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Planning in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari? Considering community-based food projects in the United States and Mexico

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ABSTRACT

In this article we argue that planning theory and practice should engage more with the normative political vision of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. They reject the transcendent authority of the State and arguably by extension, planning. As planners we should be concerned: need we reconceptualize, or abandon the planning project? We outline their vision, highlighting key concepts including lines of flight, revolution, the new land, and immanent organization, and use two cases from the United States and Mexico, the Food Commons and Center for Integral Farmer Development in the Mixteca, to show that planning in accordance with Deleuze and Guattari may indeed be possible. We end with questions: is what we describe planning? And what is planning – or what should it be?

Introduction

This article argues for a closer engagement between the normative political vision of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on the one hand, and planning theory and practice on the other. We argue for this engagement even though we think Deleuze and Guattari's work, if it is engaged fully, will unsettle planning to its core. We think they will force planners either to radically reconceptualize what planning is, or to abandon planning altogether. Deleuze and Guattari's vision is an unmistakable rejection of both the transcendent authority of the State, and the deadening alienation and domination of capitalist social relations. They urge us to create a world of radical freedom, beyond both the State and capitalism. If we take Deleuze and Guattari seriously, we will certainly abandon planning as we know it, which is to say planning as a State-led attempt to manage the complex processes of urbanization and the failures and excesses of the capitalist market. But even so, if, inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, we were to abandon planning as we know it, does that mean we would also need to abandon planning more generally? Do Deleuze and Guattari stand against planning-in-general? Or might it be possible to conceptualize a radically new idea of planning, one that would be appropriate to the new world that Deleuze and Guattari imagine?

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This article leaves those latter questions open. It does not take a position on whether we should develop a radically new idea of planning or abandon planning more generally. Nevertheless, we will try to do some work on those open questions. Specifically, we want to explore the question of whether it is possible to create a form of planning that is appropriate to Deleuze and Guattari's vision. To do so, we offer a provisional sketch of what such planning might look like, both in theory and in practice. First, we articulate that sketch *in theory* by proposing a provisional idea of radical planning that we think is consonant with Deleuze and Guattari's vision. Then, we articulate the sketch *empirically* through an examination of alternative food movements in the United States and Mexico. This empirical section describes some emerging practices in the world that seem to resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's normative political vision. We conclude by asking whether such practices in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari should be considered planning, or if they are more properly something other than planning. In the long run, we hope planners will continue to pursue their emerging engagement with Deleuze and Guattari, and we hope that engagement will bring about, at the very least, a radical shift in the way planning is thought and practiced.

Deleuze and Guattari's political vision

Against Hobbes

To really understand the relationship between Deleuze and Guattari and planning, it is necessary to start with Thomas Hobbes. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes insists that people are the source of all political power. In Hobbes' state of nature, by which he meant human life outside the State, each person retains his or her own power and uses it as s/he sees fit. The State only comes into existence, Hobbes argues, when people decide to surrender their power to the State and agree to let it rule them. The State is thus necessarily an aggregation of the power we have all agreed to surrender. For Hobbes, the State is an abstraction from the community of human beings. It is what he calls an "artificial person," something that is other than and alien to the community of actual people, whom he calls "natural persons." The artificial person of the State is *raised above* the community of natural persons: it transcends them and occupies a position of sovereign authority over them. Hobbes argues passionately (e.g. in Chapter 17) that without this sovereignty, without the consecration of the power of the State as the ultimate authority in society, the human community would degenerate into a brutish condition of total war.

Hobbes' argument here is specifically about political power, about how the State accumulates our own power into a transcendent structure that governs us. Deleuze and Guattari's work makes a more general argument about the world: in many different spheres of human life, they say, we surrender our own power to systems that subsequently use it to dominate us. For Deleuze and Guattari, the original power in the world is what they call "desiring-production" (see esp. 1977, part 1). Desiring-production is the power to produce, the power to create new things in the world. It is the only force capable of such production; all other powers derive from its power. If left to itself, desiring-production is able to create according to its own inner drives. But desiring-production is not left alone. Deleuze and Guattari say that it is continually being

captured by structures that are abstracted from it, that transcend it, and that channel and control it. These structures make desiring-production behave according to the needs of the structure, rather than according to its own inner drives. Examples of such "apparatuses of capture," as they call them (1987, chapter 13), are the family, the subject/individual, the body, the signifier, the organism, and the State. Each apparatus is important to Deleuze and Guattari, but the State gets special attention in a long chapter near the end of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Each of the apparatuses captures desiring-production, constrains it, channels its flows, and causes it to act in limited ways that reinforce the particular needs of the apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari reiterate that desiring-production is the only thing in the world that is productive, and so the apparatuses can only ever be unproductive systems of control. The apparatuses cannot create, they can only guide and shape desiring-production's creative force. They are therefore dependent on desiring-production. They would not exist without it.

