Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and
Agricultural Sciences

Life and Strife of Modern Organic Farmers

- CASES FROM SWEDEN, CAMBODIA, AND BALI

FILIPPO VALSECCHI

Master's Thesis • 30 HEC
Rural Development and Natural Resource Management - Master's Programme
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Uppsala 2019

Life and Strife of Modern Organic Farmers

- Cases from Sweden, Cambodia, and Bali

Filippo Valsecchi

Supervisor: Örjan Bartholdson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Examiner: Kjell Hansen, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Credits: 30 HEC

Level: Second cycle, A2E

Course title: Master's thesis in Rural Development

Course code: EX0889

Programme/Education: Rural Development and Natural Resource Management – Master's Programme

Place of publication: Uppsala

Year of publication: 2019

Cover picture: Mujeres Trabajar por los Companeros que Luchan (Women Work for the Comrades who Fight) by Juan Antonio (Copyright 2008-14 Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives)

Online publication: http://stud.epsilon.slu.se

Keywords: organic agriculture, WWOOF, ethnography, multicase study, typology, new social movement, risk, *habitus*

Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development

Abstract

Organic farming forms an integral part of the current environmental discourse of "saving the planet" through more ecological forms of cultivation and lifestyle. Yet, beneath this common denominator, the global organic movement encompasses an impressive spectrum of experiences varying along such factors as geographical location, farm size, work organization, personal attributes, institutional framework, business style, normative ideals, and farming techniques. Additionally, present-day organic farmers appear to privilege the spheres of individual entrepreneurship and day-to-day farm practice to those of group solidarity and political engagement, which might further question the idea of a unified, full-fledged social movement.

Some of these farmers are affiliated with the WWOOF (World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), a loose network connecting small-scale organic farms from both the Global North and South with volunteers of all ages and backgrounds. The latter normally spend from a few days to several months on a hosting farm of their choice, where they work for lodging, food, and learning. In the spring-summer of 2016, I have applied for and worked on three such farms, one located in Sweden and the other two in Southeast Asia – notably, in Cambodia and Bali – in order see how the environmental and social objectives of the organic movement are achieved in reality.

Eventually, comparing these three ethnographic cases has enabled me to highlight some crucial differences in the way organic farmers interpret their work and identity, and in particular to distinguish among three types called, respectively, "wary", "opportunistic", and "zealot" paradigm. Moreover, by drawing on the ideas of Alberto Melucci, I have isolated in each case thematic, organizational, and socio-demographic traits that are reminiscent of the *modus operandi* of the so-called "new social movements" – including signs of certain involutionary patterns that are not unusual in this type of movements, such as "anachronism", "narcissism", "sectarianism", and "essentialism".

Keywords: organic agriculture, WWOOF, ethnography, multicase study, typology, new social movement, risk, *habitus*

Table of contents

Tables and figures **5**

Abbreviations **6**

1 Introduction **8**
1.1 Research problem and research questions 10

2 Methodology **11**
2.1 Data collection 11
2.2 Sampling 14
2.3 Reflexivity 15

3 Theoretical framework **17**
3.1 Alberto Melucci on “new social movements” 17
3.2 Pierre Bourdieu on *habitus* 18

4 Background **19**
4.1 Origins of the organic movement 19
4.2 Shared values, different trajectories 20
4.3 Linking advocacy and practice: the WWOOF network 22

5 Results I: The Swedish case **24**
5.1 Organic farming as a “marginal culture” 24
5.2 A Scandinavian iron lady 25
5.3 Swedish case summary 33

6 Results II: The Cambodian case **35**
6.1 Organic farming as a “social elevator” 35
6.2 A Sino-American hipster in the tropics 35
6.3 Cambodian case summary 40

7 Results III: The Balinese case **42**
7.1 Organic farming as a total experience straddling body, land, and soul 42
7.2 A mystic couple from the East 43
7.3 Balinese case summary 49

8 Discussion I: Variations on the organic theme **51**
8.1 The three cases compared 51

8.2 A typology of organic farmers 56

9 Discussion II: Laboratories of a "new social movement" 58
9.1 Social (in)action? 58
9.2 Battling over symbolic issues 59
9.3 New social cleavages 60
9.4 "Latency" and "practice" 63
9.5 Social constructionism 65
9.6 Four risks … 66
9.7 … and one remedy 68

