of power through discourse within a larger context of globalization.

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis in bringing together the political economy of food literature with the literature on feminist political ecology. Together, these two bodies of literature historicize agriculture as a nationally constructed and directed sector which has undergone dramatic restructuring throughout the twentieth century, a trend that continues to depopulate rural places in Canada and around the world. While the political economy of food highlights the economic and political changes that characterize the increasingly global and inequitable nature of food production, feminist political ecology questions shifts in localized power relations between men and women and their access and control

over land. Works addressed by the theoretical insights of Foucault explore how discourses operate as conduits of power, and how material struggles over land and resources are simultaneously discursive struggles over meaning. Further, the latter challenges assumptions about the nature of “political” acts and resistance, by including a range of covert strategies that are often overlooked, but that proliferate in everyday life.

The second chapter is a discussion of methodological issues. In particular, I have had to consider several ethical issues in conducting research in the town I grew up in. Here I discuss the insider-outsider problematic of the researcher and the researched, and the challenges of studying “a community.” I trace the epistemological critiques offered by critical feminist researchers, and from there I outline the methods used to produce this piece of work.

In the third chapter, I examine how agriculture on the Canadian prairies was constructed by the newly born Canadian state. Agricultural imperatives of the state have always been export-oriented, however, the end of the twentieth century has seen the export imperative realigned to the priorities of value-added, global food sectors dominated by vertically integrated corporations. Thus, the roles of farms, farmers, and rural agricultural communities continue to be shaped by national imperatives. I then focus on Manitoba’s agricultural sector, and situate the political and economic importance of the hog industry as a particular response to the removal of the Crow Rate and its impact on the province’s grain sector. Through this discussion I connect the provincial commitment to the hog industry to the pronounced emphasis on economic development planning in rural municipalities in Manitoba as a solution to rural decline. Finally, I

introduce Premium Pork as a vertically integrated hog production corporation, and its plans for the area surrounding and including Hamiota.

The fourth chapter explores the power struggle between municipal officials and Hamiota residents in regard to Premium Pork's operations within the municipality. While the language of economic development is wielded as a way of silencing non-economic concerns and to thereby claim support for a controversial development, the discourses of resistance presented by Hamiota residents challenge dominant constructions of economic development strategizing and government agricultural discourse.

The work in this thesis represents my interpretation of the information shared by Hamiota residents. It is my hope that this work can contribute to an informed understanding of the contingent changes taking place in rural communities, for those who live there and those studying "rural" issues.

Chapter 1: Theorizing Agriculture within Nations and Communities

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical tools that inform my exploration of resistance to intensive, corporate hog operations in the Rural Municipality of Hamiota. The first section attempts to bring together two complementary strands of literature that comment on agro-food systems, the political economy and the political ecology of food, in order to offer a comprehensive history of agriculture in which to place rural farming communities on the Canadian prairies. The political economy of food outlines the historical development of national agro-industrialization in relation to the expansion of capitalism, which has fostered global food production chains dominated by transnational agribusiness firms. Technological change in agricultural, food-processing and retail sectors; regulatory reform; the changing spatial organization of international agro-food systems, and the increasing integration of all sectors of the system are all explored in this literature. Meanwhile, the political ecology of food takes into account the political economy of food systems, but focuses more on the ecological and social consequences of agro-industrialization. Framed within a global political economic analysis, this body of literature outlines how tendencies to specialization and intensification within global food production chains around the world, but particularly in the North, have destroyed sustainable cycles of mixed farming systems, resulting in extensive ecological damage. Changes in the relations between people and land in agricultural areas are accompanied

by concerns about their effects on rural places associated with agricultural production in the North and government responses to them.

In addition to reviewing the contributions of the political economy of food and political ecology, I also draw attention to some of the criticisms of these bodies of literature, which revolve around issues of agency at the local level and the heterogeneity of responses to agricultural restructuring. It is at this juncture that works in feminist political ecology literature become pertinent in terms of informing my methodology and theoretical framework. The second section of the chapter explores feminist political ecology as a bridge between the macro-economic and political shifts in global food systems and the issues specific to “local” sites. Central to this body of work is a concern with the operation of power through discourse in particular places. Located within a broader political ecology literature, feminist political ecologists illustrate that in struggles over land use, power relations based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural representations and identities are key. In such struggles, power is often exercised through discursive constructions. Through a fundamental concern with power relations in resource issues, feminist political ecology explores the ways in which material struggles over resources are simultaneously discursive struggles over meaning. In problematizing local constructions of resource issues, subjugated views are acknowledged and validated as particular types of knowledge, and as particular forms of resistance. Specifically, subjugated accounts constitute a safe form of resistance for those with no formal political voice in local resource decisions. Thus, discourses of resistance are placed among the myriad ways in which covert struggles take place in everyday life, even as dominant discourses operate to silence them.

Agriculture and Nation-building

The political economy of food documents the role of agriculture in the development of nation states and its contribution to inequalities between and within the North and South. The political economy of food also outlines the characteristics of a global food regime that is now in transition. Initially, the global food regime that consolidated after World War II was based on nationally subsidized agriculture models. National agriculture is now being transformed by globalizing production chains, and numerous vertically integrated global food industries are emerging from the deregulation of national agricultural programs. As a measure of agricultural restructuring, the deregulation of national agricultural policies is accelerating with a new emphasis on value-added food commodities for export.

As a result of restructuring, the composition of agriculture has expanded well beyond the farming sector to include a multitude of input suppliers and downstream manufacturers and retailers, to the extent that agriculture must be placed within food systems. Subsequently, new actors in the transition to a new food regime have emerged, among which the most dominant are transnational agribusiness firms engaged in increasingly horizontally and vertically integrated production chains. Shifts in agro-food production towards high-value and manufactured durable foods over the past fifty years mean that agro-food workers and consumers far outnumber farmers, and as such usurp the political power and importance of primary producers.

As a result, primary producers and the rural places which they sustain, in the North and South, increasingly are marginalized within food production chains, as attested to by the monumental rural depopulation that has accompanied the initial global food

regime and that continues unabated today. Rural communities founded on settler farms in the late nineteenth century now are under pressure to sustain viable local economies to retain their dwindling populations. Family farms, physically and discursively constructed spaces that have historically formed the social fabric of rural places, struggle to operate through an array of strategies including contract farming and off-farm income, even as they are increasingly flanked by absentee-owned corporate farms. Priorities dominated by the imperatives of globalized, industrial, corporate food systems are apparent in agricultural and rural discourses at all government levels, especially in the emphasis placed on value-added food exports. The latter discourses assign communities, regions and nation-states new niches and relationships in the global food economy.

In the nineteenth century, the rural sector formed a key element of Western nation-building.¹ Capitalist industrial development was dependent on the rural sector, and as such rural places and activities can be placed squarely within the history of colonial conquest and capitalist expansion.² Colonialism is tangibly enmeshed with the history of agriculture around the world. In addition to the most obvious aspect of colonialism, its displacement of innumerable peoples and appropriation of land, colonialism also shaped the ways in which different nations participate in global food systems through an unequal international division of labour. For example, during the nineteenth century in Southern colonies, a switch was made from exports of luxury goods such as silk and spices to cash-crops such as sugar, coffee, and cotton, for industrial consumption in Europe's imperial nations. From that point on until independence, Southern colonies were structured

¹McMichael, 1996; Meiksins Wood: 2001.

²McMichael, 1996,1997; Friedmann, 1993b.

economically by imperialists to provide the raw materials for the industrial needs of the North, through specialized production of tropical exports and industrial inputs.³ For many places in the South, decolonization during the post-war period signified the completion of the nation-state system as a historical movement rooted in European imperialism, and the ensuing construction of national states emulated the western experience, whether capitalist or socialist.⁴ The infrastructure of southern agriculture had been built for a select few exports to industrial centers, mostly at the expense of food security and peasant land-holdings. The dependency of the economic sector on a few agricultural exports in many southern nations created by colonization now formed the basis for Northern intervention in the “development” of these newly born independent states. While biased towards the industrial model, western developmentalism included the goal of constructing nationally organized farm sectors based in rural reforms designed to secure hinterlands and build self-sufficiency in grains, using Green Revolution technologies.⁵

While European countries colonized Africa in the latter half of the nineteenth century, ex-colonial settler states such as the US and Canada, after rendering North American First Nations peoples stationary and “unproblematic” on reserves, began to compete with European nations in exports of grains and meat in provisioning the staple diets of European labour forces.⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century, settler farming in

³McMichael, 1996; Friedmann, 1993b.

⁴McMichael, 1997:635.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Friedmann, 1987.

the New World(s) formed the new agricultural core of the world economy, providing the economic basis on which New World nations such as Canada could achieve economic development and compete in global agriculture markets. Family farm units drew labour exclusively from the family unit, and its dependency on external sources of capital was relatively low.⁷ Ecologically, the settler system was a 'natural' farming system dependent on cyclical, seasonal quality of rural life, elements of which were seen until the late 1930s. According to Goodman and Redclift, "animals were left to graze in the fields, or fed on fodder crops produced on the farm, bought inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides played a negligible part in the farm accounts, a sizeable part of the food for home consumption was provided by the farm, marketing was still in its infancy, and food was processed and prepared by women in the home."⁸

Family farming during the end of the nineteenth century and up until WWII was an extensive agricultural system characterized by "the concentration of accumulation and technological change in the heavy producer goods industries, relatively slow productivity growth, competitive markets and the predominance of non-capitalist commodity relations in the mode of consumption and the domestic sphere."⁹ As a form of farming characterized by a relatively low person-to-land ratio, this strategic provisioning role became the model for agricultural development during the postwar food regime and most of the twentieth century, and nurtured a highly productive energy- and capital- intensive agriculture, first in Europe and then in the post-colonial world.¹⁰

⁷ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:73.

⁸ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:203.

⁹ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:87.

¹⁰ McMichael, 1996.

The significance of settler farming as a New World national model of agricultural development in the nineteenth and twentieth century lay in the harnessing of the family-based labour process on the farm, facilitating the capitalization of the farm without transforming the entire labour force to that of wage earners.¹¹ Feminists, in critically unpacking ‘the family’ in family farm as a production unit, have pointed out that the unpaid labour of women on the farm has largely enabled the capitalization of the farm.¹² On a national scale, the family farm model was a vehicle for the integration of industry and agriculture, which provided demand for intermediate goods from major postwar industries.¹³

Farms began to require continual external outputs provided through the market, whether technological inputs such as oil, inorganic fertilizers, machinery, etc. or specialty agricultural outputs such as corn and soy feeds for the new intensive meat sector. As national agro-industrial complexes formed, so did a global food regime. The term “global food regime” is an heuristic device that serves to assist in the orientation of food complexes to key state/economy relations, understood in world-historical terms, and is not meant to imply a coherent or planned global agricultural mode of regulation. As such it serves as a construct that can frame the analysis of global food production.

The global food regime consisting of agro-industrial complexes that tentatively formed after World War II enabled agribusiness firms to coordinate exchanges of agro-industrial

¹¹ Cited in Goodman & Redclift, 1998:75.

¹² Friedmann, 1978; Wharmore, 1994.

¹³ Friedmann, 1995:22.

inputs across national boundaries.¹⁴ According to Friedmann, the postwar food regime consisted of three distinct agro-industrial complexes: the wheat complex; the durable food complex, and the livestock complex. A complex here is defined as a web of production and consumption relations, linking farmers and farm workers to consuming individuals, households, and communities. Each web consists of private and state institutions that buy, sell, provide inputs, process, transport, distribute and finance each link, and contain their own specific class, gender, and cultural relations.¹⁵

Central to agro-industrial development was the commodification of food fostered during the Industrial Revolution and both World Wars, which rendered food an industrially produced good and subsequently rendered agriculture a practice of “agribusiness.”¹⁶ By facilitating the goal of cheap food policies, extensive patterns of family farming entered an intensive phase after WWII to include “the interdependent expansion of capital and consumer goods industries, rapid technical change and productivity growth, monopoly market structures, the transnationalization of production and exchange, and mass consumption of standardized commodities.”¹⁷ Mass production of commodified foodstuffs for industrial labour forces led to the growth of food production lines based on the durability of food, in order to withstand the increasing distance it traveled.¹⁸

The postwar food regime and its agro-industrial complexes were characterized by the tension between integration and replication created by national agriculture programs

¹⁴ McMichael, 1997:636.

¹⁵ Friedmann, 1992; 1993b; Whatmore, 1994a.

¹⁶ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:47.

¹⁷ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:88.

in the North, in which authorized import controls and export subsidies were necessary to manage national farm programs.¹⁹ The US, as a new postwar hegemonic power, protected its own domestic markets, and other countries were constrained, especially through the Marshall Plan in Europe, to develop similar agricultural policies focusing on national markets. Thus, the replication of intensely regulated national sectors emerged, with adaptation of policies to specific locations in the food regime. At the same time, transnationally mobile investment capital had the effect of integrating the agro-food sectors of Europe and the US into an Atlantic agro-food economy, pivoting around the livestock complex. The Atlantic agro-food economy framed the new roles of tropical export countries, including former European colonies, in the food regime. Integration was uneven, as countries of the socialist bloc and capitalist countries of Asia were not integrated into transnational agro-food complexes. Further, the subsidization of settler farming in the Atlantic agro-food economy fostered huge surpluses in grain production, a chronic problem that challenged the viability and sustainability of national agriculture programs.

Paradoxically, national regulation that was based on farm interests provided fertile ground for the emergence of transnational agro-food corporations, which over time required high levels of consumption of complex food commodities to obtain agro-food profits.²⁰ Profits in the agro-food sector in the North came to depend on a larger restructuring of the post-war economies, and specifically, on mass production and mass

¹⁸ Friedmann, 1992.

¹⁹ Friedmann, 1993:32.

²⁰ Friedmann, 1995:22.

consumption, especially the increased consumption of animal products and high value-added manufactured foods.²¹ The livestock complex created two distinct subsectors: intensive, large-scale, often industrially organized livestock operations and monocultural production of feed crops.²² As Goodman and Redclift state, “in many respects, the development of the modern agro-food system and its internationalization is synonymous with the expansion of the grains-livestock complex and the corresponding diffusion of food consumption patterns based on meat and dairy produce.”²³ As such, the livestock complex, by integrating feed producers with feedlot technology across national boundaries, has been the chief vehicle of global restructuring of agriculture. While affluent states have developed their own livestock industries, southern states are now significant feed exporters, rivaling US dominance in world food markets. This shift has set the stage for the growing displacement of food crops by feed crops for livestock production, and allowed international trade in cereals to anchor global sourcing strategies of transnational companies for the new inputs of an exploding food manufacturing sector.²⁴ In addition, advances in genetics, animal nutrition and disease control, and automated, controlled barns have allowed for greater locational mobility for livestock production, an industry that is accentuated by vertical integration with compound feed firms, food manufacturers, distributors, and in some cases, supermarkets. As Goodman and Redclift explain, however, the production ‘success story’ of intensive livestock production “conceals the dramatic restructuring of rural economies and society due to the

²¹Friedmann., 1995: 34.

²²Friedmann, 1992:267.

²³ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:112.

large-scale expulsion of farm families and agricultural workers, as well as the damage inflicted on the environment by the intensification of production.”²⁵

The global food regime fostered particular global inequalities between the North and South, and according to Friedmann, had several dire consequences in the South.²⁶ First, the wheat complex was a major source of food import dependency through US food aid, which was required to deal with US wheat surpluses and conveniently coincided with a mix of foreign policy and humanitarian goals. In the early 1960s, US food aid accounted for 35% of total wheat trade, and by the end of the 1960s commercial markets had been created through food aid in many southern nations, marking the success of southern integration into the food regime through mercantile aid practices despite development programs that encouraged Green Revolution technologies.²⁷ However, the EU also began to accumulate wheat surpluses through its national agriculture programs and was strong enough to compete in the food aid game. With the food and energy crises of the 1970s, Southern countries dependent on food imports now had to buy wheat at high prices, just when oil prices had skyrocketed as well. This period devastated many countries in the South and precipitated the conditions for the debt crisis of the eighties.

Second, the durable food complex contributed to the declining demand for traditional exports from the South. The main consequence of the durable food complex was substitution and its multiple effects.²⁸ As food manufacturing industries in the North

²⁴ Friedmann, 1994.

²⁵ Goodman & Redclift: 1998:114.

²⁶ Friedmann, 1992.

²⁷ Friedmann, 1992; McMichael, 1996.

²⁸ Goodman, Sorj and Wilkinson 1987.

succeeded in replicating the natural properties specific to traditional ingredients, they substituted the products of farmers in the South. Thus, tropical exports on which most national agricultures were heavily based were displaced by substitutes technologically produced in the North. The creation of artificial sweeteners, artificial fibres and the useful conversion of northern agricultural byproducts (corn syrup, soy oils) was instrumental in displacing southern exports. During the 1970s the terms of trade for tropical exports declined drastically, eroding the agricultures fostered by colonialism that southern states depended on for export earnings.²⁹ Simultaneously, large parts of the South were transformed into food deficit regions by the displacement of tropical exports and the conversion of basic food cropping to commercial cropping, in order to provide agro-industrial inputs and luxury foods for affluent urban and foreign diets.³⁰

In the North, the post-war food regime produced great economic gains, mainly through the capitalization of the farm. This occurred in the light of several factors. The first was the appropriation of agricultural production through the livestock complex.³¹ As agricultural industries succeeded in reducing the vagaries of nature in one aspect after another of agriculture, they 'appropriated' part of the production process from farmers. Appropriation was achieved through commodity price support programs that both protected family farms and encouraged their relations with agro-food corporations.³² To avoid being marginalized in the market, farmers needed to become competitive, and thus

²⁹McMichael, 1997:637.

³⁰Friedland, 1994; McMichael, 1997:639.

³¹Goodman, Sorj and Wilkinson 1987.

³²Friedmann, 1993:34

a shift began towards mono-cultural practices and away from traditional mixed farming, a system that combined in itself food production and environmental protection.³³ Farmers soon became “locked into a technical treadmill” into increasingly specialized and mechanized operations.³⁴

The separation of intensive livestock and cereal production on farms allowed agro-food corporations to place themselves between their customers, specialized livestock operations, and their suppliers, maize and soy farms. With specialization and mechanization, new modern food chains emerged, in which Northern farmers became suppliers of raw materials within transnational agro-food sectors dominated by some of the largest, most technically dynamic corporations in the world.³⁵ Through globalized food production, agro-food corporations have become vertically and horizontally integrated over time, and often dominate several links along the food chain. Statistics abound to show that large agro-industry conglomerates command market shares verging on monopolies in various sectors. For example, agribusiness giant Cargill is one of the three major global traders of grain (the major ingredient in animal feed), the second largest animal feed producer, one of the largest processors of hogs and beef.³⁶ Farmers in the North are now tied into a network of agro-food corporations, both as buyers of machines, chemicals, animal feeds, and as sellers of raw materials to food manufacturing

³³ Goodman & Redclift, 1998:48.

³⁴ McMichael, 1996:35.

³⁵ For a striking visual of this relationship, see fig. 3 in National Farmers Union brief, “EU Subsidies, and TNC Market Power,” 2001.

³⁶ Kneen, 1989; Heffernan, 2000.

industries.³⁷ Capital has successfully penetrated the family farm enterprise, and as Goodman and Redclift point out, “the competitive movement of industrial and finance capitals followed an uneven course; the effects were spatially, as well as socially differentiated.”³⁸ Socially, capitalization on the farm has had many significant consequences, in terms of its changing family labour structure and the constituency of agricultural politics. As the farm as an economic unit loses its self-sufficiency, the members of the farm family become more dependent on each other, and especially on the activities of women.³⁹ Off farm employment, or pluriactivity, is often the result.

One mark of the contemporary dominance of transnational agribusiness is the rise of new global agro-food actors.⁴⁰ Specifically, the increasing share of wealth accumulated by agro-food corporations, shifts in employment in food manufacturing and services, and the rise of mass consumption of food products have diminished the political clout of farmers in favour of agribusinesses, workers and consumers.⁴¹ The gender and racial composition of workers in the whole agro-food sector has shifted, as women and people of colour overwhelmingly comprise the food service and manufacturing sector.⁴² Furthermore, as food consumers, women have been identified as most consistently concerning themselves with the provisioning of their families.

³⁷Friedmann, 1995: 33.

³⁸ Goodman, Sorj & Wilkinson, 1987:73.

³⁹ Whatmore, cited in Goodman & Redclift, 1998.

⁴⁰Friedmann, 1991; Heffernan, 2001.

⁴¹Friedmann, 1995:23.