Lines of flight

Deleuze and Guattari insist that given this general state of affairs in which our own power is captured and controlled, what we need is a revolution. They do not mean revolution in the classic Marxist sense, in which workers organize into a party, seize the State, abolish private property, etc. For Deleuze and Guattari, revolution means freeing desiring-production from the various apparatuses of capture so that it can operate according to its own inner drives. We can bring about this revolution, they argue, by engaging in "schizoanalysis," a process by which people discover the desire that is at work in any given situation, understand it, and help it flourish on its own terms (esp. 1977, part 4). To flourish, they argue, desire needs not so much to confront the apparatuses, to resist them or struggle against them in order to suppress or smash them. Rather desire *runs away*; it disengages with the apparatuses. Desire needs to initiate what Deleuze and Guattari call "lines of flight" (1987, esp. chapter 9), which are escapes, exoduses, withdrawals from the apparatuses of capture.

Flight is a thrilling prospect, but Deleuze and Guattari warn us it is never an easy project. Escaped desire rarely remains free for long. In rare cases it turns suicidal and careens off into oblivion, but most often it is merely recaptured by the apparatuses (1987, esp. chapter 9). Given this fact, we might imagine a reformist strategy in which successive flights-and-recaptures could, if they were frequent enough, incrementally alter the system of apparatuses for the better. For example, the organic food movement in the United States began by fleeing corporate-capitalist agriculture and trying to create a different system of food production. But the movement was soon pursued by capitalism and reabsorbed through branding and commodification. We could say that this sequence of flight and recapture has been successful, in a way, because it has resulted in a modified apparatus of capture: a less environmentally destructive corporate-capitalist food system that produces healthier food of better quality.[1]

Revolution

But Deleuze and Guattari are not reformists. They are unapologetic revolutionaries. They aim at more than merely a cycle of escape-and-recapture. They want escape to

endure, to spread, to become generalized, to grow into an epidemic of flight that the apparatuses cannot contain. For this to happen, they say, escaped elements must not escape in isolation. Rather they must seek out each other in their flight. They must connect relentlessly with other fleeing elements (1987, esp. chapter 9). Deleuze and Guattari say that these connections will augment the power, intelligence, and energy of each element so that they are better able to sustain their flight. Moreover, if the connections are made in the right way, they will increase the capacity of each element to connect with others.[2] In this way, connections will themselves breed more connections, and in the best case they will touch off a chain reaction of connections that multiplies endlessly. Connections among uncountable lines in flight, growing more numerous at an accelerating rate. For Deleuze and Guattari, that is what revolution means.

In addition to that positive, productive aspect of flight, Deleuze and Guattari imagine that flight also performs a negative task. When elements of desiring-production flee, they will carry away with them a chunk of the system of capture, such that, by their leaving, they will weaken the system's integrity. As more and more elements make their escape, together they will bear off a larger and larger proportion of that system, and eventually it will become unstable. Perhaps it will even collapse. Again, even in this negative mode, Deleuze and Guattari's vision is the same: not incremental change within a relatively stable system of capture, but a total collapse of that system.

Returning to the positive mode of flight, it is important to understand what kind of associations Deleuze and Guattari imagine fleeing elements of desiring-production will create together. They advocate a form of association they call a "rhizome," a mass of interlinked peers in which no element (or group of elements) transcends the rest, none is more central, important, authoritative than the rest, none exists outside or beyond the rest (1987, esp. Chapter 1). It is easy to see how they are working against Hobbes here. Rhizomes are horizontal networks in which each element remains immanent to the association. They are not vertical networks, where one or more elements is taken outside of and raised hierarchically above the rest. Rhizomes are *acentered* networks because they lack centrality, which is to say they do not have one or more nodes in the network that carries more connections (and is therefore more important) than the others.[3] Ideally, in a rhizome each element is connected to every other element in a perfectly distributed network. Deleuze and Guattari contrast the rhizome to what they call an "arboreal" association. Like a tree, an arboreal structure has a central trunk that is hierarchically superior to the limbs, each of which is hierarchically superior to its branches, etc. In such a structure, all nutrients (or information or power) must flow through the trunk first before they can arrive at the subordinate elements. "We're tired of trees," Deleuze and Guattari write, "they've made us suffer too much" (1987, p. 15).

A new land

In the best case, when multiple elements of desire have fled the apparatuses, when they have connected successfully to form thriving rhizomes that maintain flight and forestall recapture, when the system of apparatuses has begun to sag and crumble, at that point it is possible for something else to emerge, something Deleuze and Guattari sometimes call "a new land" (1977, esp. p. 318). This new land is a very odd sort of land: it is made

up of motion, of elements in active flight. As lines of flight connect, augment each other, and begin to assemble thriving rhizomes, they may eventually form a large enough mass of lines that they begin to trace out something like a plane, a fluid and yet tangibly consistent two-dimensional horizontal space. When flight becomes generalized in this way, when the energy and motion of flight becomes intense enough, the stasis of the apparatuses can no longer obtain; it gives way. Flight comes to *pervade* social life to the point it is able to trace out this new land.