10 Conclusions 70

References 72

Tables and figures

Table 1. The three cases compared 55
Figure 1. A typology of organic farmers 57

Abbreviations

CAP	[EU's] common agricultural policy
EC	European Commission
EFA	[Swedish] Ecological Farmers Association
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FiBL	Forschungsinstitut für biologischen Landbau (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture)
FoWO	Federation of WWOOF Organizations
GMO	genetically modified organism
HDI	[UNDP's] Human Development Index
HDRA	Henry Doubleday Research Association
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
MAFF	[Cambodia's] Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MAPO	Movimiento Argentino para la Producción Orgánica
MEC	Ministry of Environment of Cambodia
NASAA	National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia
NIS	[Cambodia's] National Institute of Statistics
NSM (or CSM)	new social movement (or contemporary social movement)
OAP	[FAO's] organic agriculture programme
OTA	[USA's] Organic Trade Association
SOAAN	Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WWOOF	World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms

1 Introduction

Organic farming is getting more and more widespread worldwide. Since 2000, an annual survey jointly conducted by the two leading organic organizations IFOAM and FiBL has registered a constant increase in the global farmland under certified organic management. In 2017, this area amounted to almost 70 million hectares, corresponding to 1.4% of the total agricultural area (Willer & Lernoud 2019: 24).[1]

In the political arena, different actors are actively supporting this trend with various policies, both on a national and multilateral level. For instance, European organic farmers have benefitted since 2014 from the so-called "greening" of the common agriculture policy (CAP), whereby 30% of the direct payments to farmers – the so-called "first pillar" of the policy – and at least the same percentage of the national budgets allocated to rural development programmes – i.e. its "second pillar" – must be linked to environmentally-friendly farming practices, including organic ones (EC 2019a; 2019b).[2] Likewise, the FAO has supported organic producers in the Global South since as early as 1999 through a dedicated "organic agriculture programme" (OAP; FAO 2018a).

Equally significant is the coverage of organic issues in academic research and the news. Part of this literature has highlighted the gains that the substitution of conventional (or, alternatively, traditional[3]) methods with organic ones brings in

[1] Against the 11 million hectares of 1999 (Willer & Lernoud 2019: 24). These numbers exclude the land being grown organically but out of certification schemes, for which there are currently no statistics available (IFOAM 2018: 28).

[2] A situation destined to endure until 2021, when a reformed CAP will come into play.

[3] These terms can be slippery. Whereas in the context of industrial societies, including those developing countries that went through the "Green Revolution", the divide typically runs between "conventional" – or "industrial" – systems on the one hand, and "organic" systems – often identified as "traditional" – on the other, in many low-income countries the only sensible difference is that between "organic by default" – which is at one time "traditional" *and* "conventional" – and "organic" as such – or, one might say, "organic by choice" (Bolwig, Gibbon, & Jones 2009: 1094). In this study I will follow the former terminology by treating "conventional" as synonym of "industrial", and the latter by reserving the term "traditional" for those subsistence systems that are "organic by default".

terms of environmental sustainability, better health standards, and even profitability.[4] Others have voiced more cautious views if not outright scepticism, especially by questioning the capability of organic systems to feed an increasing world population, unless more soil is put to agricultural use.[5] A third approach, closer to the one adopted in this study, skirts altogether the problem of assessing the pros and cons of organic methods, focusing instead on how organic farmers articulate their creed at the level of discourses, political struggles, and everyday lives.[6]

Caught amongst such conflicting forces and views, the field of organic agriculture is far from constituting a monolithic entity.[7] This is for two reasons. One is the high heterogeneity of experiences occurring both among different geographical areas (e.g. Global North vs. Global South) and even within the same area. This variability revolves around such dimensions as farm size; work organization (e.g. types of crops, farming techniques, workforce); personal attributes (e.g. farming experience, former education); institutional framework (e.g. economic incentives, organic certification); business style (e.g. affiliation in cooperatives, marketing channels, profitability); normative ideals; and farming techniques.

The second element of division consists in the tendency on the part of many organic farmers to act locally and in isolation from each other. For instance, Rosenberger (2017: 14) claims that these days Japanese organic farmers "[spurn] ideas of organic as a movement" by privileging the spheres of individual entrepreneurship and day-to-day farm practice to those of group solidarity and political engagement. For these reasons, not only does the linkage between farm-level experiences and large-scale mobilization appear feeble, but also the very understanding of the organic movement as a social movement might be questioned.

[4] The environmental advantages are summarized, among others, by Pimentel et al. (2005). The health advantages include both an improved food quality for consumers (Lairon 2010) and other benefits specifically affecting producers, such as a reduced exposure to chemicals (Misiewicz & Shade 2018) and a more balanced lifestyle (Flöistrup et al. 2006). As an instance of economic benefit, both Eyhorn, Ramakrishnan, and Mäder (2007) and Bolwig, Gibbon, and Jones (2009) showed that organic systems improve the livelihoods of smallholders in developing countries due to their lower dependency on external inputs.