⁴²Friedmann, 1992; Collins, 1995.

Spatially, rural places traditionally associated with farming are now faced with the transformation of land use and economic stature, often with controversial environmental consequences. As the food system continues to leave the farm, ecological damage increases. The widespread use of synthetic fertilizers has upset the nitrogen cycle and contaminated water supplies with excess nitrates and phosphates. At the same time, the intensification of livestock production has rendered animal waste a problem, raising further concerns over water contamination. In addition, problems of erosion, diversity loss, habitat loss for wildlife, and climate change all stem from modern agricultural practices.

Among these practices, corporate interests have penetrated farm spaces in the forms of contract farming and intensive corporate farms, leading to regionalized food sectors. Local food production has been eschewed in favour of corporate outsourcing of raw materials for food manufacturing. Through intensive livestock operations, for example, cattle, chickens, pigs and other livestock are increasingly raised in stages in several different locations, and travel to other locations for slaughter, packing, processing, retailing and finally, consumption. This has led to certain geographic locations being referred to in terms of their specialized livestock areas, as in the case of North Carolina's "Broiler Belt," an intensive poultry producing area.

Agriculture and Political Ecology

The costs of the modern food system on the environment through price supports and technological innovation are now apparent. As the reinsertion of agricultural producers and regions into the global food economy takes place, relations to land and

food are also transformed. Ecologically and culturally, Friedmann describes how the global industrialization of agriculture “disrupted the primordial connection between on one side, the land and labour that cultivates plants and rears animals and, on the other side, the human activities that acquire, transform, prepare, serve, and share meals in daily life and on festive and ritual occasions.”⁴³ Subsequently, a major consequence of agro-industrialization is the increase in the distance food travels from land to mouth.⁴⁴ Most elements of settler farming have been partially or fully removed from the farm economy and relocated, usually in an industrial form, elsewhere in the food system.⁴⁵ The latter is particularly significant when one considers that this distance, traditionally theorized in regards to manufactured commodities such as clothing, serves to render the production process invisible, and therefore the land, labour, social relations and ecological costs that constitute the production process also become invisible.⁴⁶

The environmental effects of modern agriculture point to contradictions within the entire model on which global food chains are based. There are many examples from which to draw. Animal waste is now a problem rather than part of natural recycling, pesticides are needed due to intensive monocultural production, and antibiotics and “biosecurity procedures” are required due to intensive housing animal systems.⁴⁷ In addition, there are several other important respects in which attention has shifted to the problems the modern food system presents to the environment. Increased dependence on

⁴³Friedmann, 1995:22.

⁴⁴Phrase borrowed from Brewster Kneen’s book, entitled From Land to Mouth: Understanding the Food System, New Canadian Press, Toronto: 1989.

⁴⁵ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:203.

⁴⁶Hennessy, 1995:53.

differently located components of the agricultural production and food processing system has served to transfer environmental costs from one part of the system to another. For instance, the use of soya meal and manioc for intensive cattle production in Europe has transferred some of the costs of maintaining feedstock systems to other developing countries such as Brazil and Thailand, which can ill afford it.⁴⁸ Second, increasingly intensive production has led to problems of waste disposal, pollution and disease control, resulting in increased costs of intermediate goods such as feed, fertilizers, fuel and repair, and veterinary services for the farm. These problems affect the market viability of the farm and represent major threats to the existing ecological systems, species diversity and habitats for the local environment.

As an inelastic factor of production in intensive agriculture systems, land supply can only be increased through 'improvement' or intensification.⁴⁹ Intensive agriculture, through technological appropriation and substitution, has had a dramatic effect on land resources due mainly to chemical use and intensive livestock production. Over the past fifty years the use of nitrogenous and other chemical fertilizers has left significant residues in soils, and the eutrophication of lakes, rivers and coastlines caused by excessive nutrient loading from nitrate and phosphate pollution is widespread.⁵⁰ Intensive livestock production and the disposal of manure has become a huge problem, especially with respect to its effects on water. In Europe, the mineralization of the soil from increased large-scale nitrate leaching has passed into both surface and groundwater. The Netherlands, France and Germany have documented the problems of nitrate content

⁴⁷ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:203.

⁴⁸ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:204.

⁴⁹ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:210.

in aquifers and other freshwater sources, not to mention the costs of nitrate reduction.⁵¹ In addition, the conversion of forests, pastures and wetlands to other uses has led to the loss of wildlife habitats, hydrological changes and increased risk of erosion.⁵² Finally, there are also a host of new environmental problems currently garnering attention, most notable are concerns arising from the introduction of genetically engineered species into the environment, compatibility of 'new' life forms and existing ecosystems.⁵³

As a result of the many environmentally destructive effects associated with the modern food system, management interventions to counter the damage are being implemented by various levels of government. However, the knot tying agriculture to the environment has been undone, and "given the commitment to high yields, consistent quality and the major investments in research and development which underpin these technologies, once they are established there is apparently no cost-effective alternative to capital-intensive, energy-wasteful production regimes."⁵⁴

Restructuring National Agriculture(s): The Export Imperative and Rural Dispossession

The postwar food regime began to crumble in the 1970s with the food and energy crises, which have precipitated a long period of agricultural crisis and restructuring that is ongoing.⁵⁵ A decision by the USSR to purchase three quarters of all commercially traded wheat in 1972 from the US during Detente, constituted a food crisis that coincided with

⁵⁰ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:211.

⁵¹ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:212.

⁵² Goodman & Redclift, 1991:213.

⁵³ Goodman & Redclift, 1991.

⁵⁴ Goodman & Redclift, 1991:204.

the first oil shock.⁵⁶ The food crisis arose from the sudden and unexpected shift from food surplus to scarcity, which sent grain prices soaring and threatened food shortages for poor people and southern nations. However, the shortages came from a one-time explosion of demand and a temporary drop in production, and the basic causes of surpluses reasserted itself. As major states continued to support agricultural prices by purchasing commodities, within a few years farmers were producing surpluses again.

Food aid and other forms of export subsidies which had underpinned the old food regime, created fierce agricultural competition between the US and EU throughout the 1970s and 1980s, unhinging the Atlantic agro-food economy.⁵⁷ During this time, economic policies focused on increasing export earnings, causing an expansion in production and world market shares in the US and EU. However, the hegemony of the US in the global food regime had begun to decline, and new state actors emerged, altering global food relations. New trade relations emerged between economically wealthy food importers such as Japan, and the New Agricultural Countries (NACs) such as Brazil and Argentina. Competition in substitutable feed crops and soy within the livestock complex from NACs ended irrevocably the division between First and Third World exports, and led to differentiation within the Third World in the food regime.⁵⁸

The replication of surpluses combined with the Bretton Woods dollar crisis led to competitive dumping and potential trade wars between the US and Europe. Soon the

⁵⁵Friedmann, 1993; 1995.

⁵⁶Gilmore, cited in Friedmann, 1995: 227.

⁵⁷Friedmann, 1993.

⁵⁸Friedmann 1993; McMichael, 1996.

costs of subsidizing exports and surpluses became too much for governments in nations with lower agricultural production and population such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. As well, transnational corporations had outgrown the national regulatory models in which they had thrived, and found them to be barriers to further integration of a potentially global agro-food sector based on distance and durability.⁵⁹

The collapse of fixed exchange rates prompted the US to adopt an agro-export strategy to solve its growing imbalance of payments, which encouraged commercial exports of low-value primary products such as wheat, corn and soybeans. This strategy destabilized family farming throughout the world, and intensified export production and dependence on foreign markets, especially in the South, China, and the Eastern bloc.⁶⁰ The main consequence of agro-export dependency, or the export imperative, was intense competition for markets in which the US lost its hegemonic stature. Global shifts in the food regime due to the export imperative also created the impetus for the focus on agricultural liberalization at the 1986 Uruguay Round talks on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

According to McMichael, the current restructuring of world agriculture through the GATT and now the World Trade Organization builds on a division between low-value and high-value products.⁶¹ The North has historically dominated trade in low-value temperate cereals and oil-seeds, while trade in high-value products has fallen increasingly to corporate agro-exporters and their contract farmers producing in the South — Brazilian

⁵⁹ Friedmann, 1993; McMichael, 1998.

⁶⁰ McMichael, 1998; 2000.

⁶¹ McMichael, 1998.

beef, Chinese and Hungarian pork, and Thai poultry, for example. The accession of southern countries into the GATT and WTO and their interests in liberalizing agricultural trade also signals the subordination of food restructuring to international debt.⁶² An explicit aim of structural adjustment conditions imposed by creditors is the promotion of agricultural exports such as exotic foods and flowers geared to new niche markets.⁶³ Debtor countries in the South are thus caught in a scissor between the export imperative and import restrictions in Northern markets. The growth of agro-export platforms in the North and South linked to calls for agricultural deregulation signals a more fundamental process of subordinating primary producing regions to global production and consumption relations organized by transnational food companies. Thus, as McMichael explains, “agriculture becomes less and less a foundational institution of societies and states, and more and more a tenuous component of corporate global sourcing strategies”.⁶⁴

In 1994, the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations culminated in the formation of the World Trade Organization, with the mandate to institutionalize freedom of trade, enterprise, and property rights on a global scale. It has a distinct constitutional focus on enforcing rules regarding commodity circuits and national and sub-national regulations. As such, it operates as an enforcement mechanism of market rules. According to Friedmann, “liberalization has created an unstable situation in which importers with strong currencies benefit and the largest exporter wields the greatest power in

⁶²McMichael, 1996.

⁶³Friedmann, 1993.

⁶⁴McMichael, 1998:104.

international rule-making.”⁶⁵ One consequence of national agricultural liberalization in Canada throughout the 1990s was the separation of farm income supports from production (ie. the end of price supports). Payments to farmers in countries such as Canada now are packaged as direct income supports, instead of indirectly through the prices of their commodities. However, policies that support farm incomes for reasons other than agricultural production --- to stem rural poverty and out-migration and to support rural tourist industries --- do not regulate agriculture, agro-food power or property.⁶⁶

With agro-industrialization and its myriad ecological problems, a common and far-reaching consequence of agro-industrialization is the massive dispossession of rural people in both the North and South.⁶⁷ According to Eric Hobsbawm, the period from 1950 to 1975 saw “the most spectacular, rapid, far-reaching, profound, and worldwide social change in global history,” the first period in which the peasantry became a minority everywhere but South and East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁸ Further, as McMichael states, “a century after the rural sector was a key element of the project of nation building, this project has been superceded, because of rural demographic decline under industrialization, and the erosion of sectoral and national boundaries with agro-industrialization and globalization of food systems.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵Friedmann, 1993:51.

⁶⁶Friedmann, 1993.

⁶⁷McMichael, 1997:631.

⁶⁸Hobsbawm, 1992:56.

⁶⁹McMichael, 1997:632.

While the above highlights the contributions of political economy of food in terms of elucidating the profound economic and organizational changes in the production of food throughout the twentieth century, the 1990s saw theorists argue that the research agenda around agriculture and the political economy of food had reached an impasse.⁷⁰ Specifically, while providing broad terms of reference of the transformation and industrialization of capitalist agriculture, the rising power of multinational food and agribusiness corporations and the global integration of agro-food systems, the extent to which macro political economy accounts are sufficient to explain the heterogeneous ways restructuring is felt in various localities was questioned.⁷¹ Thus, while theoretical tensions surrounding the political economy of food came to centre on the relationship between global processes and local change and the relationship between political economy and more micro-sociological perspectives, a debate also arose over the relevance of Fordist and flexible specialization models for dominant agricultural production processes;⁷² Agro-food studies since the 1980s have been characterized by a focus on the shifting structural properties of global capitalism subscribing to regulation theory, in which capitalism develops in the form of a succession of regimes of accumulation, each with specific institutional frameworks and social norms. While the latter has enabled theorists to speak of the globalization of agriculture in terms of global food regimes and agro-food complexes, concerns about the explanatory limits of regulationist conceptualizations have been expressed.

⁷⁰ Goodman & Watts, 1997; McMichael & Buttel, 1990.

⁷¹ Whatmore, 1994; Goodman & Watts, 1997.

⁷² Ward & Almas, 1997.

As Whatmore points out, there is a concern that regulationist concepts such as food regimes “impose a categorical logic on the restructuring of the production and consumption of food representing it as a coherent process determined by the structural requirements of capital accumulation.”⁷³ Part of the problem is a problematic periodization of history, in which binary histories are constructed as the focus of research takes on the task of ‘discovering’ the defining characteristics of the regime following the Fordist “regime”.⁷⁴ Consequently, local and regional differentiation in the integration of agriculture into larger capitalist circuits is concealed rather than revealed, and thus social agency is de-emphasized in building and maintaining the technical and institutional relations of global agro-food complexes. In response to this criticism, several theorists have called for a more critical treatment of “globalization” within agro-food studies that treats global restructuring as a contested and fluid process that avoids reductionist reading of contemporary changes in the food systems of particular places, and makes analytical space for social agency and local diversity.⁷⁵ Moving in the direction of more bottom up explanations of agricultural and rural change requires a shift that emphasizes more locally based studies which see the role of localities as more than just the expression of structural processes.⁷⁶ With these theoretical challenges in mind, I now review some of the work produced on the effects of agricultural restructuring in rural localities.

The effects of global agricultural restructuring have brought to the fore concerns about rural decline in areas with a heavily agricultural economic sector. While the South registers loudly in this respect, rural studies focusing on the North are now garnering

⁷³ Whatmore, 1994:53.

⁷⁴ Goodman & Watts, 1997.

⁷⁵ Goodman & Watts, 1997; Whatmore, 1994; McMichael, 1994.

attention as the myriad effects of restructuring become more apparent, especially in heavily populated and urbanized areas such as Europe. In Canada, rural places are faced with population decline as people move off the farm, and towns shrink. As towns shrink, services are consolidated and continue a downward slide into social deprivation.⁷⁷ Many national governments in the North, including Canada, recognize the decline of rural communities dependent on resource based activities such as agriculture, mining, fishing, and forestry, and now incorporate national policies specifically aimed at “revitalizing” rural economies. However, the problem with such policies is that they rely on particular constructions of rurality, often imbued with romantic notions of tradition. More importantly, as Goodman and Redclift point out in their study of British agriculture, underlying the ‘rural’ designation is a frequently concealed suggestion that spatial, rather than social and economic factors, lie at the heart of “rural” problems.⁷⁸

In this regard, policies aimed at “revitalizing” rural economies and helping rural communities “adapt” and “diversify” in order to compete in the global economy often focus on the relative isolation and dispersed population of rural places. The latter focus of rural policy tends to cast economic and social deprivation as a reflection of the spatial placement and problems of rural areas, rather than the economic and political problems within rural areas.⁷⁹ Thus, one can see rural policies that focus on improving access to services such as health care and the Internet for rural communities. Spatial isolation is taken as an implicit challenge for municipal officials to overcome, as opposed to wider

⁷⁶ Ward & Almas, 1997:621.

⁷⁷ Epp & Whitson, 2001.

⁷⁸ Goodman & Watts, 1997:79.

⁷⁹ Goodman & Watts, 1997.

political economic trends, and in this way rural policy encourages the planning paradigm of rural development.⁸⁰ In the light of these policies, responsibility now lies with rural municipal governments to plan community economic development and adapt to changing global political economic structures.

In this light, the policy agenda of the “entrepreneurial city”⁸¹, in which urban governments or arm’s length agencies like Economic Development Corporations compete to attract outside investors, is also at work in rural municipalities facing economic and demographic decline. Not only is the agenda to attract investment present at urban and rural municipal levels, it is also replicated at the provincial and the national levels and sold to the public under mantras like “jobs, jobs, jobs”.⁸² The problem, especially in rural municipalities, lies with municipal authorities left with the challenge of assessing often controversial kinds of development applications, while lacking the technical expertise to evaluate the risks and the financial resources to enforce whatever environmental conditions they might impose.⁸³ These limitations lie in stark contrast to the facts of declining population and limited economic prospects, which make even a few jobs at modest wages a compelling consideration.

According to Epp and Whitson, rural communities are facing two important challenges as a part of a larger trend of globalization. The first is the prospect of a harsher rural-urban division of labour in the global economy, as governments retreat both from regulatory roles and from redistribution on behalf of disadvantaged regions. One

⁸⁰ Goodman & Watts, 1997:80.

⁸¹ Harvey, 1989.

⁸² Epp & Whitson, 2001:xvii.

example lies in the clean, high-tech prosperity of the “knowledge economy” concentrated in larger urban centres, where prairies cities like Calgary, Edmonton, and Saskatoon thrive even as the farm crisis decimates rural communities around them.⁸⁴ As such, the countryside is coming to serve two new and very different purposes on the prairie as traditional economies declines: playgrounds offering clean and scenic environments for upscale recreation or for holiday homes for areas with access to retirees and urban vacationers; and dumping grounds, becoming sites for the messes of city garbage, massive resource developments, low-wage industry and intensive livestock production.⁸⁵

For rural places with limited resources and spatial isolation from larger populations, economic desperation has led to grasps for environmentally dubious schemes like hazardous waste treatments, strawboard manufacture, tire incineration and intensive hog barns. As a result, the second challenge for rural places on the Canadian prairies lies in negotiating new roles and relationships for various levels of government that move beyond attracting investment. With rural planners focusing on attracting jobs and investment, residents in rural communities often have little or no input into developments that will transform their lives. Particularly with respect to intensive livestock production, economic development decisions are decisions about land use within a municipality and change the relations of people to the land, imposing significant political and environmental consequences. It is at this juncture that the fields of inquiry posed by feminist political ecologists become especially pertinent.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Roger Gibbins, cited in Epp & Whitson, 2001:xv.

Theorizing Power: Feminist Political Ecology

Feminist political ecology is located within a larger body of political ecology literature. Political ecology, according to Blaikie and Brookfield, combines the concerns of ecology and political economy.⁸⁶ As a body of work political ecology developed through the attempts of ecologically concerned social scientists to examine the interconnections between how particular communities were being integrated into, and transformed by, a global economy, and issues of local resource management, environmental regulation and stability.⁸⁷ Through a careful analysis of the forms of access and control over resources and their implications for environmental health and sustainable livelihoods, political ecology examines the complex relations between nature and society.⁸⁸ As environmental problems are recognized to be social in origin and definition, recent work in political ecology is sensitive to environmental politics as a process of cultural mobilization, and the ways in which such cultural practices --- whether science, “traditional knowledge, discourses, risk, property rights --- are contested, fought over and negotiated.⁸⁹ One of most appealing aspects of political ecology is that it is less a “theory” than a means of inquiry. As Watts explains, “political ecology never represented a coherent theoretical position for the good reason that the meanings of ecology and political economy, and indeed politics, were often in question.”⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Broadway, 2001; Ramp & Koc, 2001; Whitson, 2001; Epp, 2001.

⁸⁶ Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987:17.

⁸⁷ Peet and Watts, 1996:5.

⁸⁸ Peet & Watts, 1996.

⁸⁹ Peet & Watts, 1996.

⁹⁰ Watts, unpublished:4.

Despite the seeming incoherence of political ecological theory, there are three broad concerns identified by Blaikie and Brookfield that characterize the early literature on political ecology.⁹¹ The first is a focus on land degradation as “both a cause and result of social marginalization,” indicating that political, economic and ecological marginality can be self-reinforcing.⁹² Second, there is recognition that the environment bears the pressure of production on resources through social relations that compel the land manager to make excessive demands. Finally, there is the acknowledgment that degradation itself is often contested by way of multiple perceptions and explanations by various people. While these concerns provided the impetus for studies that affirm the centrality of poverty as a major cause of ecological deterioration, Peet and Watts outline how political ecology as a field of inquiry has moved beyond these themes to include several other key areas of problematization.⁹³

One important realization within this literature is the danger of placing excessive emphasis on poverty and poor peasants, which obliterates the equally significant relationship between affluence and environmental deterioration.⁹⁴ The focus on poverty may be linked to the bias toward rural, agrarian, and Third World matters generally in political ecology. Further, as Whatmore has pointed out, in comparison to a mature and lively tradition of gender research in studies of agriculture and political ecology in the South, gender relations in the restructuring process of agriculture in the North has been

⁹¹Peet and Watts, 1996.

⁹²Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987:23.

⁹³Peet and Watts, 1996.

⁹⁴Peet and Watts, 1996:7.

more of a 'fugitive literature' in the 1990s.⁹⁵ . This has led to recent fields of studies in agriculture, which include four trends with respect to gender relations.⁹⁶ The first area deals with a concern with the crisis in reproduction of family farming and farm women's search for greater autonomy and opportunity, and the exodus of women from farming as a response to archaic gender relations associated with family businesses. The second field of work aims to recover women's contribution to advanced capitalist agriculture from the silence of official statistics. Third, there is a growing literature on the reshaping of gender relations and identities in the agricultural restructuring processes using qualitative research methods. Finally, work on the economic and cultural significance of gender to food consumption is opening up relatively new ground.