To be clear, Deleuze and Guattari do not imagine the new land to exist at the end of history. It is not a final condition, a perfect utopia. Flight and deterritorialization can never be total or final. Deleuze and Guattari reiterate many times that apparatuses of capture will always re-emerge and reassert themselves. Elements in flight will always be tempted to give up the difficult work of escape and settle back down into stasis, into new apparatuses in a new social order. This temptation, to surrender again to the apparatuses, must be *continually* warded off. The new land must be continually constructed and re-constructed through a project of escape that is always ongoing.

Again, Deleuze and Guattari are not reformists; they are offering a revolutionary agenda. The new land is a sea-change, a radical transformation of our condition in which the apparatuses are in a state of collapse, social order is in disarray, and flight pervades the social field. But again, the oppressed do not seize the instruments of power and use them to subjugate their former oppressors. Elements in flight pervade the social field, they proliferate so successfully that the apparatuses are bereft and lose their ability to maintain order. But those elements never oppress or dominate the apparatuses. They flee them. They continually redouble their flight. The apparatuses are always "warded off" by elements in flight; the former can never be "captured" or "controlled" or "suppressed." The new land is initiated by, made up of, and maintained by a perpetual project of flight.

And so the revolution that gives rise to the new land does not achieve a transition from one social order to another. It is, rather, a transition to an existence in which social order is perpetually put into abeyance. Elements in flight are not in flight from this social order or that one, but from social order per se. If they give up their flight, and settle into a new social order, the new land will necessarily dissolve, because their flight is the very substance of the new land. The characteristic activity of the new land is to prevent the emergence of a new order by stoking the condition of flight, to maintain a radically different human condition, beyond all systems of capture.

Immanent organization

But even if social order is in abeyance in the new land, Deleuze and Guattari think that there *will* be forms of organization, or consistency, or routine. Our lives together will not be utterly chaotic or random. For Deleuze and Guattari the key is that what organization or consistency or routine exists must remain *immanent*. It must always emerge out of the activity of people themselves. Organization cannot be directed or managed by a separate, transcendent, or centralized power. In the new land, people struggle to not let something outside themselves rule them. They are always warding off transcendent structures of control, always preventing what organization does emerge from becoming transcendent. They continue to flee from any power that exists outside

of or above themselves. What this means, in sum, is that people in the new land *actively manage their affairs for themselves*. They discover how to create radically democratic ways of being together. They live beyond – and actively prevent the re-emergence of – all forms of sovereignty, consecrated authority, centralized power, and institutionalized control. In the new land there are no artificial persons that transcend the community; there are only natural persons that are immanent to it. There is absolutely no place in the new land for the State, because it is the quintessence of transcendent, sovereign authority. Anti-Hobbesians to their core, Deleuze and Guattari intensely oppose the State in all its forms.

And so we hope it is not difficult to infer Deleuze and Guattari's position on any kind of planning under the auspices of the State. State-led planning, planning as we typically know it, is deeply marked with precisely the kind of relations of transcendent, sovereign authority Deleuze and Guattari want us to flee. Planning as we know it is hardly ever an activity that is carried out by everyone. Planning is almost always done by a specialized subset of the population: trained planning professionals. The authority to make planning decisions almost never remains immanent, distributed across all people in a community. Rather the authority to plan is almost always vested in specific institutions – planning agencies – and decisions are controlled by that agency (and its hierarchical superiors). Plans are rarely allowed to emerge from the immanent planning activity of people themselves, rather the plan that is created by professional planners, working for authorized planning agencies, becomes transcendent. It becomes "the Plan." Any other planning activity is permitted only insofar as it comports with this official Plan. That is the whole idea of planning as we know it.

Certainly we are not saying that planning as we know it is *perfectly* transcendent, or sovereign, or State-authorized. Obviously in any given planning context there are forces at work that are beyond or outside of the official Plan. We are trying to say merely that if we think planning with Deleuze and Guattari, we will become more aware of the extent to which planning as we know it is deeply pervaded by relations of transcendence, sovereignty, and State authority. And, more than that, we will get the itch to flee. We will become radically opposed to planning as we know it, and we will desire to invent another kind of planning, a planning that is immanent to the activity of people, a planning in which the authority (and responsibility) to plan is distributed across all members of the community. We will begin to wonder what would happen if we planned for ourselves, rather than letting the State and its professionals do it for us. What would that be like – an immanent, distributed, non-State planning? That is precisely the question Deleuze and Guattari prompt us to ask.