[5] This is the case of Borlaug (2000), Trewavas (2002; 2004), Tuomisto et al. (2012), and Kirchmann (2019). Another common criticism refers to the health hazards to which a combination of organic fanaticism and anti-scientific prejudice may expose organic farmers and consumers (McGrath 2014).

[6] Examples of this third strand of research are the studies by Frouws (1998), Curran (2001), De Cock, Dessein, and de Krom (2016), and Rosenberger (2017).

[7] Hereafter, by the expression "organic movement" I will refer specifically to the global community of organic smallholders and those who work temporarily on their lands as volunteers. However, in principle the term embraces all the actors who, at different levels and in various capacities, sustain the growth of the organic sector. These include campaigning organizations like the mentioned IFOAM as well as organic traders, retailers, and consumers.

1.1 Research problems and research questions

This thesis intends to explore two distinct research problems. One is to shed further light on the multiform ways in which different organic farmers decline the organic principles and methods in their everyday work and life experience. This will be done by comparing three specific farms, two in the Global South and one in the Global North, and highlighting the similarities and, especially, the differences existing among them. The second problem is to evaluate, based on the same case studies, if and how the organic movement can be legitimately regarded as a social movement, despite the mentioned elements of diversity and introversion that characterize it. In order to address these problems, I have formulated the following two research questions:

1. How do the farmers on these farms practice and discuss organic farming?
2. In what sense does each case represent an example of participation in a social movement?

The rest of this essay is organised as follows. The next three sections set the ground for the core of the study by outlining my research methods (Section 2) and theoretical framework (Section 3), as well as by establishing some cornerstones of the organic movement (Section 4). The ensuing three sections present my empirical findings, each being dedicated to one of the three cases I explored (Sections 5, 6, and 7). They are followed by two analytical sections where I compare the cases both with each other (Section 8) and against the theories presented in the theoretical section (Section 9). Finally, Section 10 concludes by taking the stock of the previous discussion and assessing its relevance, both for the organic movement itself and for the social research dealing with it.

2 Methodology

This section presents my methods of data collection and sampling, evaluating their relative strengths and weaknesses. This also implies reflecting on how these methods shaped my ethical relationship with the research participants, as well as the degree of objectivity with which I approached the social reality under examination.

2.1 Data collection

For accomplishing this study, I relied on a mix of participant observation, in-depth interview, self-completion questionnaires, and documentary data. With the partial exception of the questionnaire, an instrument normally associated with quantitative-survey designs (Bryman 2012: 232), all my methods pointed to a qualitative strategy of social research.[8]

The starting point was represented by three experiences of organic farm volunteering that I undertook in the spring–summer of 2016 as a member of the WWOOF network.[9] In particular, I spent six weeks on a Swedish farm (from April to mid-May), three weeks on one in Cambodia (in June), and three more on another one in Bali (in July). The fact that I approached the farm owners via the official framework of the WWOOF greatly simplified my access to the field, sparing me the need to negotiate the terms of my participation and that to secure intermediaries (so-called "champions" or "gatekeepers") that would sponsor my presence within a "closed" research setting – as a private farm arguably is (Bryman 2012: 435). In terms of my

[8] Even with regard to the questionnaires, it should be noted that, as I will clarify in a few moments, I used them as a handy substitute for the more demanding technique of the qualitative interview. As such, they contained, besides the closed or fixed-choice questions that constitute the default option in quantitative surveys (Bryman 2012: 236), also a number of open questions and spaces that I had left intentionally blank in order for the respondents to further elaborate their answers – although few of them used this option. Additionally, the questionnaire data were handled through a qualitative approach to data analysis, just as my other data.

[9] Or as a "WWOOFer" for short.

role as an observer, during that period I acted as a "complete participant",[10] insofar as I engaged full-time in all the work and leisure activities performed by the residents (ibid.: 446). At the same time, I made no secret to my hosts that, apart from accomplishing my expected tasks as a WWOOFer, my primary goal was to seek some inspiration for a future research that I would carry out in the context of my academic studies.