Another focus of recent works in political ecology is the treatment of politics. As Peet and Watts point out, politics was not always central in many studies, and macro-processes of political economy were often inadequately explained as "exogenous factors".⁹⁷ Analyses of land-based resources did not confront and incorporate politics inscribed in various social arenas, so political ecology's conception of political economy was often anemic. Furthermore, there was "no serious attempt at treating the means by which control and access of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested within the political arenas of the household, the workplace, and the state."⁹⁸ Thus, efforts to integrate various types of political action into questions of resource access

⁹⁵Whatmore 1993:87.

⁹⁶Whatmore 1993:87.

⁹⁷Peet and Watts, 1996:8.

⁹⁸Ibid. 9.

and control have been seen within political ecology, responding to calls for a more robust political ecology.⁹⁹ Part of this integration of politics is an interest in the connections between knowledge and power. It is within this current that feminist political ecology emerges.

According to Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, feminist political ecology is an “analytical framework that seeks to understand and interpret local experience in the context of global processes of environmental and economic change.”¹⁰⁰ Feminist political ecology moves beyond the emphasis on decision-making processes and the social, political, and economic contexts that shape environmental policies and practices to state that many axes of social differentiation are important variables in shaping resource access and control. Moreover, these axes of differentiation are not fixed, but fractured and refracturing.¹⁰¹ As such, gender interacts with and is negotiated by class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change, struggles to sustain ecologically viable livelihoods, and the prospects of any community for “sustainable” development.¹⁰² By drawing attention to these axes of difference, power relations between different groups within spaces such as communities, households, farms, are thus scrutinized and laid bare. Feminist political ecology thus tackles the notion of “gendered spaces,” entailing an examination of how gendered rights and responsibilities are spatially organized.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the role of gendered knowledge comes into play in the

⁹⁹Broad, 1993; Kirby, 1990; Agarwal, 1992; Guha, 1990; Mackenzie, 1991; Carney and Schroeder, 1996;

¹⁰⁰Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, 1996:4.

¹⁰¹ Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway and Smith, 1999.

¹⁰²Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, 1996:4.

¹⁰³Ibid.

construction of particular spaces, in which some types of knowledge are either rendered invisible or unimportant. Central to gendered space is its discursive element, which serves to relay the material control and access of resources, and the responsibilities to procure and manage certain resources within household and community spaces.

Questions of power are ultimately bound up in the gendering of spaces, as the ability to preserve, protect, change, construct, rehabilitate and restore environments are implicated in the rights and responsibilities ascribed to particular spaces.

By acknowledging the discursive elements at play in particular spaces, works in feminist political ecology demand that the politics of meaning and the construction of knowledge as conduits of power be taken seriously. By drawing on the work of Foucault, studies within feminist political ecology tackle the role of discourses as constitutive of, but not limited to, the power of political and economic apparatuses.¹⁰⁴ With respect to power, Foucault explains that

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power.¹⁰⁵

To follow Foucault, power is a strategy employed in a multiplicity of sites. Power as a strategy is effected by the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse.¹⁰⁶ Discourse here is defined as “the production of knowledge through

¹⁰⁴Mackenzie, 1990, 1994; Schroeder, 2000.

¹⁰⁵Foucault, 1980:98.

¹⁰⁶Foucault, 1980:93.

language, so that we construct a topic in a particular way, and hence limit the other ways in which the topic can be discussed.”¹⁰⁷

In the construction of discourse certain types of knowledge are privileged as truths, while the knowledges of the less powerful are subjugated. The attention to subjugated knowledges in discourse analysis with relation to space has two significant consequences. First, when discourse analysis is projected into space it produces a new approach to inter-regional relations, allowing among other things a focus on the discursive relations between hegemonic and dominated regions.¹⁰⁸ One example of studies with respect to this point is a vast body of post-colonial theorizing, which attests to the importance of the discursive construction of the “Third World” as establishing a field of intervention for western developmentalism.¹⁰⁹

A similar attempt may be seen in theorizing about “regional discursive formations” within political ecology literature, defined as certain modes of thought, logics, themes, styles of expression, and typical metaphors that run through the discursive history of a region, appearing in a variety of forms, disappearing occasionally, only to reappear with even greater intensity.¹¹⁰ Regional discursive formations also disallow certain themes, in that they are marked by absences, silences, repressions, marginalized statements, allowing some things to be mentioned only in highly prescribed, “discrete” and disguised ways. Within a regional discursive formation even competing “opposite”

¹⁰⁷McCrone, 1997:12.

¹⁰⁸Peet and Watts, 1996:14.

¹⁰⁹Said, 1978; Escobar, 1985; McClintock, 1995; Mackenzie, 1998.

¹¹⁰Peet, 1996.

notions often employ the same metaphors, perhaps even similar logics.¹¹¹ These formations are significant as sites to explore the politics of regulatory knowledge; why particular knowledges are privileged, how knowledge is institutionalized; and how facts are contested.¹¹²

The production of knowledge about a particular space creates the ability to ascribe authority over that space. By creating a space of intervention by constructing “national agriculture” for example, certain types of operations are made desirable while others are not. It is necessary in creating authority to draw on knowledge of the particular “characteristics that are taken to be immanent to that over which authority is to be exercised, whether it is the characteristics of a land with its peculiar geography, fertility, climate; of a population with its rates of birth, illness, death; of a society with its classes, interests, conflicts; of an economy with its laws of circulation of supply and demand; or of individuals with their passions, interests and propensities to good and evil.”¹¹³ Thus, as the object of municipal, provincial, and national governments, one may examine how ‘agriculture’ is constructed in particular ways at each level, which involves amassing information, defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹Peet and Watts, 1996:16.

¹¹²Beck 1994; Shrader-Frechette 1990.

¹¹³Rose, 2000.

¹¹⁴Rose, 2000: 33.

Clearly, language is about the ways in which the world is made intelligible and practicable, and domains such as ‘the rural community,’ ‘the farm’ or ‘national agriculture’ are constituted, which are amenable to interventions by various people claiming authority, as well as by the inhabitants of those domains themselves.¹¹⁵ Thus, discourses can function as the territorialization of thought: “marking out territory in thought and inscribing it in the real, topographizing it, investing it with powers, bounding it by exclusions, defining who or what can rightfully enter.”¹¹⁶ In this way, diverse knowledges are ascribed varying levels of legitimacy, and in this way gendered, classed or “localized” knowledges are often rendered invisible or invalid.

Secondly, in linking spaces and discourses it becomes possible to place “the claims to attention of local discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchize and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its object.”¹¹⁷ Discourse analysis, in its recognition of the power relations inherent in discursive constructions, allows for an expanded version of resistance that includes interventions that take place everyday. The nature of resistance within recent works in feminist political ecology eschews the restriction of incidents of resistance or protest merely to what is visible.¹¹⁸ As Scott explains, for social sciences “attuned to the relatively open politics of liberal democracies and to loud, headline-grabbing protests,

¹¹⁵Rose, 1993:289.

¹¹⁶Rose, 2000:34.

¹¹⁷Foucault, 1980:83.

¹¹⁸See Mackenzie, 1998; Schroeder, 1996; Carney and Watts, 1990.

demonstrations, and rebellions, the circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is, like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum.”¹¹⁹ Thus, the host of practical, low-profile strategems designed to minimize appropriation, including “footdragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage,”¹²⁰ are ignored or dismissed. Resistance, based on the latter definitions, becomes any action that attempts to mitigate the demands of those more powerful trying to appropriate, and illustrates that less overt forms of resistance are at the disposal of less powerful groups in society.¹²¹ This political territory counteracts public social relations, which are characterized by the “open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate.”¹²² It is constituted by a discourse that occurs ‘offstage’, beyond the observation of those who dominate, and also by a politics of disguise that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors.¹²³ In this light, any discourse that challenges authority, especially one that takes place in everyday life and is often overlooked, may be considered as a particularly “quiet” type of resistance.

Such notions of resistance recognize that material contests are simultaneously struggles over meaning, “struggles over the appropriation of symbols, struggles over how the past and present shall be understood and labelled, a struggle to identify causes and

¹¹⁹Scott, 1990:183.

¹²⁰Scott, 1990:188.

¹²¹Scott, 1990:199.

¹²²Scott, 1990:2.

¹²³Scott, 1990:4.

assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history.”¹²⁴ Further, acts of resistance are differentiated by gender and by class.¹²⁵ Recent studies emphasize that resistance by subordinated groups may take the form of acting on multiple subjectivities and meanings.¹²⁶ For example, Schroeder’s research on Gambian market garden sector indicated that discursive politics played a prominent role in the negotiation of the conjugal contract as a result of changing production practices among Gambian men and women.¹²⁷ Similarly, Mackenzie studied the resistance mounted by women in Murang’a, Kenya, where women successfully manipulated the discourse of “customary” law to retain rights to land.¹²⁸ As such, feminist political ecology builds on analyses of identity and difference, and of pluralities of meanings in relation to the multiplicity of sites of environmental struggle and change.¹²⁹ By acting on multiple subjectivities, marginalized groups can engage in “complex resistances... that are fought out on the terrain of cultural representations and struggles over meanings.”¹³⁰

Conclusion

The political economy of food and feminist political ecology speak to the challenges facing rural municipalities with a predominantly agricultural resource base,

¹²⁴Scott, cited in Mackenzie, 1998:5.

¹²⁵Mackenzie, 1998:5.

¹²⁶Mackenzie, 1992, 1994; Liepins, 1998; Schroeder, 1996; Carney and Watts, 1990.

¹²⁷Schroeder, 1996:83.

¹²⁸Mackenzie, 1995:19.

¹²⁹Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, 1996: 287.

such as Hamiota, Manitoba. Both bodies of literature outline the historical political, economic, social and environmental inequalities inherent in agricultural production. As national agriculture in Canada continues to be restructured in compliance with the export imperatives of global food production chains, farms and farmers are undergoing changes that are radically changing social relations in rural places. Many rural municipalities continue to decline in population and economic viability, with the economic development planning paradigm gaining force.

Faced with limited local resources, municipal officials are often forced to consider controversial developments. Further, the controversial nature of many of these potential developments may lead to the denial of public participation in economic development strategies that are effectively local resource decisions. In such cases, the language of economic development is wielded as a silencer to those with concerns that include social issues around quality of life and environmental concerns. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the extent to which the latter has occurred in Hamiota, as a site of new intensive hog operations. While local municipal officials broadcast the boon of hog barns to media sources, unhappy and concerned residents are constrained to take part in informal resistance in the form of complaints at the coffeeshop and around town. The following methodology chapter discusses my methods for examining discourse as resistance, and some of the ethical issues that have arisen from conducting research in the town I grew up in.

¹³⁰Berry, 1989, cited in Carney and Watts, 1990: 211.

Chapter 2: Methodology

My aim in thinking about resistance to intensive hog barns as the informal discourses that take place in daily interaction, emphasizes the power differentials that characterize any space labelled as a “community.” As such, an examination of resistance as discourse moves beyond a moot zero-sum accounting of power relations, and into the ways that discourses enable some people to attempt to claim authority over others. The objective in exploring resistance as constituted by the discourses in Hamiota is twofold. First, it becomes possible to see the silences inherent in the dominant discourse of economic development used to support intensive hog operations, as well as the ways that discourse is manipulated to subjugate countervailing opinions and concerns. Second, delving into discourses of resistance gives voice to the opinions, experiences and attitudes of subjects of economic development.

With respect to Hamiota, I realized as research progressed that I wanted to point out that residents had suffered a loss of political power by being denied participation in the decision to allow Premium Pork to establish operations in the municipality. Citizens were left no formal political channels of participating in an important decision about their future. In exploring the discourses of discontent in Hamiota, a range of concerns are revealed in regards to intensive hog operations and broader rural issues, opinions that have been confined thus far to letters to the local papers, “coffeeshop talk” and other informal social interactions. At the same time, it became apparent that residents’

diminished political power stemmed from the pressures to attract economic development facing municipal government officials. As such, I wanted to explore how the discourse of economic development is embedded in larger processes of globalization within and beyond agriculture, and the ways in which men and women in Hamiota challenged this discourse.

The nature of political resistance is central to this thesis. While I kept hearing complaints about the “hog barns” during phone conversations with family and friends before and after my decision to pursue this as a thesis topic, opposition to Premium Pork’s operations in Hamiota is regarded by many as being relatively “quiet.” This lay in stark contrast to the vociferous opposition present in some neighbouring municipalities, such as Rosburn, where unhappy residents dumped hog manure on the council table during a meeting about intensive hog operations. I was interested in hearing what Hamiota residents thought about Premium Pork locating their operations in the municipality, and thereby exploring how “quiet” and informally voiced concerns constitute resistance to a decision made on their behalf that will affect their lives for years to come.

Power, knowledge, and epistemology

My approach to this research project attempts to incorporate the methodological insights of critical feminist theorists. Feminist critiques of positivist research render problematic the construction of binaries such as objective self and subjective other, and the belief in one universal, observable “truth” discovered during research. A feminist methodology thus seemed appropriate in my desire to represent the complexities of

economic development as a political space within Hamiota. By deconstructing economic development as a tool of power, I wanted to avoid making a glib judgement about the desirability of Premium Pork's operations. To do so would not only be insulting to local government officials, but it would also be unfair to all Hamiota residents, who are now faced with the reality of working and living alongside of intensive livestock operations in the municipality. My main aim was to present perceptions of Premium Pork's hog operations held by some Hamiota residents, and to recognize these perceptions as resistance to the dominant economic development discourse. As such, I hope that this project constitutes action research, in that it attempts to "develop political conversations among a complex and diverse 'we,'" subverting the construction of unified consciousness, and destabilizing the dominant discourses of economic development located within larger globalizing trends.¹

Undertaking this research project presented unique challenges and opportunities to me, with respect to my position within the "research geography."² As Hamiota is the town where I attended elementary and junior high school, and continues to be the home of my parents and siblings, I could be considered an insider in the community. However, the insider-outsider dichotomy is problematic, in that there is a spectrum of insider-outsider relations within any "community," which depends on relations between any two people and the situation in which they find themselves. As such, moving between the poles of insider and outsider is dynamic, with power shifting between the researcher and the researched throughout the research process. Recognizing this state of "betweenness" may allow researchers to write against the "othering" that has characterized much social

¹ Gibson-Graham, 1994: 220.

² Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway & Smith, 1999:41.

science.³ With respect to this changing insider-outsider spectrum, Laurie et al. point to the multiple identity tensions linked to place, rendering identity and space relational.⁴ Therefore, research in one's "community" is very much embedded in, and a product of, the social interactions therein.⁵ When my research began in the summer of 2001 I worked at the Hamiota hardware store, which enabled many community members to get to know me after a lengthy five-year absence at university and re-established me as a member of the community. Further, the death of one of my brothers in March 2001 invoked tremendous support and sympathy from many in Hamiota for my family and for me, which I am sure has had some measure of impact on this research.

In considering my position within the research context, I had to face the power implications of being a researcher. As the one who formulated and asked the questions in the interviews, and especially as the one who then interpreted and presented the answers independently, the researcher has considerable power in comparison to those interviewed.⁶ However, recognizing that this is a project that benefits me directly as a condition of receiving my MA, I want to contribute something of value to my friends who live in and around Hamiota. To many residents, my research was perceived as an exposé of Premium Pork, something that this thesis is not. I have to admit that I do not like the concept of intensive livestock operations of any kind. Recognizing my personal opinion on intensive hog operations, however, does not diminish the stark realities of rural depopulation and decline facing municipal governments, and I have endeavoured to link broader political and economic trends to past and current social experiences in

³ Fine, 1994:75.

⁴ Laurie et al, 1999:60.

⁵ Rose, 1997:306.

⁶ Cotterill, 1992:604.

Hamiota. It is my hope that these links allow for critical reflections on the purpose and consequences of community economic development.

Part of the privileged and powerful position of many researchers is the ability to “walk away” from their fieldwork, write their research accounts, and potentially never see their research participants again.⁷ In contrast, not only will I be regularly returning to Hamiota to visit my family as long as they remain there, but I will also be engaging with research participants and anyone who may choose to read, or to ask about, my thesis. As such, the “field” can never be conceived as a separate physical space where I have conducted research.⁸ The contested boundaries between “everyday life” and “the field” for me raised several issues. First, a strong sense of my ethical responsibilities in representing the accounts of participants was highlighted. There was also a worry that despite my best efforts to fairly represent interviewees’ perceptions, there might be some who would be alienated by my arguments, which is not my intention but might not be avoidable in some cases. Despite my own intentions, Laurie et al. point out that research, like any social encounter, is multiply constituted and never pure in intentions and outcomes.⁹ In this light, I also had to consider that I might be rendering myself vulnerable with respect to future relations in Hamiota. While I can acknowledge that my position will shift yet again after my thesis made available in Hamiota, I cannot predict how this shift will play out in terms of my future social interactions.

My aim in identifying these concerns is to engage in a type of self-reflexivity that does not claim to transparently remove my own ingrained biases as a researcher. Instead, I want to point to the very partial and particular knowledge that is produced in this

⁷ Cotterill, 1992:604.

⁸ Laurie et al, 1999:48.

thesis.¹⁰ Developments in the hog industry within Hamiota and southern Manitoba in general have progressed since I undertook interviews, clearly substantiating that this thesis is a particular snapshot in time of a very dynamic political and economic phenomenon. While my interviews took place at the initial stages of Premium Pork's operations, many of the proliferating hog barns are now established in their production cycles and their effects are being felt by many rural dwellers. As a benchmark of growing concern, the number of citizens groups in southern Manitoba protesting intensive hog barns is growing and media coverage of the hog industry is substantial both in the Brandon Sun and the Winnipeg Free Press, as well as rural community weeklies.

In terms of my own reflexivity, I do not claim that my own position can ever be fully "known" to myself or others, rather I wish to acknowledge that social science research is messy and full of contradictions.¹¹ In this way, my thesis hopes to emulate the aim of Haraway's concept of situated knowledge, to produce knowledges that are not overgeneralized, which may "leave opportunities to learn from other perspectives and ways of knowing, to engage in translation exercises across nonreducible knowledges."¹² By attempting to provide a basis for transformative action for Hamiota residents, I support Maguire's assertion that "producing knowledge for knowledge sake or some indefinite future application is an exploitative, unaffordable luxury."¹³

As I considered my own conflicting and changing positions as someone "from Hamiota," it became clear to me that I had to work against essentializing and homogenizing Hamiota as "a community," a term which often serves to mask power

⁹ Laurie et al, 1999:48

¹⁰ Rose, 1997:315; Gibson-Graham, 1994:214.

¹¹ Rose, 1997:308; Gibson-Graham, 1994:220.

¹² Haraway, 1988, cited in Pratt, 2000:641.

imbalances. In this regard, Watts explains how “community” is often falsely invoked as a unity, when in fact not everyone participates or benefits equally in the construction and reproduction of “community,” or from the claims made in the name of community interest.¹⁴ As an indicator of the latter, “community” often involves the territorialization and naturalization of history, where founding events legitimate the existence of community and are not considered in relation to the histories of others.¹⁵ Particularly, examining the claims of authorities made on behalf of “the community” becomes central to conceptualizing community economic development as a political space that empowers some while disempowering others. As Scott has outlined, the subordination of local knowledges does not mean that those who have been disempowered have no political recourse.¹⁶ Instead, it behooves researchers to examine how those marginalized have mounted resistance in ways that do not threaten further political marginalization. In Hamiota, residents were not provided with a forum of expressing discontent with Premium Pork’s location in the community. As such, the most expedient way of expressing discontent is during everyday social interactions, through conversations around town.

Research Methods

With all of these things in mind, I began my exploration by going into the Hamiota Echo archives during the summer months of 2001 to see when information

¹³ Maguire, 1987:100.

¹⁴ Watts, unpublished paper “Political Ecology”: 14.

¹⁵ As an example, there is no mention made of the Saulteaux people in the *Grains of the Century*, Hamiota’s Centennial history book, effectively silencing the history of a colonized people who had occupied the area previous to European settlement.