We think it is exactly the right question. But it is one that does not have an easy answer. It will require a long and collective investigation, one we think should be mostly an *empirical* one: to what extent are people *already doing* that kind of planning, outside and underneath and in the cracks of planning as we know it? Desiring-production is never resigned in its capture. It is always working its way free, plotting its escape, looking for ways to operate according to its own will. Even if planning as we know it is thoroughly stained by transcendence, sovereignty, and State-authorization, nevertheless people are "planning" for themselves, working away at their own projects, planning in ways the State doesn't see, in gaps the Plan never imagined.

It is an empirical question, but it is one most planners do not think to ask. We should be looking for such planning in the activity of actual human communities, building a case file of examples so that we can get a fuller sense of what such planning is actually like (see Born, 2013). And so the rest of this article is devoted to that project. We examine several different cases from the alternative food movement in an effort to seek out and try to describe actions, relations, and communities that resonate, to greater or lesser degrees, with Deleuze and Guattari's new land. None of the cases is unadulterated, the perfect instance of a new land. All are complex mixtures of different desires and agendas and degrees of immanence. Our intent in narrating them is not to find the perfect case, but to look for that immanence, to shine a light on it so that we can begin to see it, become aware of it, and maybe even discover that it is not as rare as we thought it was. We hope our investigation can join a new effort that will begin tracing the lineaments of what an immanent planning might be, a planning that can stoke our imagination of what is possible, "fell trees in favor of veritable rhizomes" (1987, p. 190), and contribute, a little, to a revolution.

Cases

We focus our attention on alternative food movements in Mexico and the United States because they are cases we know something about. We do not claim that immanent planning is more likely to be found in this arena than elsewhere. We think we should look for it wherever we can. Immanence and active self-management can be seen in the cases we present, but it can also be seen elsewhere: in workers occupying and managing their factories; in residents squatting urban land for housing or for agriculture; in auto-produced settlements of millions of residents in cities in the global South; in attempts to create alternative local economies; in initiatives to create community-supported agriculture or fishing. None of these creates an entirely new land beyond the State and capital. But they are all instances of people in flight, people who are building human communities and relationships for themselves, beyond systems of separated, transcendent, sovereign power. To varying degrees, they are creating some other way of being together, another form of life.[4] These initial escapes, if they are to thrive, must seek out and connect with others, form rhizomes that grow and spread, and trace out a new land.

The first of our cases, located in the United States, is an initiative called Food Commons. The second case is a farmer-to-farmer education organization in Oaxaca, Mexico called CEDICAM (Center for Integral Farmer Development in the Mixteca), which works to increase the food sovereignty of communities in the region. Both cases are complex, with many parts. Our goal in examining them is less to provide a complete picture of the cases themselves, and more to emphasize those aspects that resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's vision. We aim to evoke a concrete, if perhaps fleeting, sense of what planning in a new land might be like.

Food commons

Food Commons is an initiative undertaken by former members of Roots of Change, a statewide project in California that works for a more sustainable and just food system.

The goal of Food Commons is to develop an alternative to the current global corporate food system by supporting a network of smaller-scale, regional food systems, each of which is owned and controlled by people in the region.[5] Each regional system would be relatively autonomous from the others, but the various systems would also still be linked together in a network for addressing issues of common concern. Inside each region, the goal is to work toward greater collective ownership and management of all elements of the food system – farmland, financial institutions, processing facilities, distribution systems, and retail outlets. Each regional system imagined by Food Commons would be organized into three main components: (1) a "non-profit and quasi-public" trust that purchases and controls farm land and other food-production assets; (2) a collectively owned financial arm that amasses and loans capital; and (3) an "integrated business enterprise" called a "hub," also collectively owned, that builds and manages distribution and retail systems (see Food Commons, 2011).

For Food Commons the idea is not really to resist the conventional global corporate food system in order to undermine it. Rather the goal is to focus on building an alternative approach to food, organized on different principles:

> Food Commons does not seek to replace the current global industrial food system, but rather to strengthen the overall food system in the United States by expanding and diversifying the number of individuals and businesses participating in food supply chains, providing communities with the opportunity to invest in and control the means of their own food security, and increasing consumer choice and access to foods produced in accordance with commonly shared principles of fairness, sustainability and accountability. (Food Commons 2.0 p. 30)

This desire resonates, to an extent, with Deleuze and Guattari's insistence of flight, and it is worth noting that it differentiates Food Commons from most food activism, which tends to be focused on undermining the dominance of the conventional system through greater government regulation (or at least reduced government subsidization) of global corporate food production (e.g. factory-farmed cash crops, or genetically modified seeds). The Food Commons model, by contrast, hopes that, in a given regional-scale food shed, the elements that are already in flight from the current system, whether they be farmers, processors, stores, banks, or consumers, can be *connected* to each other so that they can create organizations of mutual support that will help them sustain their flight. The idea is that if they can be connected successfully and are able to begin building viable alternative approaches to food, more and more elements of the regional food system can also choose to flee and connect into the emerging alternative. If this process gains enough momentum, eventually the current system would fall into disuse and wither. While Food Commons does not articulate the latter goal explicitly, nevertheless it would be the logical outcome of their vision for a spreading network of collectively owned regional food systems in the United States and beyond.

Food Commons itself is a non-profit corporation, and the trust in each regional system would be a non-profit corporation as well. But the model also imagines a role for local-scale for-profit firms, particularly in the distribution and retail sector. Food commons expects that there will be a role for the profit motive and market distribution mechanisms in the food system it is trying to create. However, whereas the goal of corporate-capitalist agricultural production is to maximize the accumulation of capital,

Food Commons' principal goal is to provide healthier, less expensive, and better food to consumers. Any profits are expected to be reinvested in the local system, both by paying reasonable wages to workers, and by investing in additional infrastructure to allow for the local network to sustain itself. This kind of behavior, Food Commons argues, will provide food *and* stimulate growth in the regional economy. Clearly, Food Commons is imagining something different from a conventional capitalist food system. But still, their openness to profit motives and market distribution mechanisms could provide a point of recapture through which fledgling regional food systems could be reintegrated into the capitalist apparatus. And the fact that they emphasize local economic growth as an important goal similarly opens the possibility that a given regional system could regress to become once again a system whose primary goal is capital accumulation.

Today Food Commons remains more an idea than a practice. It is being tested, as "prototypes," in Atlanta, Fresno, and Auckland, NZ (see Food Commons, 2011). By design, each prototype will vary to some extent in its features, since the particular arrangements are intended to be tailored to the local context and to the particular collection of participants. And so as participants work to turn the concept into practice, as they begin to make real decisions on how their food system will look, there are at least two large questions that remain open. The first has to do with the organization and initial financing of Food Commons. As it is currently set up, Food Commons is directed by a core leadership group, and its financing comes mostly from a small group of major investors and foundations who are eager to see if a sustainable regional food network is feasible. Even though such organizational and financial oligarchy is intended to be temporary, to be only necessary at the beginning in order to give the prototypes some starting momentum, still this relatively centralized organization is not at all a rhizomatic structure, and so in a way the whole initiative starts life having to overcome a (perhaps significant) founding hurdle. On the other hand, the values that guide the implementation of the prototypes point in a more rhizomatic direction: they include "subsidiarity," a principle that favors decentralized decision-making authority within each regional food system once it is up and running. Food Commons intends that the networks in each system will be distributed networks, to the extent that is found to be feasible by the participants. But Food Commons also explicitly expects the need for a federal (that is, loosely hierarchical) organizational structure in which more local groups abide by the decisions of a larger-scale collective on issues of common concern. So, if the prototypes are allowed to develop their values, practices, and organization emergently and democratically, or, better, if the actors in each local system decide to actively take up the work of managing their affairs for themselves, then there is greater possibility that rhizomatic organization will develop in, and come to permeate, each regional prototype. If instead the Food Commons leadership asserts tighter control over values and organization, and if the participants choose *not* to assert their own control, then each prototype may well develop a more arboreal structure.

The second open question has to do with the State. The State is not a central presence in the Food Commons vision. The trust, the financial arm, and the hub are owned collectively, but they are not owned by the State. Food Commons does not adopt the familiar Keynesian or State-socialist model, in which the State is assumed to be the same thing as the people/public/community, and it acts in place of the people.[6] But in the Food Commons approach, ownership is imagined to be outside the State, held

jointly by some combination of elements in civil society. But as each regional prototype develops, there is always the possibility that it will come to prefer a State-ownership model and allow the State to play a major role in funding and managing the regional food system.

And, even if a particular regional system successfully wards off the State and control remains in the hands of active community members, another, more subtle, shift could occur. The organizational forms that are created – the trust, the hub – might come to take on State-like qualities. That is, they might start out as immanent organs that effectively coordinate the food system through the activity of people themselves, but over time they might take on a transcendent position such that, say, the hub goes from being an immanent organizational form that arose as an effective response to a specific need, to being The Hub, a fixed institution that is granted durable and final authority to make decisions within a certain purview. This latter development is always a danger, and it is more insidious. It is much easier to identify and refuse the State-led model – for that, one would only need to examine the experience of actual socialist States. It is much harder to know when State-like qualities (transcendence, sovereignty, institutionalized authority) are growing stronger within an immanent organization, harder to perceive them gradually usurping control over decisions, harder to see a formerly active population is becoming increasingly passive. And here again, the way that Food Commons is coming into being, through the initiative of a cadre of visionary leaders and funders, rather than emerging from the distributed activities of people themselves, may make it more susceptible to the emergence of such State-like qualities.