¹⁶ Scott, 1990:199.

about intensive hog operations and Premium Pork began to appear in the newspaper. I wanted to see what sort of information was provided in these articles, and to compare it to local perceptions of Premium Pork's operations. After spending two months clipping Echo newspapers, I had an extensive collection of articles on intensive hog operations dating back to January 1997. Most articles highlighted the hog industry as an excellent prospect for Manitoba and rural towns in need of economic revitalization. Articles in the Hamiota Echo provided most of my information on the point of view of the rural and town councils and the Hamiota Economic Development Corporation, as well as the sequence of events in Premium Pork's entry into Hamiota.

The Internet proved to be an invaluable source of information in terms of agricultural and economic development discourses at the provincial and federal government levels, which outlined the changing mandates and relationships between different levels of government with respect to agriculture and rural communities. Specifically, the Manitoba Agriculture and Agri-Food, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, National Archives of Canada were visited over the period of year and a half as research progressed. Similarly, I visited the Town of Hamiota's website to see how municipal officials had constructed the community online, in addition to examining Grains of the Century Volumes I and II, Hamiota's Centennial history books. Finally, my information on Premium Pork as a vertically integrated corporation was gleaned from the exploration of the Premium Pork, Genetiporc, and Breton Foods websites.

After returning to Ottawa for the fall term in 2001, I travelled back to Hamiota for Christmas, and in January of 2002 I began the interview process. Originally I had hoped to conduct 30 interviews, but time constraints limited that number to 20. In making a list

of potential interview candidates, I tried to cover a range of socioeconomic, occupational, gender, age and marital status. In doing so, I attempted to present a broad sample of participants in order to represent a range of opinions and the diversity of the population within the municipality. Of the 20 participants, 2 were involved in local government. One difficulty lay in including Premium Pork employees in my sample. I was informed that as part of their employment contracts, employees were not to discuss any details about their jobs in the barns, and that termination could result if this condition was breached. Although I wanted to interview local Premium Pork employees, this was not possible as I did not want to risk endangering anyone's job. Thus, I have utilized newspaper articles and Internet information that is available to the public as primary sources of information about Premium Pork and its operations, in addition to information provided by my twenty participants.

The process of interviewing took place over the month of January 2002. First, I contacted potential participants by phone, explained my research project and asked if they might be interested in participating. If the answer was yes, which it was for all people contacted, I visited the potential participant's home to drop off a consent form, a cover letter that summarized my project, and a research instrument outlining the topics that would be covered during the interview.¹⁷ After a day or so, to ensure that the potential participant had an opportunity to read the material I distributed, I would call again and ask if they were still interested in an interview and if so, when would be a convenient time. For some who expressed interest, there was not a convenient time. I understood and appreciated that it was not easy for people, especially those with young families, to

¹⁷ Copies of the cover letter, informed consent form and the research instrument can be found in the appendices.

set aside an hour or more for an interview. The times were set, and most interviews were conducted in the homes of participants.

With the exception of my interviews with the two local officials, which took place rather formally at their offices, the majority of my interviews were quite informal and very social in nature. Most took place around the kitchen table with a cup of coffee, or with the interviewee and I relaxing on sofas in the living room. While I had estimated that interviews would last approximately one hour, many lasted as long as two or three hours. One interview stretched out to five hours, as one couple cleaned up after their supper, got their children to bed and then sat down to answer my questions, which then became a social chat. As I recorded all interviews on audiotape, these social and lengthy interviews posed the problem of when to turn off the tape. Often I found that after I had switched off my tape recorder, participants and I would continue conversing about the research topics listed in the research instrument. Sometimes I would scribble down some notes in the car after I left, and other times I would turn the tape back on if I had any room left to record.

During interviews, many participants were not sure as to the value of the knowledge they were sharing, as most of what we discussed seemed very commonplace and made the interview seem more like an informal conversation about the state of agriculture and the local rural economy. For example, after about twenty minutes of interviewing a farming couple, one male farmer asked me, "How are we doing here? Are we answering these right?" His question evoked a thought and a question for me: First, I was amazed that he was not sure if they were imparting anything of value to me, as their comments were particularly illuminating. Second, I wondered if he was trying to give me

answers he thought were “right.” My only response was to assure him that I was interested in his opinions and that there were no right or wrong answers. He said he didn’t think he had really told me anything of importance. I interpreted this as an indication that he wondered how these informal conversations about topics that everyone has an opinion on could constitute an academic exercise. Similarly, a retired woman expressed her feelings of inadequacy as an interviewee in that she deemed herself uninformed about the hog industry. However, her interview provided invaluable insight into the changes in local agriculture, in the local climate, and in social relations in Hamiota over the past fifty years or so.

During the interview process, I noticed two perceptions of me among those interviewed. One perception was of a naïve young woman, a potential troublemaker. In my interviews with municipal officials, I encountered a guarded tone when asking about public input into the decision, information disseminated to residents, and concerns about Premium Pork’s operations, which I admit I expected because of the nature of the topic. The defensive nature of responses to these questions led me to believe that these participants were wary of my intentions in interviewing them, especially in representations of them in my final analysis. Other participants saw me as a young, educated woman who was becoming an expert on intensive hog operations who would prove that they were “bad.” Many interviewees asked me about operational and regulatory details within the hog industry, to which I often had no response. Most participants had questions about the availability of the thesis, which I have decided will be publicly accessible through the Hamiota Centennial Library. I intend to contact participants in writing upon

finishing the thesis to indicate its availability and to express my thanks for their participation once again.

After three weeks of intensive interviewing, I returned to Ottawa to begin transcribing the audiotapes. A huge amount of data was generated through the interviews, presenting me with the challenge of discerning the most pertinent points in order to re-present participants' experiences and thoughts without compromising their subjectivities or violating their realities.¹⁸ However, my own limitations as a researcher in terms of time and financial resources rendered me unable to return the transcripts to participants for their perusal. My discretion in using the material provided by participants attempts to present the nuances of economic development in Hamiota.

During the writing of the thesis I was faced by the challenge that every small community has its own particular set of social relations, and the general fact that secrets are difficult to keep. Although a few interview participants indicated that they did not wish to remain anonymous on their informed consent forms,¹⁹ I have chosen not to name anyone in my analysis in order to prevent any social or economic risk to any of my interview participants. Participants were coded by gender, F for females and M for males, in addition to a number. Thus quotations from participants are followed by their code in parentheses.

The findings presented in the following pages are entirely my own, although in my desire to recognize the real voices of concern amongst participants regarding hog barns, agriculture and life in rural Manitoba, I have focused very much on the anecdotes and words of the men and women who graciously shared their time and thoughts with

¹⁸ Acker et. al, 1991:142-43.

me, these constitute the majority of Chapter 4. In the following chapter, I examine the historical construction of agriculture on the Canadian prairies and the particularities of Manitoba's agricultural sector. From there I describe Hamiota and its recent introduction to Premium Pork as an economic development strategy.

¹⁹ The informed consent form I used, as approved by Carleton University's Ethics Committee, is included as Appendix A.

Chapter 3: Restructuring Canadian Agriculture

Introduction

This chapter outlines the political economy of commercial agriculture in Canada since the mid-nineteenth century, in terms of its composition and role in the Canadian economy as constructed by the Canadian federal government. Manitoba's particular agricultural characteristics are then described within the larger Canadian political economy of food, in order to offer an account of recent trends toward intensive livestock operations in the province. I trace how commercial agriculture was initiated on the Canadian prairies at the behest of the Canadian state – physically through the surveying of homesteads, the cultivation requirements introduced through the Dominion Lands Act, and the implementation of the Crow rate subsidy for grain transportation; and discursively through a western Canadian identity constructed around the family farm.

After establishing the family farm and the Crow rate as cornerstones of the political economy of food on the Canadian prairies, the chapter then examines how the export imperative of governments at the federal and provincial level in Canada has effected changes to Manitoba's agricultural political economy, resulting in shifting economic roles for farms and rural communities while still claiming a commitment to national agriculture based on family farming. In line with the political economy of food literature, the initial construction of a Canadian commercial agricultural sector facilitated changes in its composition that has seen the decline of the quarter section farms and the

rural communities they formed. Contemporary agriculture consists of fewer farmers and more agribusinesses. National agricultural priorities now focus on agri-food industries that provide value-added manufactures for export, promoting Canada as a competitive agricultural player in global markets.

As an example of the Canadian state's position on agro-export, I cite an April 2002 policy document entitled "Putting Canada First: An Architecture for Agriculture Policy in the 21st Century." In this document, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada reveals its plans to continue aligning the agricultural sector with national goals of increasing global food exports, in accordance with the mandates of multinational trade arrangements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization. This leads to a range of priorities that are export and consumer-driven such as food quality and safety, environmental standards, and agro-industry driven such as science and innovation, renewal, and business risk management, in addition to commitments to rural communities and family farms.

I situate Hamiota within the political economy of Canadian commercial agriculture to reveal the influential role of the federal government in fostering homestead agriculture as the basis for this town and others like it as a means of nation-building, consisting of identity construction around the economic imperative of wheat exports. It also points to the fact that the export imperative is not new, but one that has undergone changes in terms of how it is constructed and pursued by governments. In reconstructions of the export imperative at the end of the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century, the pertinence of farm families and the viability of rural communities have diminished as the effects of political and economic

restructuring are felt. Rural places appear to have few options for economic development, with a spectrum of options ranging between rural tourism/recreation and locales for undesirable and controversial developments such as intensive livestock operations, hazardous waste disposal, etc.

One monument of Canadian government protection that characterized the post-war food regime is particularly significant to rural communities and farmers in Manitoba. The Crow Rate was seminal to the prosperity of Manitoba grain farmers between 1945 and 1975, and its removal has been a major factor in spurring agricultural diversification into livestock within the province. The Crow Rate, implemented in 1897, was a grain transportation subsidy that effectively acted to shorten the distance between Manitoba grain farmers and their markets. Removal of the Crow Rate in 1993, according to some, is just one indicator of the Canadian government's "boy scout" role at the WTO, a reputation gained by implementing rules against subsidies ahead of schedule while the US and EU drag their feet.¹ The protection of socially valuable livelihoods does not register in the new strategy for agro-exports, as seen in federal suggestions that the only long-term solution to the farm crisis was fewer small farmers, summarized by a national cabinet minister's blunt statement, "Get out of grain farming."²

Initial Constructions of Agriculture on the Canadian Prairies

The National Archives of Canada, through its 2002 virtual exhibit, "The Canadian West," outlines the central role prairie agriculture played in Canadian history.³ Most

¹ Epp & Whitson, 2001:xviii.

² Epp & Whitson, 2001: xvii.

³ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*, 2002.

interesting is its explicit depiction of the physical and social constructions of an agricultural sector in the West as an act of nation-building. Constructing an agricultural sector based on quarter section homesteads served the newly formed Canadian government politically and economically in three ways. First, it allowed the state to gain national revenues through an export oriented commercial prairie agriculture sector. Second, settling the prairies allowed Upper Canada to connect with British colonies on the Pacific Coast, and lastly, the state was able to actively construct a fledgling “Canadian identity” around family-based commercial agriculture.

After Confederation in 1867, concerns about the rapid expansion of American authority and Métis discontent in the Red River region caused officials in Canada West (now Ontario) to want to secure the prairies as a link to the British colonies on the West Coast. This would enable the new Dominion to begin building its own economic empire. A massive tract of land owned by the Hudson’s Bay company known as Rupert’s Land⁴, the prairie region entered Confederation as a land transfer from the Hudson’s Bay Company to Canada on July 15, 1870. The Manitoba Act of 1870 created the province of Manitoba, a small postage stamp province encompassing most of the Red River Valley, while the rest of the Canadian West was designated as the Northwest Territories.⁵ Ottawa subsequently began what it saw as an “orderly settlement of the West”⁶, part of which was dealing with Métis and aboriginal claims.

⁴ The Hudson’s Bay Company was granted sole trade and commerce within Rupert’s Land in a royal charter of 1670, with Hudson’s Bay Company investors named as true and absolute lords and proprietors. Rupert’s Land included much of present-day Western Canada, all of Manitoba and parts of the northern United States. For more on the history of Rupert’s Land, see Shilliday, 1993a.

⁵ Shilliday, 1993a.

⁶ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*, 2002.

The violence of nation-building is apparent in the history of commercial agriculture on the Canadian prairies, as seen in the Canada's treatment of aboriginal inhabitants. In the late 1880s, the Canadian government entered into treaty negotiations with Métis and First Nations as a "peaceful" means of displacing First Nations in preparation for wide-scale Euro-Canadian settlement and commercial agriculture, after the precedent of violent and expensive Indian Wars in the United States.⁷ American expenditures to fight the Indian Wars exceeded Canada's entire federal budget in the 1870s and 1880s.⁸ Despite this "peaceful" approach, the result for First Nations peoples treaties with the Canadian government has resulted in cultural genocide, through a combination of the reserve land system and residential schools in which "Canadian ideals" and Christianity were delivered to young minds without "interference" from their families and communities.⁹ Bands received reserve lands that would be held by the Crown for their exclusive use, in return for giving up their "Indian title" to the landscape. Title to reserve lands was to be, and still is, vested in the Crown. In order for the lands to be withdrawn from future sale, a complete legal description of the land, which included a map, had to be filed with federal agencies and the local land registry office.

While the government dealt with First Nations peoples, several other tasks seminal to the political and economic needs of the new Canadian state were undertaken in the effort to open the western landscape for commercial agriculture. The first major task of the federal administration was the physical demarcation of the international border, which existed only on paper. Over a three-year period between 1872 and 1875, 1,600 kilometres of border were marked, stretching between Lake of the Woods and the eastern

⁷ Shilliday, 1993a.

⁸ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002.

slope of the Rocky Mountains. For the first time, an international boundary separated Canada's Prairie West from its American counterpart. After successfully securing the national boundary between the US and the Canadian prairies, the federal administration began two important final tasks, one being an extensive network of rail lines across the prairies. The other was a survey program, which would see the region divided into the unique checkerboard pattern of townships that has become synonymous with prairie agriculture. Together, these initiatives formed the backbone of Canadian prairie agriculture.

The transcontinental railroad cost the Canadian government 10.4 million hectares of the best Prairie land, an estimated \$63.5 million in public funds and government loans of \$35 million, the displacement of Canada's First Nations, and the lost lives of many Asian immigrant labourers.¹⁰ The introduction of railway transportation to western Canada was crucial to the settlement of the landscape by European immigrants and to the very act of nation building itself. The railways, by tying Prairie communities together and by opening distant markets to western produce, played an integral role in western economic development, which was aided by the Crow rate subsidy. The Crow rate¹¹ of 1897 gave the Canadian Pacific Railway a cash subsidy of \$3.3 million and title to extend a line through the Crow's Nest Pass into the Kootenay region of southern British Columbia, where rich mineral deposits were being developed. In return, the railway agreed to reduce freight rates on eastbound grain and westbound "settlers' effects" in perpetuity. The freight rate over time represented a decreasing fraction of the railway's costs until its removal in 1993.

⁹ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002.

¹⁰ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002.

Canada's survey system covered 200 million acres and led to the creation of more than 1.25 million homesteads.¹² The survey system was central to the federal government's plan to settle the West by populating the townships and their quarter-section homesteads. The typical township had 36 sections, each of which measured one square mile (640 acres) and was divided into quarter sections. Of the 36 sections in each township, 16 were available for settlement.¹³ The even-numbered sections were reserved by the federal government for free homestead grants, and the odd-numbered sections were reserved as grants to the railways and as school lands. School lands were to be sold by the Crown to defray provincial and territorial school expenses. Sections 8 and 26 were part of the lands awarded to the Hudson's Bay Company under the terms of the transfer of Rupert's Land.

The cornerstone of commercial agriculture in western Canada was the quarter-section homestead. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 introduced the concept of private land ownership and established procedures by which land could be bought and sold like any other commodity. According to the National Archives, the Dominion Lands Act embodied the government's efforts to prepare the "Last Best West" for large-scale European immigration, and in doing so, to give the West a Canadian identity.¹⁴ The Dominion Lands Act and its later amendments, set out the conditions under which the male head of a family or a single male 21 years or older (later 18 years), would be eligible for a free quarter-section homestead grant. Homestead duties were performed in any of three ways.

¹¹ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002.

¹² National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West* 2002.

¹³ Shilliday, 1993b:21.

¹⁴ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*, 2002.

One option required the settler to cultivate and reside on the homestead for three years without being absent for more than 6 months of the year. Alternatively, the settler was required to reside for two years and nine months anywhere within two miles of the homestead 'and afterwards actual residence in a habitable house upon the homestead for three months at any time prior to the application for patent.'¹⁵ Under this system ten acres had to be broken the first year, 15 in the second, and 15 in the third. Finally, the settler had the choice of a five-year system under which the settler could reside anywhere for the first two. He had to perfect his entry by beginning to cultivate the land within six months, breaking five acres the first year, cropping those five acres and breaking ten additional acres the second year and also building a habitable house. Thereafter he was able to abide by the usual condition for the three years residence. Until 1889, homesteaders could also "pre-empt" – that is, purchase an adjacent quarter-section homestead at a guaranteed low price when they received title to their free grant. In an effort to avoid private speculation, the Dominion Lands Act required a potential farmer to "improve" his homestead before the Crown would award a Land Patent on the grant. "Improvements" generally meant that the applicant resided on the land for at least a three-year period (and for at least six months in each of those years), built a residence, and broke fifteen to fifty acres of land and planted another ten to thirty acres of crops.

After the surveys were complete and the Dominion Lands Act was in place, Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior from 1896 to 1905, initiated the greatest immigration scheme in Canadian history. Through his efforts, the Department of the Interior distributed tens of thousands of pamphlets about western Canada in Europe and

¹⁵ Hamiota Centennial History Committee, 1984.

the US, which described the opportunities and the free homesteads that were available for prospective immigrants in western Canada. Sifton's sole objective was to populate the West and his policy was simple: "only farmers need apply."¹⁶ For Sifton, agriculture was the backbone of the Canadian economy and everything else depended on its success. He believed that the best European agriculturalists came from northern areas – Britain, Scandinavia, western or eastern Europe – and considered east-European immigrants to be hard-working, obedient, agricultural people.¹⁷ Stated Sifton, "I think a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers had been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife, and a half-dozen children, is good quality."¹⁸

In addition to the pamphlet and poster campaign, the federal government introduced the concept of block settlement by ethnic groups. This policy allowed entire communities to leave their ancestral homes and move en masse to the Prairie West where entire townships were set aside for them. The federal government successfully used this provision to attract Mennonites from the Russian Ukraine, as well as Scandinavians, Icelanders, Danes, Mormons, and Doukhobors.¹⁹ The Canadian government's promise of 160 acres of free land seemed especially attractive, and a burgeoning national economy provided a large market for Canadian wheat. New, faster-maturing and hardier wheat strains were being developed, such as Red Fife and Marquis, which pushed farming settlements northwards where frost came earlier.²⁰ Also, increasingly efficient farm

¹⁶ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002

¹⁷ Coates & McGuinness, 1987.

¹⁸ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002

¹⁹ Coates & McGuinness, 1987.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

machinery and farming techniques, such as dry-land and irrigation farming, were being invented.

The result of this immigration campaign was a vast influx of immigrants from the United States, Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, the Balkans, the Ukraine, and Russia. Western Europeans comprised the largest proportion of immigrants to Canada during this period, but many came from central and eastern Europe as well. For example, 170,000 Ukrainians came to Canada during the great wave of immigration at the turn of the twentieth century.²¹ In 1896, on the eve of the federal government's full-scale advertising bombardment, 17,000 newcomers arrived in Canada. Just three years later, when the program was in full swing, the figure almost tripled to 45,000, and by 1905, it tripled again.²² In all, two million people arrived in Canada in the period from 1896 to the First World War. By 1911, the Canadian West had been transformed;²³ there was a growing Euro-Canadian population, great expanses of wheat and other grains, prosperous farming towns, and a nascent regional identity based on homestead agriculture.

The prairie west of the late nineteenth century was intended to be a settlement frontier for Canada, leading to the "development of one of the world's great agricultural regions."²⁴ As a measure of this aim, in 1901 82% of the cultivated land in Manitoba was in grains, two-thirds of which was wheat, and by 1928 the production of wheat for export had come to characterize the region. According to historian Gerald Friesen, "Canadian wheat sales constituted nearly half the world export market. An entire society was organized to facilitate this activity. It was built upon rural village and transportation

²¹ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002

²² Welsted & Everitt, 1996.