Oaxaca: flight, immanence, rhizomes

The second case we examine is located in a very different context than Food Commons, albeit one that is very much linked to the food system in the United States. Oaxaca is both a city and state in southern Mexico. It is among the poorest states in Mexico, usually ranked the third poorest, depending on the measure of poverty (World Bank, 2011). Oaxaca has long history of activism around indigenous rights and social justice, often in conflict with the state government. The most notable example in recent history is the 2006 popular uprising after a teachers' union strike. Violent repression of the teachers' strike by the State emboldened a much wider societal response – which emerged in an organization called the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca – that ultimately forced the State to retreat from the city. For six months, beginning in June of 2006, people in their neighborhoods managed for themselves, through community assemblies, the city's security, food provision, transportation, and other functions (Denham & C.A.S.A. Collective, 2008, esp. p. 27, 77).

The Oaxaca region also has a long history of struggle over the production, distribution, and consumption of food. In the Oaxacan *campo*, or countryside, smallhold farms are the norm. Oaxaca is the ancestral home of maize, and so there is a strong economic and cultural connection to that crop. At the same time, most farmers in the region have been exposed to, and many use, modern Green Revolution agricultural technologies. Other farmers have begun developing alternative farming approaches, such as reintroducing pre-conquest heritage crops (e.g. amaranth), using organic fertilizers and pest

management regimes, and employing older technologies like human and animal labor to plow parcels that are difficult to access.

The most recent chapter in this history concerns genetically modified corn. It has been found in the mountain areas of the region, where its pollen was carried in by the wind. Local opinion about genetically modified crops is mixed. Some farmers see transgenics as a threat to the genetic diversity of the area, and a threat to maize in particular, while others are interested in the potential benefits of the new varieties. The Mexican government has, since at least the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, been strongly supportive of large-scale agribusiness in general and the use of genetically modified seeds in particular. Its experts promote the use of chemical inputs on farms, and they favor cash crops over food crops. Moreover, the government has actively cut support for agricultural technologies that favor small-scale farming by smallholders growing food for local consumption. The inputs that are still provided – subsidized seed for example – are of unknown origin to the farmers, and many suspect it is imported hybrid seed (Shapiro, 2006). But for many small-scale farming families in Oaxaca, the simple fact that food is available is more important than the provenance of the seed.

On the consumption side, food debates are lively as well. Not only with regard to seed heritage and culturally important foodways, but also with regard to public health. In the main city of Oaxaca de Juarez, people have been exposed to the diet of the industrialized world and the products of the industrial food system. As a result, obesity is rising, junk food is popular at every small bodega, and traditional food markets are losing popularity as shoppers turn to megamarkets like Sorriana and Chedraui. Traditional foods are being displaced by corporately produced substitutes, and even tortillas are now sold under the Wonder Bread label.

In the case study that follows, we will focus our attention on the Center for Integral Farmer Development in the Mixteca (CEDICAM). But it is important to understand that CEDICAM is not alone in the region. There are many groups and organizations struggling to create other approaches to food. Issues of concern across the groups include the encroachment of the global industrial food system, tenure security for smallholders, technologies for maintaining yields, healthy foods, indigenous rights, and colonial domination.[7] For example, the Indigenous Rights Center Flor y Canto (*Centro de Derechos Indígenas Flor y Canto*), advocates for the preservation and expansion of indigenous peoples' rights to resources, such as water use appropriate to subsistence agriculture. There are also larger assemblies of organizations with multiple missions, such as the Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juarez of Oaxaca (UNOSJO), a mostly Zapotec organization that advocates for more secure land tenure, indigenous rights, and forest and watershed protection. There are also smaller and more informal groups, such as RASA (Autonomous Network for Food Sovereignty), a network for cultural preservation and food sovereignty that has a particular interest in urban and peri-urban agriculture. While most groups focus on the production of food in the countryside, RASA is concerned with food production and consumption in the city. It is a loose network of some 100 members that has no paid staff and goes from periods of great activity (i.e. small conferences, meetings, site visits, trainings) to near-dormancy. The mission of the group is to increase food sovereignty and security particularly for marginalized groups in Oaxaca City, including women and indigenous people. RASA is

worth mentioning in particular because it is organized in a network that is distinctly distributed. It has no permanent leadership, and so those who are interested in an issue will take the lead in championing it on behalf of the network. RASA has hosted a forum, which provides space for people to share and discuss ideas, mostly having to do with various practices of agricultural production in the city, as a way to establish greater self-reliance among members. For example, one program taught women how to grow mushrooms, a popular and important food in Oaxaca. Members decide what they want to learn, what knowledge is important for their needs, and how they will use that knowledge. What RASA does, in effect, is to provide an immanent infrastructure that emerges when it is needed to link active participants to each other. Its members' activity and desires drive the project. RASA's role is only to augment the power of participants by facilitating connections among them. This is similar, as we will see, to how CEDICAM works. In both cases, the structure of the organization is decidedly horizontal and rhizomatic.

CEDICAM

CEDICAM is an effort to create a network that shares knowledge, mostly among food producers in the *campo*. Located in the Mixteca region of Oaxaca in the villages outside Nochixtlan, CEDICAM works in a highly environmentally degraded region dating back to at least the time of the arrival of the Spanish. Accordingly, a great deal of their work is in environmental conservation and improvement: they have planted over five million trees and built miles of retaining walls to hold back soil and water to increase topsoil and groundwater availability. CEDICAM is a farmer-to-farmer training organization that in addition to sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation, works specifically on community organization and development.[8] It bears some resemblance to university-based Extension programs in the United States (minus the State sponsorship), in that farmers grow demonstration plots, and they share what they learn with other farmers. CEDICAM works in 22 villages across the Mixteca region of Oaxaca. For the most part, the network develops its programs based on the emergent needs and interests of the participant farmers. For example, the farmers in the network tend to be wary of intensive industrial agricultural techniques, and they prefer to experiment with more traditional techniques, and so CEDICAM focuses its attention on those techniques. But that preference is not because the organization has a founding value to oppose conventional techniques. It is rather a concern that is shared and expressed over time by the farmers who participate. Other techniques of interest to CEDICAM include ways to use animals to plow, a sophisticated seed saving and plant hybridization regimen, which is combined with symbiotic multi-cropping (of corn, beans, and squash in an historic technique known as milpa), all of which use a mostly natural pest management approach. This set of alternative practices has generally been quite successful. It has produced greater yields, and it has reduced chemical inputs for most farmers to almost zero.

This reduction of industrial inputs (which are costly for the farmer) is part of a general effort within CEDICAM to turn away from Green Revolution agricultural technologies. The latter approach typically provides better yields for farmers in the short term but then becomes economically and ecologically unsustainable in the longer

term. Many farmers in the region have had a negative experience with these technologies. Many extend this negative feeling to the agronomists and government representatives that promoted such technologies. Following on from this feeling, CEDICAM has decided to exclude such experts from their operational structure. CEDICAM is entirely farmer-operated. Thus there is a sense in which we might consider CEDICAM to be "in flight," both from the Green Revolution and its ecological and food-system consequences, and from the State and its paternalistic government experts who tell farmers how best to manage their farms. This latter relation is imbued with both a long memory of European control over indigenous lives, and a more recent history of State control over the lives of rural Oaxacans in southern Mexico. It is difficult to disentangle those elements, and CEDICAM's line of flight is a multifaceted turning away from many forms of control and domination. At the same time, CEDICAM's flight has a more positive aspect: it is also an attempt by farmers to take technology and expertise into their own hands, to invent and manage for themselves an approach to producing food that is appropriate to their situation as they understand it.

The exclusion of government representatives and experts is also very much a result of the organizational structure of CEDICAM. For the most part, it operates as a horizontal network. Each village site participates as a peer with all the others. So far, no node in the network has grown more central than the others, at least on a permanent basis. CEDICAM does have a main office location, which is used for hosting trainings and staff functions, but that is more a convenient, geographically central location than it is a center of control. Certainly over the course of CEDICAM's activities, some sites temporarily take on a more central role than others, such as when, say, one site is being used as a demonstration site and community members come to learn from it. But so far that centrality has always dissipated over time. Other sites, in their turn, come to the fore, and the voices of other participants become more prominent. And so in part CEDICAM's conscious choice to exclude the State is the result of their desire to ward off the State's predilection to centralize and hierarchize distributed networks like CEDICAM.

Again, CEDICAM's distributed structure, and their desire to keep the State at arm's length, are not so much the result of a founding principle that CEDICAM is bound to follow. They are more emergent features that have arisen because they make the most sense for those who participate. CEDICAM's current structure and method of making connections resonates in many ways with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome. But as Deleuze and Guattari make clear, a rhizome, once established, is never guaranteed. The more CEDICAM has demonstrable success (with, say, yields or water conservation or pest management), the more the State will become interested and seek to capture its energy. One CEDICAM project, for example, which intensively terraces deforested hillsides and cultivates their soil in order to return the area to productive farmland, has been adopted as a "best practice" by the Mexican government, which has paid considerable attention to the project (Nuñez & Marten, 2010). Participants in CEDICAM will need to continually ward off such capture if they want to preserve existing rhizomatic relations. Moreover, there will always be dangers that lurk within. Some CEDICAM sites and participants will assert themselves as more important members, as more central nodes in the network. And others will be tempted to give in, to let others take the lead. In order to maintain a working rhizome, participants will

need to continually ward off such dangers. They will need to struggle to make sure that centrality does not become fixed, and leaders do not become permanent.