²³ National Archives of Canada, *The Canadian West*. 2002

networks, a grain marketing system and a family economy attuned to the rhythms of the seasons and the demands of the work itself.”²⁵ While Friesen may argue that the fatal prairie habit of dependence on a single export commodity had also been established at that time,²⁶ others note that in Manitoba’s case, a mixed economy existed with northern resource industries such as mining, fur and forestry, southern agriculture and urban manufacturing and processing.²⁷

During 1873 and 1874, Dominion survey crews covered Townships 13, 14, 15, Ranges 23 and 24W, the land that was later to be known as the Rural Municipality of Hamiota.²⁸ The surveyors described the land as undulating, with black sandy loam, numerous patches of swamp and brush and a few bluffs of poplar. Settlement occurred in the municipality of Hamiota in two ways: by the homesteading process set forth by the Dominion Lands Act; or by the direct purchase of lands. By 1909 almost all of the land in Hamiota Municipality had been settled or purchased.²⁹ The entire existence of the town occurred through the settlement of the west for commercial agriculture, settled by pioneers mainly from Scotland. The settlers cultivated the land for grain production, and sustained themselves through mixed farming practices.

I had several purposes in mind when covering the history of prairie agriculture in Canada. The first was to illustrate the role of nation-building in shaping agriculture on the Canadian prairies during the early years of the Dominion. The project of nation-building was effected through the appropriation of land from, and the cultural genocide

²⁴ Friesen, 1984: 301.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Friesen, 1984: 328.

²⁷ Coates & McGuinness, 1987.

²⁸ Hamiota Centennial History Committee, 1984.

²⁹ Hamiota Centennial History Committee, 1984.

of, First Nations and Métis people across Western Canada. Not only did the Canadian state facilitate the construction of a prairie commercial agriculture sector based on homestead farming, it created a Canadian identity associated with the family farm that continues to affect political debates about Canadian agriculture. History also shows that nationally constructed homestead agriculture was based on a system of family farms imbued with hierarchical gender relations that still operate in many places. It is within the context of initial constructions of Canadian prairie agriculture that I now turn to discuss contemporary deregulation of the sector and its implications for rural communities such as Hamiota.

In accordance with the political economy of food literature, the twentieth century saw the strain of the post-war food regime take its toll on Canada's agricultural sector. In 1969, the Canadian Federal Task Force on Agriculture outlined the major problems of Canadian agriculture as "low incomes, over-production, prevalence of small, non-viable farms, increasing regional disparities, low and unstable prices, cost-price squeeze, slow market growth, diminishing export markets, declining farm share of national income, paternalism and ineffectiveness of government policies."³⁰ In making suggestions for agricultural policy changes the Task Force described the some of the highlights of its 1990 Canadian agricultural model as: fewer family farms; increasing farm size; tougher domestic and international competition; increasing technological change; less independence for individuals; constant improvement in quality of management throughout agriculture; greater reliance on, and use of, planning; fewer government subsidies and support programs.³¹ As a way of achieving this model, the Task Force

³⁰ Federal Task Force on Agriculture, 1969:7.

³¹ Federal Task Force on Agriculture, 1969:8.

recommended that “the primary specific trade goal of Canada should be to negotiate a free Continental Market with United States for livestock and livestock products, feed grains, oilseeds, potatoes and some fruits and vegetables,”³² stressing that “emphasis must be placed on continuity of supply for export markets.”³³

Twenty years later in 1989, the Canadian government entered into the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement, which made provisions echoing the trade goal identified by the 1969 Task Force. One provision in particular, that Canadian transportation subsidies under the Western Grain Transportation Act would be eliminated for products moving through western ports to US markets, signaled the beginning of a radical restructuring of Canadian agriculture that would have serious ramifications on the political economy of the prairies. The Free Trade Agreement also marked the Canadian state’s firm commitment to agricultural deregulation, providing the springboard from which Canada would proceed to accept the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992, and membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. In this context, the export imperative has been redefined once again by the Canadian state to focus on value-added production, which has precipitated the proliferation of intensive hog operations in rural Manitoba.

Reconstructing Export-Oriented Agriculture in Canada

The reconstruction of the export imperative to favour value-added food production is apparent in an Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2002 strategic document, “Putting Canada First: An Architecture for Agricultural Policy in the 21st Century”. In

³² Federal Task Force on Agriculture, 1969:433.

³³ Federal Task Force on Agriculture, 1969:434.

contrast to the importance of settler farmers in Canada's first agricultural strategy, "Putting Canada First" focuses on Canada's growing agri-food industries and continues to deregulate agricultural policies devised for family farm based national agriculture. This follows from Canada's accession to free trade agreements such as the NAFTA and to global trade bodies such as the WTO.

With agricultural restructuring, national imperatives for value-added food exports co-exist with provincial and municipal economic development strategies, and corporate strategies aimed at capturing a larger share of global markets. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAC) mandate and priorities reflect the vast changes in agriculture over the past hundred years, but still cite agriculture as an important aspect of the Canadian nation: "Canada's agriculture and food industry is a high-tech, high-value, knowledge-based sector that is integral to the Canadian identity."³⁴ However, this identity expands well beyond farmers and rural communities engaged in farming activities, and focuses on value-added agro-industry. According to AAC's corporate brochure:

"the agriculture and food industry is big business! It generates 130 billion dollars in sales annually and accounts for almost two million jobs. In fact, food processing is the largest manufacturing sector in seven of our ten provinces."³⁵

For AAC, domestic and international trade "means jobs and growth opportunities for Canadians, in processing, in distribution, in marketing, and a score of other industries. Of the two million jobs our sector supports, three of every four exist beyond the farm gate. But success in the sector is also, of course, a good predictor of success on the

³⁴ Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, *Agriculture: Food and Much More*, 2001.

³⁵ AAC, *Agriculture: Food and Much More*, 2001.

farm.”³⁶ This strategy fails to acknowledge the vast differences between farm operations. While claiming to include farmers in the drive for global excellence, AAC fails to acknowledge the political and economic difficulties smaller producers face in the light of the corporate nature of agriculture. This failure effectively casts small farmers as slow to “diversify” their operations in comparison to the fast pace of agricultural globalization. Furthermore, it denies the wide social and environmental changes that are occurring with the deepening industrialization of farming.

Recognizing that rural areas continue to decline but failing to link the latter with the lack of support for sustainable rural livelihoods, agricultural strategy at all government levels is now accompanied by efforts to revitalize the rural economy. While agri-industry is emphasized in AAC’s Putting Canada First, the federal government acknowledges the severity of rural decline and its relation, at least in the West, to the agricultural sector. According to AAC:

“...every one of us working in agriculture depends, to a large extent, on what happens on the farm. In rural areas, in particular, agricultural success is often pivotal to a strong economy. That's why AAFC is coordinating the government-wide effort to build stronger rural communities. Through a host of joint programs, including the Canadian Rural Partnership which pulls together the resources of more than 20 federal departments and agencies, we're finding new ways to equip rural communities to compete in the global economy.”³⁷

Through its new rural initiatives, AAC's vision for rural Canada includes: *vibrant communities and a sustainable resource base contributing to our national identity and prosperity; citizens making informed decisions about their own future*; Canadians sharing the benefits of the global knowledge-based economy and society, and taking full

³⁶ AAC, *Agriculture: Food and Much More*, 2001.

³⁷ AAC, *Putting Canada First: An Architecture for Agricultural Policy in the 21st Century*, 2002.

advantage of opportunities for personal and sustainable community development”³⁸ (my emphasis added). In Manitoba, however, where the hog industry is now touted as the wave of the future for agriculture, rural communities often are not equipped with the tools to compete in the global economy, and rural citizens are not allowed to make informed choices about their own futures. The discourse of global competition that enshrines the national export imperative has filtered down to the provincial level and is re-articulated in the discourse of economic development at the municipal level. Coupled with a sense of desperation for economic revitalization in many rural municipalities, the dominance of economic development discourse has the effect of diminishing citizens’ participation in choices that will affect their future, and subordinating a vast array of their concerns to narrow economic imperatives. With the latter in mind, the next section outlines the particulars of Manitoba’s commitment to the hog industry and then examines the case of Hamiota, a rural municipality in Manitoba that is now the home of two corporate owned intensive hog operations.

Manitoba’s Agricultural Restructuring and Commitment to the Hog Industry

The political economy of food in Manitoba historically is strongly linked to the Crow rate and its role in prairie grain production. Consequently, the province’s commitment to the hog industry can be seen as a direct result of national export imperatives and the subsequent dismantling of the Crow rate in 1993. As evidence to the latter, I cite the conclusions of a 1982 study on the effects of dismantling the Crow Rate

³⁸ AAC, Federal Framework for Action in Rural Canada, 2001.

on Manitoba.³⁹ The first conclusion indicated that the impact of rising freight rates and a smaller, rationalized network of branch lines would be minor on Manitoba's gross agricultural production, but that the loss of net income would be significant. Secondly, the study suggested that increased livestock and oilseed production could partially offset the income lost if the Crow rate was removed, but only if larger markets for livestock and oilseeds were found. In concurrence with this study, the links between transportation deregulation, increasing exports and western economic development became clear after the Crow rate was actually dismantled.

In 1995, a report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food outlines the precedent set by dismantling the Crow rate:

“For the past 100 years, the evolution of the rail transportation system has been linked inextricably to economic development in Canada. The development and prosperity of the western economy have been tied to the fortunes of grain export, which in turn, have depended on strong rail links and reasonable freight rates. Freight rate deregulation will be a radical change of direction for western grain. It will not only remove a pillar of grain export policy but will also sever the traditional link between transportation policy and western economic development.”⁴⁰

Although removing the Crow rate severed the link between transportation policy and western economic development, it seems to have solidified the link between value-added export policy and western economic development. In this regard, the 1995 Standing Committee report offered a prediction of diversification into livestock that had particular relevance for Manitoba:

“Livestock groups appearing before the Committee were optimistic about the future for livestock farming in the west, particularly for exports in

³⁹ Manitoba Ministry of Highways and Transportation, 1982:4.

⁴⁰ Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, “Dismantling the Crow: Curbing the Impacts.” June 1995:1.

processed form. The underlying economic rationale is that an increase in grain transport costs will be reflected in lower farm gate prices for grain which will probably induce production shifts away from grain and towards livestock.”⁴¹

Upholding the findings of the 1982 and 1995 reports, Ramsey and Everitt elaborate that grain farmers in southern Manitoba have been in crisis since the loss of the Crow Rate, with few diversification alternatives other than livestock.⁴² The Keystone Agriculture Producers (KAP), a Manitoba farm policy organization consisting of farmers and commodity groups, estimates that grain transport costs have quadrupled since the removal of the Crow Rate in 1995, rising from approximately \$10 to \$40 per tonne, or even more, depending on proximity to a mainline.⁴³ With lower grain prices and rising input costs, in particular, fuel costs, grain farmers in Manitoba are now at a competitive disadvantage. KAP notes that wheat prices are approximately \$1.77 per bushel lower than in 1995 and fuel costs have increased approximately 40%, translating into an increase of \$4.50/acre.⁴⁴

In response to the decreasing viability of grain production in the province as a result of rising transportation costs, the post-Crow era has seen Manitoba Agriculture and Food proclaim allegiance to a value-added hog industry, while clinging to a commitment to family farmers.⁴⁵ As such, Manitoba Agriculture and Food is actively attracting pork industry investors to Manitoba, elucidating the province’s resource potential in such emphatic phrases such as, “abundant prairie land can accommodate safe, unfettered

⁴¹ Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, “Dismantling the Crow: Curbing the Impacts.” June 1995:11.

⁴² Everitt and Ramsey, 2001.

⁴³ KAP Presentation to Senate Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, March 2000.

⁴⁴ KAP Presentation to Senate Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, March 2000.

⁴⁵ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, *Destination 2010: A Strategic Roadmap for Agriculture and Food*, 2001.

expansion.”⁴⁶ Other key attractions presented to investors are low input costs, strategic links for distribution, and Manitoba’s flexible marketing system, as well as Manitoba’s new slaughtering capacity with the construction of a Maple Leaf slaughterhouse in Brandon.

As a result of diversification into intensive hog production, hog production has increased dramatically in Manitoba in each year since 1990. According to Census of Agriculture figures, the number of pigs on Manitoba farms increased by 81% between 1991 and 2001. At the same time, the total number of hog farms declined from 3,150 to 1,450.⁴⁷ In 2001 alone, 11% of pig farms produced 82% of pigs in Manitoba. According to Ramsey and Everitt, there are several reasons for the consolidation and concentration trends of the 1990s.⁴⁸ First, the industrial nature of large-scale hog production facilities does not allow farmers to simply “get in” or “get out.” As a long-term investment that favours large-scale capital, it is much easier for smaller producers to exit. Second, the loss of single desk selling through the Hog Marketing Board in 1996 means that farmers sell directly to processors who require certain numbers in order to receive delivery, which has the effect of squeezing out smaller operations. The advantages of the removal of single desk selling have been felt by the packing industry, while the disadvantages have been borne by small producers. Provincial commitment to value-added pork production are apparent in the support for the meat-processing sector, specifically during the construction of the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon from 1997-1999, and the promotion of

⁴⁶ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, *Pork in Manitoba*, 2001.

⁴⁷ Ramsey and Everitt, 2001:6.

⁴⁸ Ramsey and Everitt, 2001.

hogs as an alternative, or “diversification” option, to crops for farmers.⁴⁹ Finally, the perceived stability of the Maple Leaf plant in Brandon constructed in 1999 presumably offers a destination for hogs raised by Manitoba producers.

As a significant source of change to the physical and social topography of the political economy of rural Manitoba, it is important at this juncture to note the proprietary differences in the structure of the modern hog industry. Contract farming has been a common feature within the hog industry throughout the nineties and is increasing with deepening vertical integration within the hog industry. As in many sectors of agriculture that display vertical integration, sole proprietors operate alongside owner-operators and owners bound to contract arrangements with larger companies, and corporate, commercial facilities. With respect to owner-operator contracts, an individual owns the buildings and covers the expenses of the buildings and its operations, including labour, while the contracting company pays a percentage of the price of stock produced. With owner contracts, an individual owns the barns, but the contracting company provides the inputs for the operations of the barn and pays a percentage for the stock produced. Finally, there are the commercial facilities, where the company/shareholders own the building and covers all expenses within the daily operations of the barn.

The economic gains from a modern intensive hog industry appear attractive. According to Manitoba Agriculture and Food⁵⁰, the pork industry is the Manitoba’s most valuable agricultural industry, with a production value of \$860 million in 2001, and contributing to approximately 17,000 jobs. Moreover, in a short period of time,

⁴⁹ Ramsey and Everitt, 2001:4.

⁵⁰ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, “Manitoba Swine Industry Facts: An Overview of Production, Processing and Exports”, 2001.

Manitoba has become the largest exporter of live pigs in Canada, and the second largest pork exporting province after Quebec. As an insightful testament to the export orientation of the hog industry, Manitoba exports more than 90% of all pork produced in the province. The following graph⁵¹ illustrates the tremendous growth in Canada's and Manitoba's pork exports over a ten year period:

However, heavy expansion into pork production has also brought to the fore concern about the impacts on Manitoba's soil and water, as alluded to by the Standing Committee's 1995 report. The committee stated that "it should be noted, however, that if significant diversification into livestock were to occur [on the prairies] there would be environmental implications for the land base and water resources. The impacts have already been demonstrated by giant feedlot operations in the U.S."⁵² With growing controversy over the location of intensive hog operations in many Manitoba

⁵¹ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, "Manitoba Livestock Industry Profiles 2001: Hog & Pork Sector", 2001.

communities, especially in the predominantly grain-producing areas of the southwest, Manitoba Agriculture and Food faces the challenge of responding to environmental concerns about the industry's growth throughout the late 1990s and into the new millenium. In 1997, one newspaper columnist wondered whether the environmental impacts of intensive hog operations constituted "Manitoba's unspeakable topic," claiming that "the issues nobody wants to deal with at any official level concerns hog manure and hog odours":

"Big barns are springing up like dandelions across southern Manitoba and some people are making big bucks, while the pro-pig people (including provincial politicians) crow about the number of jobs being created and the export markets opening up. But there is a persistent, ever-growing worry about the smell and the waste emanating from swine-breeding operations. That has led to several concerned citizens openly questioning the rules and regulations governing all livestock, including the disposal of animal carcasses."⁵³

In response to these mounting concern about intensive livestock operations (ILOs), the provincial government announced the Livestock Stewardship Initiative in March 2000, consisting of a panel that would undertake a regulatory review of provincial legislation pertaining to ILOs with a specific focus on cattle and hogs. The Panel had "a mandate to seek the views of Manitobans on the expansion of the livestock industry in Manitoba, and to present these to government in a report along with recommendations."⁵⁴ In December 2000, the Panel's report outlined that under the current Planning Act, land use planning is voluntary at the local government level. The Planning Act encompasses the Provincial Land Use Policies Regulation. With respect to the agriculture, the intent of the Planning Act is:

⁵² Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, June 1995:11.

⁵³ Peter Warren, "Is this Manitoba's unspeakable topic?" Crossroads Vol.15, no.34, May 19 1997.

⁵⁴ Livestock Stewardship Panel, 2000.

“to enhance the stability of and to foster economic growth, which is environmentally sustainable by encouraging development, use and management of agricultural lands...Criteria related to the establishment or expansion of livestock or poultry operations should be developed by local authorities. Local governments were established as the authority to enact land use regulations with respect to livestock production operations.”⁵⁵

While siting permits for ILOs are issued by the municipality or planning district (a body of representatives of 4 or 5 municipalities consulting on and regulating land use planning), local planning districts represented 184 of 201 municipalities as of September 2000.⁵⁶ The purpose of planning districts is the establishment of a development plan outlining broad local land use categories for a group of municipalities for such uses as residential, commercial and agricultural, thus identifying prime agricultural lands and areas where livestock operations may develop. By creating land use zones through a planning district, zoning bylaws allow municipalities to list permitted and/or conditional uses within each zone. Although not a regulation in itself, the development plan may establish criteria by which livestock operations are evaluated, especially with respect to conditional use permits. Conditional uses will allow an ILO to operate if it meets the requirements of the zoning by-law and complies with any other conditions municipal councils deem necessary to ensure the objectives of the development plan and by-law are adhered to.⁵⁷ For example, municipalities can request covered manure lagoons in order to control odour under conditional use by-laws.

However, disparities among municipal jurisdictions with and without membership in planning districts are rife with respect to ILO approval and regulation in Manitoba.

⁵⁵ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, “Farm Practices Guidelines for Hog Producers in Manitoba 2001”, Section 2.3.1.1.

⁵⁶ Livestock Stewardship Panel, 2000.

⁵⁷ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, “Farm Practices Guidelines for Hog Producers in Manitoba 2001”, Section 2.3.1.3.

Those municipalities remaining with no district plan have no legal authority to regulate siting and development of proposed intensive livestock operations.⁵⁸ ILOs built in areas with no land use planning authority simply require the appropriate permits from Manitoba Conservation regarding manure storage design and construction and a water rights license, with no need for approval from municipal governments. In this case, ILOs are regulated under the Environment Act and the Water Rights Act. Operations using more than 25,000 L of water per day must obtain a license under the Water Rights Act.⁵⁹ As a requirement of the Environment Act, which addresses standards involving livestock manure storage, spreading and hauling, and the disposal of dead animals, manure management plans are required for operations with more than 400 animal units of any one species. An animal unit, a value developed in 1994, refers to the number of animals required to excrete a total of 73 kilograms of nitrogen in a 12 month period.⁶⁰ These values were calculated to deal with the fact that while livestock manure may be highly desirable as an opportunity to recycle organic material and reduce the dependency on inorganic fertilizers on farmland, too much manure may result in excessive build-ups of elements like nitrogen and phosphorus in the soil.

Beyond outlining the current state of provincial livestock regulations, the Livestock Stewardship Panel pointed out that the overriding environmental issue appears to be the monitoring and enforcing of the standards set out in the Environment Act and the Water Rights Act, supporting media statements that provincial officials will admit off

⁵⁸ Livestock Stewardship Panel, 2000.

⁵⁹ Livestock Stewardship Panel, 2000.

⁶⁰ Manitoba Agriculture and Food, "Farm Practices Guidelines for Hog Producers in Manitoba, 2001": Appendix I.

the record that checks on hog operations are few and far between because they simply “do not have enough inspectors.”⁶¹

Divides are becoming common in rural Manitoba communities with the proliferation of intensive hog operations. In particular, those opposed to such operations have social concerns in mind. Critics point to the fact that more affluent municipalities near Brandon are not being targeted for intensive operations by hog industry investors. Instead, “barns are being put into sparsely populated areas where opponents have the fewest financial resources for mounting a fight.”⁶²

This section has outlined the changing political economy of agriculture in Manitoba with the dismantling of the Crow Rate. As such, it dealt with the exponential growth of the province’s hog industry throughout the 1990s, and growing concern about environmental legislation and other regulations on the industry. Within this context, I now introduce the particulars of Premium Pork, its operations, and its entry into the Rural Municipality of Hamiota in 2001.