Conclusion

We know that Deleuze and Guattari would decry planning as it is typically theorized and practiced. They would object to the degree to which it is carried out by a sovereign State authority whose power transcends all other powers in society. They would oppose the way it operates through centralized, or arboreal, institutions, whose more-central position is fixed by the State. They would tell us to flee that kind of planning, and they would urge us to engage instead in activity that is immanent, where the power to act and to judge is distributed widely across the social realm rather than vested in a sovereign authority. The coordination, organization, and decision-making that exists should emerge out of the immanent activity of people themselves. It should not be declared from outside or beyond those people, by a State authority that transcends them. There could, perhaps, be planning organizations and planning institutions in Deleuze and Guattari's new land, but they would need to arise immanently, as a result of and entirely dependent on the activity of people themselves. As soon as such organizations take on qualities of permanence, transcendence, and sovereign authority, Deleuze and Guattari would advise us, we should resume our flight.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that both Food Commons and CEDICAM exhibit qualities that resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's political vision, even if neither is a perfect example of that vision. In both the regional food systems that Food Commons' imagines and in CEDICAM's existing network, there are institutions that organize the food system, but they are not State institutions. Rather they are relatively distributed networks of organizations that are controlled and operated by the community. Their success would depend on the continued attention and activity of their members. It is always possible that State-like structures will emerge inside those networks: over time any of the institutions could take on transcendent or sovereign authority over decision-making. But Deleuze and Guattari would say that we should expect that. The new land can never be permanently beyond such arboreal structures. Relations of sovereignty, domination, and centrality will always re-emerge, and they must be continually warded off.

We hope that future work in planning will find and learn from these types of cases. In this article, we have examined one case (Food Commons) that is more vision than reality, and one (CEDICAM) that is more articulated in practice. We think that both types of cases are useful: they demonstrate equally well the values, contours, and challenges that arise in the project of creating distributed, rhizomatic organizational structures in which control remains in the hands of people themselves. Apparatuses of capture will always re-emerge, and they will always need to be warded off by the active participation of people themselves.

Is it correct to call what Food Commons and CEDICAM are doing "planning"? Or is another term more appropriate, like "activism," "advocacy," "organizing," or even "insurrection"? If we call this "planning," and thus allow planning to have a more expansive definition, how expansive can we be? At what point does the term become meaningless because it encompasses too much of the realm of human activity? If we are

inclined to define planning more restrictively, how restrictive should we be, and what criteria should we use to draw the line? If Food Commons and CEDICAM are *not* doing planning, why is that, what criterion do they lack? Or, put another way, what activity are they engaging in that is beyond the pale of planning as it should properly be understood?

We end with these open questions because we hope the debate will continue. What is planning? Can we do it in a way that is true to Deleuze and Guattari's vision? Or do Deleuze and Guattari prompt us to so radically rethink planning that in the process we will have moved beyond planning in any reasonable understanding of the term? We think that the cases of Food Commons and CEDICAM, while they do not resolve these questions, at least suggest that we should continue to explore the possibility of planning in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari. Maybe we will decide it is planning, maybe not – but either way there is potential there, potential for a radically new form of life in common, a new land in which we manage our food system, and our lives more generally, for ourselves. In planning theory and planning practice we have only begun to understand what that new land might be like. We should continue our exploration.

Notes

1. We are assuming this is all true in order to think through the merits of the reformist strategy. (It very well may not be true.)
2. Deleuze and Guattari give us an atomic image here: they say the valence of each element will be augmented (1987, p. 229).
3. Here Deleuze and Guattari take inspiration from Pierre Clastres' (1987) discussion of *acephalous* societies, literally societies without a head, or societies that lack a permanent, authoritative, single leader (see also Graeber, 2004; Holland, 2011).
4. Henri Lefebvre (1991, esp. chapters 5–7), whose political vision resonates very strongly with Deleuze and Guattari's, offers a spatial conceptualization of such other ways of being together. He calls them "differential space," space that is other than the "abstract space" of the dominant State-capitalist power.
5. Information on Food Commons has been gathered through both archival analysis of Food Commons documents and substantial personal communication with its founders.
6. This is true even in a liberal democracy like the United States. For example, "public lands" are in fact owned and managed by the State, not by the public.
7. Which very much continues, even if the masters are now in Mexico rather than Spain.
8. In addition to secondary sources, information on Oaxacan farming and organizations, particularly CEDICAM and RASA, has been gathered through site visits and cultural exchanges in which one of the authors has participated extensively. See also an excellent summary of CEDICAM by Nuñez and Marten (2010).

Disclosure statement

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