Premium Pork

Premium Pork Canada, Incorporated was formed in 1996 in Lucan, Ontario. As of 2001, it had 40,000 sows on multi-site systems covering Ontario, Manitoba, Iowa and Indiana.⁶³ The company is a vertically integrated producer, with many offshoots and contractual partnerships. For example, Premium Pork Transport is the sole carrier for

⁶¹ Peter Warren, “Is this Manitoba’s unspeakable topic?” *Crossroads* Vol.15, no.34, May 19 1997.

⁶² “No hog barns in RMs closest to Brandon,” *Brandon Sun*, 2 September 2001.

Premium Pork Canada and all its divisions, with cargo ranging from 17 day old early weans to mature breeding stock.

Premium Pork is a distributor of Genetiporc porcine stock. Geneticporc, whose slogan is “Better Pigs, Better Pork, Better Profits,” is an offshoot of Breton Foods Canada, founded in 1944.⁶⁴ Breton Foods is a large Quebec-based Canadian pork processor. The company operates its own slaughterhouse, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and processes 3,000 pigs daily.⁶⁵ In addition, Breton Foods Canada packages branded fresh and processed pork, and also owns Premier Chef, a company that produces ready-to-eat meals, and Bocetin, a processed ham company. Specializing in value-added food products, Breton Foods’ operations rapidly concentrated in pork production in the early 70's. In the mid 80's, in order to solve supply problems in terms of healthy breeding stock and slaughtering expectations from its own processing plant, the company decided to initiate its own genetic source under the name of Genetiporc. Since then, the commercial network of Breton Foods Canada has ensured a constant supply of animals in terms of both quantity and quality. According to Genetiporc’s website, the early stage of the company witnessed the rapid growth of external demand for Genetiporc products, resulting in the development of an international market presence at the beginning of the 1990s.

Premium Pork also has a partnership with Prairie States Management Company of Iowa in Oak Leaf Premium Pork, LLC. While Premium Pork specializes in the

⁶³ Premium Pork, 2001.

⁶⁴ Genetiporc, 2001.

⁶⁵ du Breton Farms, 2001.

production of weanlings in new high-tech facilities, Prairie States Management Company, based in Emmetsburg, Iowa has over a decade of experience finishing in modern facilities. It is instructive here to describe the segregated life span of pigs in modern intensive production. While traditional pig husbandry involved farrow to finish operations, with animals remaining on the same farm from birth until sent to market, modern hog operations may deal with one of the following stages of a pig's life: the birth and weaning of piglets (farrowing barns); the fattening of weanlings to about 50 pounds (nursery/grower barns); and the fattening of pigs to slaughter weight (finishing barns). The goal of Oak Leaf Premium Pork is to utilize the farrowing expertise of Premium Pork and the nursery and finishing expertise of Prairie States Management Company, with an eye toward producing a quality product for consumers worldwide.⁶⁶

In 1999, the Hamiota Economic Development Corporation (HEDC), a body jointly incorporated by the Hamiota Rural Municipal council and the Hamiota Town Council, approached Premium Pork to discuss the possibility of investment in intensive hog production in Hamiota municipality. Over a period of one year, negotiations resulted in the construction of two farrowing barns, each housing 2,500 sows in order to sell breeding stock to intensive livestock operators in Mexico. These negotiations did not include public consultations with Hamiota citizens. The Crossroads, a newspaper serving the towns of Birtle, Hamiota, Rosburn and Shoal Lake (an area known as the Yellowhead region), ran a frontpage story entitled "Hamiota will be in 'hog heaven,'" on May 20, 2000 announcing Premium Pork's entry into Manitoba with the development of

⁶⁶ Oak Leaf Premium Pork Ltd., 2001.

a 2500 sow production facility three kilometers west of Hamiota.⁶⁷ According to the article, the facility provides Genetiporc breeding stock for Manitoba contractors and for export, while creating eight to ten jobs. No mention was made of the fact that Premium Pork had purchased the land for its first barn from Hamiota's Economic Development Officer. In response to concerns raised about the lack of public consultation in this controversial community economic development strategy, Hamiota residents received assurances by the municipal council and HEDC that the jobs and taxes provided by Premium Pork's operations would be a boon to the community.

While surprised and concerned residents were reacting to the news of Premium Pork's entry into the municipality, the Hamiota Echo's front page on July 22, 2000 headlined, "Second hog barn approval given by R.M. Council."⁶⁸ The second facility, located approximately eight kilometers northeast of Hamiota, was referred to as the second phase in the development of hog barns within the Rural Municipality of Hamiota. Very brief mention was made in the article that municipal approval was not required, and that "as a good corporate citizen, Premium Pork approached council for its approval out of courtesy,"⁶⁹ attesting to Hamiota's lack of membership in a planning district.

As part of its extended production network based in southwestern Manitoba, Premium Pork has established a commercial facility known as Mesa in the neighbouring municipality of Strathclair, stocked with the female offspring produced from the operations in Hamiota. Oakridge Swine is a second commercial facility that sends weanlings to market, operating in the neighbouring RM of Woodworth. As of November

⁶⁷ "Hamiota will be in hog heaven", Hamiota Echo, 20 May 2000.

⁶⁸ "Second hog barn approval given by R.M. Council", The Hamiota Echo, 22 July 2000.

⁶⁹ "Second hog barn approval given by R.M. Council", The Hamiota Echo, 22 July 2000.

2001, Premium Pork had plans to construct five additional commercial facilities in the Yellowhead Region: another in the RM of Woodworth, two in Rosburn; one near Silverton; and one in Birtle. Besides the commercial facilities, there are two privately owned nursery barns in the region that house female weanlings from Hamiota's operations for 7-8 weeks. Premium Pork is also working to develop a network of ten gilt development barns: four in Silverton; one near Brookdale; three in Sidney and two near Vista. As is the case with the nursery barns, the gilt development facilities are all privately owned and under long-term contracts with Premium Pork to raise gilts to a level of maturity where they are ready to be introduced into the breeding system. The final stage in the development of the extended production network is the construction of a boar facility to be located near Hamiota, which will house two hundred animals and a laboratory for the testing of semen utilized in the artificial insemination process.

Conclusion

This chapter places the history of Canadian agriculture within the violence of capitalist nation building. In doing so, it highlights the roles of all levels of government in the agricultural sector. During the formation and expansion of the Dominion of Canada, the federal government was central in shaping the material structure of prairie agriculture to accommodate a commercial export imperative. As a vehicle for national wheat exports, Manitoba's agricultural sector was one based on many small family farms and subsidized grain transportation that settled the prairies.

However, with changes in the global political economy of agriculture, the Canadian government has redefined the export imperatives of the nation to emphasize

value added production. This has happened in tandem with commitments to agricultural deregulation through membership in the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization. A pertinent example of agricultural deregulation is the dismantling of the Crow rate subsidy for grain transportation, which has played a significant part in restructuring Manitoba's agricultural political economy in favour of intensive livestock operations. In particular, intensive hog operations proliferate as community economic development strategies for struggling municipalities dependent on grain farming. As such, vertically integrated companies like Premium Pork are approached as potential investors in communities, in the hopes of securing jobs. However, gaps in land use regulations and questions about the monitoring of environmental regulations have led to considerable concern about the desirability of such intensive operations.

The following chapter explores the particularities of how Premium Pork entered the municipality of Hamiota, specifically with respect to a power struggle that took place between municipal officials and residents in the spring of 2000. In a struggle over a decision that is basically about land use, discourses abound in Hamiota with respect to the desirability of intensive hog operations. One such discourse constructs municipal autonomy in promoting Premium Pork's operations as a community economic development strategy, based on rural decline and the crisis in grain farming. In response, residents have mounted a discourse of resistance grounded in subordinated social and ecological concerns about intensive hog operations.

Chapter 4: Economic Development and Resistance in Hamiota

Introduction

When municipal officials in Hamiota announced Premium Pork's entry into the municipality, they provided a discourse of community economic development to justify their support for intensive hog operations. Deconstructing their discourse of economic development reveals it as a rational response to rural decline as a consequence of a deepening agricultural crisis. In this account, as in the political economy of food literature, rural depopulation and the economic viability of rural communities accelerate with farm consolidation and concentration. Fewer young people remain on the farm or in Hamiota, as migration to urban centres promises a higher probability of employment. In the face of these problems, municipal officials regard Premium Pork as a controversial but necessary type of agricultural diversification.

As indicated earlier in the thesis, the responsibility to address rural economic decline promotes the economic development planning paradigm among municipalities. Informed by the need for job creation as a means of population stabilization, economic development discourse pins the future of Hamiota on local officials' ability to attract jobs to the community. Aligning with the Manitoba government's promotion of the hog industry, incentives offered to Premium Pork cement the notion of competition for limited investment and jobs among declining rural municipalities. Officials also

implemented the notion of competition for limited investment as a basis for denying the public input into this development strategy.

By examining how power is exercised through development discourse, it is possible to see how residents' social and ecological concerns are silenced. The perception of competition and the compelling language of local jobs used by economic development planners serves to dismiss and silence objections to Premium Pork's presence in Hamiota as unwarranted and unreasonable "personal feelings." Further, the lack of formal channels for public input into this controversial economic development strategy has allowed some municipal officials to claim that no resistance to Premium Pork's operations exists in Hamiota, or that the resistance that does exist is "quiet", negligible and somehow benign.

Quiet resistance to Premium Pork in Hamiota centres on a discourse of family and community oriented agriculture that puts forth a more critical view of the corporatization and intensification of agriculture. In this discourse, residents act on their community "insider" subjectivity to reify Premium Pork as an "outsider", in order to contrast its hog operations with family farms in terms of their political, economic, social and ecological impacts. Particular concerns revolve around the loss of political autonomy within the community, the production structure of the company's operations, and its relations to land and the environment. In this way, the benefits of Premium Pork's location in Hamiota are cast in a light of skepticism, as the presence of the company is viewed as a deepening of agricultural intensification and corporatization that has thus far fuelled the economic decline of agriculturally dependent communities such as Hamiota.

In exploring the discourses of economic development and resistance in Hamiota, I hope not to construct a false binary of economic development planners versus concerned residents. The knowledge that informs these discourses in some cases is complementary, and in others is contradictory. I want to explore the ways in which power operates through these complex discourses. Further, exploring these discourses illustrate that the ways in which we think about rural communities and economic development are contingent and thus open to challenge and change.

Deconstructing the Discourse of Economic Development

Economic development discourse in Hamiota is grounded in particular constructions of community economic decline, signified by a steady trend of rural depopulation. According to 2001 Census figures, the Rural Municipality of Hamiota lost 18.8% of its population between 1991 and 2001.¹ Over the same period, the Town of Hamiota's population grew by 4.3%, mainly due to people retiring from farming and moving into town. A retired farmer summarized the historical nature of the depopulation trend, and also attested to changes in agriculture leading to the growth of farm sizes as a cause of depopulation:

“We have watched the farms grow in size and the number of people in the community decline for as long as I can remember. I have never seen an overall increase in rural population in all the time I can remember. I had an interesting book, where it quotes as early as 1916 that due to the decline in rural population, certain effects are being felt by small communities. So, that just shows how far back it goes.” (M7)

A concerned town council member indicated that the motivations of municipal officials in promoting Premium Pork's operations as an economic development strategy

¹ “Census confirms population still declining in rural areas”, *Crossroads This Week*, 16 March 2002.

were informed by steady depopulation statistics, the crisis in grain farming and a lack of economic opportunity for young people in Hamiota:

“Farm population has declined drastically since the 1950s, in the RM of Hamiota alone there was about 1500 people. Today they’re hard-pressed to find 500. So it’s about a third of the population... Now, for Hamiota to survive, in council’s opinion, we have to go out and promote some kind of industry... It’s well known that the grain industry is not very successful right now, and we have to diversify and this is a, shall I say, controversial type of farm diversification... We don’t have anything for our young people to do. They just continue to leave and leave and leave. Of course if one can get a job, then he can stay and along with that your population grows and retail outlets do better and they need places to stay. As they build houses your tax base increases, and so on. So basically, its jobs... We’re trying, and I guess my approach is if you’re going to get ahead at all, you have to take some risks.” (M8)

Pressure is mounting to retain the mature population of the area, as well as to create economic opportunities in order for young people to remain. A deepening lack of economic opportunity in Hamiota has meant that most young people leave town for post-secondary education, and few return in the face of more favourable employment in urban centres or in Alberta’s oil and gas industry.

While the lack of economic opportunity for young people in Hamiota is cited as a major concern for the municipal government, so are the challenges facing long-time grain farmers. The crisis in grain farming for farmers in Hamiota has taken the form of mounting debt and low grain prices, forcing many to consider selling their farms and leaving Hamiota municipality. In the view of municipal officials and residents alike, not only are young people challenged with remaining in Hamiota, so are many farming people who have lived their entire lives there.

A male grain farmer explained the challenge for him and his wife to remain on the farm and the difficulties facing them in leaving the farm:

“I’ll tell you, if someone offered us a good price for our farm, we’d jump at it. We’d get a job, because there is no money in grain farming. I mean you can look at us, we have nice home, but the bills are killing us... We’re cash poor. And then they say, don’t expect to get anything for your grain this year --- well, we didn’t get anything last year! The bills are higher than what you’re making. It’s a vicious circle, and the buyers all want to buy grain for nothing. So there’s no hope. We have tried to sell, but so far nothing’s come up. We have to sell for a good price, because we have so much debt to pay off and have something to live on. With farming for 25 years and not having a high level of education, just what kind of jobs are we going to get? We’ll get jobs, but we’ll have to have a pretty good nest egg.” (M2)

In this light, Premium Pork’s operations are promoted as a viable diversification project, albeit a controversial one. For those struggling to remain on the farm, working at Premium Pork is presented as an option for income supplement. One municipal official commented that:

“a number of employees that are working there are farmers – male farmers, female farmers --- and that certainly, because grain farming is so tough right now, that’s augmenting their income and perhaps allowing some of the family farms to continue. I know of three or four families, because their husband or wife is working for Premium Pork, it allows them to struggle on with their farm as best they can.” (M8)

Thus, despite the belief that production concentration is a significant reason for dramatic local decline over the past twenty-five years, municipal officials identified continuing shifts in agriculture such as intensive livestock operations as opportunities for economic development for Hamiota. As a result, economic development is portrayed as rational response to the crisis in grain farming, by emphasizing the need for jobs and investment as a way of stabilizing the rural population. Quoted in the Hamiota Echo, Hamiota’s Economic Development Officer cited the advantages of Premium Pork’s operations for the town: “This is a multi-million dollar operation which brings

employment into the community. Economically, it's good news not only for Hamiota, but the area."²

While emphasizing the number of jobs created by allowing Premium Pork into Hamiota, the language of economic development dismisses a myriad of concerns as purely emotional reactions to an impressive economic opportunity. According to the Hamiota Echo,

“Whatever personal feelings community members may have regarding large hog operations, everyone must be impressed by the employment opportunities that Premium Pork is bringing to Hamiota. The creation of these jobs is a huge economic boost for this community. At a time when the farm economy is low, most people are enthusiastically welcoming this development.”³

Emphasis on the farm crisis is used as leverage to silence non-economic concerns by appealing to a very real sense of desperation and worry about the economic future of the community.

As many agriculturally dependent towns in southern Manitoba continue to lose population and jobs become scarce, the prospect for attracting investment to these locations appears dim. In response to these challenges, the mandate of Community Economic Development Corporations to create jobs by attracting new businesses becomes very important. One consequence is a notion of competition between communities within economic development discourse. In Hamiota, the impression that rural municipalities are in competition for economic investment and development possibilities was widespread. As a male businessman and farmer commented, “[The RM council] believed that there was competition for this office and the barns, and thought

² “Hamiota will be in ‘hog heaven’”, *Crossroads*, 20 May 2000.

let's get this in and hopefully the problems are not as bad as everyone thinks." (M1) The latter description echoes the oft-mentioned "race to the bottom" associated with foreign direct investment, with economic imperatives undermining social and ecological costs.

Moreover, the challenges of stiff competition for investment between communities were cited as a reason for council's decision to forego public consultation. According to one male farmer:

"In the past, Hamiota has been looking for things to bring into town, like one example was the airport that they put in Shoal Lake. We had the chance to get it here, and it looked like a sure thing, and then someone said they weren't happy about where it would be situated, and it got to the point where council backed away from it... I just wonder if that was one of the reasons why the council felt they should grab hold of this before there was too much public discussion, and things got stalled like in the past. They were just trying to vote for anything that would bring economic development to the area." (M6)

Indeed, a major factor in councils' decision not to consult Hamiota residents about Premium Pork's operations was the number of economic development strategies that failed to come to fruition previously due to public disapproval and opposition. In this regard, one local official commented,

"There probably wasn't enough information getting out to people [about Premium Pork]. There's always a very, very fine line. If you start calling open public meetings, you set yourself up for wild evenings. Usually what you get are those who are violently opposed. That's what happened with the proposal for a hazardous waste treatment facility here about 10 years ago. They had open public meetings. It was a headache. There were an awful lot of hard feelings." (M8)

In this case, dissenting public input into a controversial development proposal was seen as disruptive to the prospect of economic development, and to social relations within Hamiota. The connotations of public meetings for economic development planners was summarized by a member of the Hamiota Economic Development Corporation, "Public

³ "Hamiota gets head office of Premium Pork", *Hamiota Echo*, 28 October 2000.

meetings tend to be counter-productive. Crowd mentality is difficult to deal with.”(M9)

Thus, economic planners in Hamiota avoided a critical examination of the reasons why Hamiota residents might be opposed to a particularly controversial development by constructing images of an unruly, wild, and violently opposed crowd with ‘counterproductive’ concerns. Given the controversy and heavy media attention surrounding intensive livestock operations, particularly since the high-profile Walkerton inquiry, public meetings are viewed as being counterproductive by threatening the ability of economic planners to attract investment to Hamiota. However, to many in Hamiota, the municipal government’s role of representing the interests and concerns of all citizens was compromised by the decision to avoid public consultations.

By viewing public participation as an obstacle to the mandate of economic development, municipal officials were able to identify their role as one of facilitating smooth entry of Premium Pork into Hamiota. Part of ensuring Premium Pork’s location in Hamiota involved lengthy negotiations over financial incentives which, as consequence of perceived competition, had to be negotiated discretely. However, these incentives pose a risk to Hamiota’s limited resources. One local official identified concerns about the financial risks associated with incentives given to Premium Pork as a guarantee of location in Hamiota:

“If we have to back a loan, which we well might, for the development of the offices and truckwash, there will be added financial risk. So there’s certainly financial risk involved... It hasn’t been easy... They’re wanting, of course, to get the best deal they possibly can out of the RM council and town council. Like one of the things the RM council did for them was they halved the cost of a water line from the water plant here to the barn site southwest of town. Town council then got involved by reducing the cost of the sale of bulk water, because it doesn’t have to go through our treatment plant, it’s not as expensive to provide it at a better rate, so those kinds of financial incentives were used to attract them.” (M8)

Easing Premium Pork's entry into Hamiota also meant that instead of initiating dialogue with community members about the company and intensive hog operations more generally, municipal officials opted to hold an open house after construction on Premium Pork's first barn had commenced. Sponsored by the Hamiota Economic Development Corporation, Manitoba Agriculture and Food and the Manitoba Pork Council, the open house was like "a little pig fair," according to one municipal official, where small displays were set up by the sponsors with pamphlets for those in attendance. Not surprisingly, there was not a substantial turnout.

The purpose in outlining the content of development discourse in Hamiota above is to point to its use as an instrument of power in municipal decision-making and the consequences thereof. Municipal planners claimed authority to welcome Premium Pork by using economic development discourse as leverage. In this discourse, Hamiota is a town in desperate need of jobs, in competition with surrounding communities for outside investment. The latter sense of external pressure is wed to sources of internal pressure from dissenting Hamiota residents. Internal pressure from residents responding to the controversial nature of intensive livestock operations, especially in terms of their environmentally dubious reputation, was avoided by denying public participation, something that has confounded efforts to attract investment in the past.

The actions of municipal officials in Hamiota also have larger implications. With respect to the role of declining rural communities within the political economy of agriculture, the only option offered by economic planners is to accommodate the needs of

global agriculture and hope for the best. In this regard, a female town resident offered the following comment:

“To be fair, what is going to happen to these small towns in the light of this globalizing of all agriculture? Maybe if we don’t do this, these towns will die. I don’t like to see it, but this might be what has to happen to keep the town going.” (F4)

Her statement indicates that the places traditionally associated with agriculture, like Hamiota, will have to conform to the political and economic realities of global and increasingly corporate agricultural sectors whether they like it or not. Given that the role of municipal officials is one of brokering investment that in this case is undesirable, this has serious implications for the rights of rural residents in the transformation process of rural places.

The ability of municipal authorities to claim authority in sanctioning Premium Pork’s operations was created through subscription to a local economic development discourse, which had significant consequences for those opposed to Premium Pork’s operations. Through particular constructions of Hamiota and the hog industry within economic development discourse, municipal officials have created a basis on which to claim that there has been no resistance to intensive hog operations in Hamiota. At the same time, the language of economic need is wielded to effectively dismiss and silence concerns. In downplaying resistance to Premium Pork’s operations, one local official had this comment:

“There was minimal opposition, there was some and there still is some, and there’s probably some people who are quietly opposed... But, at this point, things are very quiet really... My opinion from talking to people is that there are questions and concerns, but not widespread opposition. A lot of people say, ‘hey we gotta do something to keep our area alive.’” (M8)

However, this statement belies the significance of the decision to deny public input in creating a vacuum for residents' formal political participation. Justified by constructions of competition, the counterproductivity of public meetings, and the need to keep the area alive, the opportunity for residents to effectively oppose Premium Pork's arrival in Hamiota was virtually obliterated in the absence of public meetings. I contend that the quiet opposition of questions and concerns constitutes resistance of the everyday sort, which is the most accessible avenue of resistance left to residents now at the centre of Premium Pork's extended production network. The next section introduces the efforts of Hamiota residents to participate in and resist the decision to welcome Premium Pork to Hamiota.

Discourses of/as Resistance in Hamiota

A public meeting of July 2000, and a letter that followed it, constituted the extent of formal, collective resistance to Premium Pork's location in Hamiota. An effort to initiate dialogue around intensive hog barns among Hamiota residents, the meeting was organized and held by concerned citizens featuring presentations by a representative of the Sierra Club and a Brandon University professor, followed by a question and answer session. The evening was meant as an informational evening for Hamiota residents, where the potential environmental and social liabilities associated with intensive hog operations could be formally broached in a public forum. As one man explained, "Until the public meeting, no one was saying anything negative about this. [The meeting] was meant to give people some awareness of the issues, get some information and express some views." (M5) However, the timing of the municipal announcement regarding

Premium Pork's entry into the municipality coincided with seeding and the onset of summer vacation. The latter and a lack of resources on the part of citizens made mounting a concerted movement to oppose the construction of the barn virtually impossible. As such, a letter to council marked the end of a formal, collective attempt to protest Premium Pork's operations. One man elaborated on this final collective action:

"After the meeting, we thought, 'We don't have the resources, school's almost out, people are going to be gone for the summer, so we wrote a letter to council asking for a plebiscite and have a community vote on this. We got letters back from the town saying, 'We're strongly in favour of economic development, blah, blah, blah....'" (M5)

In the time leading up to, and since, the meeting, many residents believe that they have had no meaningful formal channels of voicing concerns about Premium Pork's operations, and that municipal officials are really not interested in their concerns.

Frustration as a result of curtailed political participation was aptly summarized by one woman:

"If you want to complain or voice a concern, there's no forum for that. There's no group, no one person, no one seems to be interested in anything anybody wants to say. There's no way of making a voice heard that I can find." (F10)

As a result, resistance is expressed widely in informal forums. Informal discourses of resistance proliferate during everyday social encounters in Hamiota, which do not overtly challenge Premium Pork's presence in the municipality, but that certainly disparage it.

One woman offered the following comment regarding the nature of informal resistance:

"People are complaining but I wonder if that's doing any good. Or is it just whine, whine, whine to your neighbour? As far as the pig barns go, the mayor may not have received any written, official complaints, which I don't believe by the way, but I can't think that he hasn't heard some whining and crying in the coffeeshop or somewhere else, 'cause people do." (F4)

More than just an opportunity to complain for the majority of Hamiota residents, informal conversations in Hamiota provide the most substantive information regarding Premium Pork and its operations. In this regard, several people identified “coffeeshop talk” or “talk around town” as their main source of information about Premium Pork, after the first barn was under construction. A male farmer attests to the latter:

“One of the problems I heard about when the first barn was put in, was that there could have been a little more public awareness at the start of it. Coffeeshop talk was that it had been put through and was in its first stages before anyone really had a say in what was going on... I think the people on the two councils are quite intelligent people, and I feel they must have looked over everything before they went to the next step, but there could’ve been more information out there for people.” (M6)

While resentment at the inability to protest the initial decision is clear, the lack of information sharing by municipal officials has some residents worried about their ability to participate in future decisions of a similar nature. Resistance for some will not be confined to informal complaints in the coffeeshop or around town, especially as Premium Pork expands its production network in the Yellowhead region. One man expressed his concern, and offered his strategy for resisting potential attempts to locate an intensive hog operation near his home:

“The thing that is scary is, where’s the next barn going to go? There’s a number of people worried about that...I guess if they were deciding to build one in close proximity to us, we would put a [hog] barn on the adjacent quarter section and we would make it very clear to them that we would build one. Maybe free-range pigs and give them the opinion that maybe disease would be concern, because we wouldn’t be as high tech as them. That might be one way to prevent a barn from being built beside us... Wild boars, free-range wild boars with no fences might be the answer. The thing that’s most uncomfortable for me is, how could I stop one or ensure that there wouldn’t be one close enough to me to affect my life and our investment in this area? I think I would be very creative to make it very uncomfortable for them, and probably not legal. That’s uncomfortable. I would like to know that there is a proper process for siting any subsequent barns, so that there would be an opportunity to

logically voice your concerns before they all of a sudden appear with a Cat and say, “Guess what we just bought?” That would be very offensive.”
(M1)

While the municipal government promotes the discourse of economic development to promote Premium Pork’s intensive hog operations as a new opportunity for jobs, interviews with Hamiota residents reveal more complex considerations. While those interviewed support economic development for Hamiota in principle and sympathize with the challenges facing municipal officials, many concerns are raised through a discourse of resistance that makes an appeal on behalf of family-based agriculture. The residents I spoke to want to remain optimistic about the future of Hamiota and Premium Pork’s location in the community, but offer discourses of resistance comprised of the social consequences of intensive hog operations for the municipality of Hamiota. Issues surrounding potential changes in quality of life are the most common. Specifically, concerns over odour and water safety attest to residents’ resistance to their community becoming a dumping ground for industrial agriculture. Furthermore, changes in the social structure of Hamiota due to the migratory nature of workers employed at the hog barns, and a loss of decision-making authority and autonomy in the face of absentee corporate investment form another significant source of worry.

The greatest concern about intensive livestock operations in Hamiota is the odour associated with hog manure. As a major source of discontent, odours from intensive hog barns signify a serious quality of life issue for all residents interviewed. Several people indicated that if hog manure odours became prevalent in and around their homes, they

would move away from Hamiota. One man stated his worry about this aspect of

Premium Pork's barns:

“The main concern for me is the smell, and that's a lot of people's concern. The thing is, if it smelled like pigs all the time around here, I would move. It's one thing for the site to smell --- you have to put up with that --- but if I can smell pigs in my yard in town, I wouldn't stay here.”
(M4)

This narrative indicates that odours from the hog barns may drive some current residents away.

Moreover, Hamiota's ability to attract newcomers and retirees to the town and municipality may be hindered by unpleasant odours, a possibility pointed out by one town resident, “You're not going to attract people here if the wind is blowing from the west or southwest, you're not going to get professionals coming here. Why would they?”(M5) Similarly, a retired woman explained that Hamiota's desirability as a retirement destination could diminish as a result of manure odours: “I think there's a lot of disadvantage in the odour. I would wonder if, over time, people choose not to retire in Hamiota for that reason, and move away. Especially if they're not tied to this area through family.”(F9) In these cases, intensive livestock operations pose a significant threat to alternative types of development for the town in the future.

As a factor affecting the quality of daily life in Hamiota, odours from hog manure counteract whatever benefits the jobs may present for many residents. For residents, the quality of community development has to be considered alongside the economic aspects.

A particularly unhappy woman had the following comment regarding odour:

“Someone joked about the smell and said, “That's the smell of money.” I said, “Well, it makes me choke... Whatever the advantages are economically, they're not worth it. If you can't breathe the air, what's the

sense? I don't know necessarily if it's a health risk, but it certainly affects my quality of life. It affects my mental health — it really does... I really don't want to live where I can't breathe, and I'm seriously thinking about moving.” (F10)

The matter of unpleasant odours from Premium Pork's hog barns is complicated by the presence of a cattle feedlot west of Hamiota, an operation funded through local investment that also produces undesirable odours in Hamiota. Interestingly, tolerance of odours from Premium Pork's operations was identified as low in comparison to those originating from the cattle feedlot. A local businessman offered the following explanation:

“I think people are more tolerant of a much worse smell from the feedlot, because it's local investment. There's probably 10 local families that are surviving by subsidizing their incomes. But as soon as there's a problem with [Premium Pork] barns, I don't think people will be very tolerant.” (M1)

Resistance to Premium Pork is acted on with a “community insider” subjectivity by many residents, which is clearly seen in explanations for tolerance of the cattle feedlot. The insider-outsider politics of ownership affecting the variability of odour tolerance was further clarified by another man:

“There's an interesting local thing going on here too with the feedlot. Even though it's not a hog barn, there's absolutely no complaint because it's local people. Just locals. There is an infrastructure here where certain locals are more local than other locals, and only certain locals could pull off bringing something like [the feedlot] in, and they pulled it off which I think will be detrimental to Hamiota in the long term. It's not much fun sitting around the pool when all you can smell is pigs or cattle.” (M5)

However, the subsequent problem lies in how to identify which livestock operation offending odours emanate from, and ambiguity surrounding the origins of manure odours has provided a means of silencing offence to Premium Pork's operations.

One woman's struggle to express her concern about odours from intensive livestock operations is particularly illustrative:

"I don't want to live where I can't breathe, where I can't go outside, I feel very strongly about that. So they're going to lose me, and I know they don't care because I wrote the town council a letter, and I said in the letter that I was thinking of moving because of the smell, and they never even answered the letter. So they don't care, but I think I'm probably a loss to the community. Well, anybody is in a small community, every person counts. In an article to the Brandon Sun, the mayor said to tell skeptics of hog barns to go ahead and do it, that as far as he knew, no one had complained about odour... I was so upset that I wrote a second letter to council, and I did receive a reply. In my first letter I had complained about the general smell and the constancy of the smell and I said that sometimes it's pigs, sometimes it's cattle. It was not a very polite letter, and in the response to my second letter I was told that since I didn't indicate what kind of smell it was, by my own admission I was not a connoisseur of noxious odours. So my complaint wasn't valid, I guess." (F10)

Regardless of whether the odours originate from pigs or cattle, the effect is the same for those living in close proximity to intensive livestock operations: a decline in quality of life. As one woman stated, "The smell is a big concern. If the PP barns smell as bad as the feedlot, I will be very upset. I've had to get up in the middle of the night and close windows because of the feedlot." (F6) Despite the reassurances that Premium Pork's presence is a boon to Hamiota, one man summarized the trouble with these sorts of operations, "Everyone thinks that hog barns are great from a distance, but no one wants to live next to one." (M5)

As highlighted above, the discourses of resistance directly challenge the premise of job creation as a means of stabilizing the rural population put forth by municipal officials. This is achieved through discussions about the qualitative aspects of employment at Premium Pork's barns. Questions are raised as to whether the wage level

at Premium Pork's barns are adequate to sustain a family, and whether or not the wage level could justify the unpleasant nature of the work. As one woman stated,

"You hear that these jobs aren't going to be very high-paying. Can people sustain themselves, not only in the financial sense, but can they sustain themselves in terms of the physical work requirements? And you know, this is not very nice work." (F5)

Working hours and wages in Premium Pork's hog barns were described as problematic for some workers. One male farmer offered the following anecdote, which was critical of fixed salaries at Premium Pork's barns because of long working hours,

"I know one lady who works at the barn and she said she likes her job, but she's working over 100 hours every 2 weeks, and she's on salary. So if you break it down, she's only just making over minimum wage..." (M2)

Discussions about the qualitative aspects of Premium Pork's jobs reveal that low salaries and stressful working conditions may contribute to a more transient population in Hamiota, which may not be beneficial. Speculation about the nature of workers moving into town and the level of turnover at Premium Pork's Centec and Gateway barns produce concerns about the possible negative consequences of a new socio-economic group in the community. One town resident had the following comment about increased class polarization within Hamiota:

"There are different people in town, but it's very blue collar. This is not a blue collar community by any means, I mean most people spend more on hockey for their kids than low-income people in Winnipeg ever dream of. Yeah, there might possibly be more kids in town, but there will be a lot of social baggage... If you parachute in a socio-economic group that has no benefits and is making \$10-15/hour as their primary source of income, that will change things in the social strata." (M5)

As such, potential problems for Hamiota as a result of a potentially transient workforce contradict the claim that Premium Pork's jobs are a boon to the community. One man

expressed his opinion that a transient labour force would have little social benefit for

Hamiota:

“We’re certainly going to have a higher population of a more transient group... I guess in the perfect situation, [Premium Pork] would be able to retain their employees for the long term, and families wouldn’t be transient. The connotation of transient is that they don’t add a lot to the community, more rough and ready, and more concerned about a job than family. Certainly there’s no comparison between this type of livestock operation and a family farm.” (M1)

Commenting on the qualitative aspects of Premium Pork’s jobs also illuminated gender issues. In the discourses surrounding Premium Pork in Hamiota, there is no challenge to patriarchal perceptions of women. One illustration is provided by the jobs in Premium Pork’s barns that perpetuate gender stereotypes. Specifically, there appears to be a gendered division of labour within Premium Pork’s nursery barns that delineates certain tasks for men and women. One woman attested to the belief that women were more nurturing, and that this criteria was used in hiring at Premium Pork’s nursery barns:

“There’s quite a few girls working out there. That’s what they wanted, was a lot more females because they’re a lot more gentle with the piglets and stuff. They wanted to make sure they’re being handled properly. It’s women’s mothering sense, I guess.”(F7)

Similarly, a retired woman elaborated:

“I find it interesting that when they want people to look after baby pigs, they hire women. That’s their policy, women are more nurturing. When they were hiring out here to look after baby pigs, they only wanted women. Well, we’re good for something, to nurture!” (F4)

In this narrative, women are identified as “nurturing,” a characteristic making them ideal for working in the nursery barns. Interestingly, however, details of the job proved to contradict the description of “nurturing” piglets, by in fact indicating that this particular position included weeding out the runts of the litter, a decidedly non-nurturing task:

“One of my daughter’s friends works out at the barns doing stuff with the baby pigs, and another of my daughter’s friends thought she might apply for a job. When she heard what the job was, it’s working with the baby pigs and deciding which ones to get rid of. I didn’t want to know about it, but when the second girl heard about it she didn’t want to do that kind of work, couldn’t do that kind of work.” (F10)

In accounts acknowledging the tendency for Premium Pork to prefer women in the nursery barns, the importance of these jobs to struggling family farms became apparent. As one retired woman explained,

“Some [of the workers] are farmers’ wives, so I suppose that makes life easier on that farm, and maybe that farmer won’t move away, if he can keep going with his off-farm income, so there might be benefits that way... I think that a lot of people think that the barns will keep young people in the community. But I don’t think that it’s all that many jobs. The people that I know who are working out there are in the community anyway --- farmers’ wives, for example.” (F4)

While farm women acquire off-farm employment to subsidize the continuing viability of the farm, they are still referred to as “farmers’ wives,” not partners in the farm in their own right. The male farmer gets to “keep going with *his* off-farm income” (my emphasis added), provided by his wife. Her work is automatically assumed to be a factor in making life easier on the farm, but is still not recognized as integral to the continuing existence of the farm.

More broadly, juggling home and work for women at Premium Pork’s barns proves to be problematic. While economic pressures require women’s participation in the workplace, trying to maintain family time with children and spouses becomes more difficult. In this respect, one woman offered the following comment:

“The salary sounds like a lot, but you’re working, working, working. I was talking to another gal, she’s on salary at a barn, and she’s just exhausted. She took this job so she would have more time to spend with her kids and travel to her job, but night and day she’s at the barn, and she’s on salary.” (F2)

In this section I have shown that Hamiota residents have challenged the economic premises of Premium Pork's hog barns on a qualitative basis, to outline that Premium Pork's jobs are not exactly desirable and that these operations contradict residents' alternative notions of community development. I have also discussed the gender implications of Premium Pork's operations. While gender concerns have not constituted a basis of resistance to Premium Pork, the next section highlights that residents have acted on their "insider" subjectivities to inform their "quiet" resistance.

Premium Pork as "Outsider"

The common theme underpinning discourses of resistance was the differentiation of Premium Pork's operations from local farms, or as in the case of the cattle feedlot, from local investment. Many residents spoke from a community insider perspective to reify the company and emphasize its outsider status in the community, and to contrast the company by operationalizing an idealized model of family farming. In this way, differentiation based on "outsider", corporate, absentee investment, rather than "insider", local and family-based ownership, forms the basis for the desirability of intensive livestock operations in Hamiota. The following comment, offered by a retired farm woman, explains her view of the social shortcomings of corporate operations:

"They can't be true members of the community the way a small farmer is, because you help your neighbour, you lend him your tractor if he needs it, that kind of thing. There'll be none of that... My guess is that these pig barns will only stay a certain amount of time, and then move on to the next place." (F9)

To effectively give shape to Premium Pork's outsider status, residents indicate that the company's operations are qualitatively different, thereby placing them in a position of

antagonism to competing “insider” farms. Constructing intensive hog operations as indicators of deepening corporatization within agriculture, residents render Premium Pork’s “hog barns” qualitatively different from farms. “Hog barns” are the local term for intensive hog operations, differentiated from farms by ownership and scale. Small to medium-sized, family owned and operated farms provide the benchmark against which Premium Pork is measured. Residents note several distinguishing features between farms and Premium Pork’s operations. First, Premium Pork’s hog barns, by virtue of corporate ownership, answer to the needs of shareholders. As one farmer formerly in the hog industry clearly stated, “It’s a factory setup. The bottom line is the family farm pig operation does not have shareholders.” (M2) Further, residents view Premium Pork’s presence as an exploitation of Hamiota’s land, water and labour for corporate profit. As one local businessman and farmer commented:

“The only similarity between [Premium Pork’s operation] and a farm is the fact that there’s pigs there. It’s not a family farm, it’s strictly profit driven... There are no local farmers involved in this thing, it’s just some corporation that for all intents and purposes is exploiting our wide open spaces to make a profit, and trying to hide behind economic development as the reason why we should accept them.” (M1)

Second, the mode of production in Premium Pork’s operations provides many differences from family farms. For example, one woman explained that Premium Pork’s barns were industrial sites more akin to factories than to farms due to the labour structure of the facilities and the way pigs are raised:

“Out there, the pigs are all inside, there’s tons of workers out there and I would never think of that as a farm ever. It’s a hog barn and it’s run by Premium Pork. I wouldn’t even call it a factory farm, because it’s not a farm. It’s a factory.” (F7)

A former pig farmer elaborated on the differences in raising pigs in a factory-like facility:

“Premium Pork runs their operations differently, too. [The pigs] are on cement, standing in one little spot --- it’s like slap ‘em, pack ‘em and get them out. Our pigs were in a fairly big pen, they had straw. There were windows, they weren’t force fed... What do you think the difference in the meat will be? You know, between pigs who get sunlight, fresh air and get to move about, compared to the ones standing in one spot, fed, fed, fed. And then they’re getting injections of God knows what, steroids probably. That’s trickling down into us humans, what are we getting?” (F2)

By pointing to the differences in ownership and production between Premium Pork’s hog barns and local farms, discourses of resistance in Hamiota question the economic sense of attracting intensive hog operations that epitomize the capital concentration and intensification prevalent in most agricultural sectors. As one woman stated,

“If you took the number of hogs that PP is raising and divided it into the number of farms in the municipality, each one of those farms will profit so they can live here. Whereas this way, there’s none of that.” (F8)

Similarly, a local male farmer challenged the economic premise of Premium Pork’s intensive livestock operations:

“I guess going on the number of hogs, spread that over a number of hog farms in Hamiota, I think that as far as the bigger picture goes, it would be a better economic package for the area to have all those farmers raising that number of hogs instead of one big corporation. I think when it gets to that size, while it’s still deemed a farm operation, I can’t see it as a hog farm, and that goes for any livestock operation of that size. That is not a farm operation, it is a corporation.” (M6)

These narratives are particularly poignant given that there are no independent pig farmers left in the RM of Hamiota. According to one farmer, the economics of the hog industry are baffling:

“A number of years ago, about 3, all the small pig producers went broke. The price of pigs dropped off to nothing. That finished most of them off. The local small pig farmers are all gone now. I actually hardly know of any small pig operations around anymore. Now all of a sudden we’ve got these barns in here, and they seem to have set prices. It’s all got to be big

factory farms now, everything... So how come, the smaller operations that didn't have near as many pigs, went broke because there's no money in them? All of a sudden we have these mega-barns in here, and they're going to make money?... This is the end of the small pig farmer.”(M2)

Capital intensification within the hog industry presents a tremendous challenge to smaller producers who cannot compete with corporate barns for contracts based on large quantities and consistently standardized animals. As a formerly independent pig farmer explained,

“The hog barns are all corporate, and the little guy doesn't have any investors other than himself. It's not farming any way you look at it. It's not [Premium Pork] in specific that's shutting everyone else down, but there's actually only one small guy left operating on his own in this area [in the RM of Miniota]... Bigger companies can supply more. They can walk into Maple Leaf, or Springhill in Neepawa and cut a deal with them, whereas someone shipping 20 pigs a week doesn't really have any bargaining power. And you know you're not going to get what someone shipping 200 pigs a week is getting. It makes it harder.” (M3)

Echoing the above sentiments, another farmer summarized the situation for smaller producers with the following observations:

“The reality is that there's a lot of vertical integration that's happening within the livestock industry. Soon, and it's almost there, the McCain family will own the Brandon plant. They've also been purchasing genetics, feed companies. So it's going to get to the point where the only way you'll have access to a local killing plant is if you're tied in with these companies. It's strictly a case of wealthy entrepreneurship. There will soon be no market, or a very limited one and certainly not a premium market, for the farmer who's on his own with pigs. He's going to have no market at some point in time, unless he can carve out a niche market where he raises them organically and uses a local abattoir. I guess there will always be those kind of markets but a guy who wants to have 1000 head a year is going to find it difficult in the future. Unfortunately, that's the reality of business.” (M1)

Residents believe that as an indication of the trend toward corporatization and vertical integration in agriculture, the proliferation of intensive hog operations such as Premium Pork's could result in further rural depopulation. Intensive operations are part of

a hog industry that excludes small producers and the traditional methods of husbandry associated with them. As corporate ownership of land and concentration of agricultural production moves more people out of rural areas, the towns that depend on them will also wither. As one woman stated, “It’s one step into the corporations --- bigger, bigger, bigger. One barn with all these pigs instead of many family farms and many families. Therefore your small towns will soon be gone.” (F2) The general trend of bigger operations and intensification of agricultural operations was criticized by many residents, summarized by a grain farmer:

“Even family farms have to be big now— one rich guy buys up all the land, so then there’s only 1 or 2 families managing all the land instead of the 10 families that were there, so what’s going to happen to the little town? Gone. That’s what’s going to screw up... small towns will disappear with the end of family farms, as they have been already.” (M2)

Besides providing the basis for the economic and social ramifications outlined above, reifying Premium Pork as a corporation also allowed Hamiota residents to voice ecological concerns, especially with respect to groundwater contamination. In demonstrating distrust for Premium Pork, discourses of resistance portrayed local farmers as better environmental stewards than corporate managers. Specifically, as a company primarily concerned with profits, Premium Pork is portrayed as having less motivation to prevent environmental damage than a local farmer would, because the company may relocate elsewhere. A retired farmer offered his reasoning for this belief:

“Well, I’m not very confident that they will be good [environmental] managers, and I think everyone has to have a motivation. A farmer has a motivation, he’s going to be there, but I don’t think a hog barn has the same kind of motivation. Because there could be a problem with respect to manure management, and there could be a fine, but that generally ends the issue and things go on. But in the case of a farmer, if he damages his land, he damages himself. I can’t really see how the larger hog operations can be seen as farms, but they say they are. I don’t think that they would

necessarily be good stewards of the land. I think that the biggest single problem is the potential effect on aquifers and groundwater. I haven't seen any, and maybe this is the problem, I haven't seen any detailed studies on various effects on various kinds of soils. If a lagoon leaks, it's quite possible that there would be a permanent or long-term change in the aquifer." (M7)

As illustrated above, the management of manure and the potential effects on local water systems is a major concern, which is reinforced by the concentration of operations in the area. Proliferation of corporate hog barns producing large volumes of waste heightens concerns about the unpredictability of good manure spreading conditions. As one female farmer pointed out, simple weather changes can disrupt safe manure spreading practices, and that occurrences of unsafe spreading increases with significant amounts of manure:

"I have some concern over the manure thing. I'm sure that spreading some manure over fields isn't bad, but over time would there not be a buildup? And there's no way we can predict such things as a heavy downpour of rain washing manure into streams. Now perhaps they have a way of dealing with such things, but I don't think I really trust them to cover every eventuality, and they can't, especially in an area where there are so many pig barns. You know if there was just one, but the number seems to be building, there will be three right close here. So that's a lot of manure." (F9)

Thus, the number of Premium Pork's intensive hog barns being built in the area is perceived as a significant threat to groundwater. According to one young man, reassurances of sound management practices warrant some skepticism:

"Yeah, I've heard lots of negative things to do with hog barns, to do with the water table and stuff. I find it hard to believe that there's nothing wrong when the whole town is being surrounded by pig barns, basically. I guess I don't really know much about it, but the amount of waste those pigs are producing, maybe they'll be ecologically friendly for a little while, I think it'll build up, but I don't really know what they have planned for all that waste. I just have a lot of doubt." (M10)

Also demonstrating concern about the livestock concentration and the challenges for manure management, a female farmer offered a similar opinion, "It's pretty early to say,

but I think we're getting quite a few barns in a small area. That's a lot of livestock concentrated in one place, and I don't see how it can't be harmful." (F8) The above narratives regarding water contamination communicate significant mistrust of Premium Pork, and a wider skepticism of the environmental effects of intensive livestock operations, aptly summarized by one woman:

"I think that any intensive agriculture is going to affect the water. Those pollutants are going to seep down and eventually get into the groundwater. That's where the wells are. They say the technology is there to manage things, and I guess if they say that you have to believe it. But I don't think these people always live up to their promises." (F4)

Beyond condemning Premium Pork as a poor environmental steward, several people had questions about how water safety and environmental standards were being monitored. One businessman stated that part of the problem was the perceived absence of effective monitoring of the manure lagoons:

"This is about a company and they have no legal obligation to keep the public informed about what's going on in their business, but there should have been some way to have independent monitoring of their cells and lagoons. But if there's no independent body monitoring, then what's the likelihood of us ever knowing if there's a problem anyway? Pretty slim. The only way we'll be able to check is when there's already a problem." (M1)

Focusing on the differences between Premium Pork's operations and family farms allows residents to relay a high level of distrust for the company, and serves to highlight the potential consequences of corporate concentration of livestock operations on rural communities such as Hamiota. In particular, worries abounded about the loss of local power in decision-making, and the subsequent effects on life in Hamiota. As one woman explained,

"The biggest change I see is, it's all going to be corporate farming. Then the decisions are not going to be made locally. Rather, they'll be made far

away, who knows, even Holland, certainly Ontario anyway! And are those people going to be concerned about this community? I don't think so. They're not even going to understand it." (F4)

In shifts toward corporate farming, not only will micro-politics be transformed in Hamiota as residents lose political power, decisions about the use of land and the way food is produced will have significant consequences on the local environment.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to outline the discourses used both to promote and resist Premium Pork's operations in Hamiota. Proponents of Premium Pork construct Hamiota as a declining agricultural community in competition with surrounding communities for limited investment communities. Job creation is presented as a way to stabilize and possibly increase the population, by offering employment opportunities to young people and struggling grain farmers. In a moment of shrewd political decision-making, Hamiota officials ensured that Premium Pork would locate in the municipality by foregoing public consultations. This was justified by alluding to former public meetings that had effectively stalled such controversial developments as a hazardous waste facility, attributed to counterproductive concerns and unruly crowd mentality. Thus, public opinion was superceded and silenced.

The implications of the municipal government's actions are significant. The power to command how land will be used in the municipality is confined to local decision-makers with no accountability to residents. Quality of life issues around manure odours and potential groundwater contamination are subordinated to very particular

perceptions of development, in which municipal officials become brokers for potential investors.

Hamiota residents, in trying to regain some measure of power in a decision that affects their daily lives, have implemented a discourse that uphold the virtues of family farming. Their “quiet” resistance casts Premium Pork as an “outsider” in Hamiota, while resting on an uncritical ideal of family farming. In criticizing Premium Pork’s hog barns as factory-like operations, the economic benefits of these particular operations are directly challenged. Residents’ discourses about Premium Pork take place in conversations meant to subvert the authority of municipal planners, and as such, constitute the most everyday and quiet sort of resistance.

Conclusion

This thesis attempts to explore discourses of resistance to intensive hog barns in Hamiota. I began by tracing the political economy of commercial agriculture, in terms of its origins in the violent process of capitalist nation building, in which a national agricultural sector based on family farms was fostered. In this account, technological advances and the economic gains from national agricultural sectors began to fuel the depopulation of rural places, and saw transnational agribusinesses gain prominence. Food production became globalized, and the export imperative that informed initial construction of Canada's agricultural sector was reshaped to emphasize more value-added products. Since the 1980s, the agricultural sectors have been liberalized and deregulated, and agriculturally dependent places have felt the effects in depopulation and economic decline.

In southern Manitoba, a grain-producing area of the province, the removal of the Crow Rate for shipping grain has led to a provincially promoted diversification into the hog industry. For many municipalities with limited resources, controversial economic development schemes like intensive hog operations are attractive for the number of jobs they offer. However, the notion of competition between municipalities redefines the role of local government as one of brokering investment for economic development. The latter role formed the basis to avoid public consultation in Hamiota, signifying the denial of residents' rights to participate in economic development decisions that will affect their quality of life.

The political decision to deny public input was justified through a particular discourse of economic development. Emphasis on the grain crisis, and the need for jobs

to stabilize the population were used to justify the logic for welcoming Premium Pork to Hamiota. The language of competition for investment was used to legitimate incentives offered to the company and the discrete nature of negotiations, and to silence opposition to Premium Pork's operations. Residents were only informed of this controversial development after Premium Pork was in the process of building their barns. While formal protest was difficult for residents to mount in the absence of public consultations, and the timing of announcement, informal resistance does exist in everyday life. Specifically, residents engage in a discourse of resistance based on "community insider" subjectivities that aim to identify Premium Pork as an outsider. Contrasted against an ideal-type of family farms, this discourse of resistance relays mistrust for the company and its factory operations. In this way, concerns about water contamination, odours, quality of work, migrant workers, and loss of political autonomy in Hamiota are raised.

In examining quiet resistance to Premium Pork, I want to point to the power struggle over land use and accompanying social concerns inherent in competing discourses. While municipal officials want to create jobs in Hamiota, residents do not want their home to become a dumping ground for corporate livestock operations. Gaps in Manitoba's regulation of land use planning are just one example of how rural residents are saddled with established and potential problems of intensive hog operations. Although Hamiota's economic decline is very real, the rights of residents to make informed choices about their future has been severely limited by political and economic realities responded to in a particular way by national, provincial and municipal governments. Calling attention to and exploring quiet resistance illustrates that intensive hog operations in

Manitoba are contingent economic developments, and may be challenged with alternatives.

Due to actions of municipal officials in Hamiota that removed the initial possibility of formal protests for residents, theirs has been a “quiet” resistance confined to a symbolic discursive struggle carried out through informal conversations. The discourses of resistance that constitute conversations around town and in the coffeeshop involve residents’ attempts to construct Premium Pork as an outsider, and to differentiate its “hog barns” as factories. These discourses constitute resistance in their attempt to legitimate residents’ ecological, economic, political, and social knowledge of the area, but they do so by strategically operationalizing an uncritical ideal-type of family farming that upholds a conventional gendered division of labour that devalues the on-farm and off-farm work of women. Thus, we see Hamiota residents attempting to reclaim legitimacy for their forms of local knowledge in decisions about land use through a strategically unifying discourse of ‘family farms’ that masks the gendered particularities of family farming.

As a work that draws on the political economy of food and political ecology literatures, I believe this thesis offers some contributions to both bodies of scholarship. Through the study of how power operates through discourses, questions arise with respect to the economic, social and political rights of rural residents, the purpose of economic development planning, and the roles of citizens, corporations and government at every level. All of these questions as they relate to agriculture force us to critically examine our philosophies regarding food production and the relations between men and women with respect to land use in Canada.

My argument casts the roles of the federal and provincial governments as one of expediting the export imperative first through subsidized homestead agriculture and now through investment in value-added industries. The vehicles for these levels of governments to attain the goal of increased value-added exports are vertically integrated corporations competing in global food markets. For agricultural municipalities in economic decline, the challenge is to find a place in the changing structure of agriculture by attracting investment for economic development. The discourses of value added agri-food exports, competition and economic growth imbue governments with these roles, and subordinate a vast array of social and ecological concerns. As such, the role of citizens, as the purported subjects of economic development in these discourses, is rendered quite passive. It is at this juncture, however, that the creation of discursive space for alternative types of community development via “quiet resistance” becomes important.

As seen in Hamiota, quiet resistance as the discourses of everyday life becomes an attempt to regain authority about a local place and economy in which the role of discourse is to suggest socially acceptable alternatives to ILOs. This is a struggle that continues in light of the establishment of Premium Pork’s extended production network in the area. Municipal officials have assumed positions of authority for economic planning, and present their strategies in terms of the future economic sustainability of the community. However, residents do not want to see their soil and water resources spoiled by livestock intensification, nor do they want to see depopulation and economic decline in the area continue; furthermore, they do not want to lose their homes and livelihoods. In order to draw attention to these concerns in contrast to the compelling language of economic development, Hamiota residents are attempting to gain a discursive platform from which

to challenge the authority of municipal officials through discourses of resistance present in everyday interactions at the coffeeshop and around town. This may be seen as an example of Scott's concept of resistance, as a daily discursive struggle against intensive hog operations that lies beyond the visible end of the political spectrum, especially when compared to some of the overt reactions of neighbouring communities;¹ upset Rosburn residents, for example, dumped pig manure on the table at a municipal council meeting. It is important to recognize that more overt types of resistance find their origins in subordinated discourses, and that resistance as discourse alone is a practical and universally available way for marginalized groups to resist, without risk, those people who would claim power over them.

With respect to these concerns, one question beyond the scope of this thesis arises that is increasingly important for me: how does locally based "quiet" resistance as discourse operate (or fail to operate), beyond challenging dominant constructions of development, to change the tide of deepening agricultural vertical integration and the limited roles of rural locales in the global economy? In a related fashion, I am interested in how this piece of work, as a study of a particular rural economic development strategy, relates to a lively body of urban "entrepreneurial city" literature. Canadian cities, as well as rural municipalities, are attempting to attract investment as a way of spurring economic growth and fostering global competition, but in contrast to the "smart" label attached to many Canadian cities with respect to their economic development strategies, most rural municipalities appear desperate.

In addition to drawing attention to these important questions, this thesis attempts to make a contribution to studies of political ecology and the political economy of food in

¹ Scott, 1990.

the North by trying to bridge macro studies of global agricultural restructuring and the specific micro situations that emerge within this context. I also believe that this thesis not only counteracts a disciplinary bias towards the South in much political ecology literature by addressing struggles over land use decisions in Canada; it also makes other contributions to such studies. Particularly, as economic development projects in the South often replicate Northern, intensive styles of agricultural production, the economic, social and ecological plight of rural areas around the world may provide a basis for affinity and action in a way that the aggregate socioeconomic status of nations cannot. Similarities between the effects of agricultural structural adjustment in the North and South may provide a basis for agricultural policy alternatives, as one example.² In this way, the problems of intensive agricultural production and restructuring in Canada can inform debates in other places where radical intensification is taking place, and attest to the need for alternative types of agricultural and rural development around the world.

² See the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives article, "The Structural Adjustment of Canadian Agriculture," 2002.

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APPENDIX A: COVER LETTER

Haeli Goertzen
M.A. Thesis Researcher
Institute of Political Economy
Carleton University
Ottawa, ON
email: haeli16@hotmail.com

Dear Jane/John Doe:

You are being invited to participate as an interview subject in a Master's thesis project on corporate hog farms in Hamiota. This project seeks to explore the meanings that Hamiota residents attach to Premium Pork's operations within the Rural Municipality of Hamiota. The focus of the research is to explore residents' perceptions of corporate hog farms in comparison to the promotion of Premium Pork's operations as a community economic development strategy. This research will result in a thesis which will be made public through the Carleton University Library and the Hamiota Centennial Library. The project may also be published in article or book form.

As an interview subject for this research project it is important that you understand that you are not bound in any way to comply with the interview. You retain the right to stop the interview at any time without prejudice. It is important that you understand that you have the right to ask for clarification or refuse to answer any of the questions that you are asked throughout the interview. You will also be given the option to keep your comments anonymous. The process for ensuring anonymity will be explained on the following consent form. The interview should be completed within 45-60 minutes.

Thank you in advance,

Haeli Goertzen

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Purpose of informed consent form:

A consent form is intended to outline your rights as an interview subject and to help explain the purpose of the research you are contributing to. I will retain a copy of the consent form and you may keep a copy for your own records.

Statement of research to be undertaken:

You, the undersigned, are being invited to participate in the research process for a Master's thesis on the subject of large-scale hog operations as a community development strategy in Hamiota, which will be made public through the Carleton University Library. The thesis will also be available at the Hamiota Centennial Library. There is the possibility that the research may be published in either article or book form.

Contact Information:

Researcher: Haeli Goertzen, (613) 730-3763, (204) 764-2778, or email: haeli16@hotmail.com

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Fiona Mackenzie, Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 2576

Political Economy Chair: Prof. Rianne Mahon, Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 8858

Potential Risks:

As the researcher, I realize that as this research project asks questions of a political nature, and that there is the potential for emotional, economic and social risks associated with the research process. Some of the questions I would like to ask may be related to your occupation(s), and will include the sensitive issue of intensive hog operations in your community. Responding to these questions will involve voicing your perceptions of various aspects of intensive hog farming and the political processes involved in their approval. Therefore it is important that you carefully read the set of topics that the interview will cover, which accompanies this consent form. Being aware of the types of issues that may be raised in the interview should allow you to assess whether or not you perceive any potential risks, or anticipate possible anxiety or discomfort that may arise from the interview process. I believe that any potential risks associated with the research process can be avoided through your anonymous participation. Whether or not you perceive any risks it is important that you understand your rights as an interviewee and the process for requesting and ensuring anonymity as outlined below.

Interviewee's rights:

As an interview subject you can stop the interview at any time without prejudice. You may also decline to answer any question(s). You will decide how the information you have provided will be dealt with if you decide at any time to withdraw from the interview process. Please read the following statements and check one in accordance with your wishes.

- ☐ Should I exercise my right to withdraw at any time *I will allow* the researcher to use the data I have provided to that point.
- ☐ Should I exercise my right to withdraw at any time *I will not allow* the researcher to use the data I have provided to that point.

Process for ensuring anonymity:

- each interview will be transcribed by the interviewer and coded.
- a record of the interview subject's coding and the list of interview participants will be kept in the thesis supervisor's locked office.
- any audio recordings will be similarly coded.
- any records of the interviews will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research.

Request for anonymity (please check one):

- ☐ I *wish* to remain an anonymous interview subject.
- ☐ I *do not wish* to remain an anonymous interview subject.

Agreement to participate in the research process:

Name of interview subject (please print)

Signature of interview subject

Haeli Goertzen*

Date

*I agree to comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement "Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans," available at www.nserc.ca/programs/ethics/index.htm .

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The semi-structured interviews that I undertake will include questions/discussion on the interview subjects' perceptions of intensive hog operations regarding the following issues:

A. Environmental Issues

- effects of hog barns on land and water quality
- odour

B. Social Issues

- odour
- traffic, dust and noise
- perceptions about the position of corporate farms and family farms in the municipality
- differences between a "farm" and a "hog barn"

C. Economic Issues

- corporate farms' advantages/disadvantages to community development
- agro-industry and implications for family farms

D. Political Issues

- process of attracting agro-industry and community input