However, it was not until two years later that I explicitly resolved to use this field data as the basis for an ethnographic study about the organic movement, as well as to complement it with additional data sources. The first was a semi-structured interview with my former Swedish host, Gunhild. The interview took place at her farm on September 30th 2018, was conducted in English, and lasted approximately 46 minutes, corresponding to a 31-page typewritten transcript. Although in principle I would have preferred to apply the same method also to my two other hosts, namely, Andy in Cambodia and the couple Mio-Ketut in Bali, eventually this proved impossible, both for their physical distance – which made in-person interviews far too expensive – and also because they were too busy for participating in online interviews.

Therefore, I had to make do with a questionnaire, also in English, comprising 28 between multiple-choice and open-ended items, the same for either host. Both questionnaire forms, together with other simpler ones that I administered to two of my former colleagues of WWOOFing,[11] were sent out by e-mail and completed between February and March 2019. Apart from that, in all three cases I solicited further clarifications and details also by e-mail or via chat messages. Finally, I made some limited use of documentary sources, including the farm descriptions that showed on the farmers' WWOOF profiles and, in the sole Balinese case, a highly informative farm website coupled with a 9-page "Helper Handbook".

None of these sources was without its flaws. With respect to the observational data, one of these was the two-year gap that occurred between the phase of data collection and that of writing up – i.e. the "ethnography" understood as the written outcome of an observational study (Bryman 2012: 432) – with all the memory faults and consequent losses of information that this implied. Even more crucial was the fact that, during my fieldwork, I had not the faintest idea as to whether, let alone how I would eventually use the information I was gathering. In this respect, my study may well be regarded as an example of "retrospective ethnography", in which the observer is not (fully) aware of being already engaged in a research process (Bryman 2012: 435). This circumstance put clear limits both on my efficiency as an

[10] Also called "full member" (Bryman 2012: 441) or "active participant" (Creswell 2014: 190).

[11] The WWOOFers in question were Lars and Zoya, with whom I had collaborated, respectively, in Sweden and in Bali.

observer/interlocutor and on the accuracy with which I recorded the events/conversations I was witnessing. This is because, having not set my research topic yet, I was operating in the absence of an explicit "observational protocol" (Creswell 2014: 193) or "set of animating questions" (Silverman 2015: 246), which inevitably conferred a certain erraticism to my activities. Similarly, I was not able to take proper field notes either, insofar as, any piece of data being potentially worth recording, none stood out as more significant than others (Bryman 2012: 448; Silverman 2015: 247).[12]

Similar problems affected the two main survey instruments I used, namely, the interview and the questionnaire. In either case, the questions I posed to my interlocutors suffered from some excessive scope and unfocusedness, bearing on issues that afterwards would turn out to be of scarce relevance to the study. Here, too, the reason was that my research problem and questions were to emerge only at a later stage of the research process. Although in principle this is perfectly compatible with the open-ended character of qualitative research, to some extent even representing a strength of this type of inquiry – for it allows the theoretical ideas to emerge spontaneously out of "rich" data, without precluding *a priori* any line of inquiry (Bryman 2012: 403–7) – on the other hand, I recognize that a more timely definition of my objectives would have resulted in a less dispersive (and trying!) endeavour.

Beyond that, there were obstacles of a purely communicative nature. In the case of my chief interlocutor in Bali, Ketut, the main problem lied in his poor mastery of English, which resulted in his frequently misunderstanding my questions and, consequently, providing somewhat incongruous answers. As for my Cambodian informant who, being originally from the US, clearly had no such a barrier, his answers may not have been entirely accurate due to his limited knowledge of agricultural issues and, even more so, of Khmer language. The latter circumstance, in particular, prevented him from fully grasping the viewpoints of his adoptive relatives and, consequently, passing on them to me in a faithful manner.

Also bearing on communication was the difficulty to keep the dialogue with all my ex-farm hosts alive: whether because they saw it as a plain waste of time[13] or out of a justifiable reticence to talk about matters that touched also on sensitive details (e.g. their level of education, property, income), my informants tended to either respond to my messages in a hasty and patchy way or "forget" them altogether. For all these reasons, and despite my efforts to convey an information as accurate as

[12] On the other hand, the importance of the field notes should not be overstated either. For instance, one authority on the ethnographic genre like Van Maanen observes that "[s]torytelling of the impressionist sort seems to rest on the recall of forgotten details and the editing of remembered ones. […] The great dependency commonly claimed to exist between fieldnotes and fieldworkers is not and cannot be so very great at all" (Van Maanen 2011: 117–8).

[13] A point that one time Gunhild made clear without much ceremony (see Section 5.2).

possible, I cannot guarantee the absence of misunderstandings of their thoughts on my part. As for the documentary materials, with the exception of the mentioned pair of highly valuable texts relative to the Balinese case, they were in fact limited to a few descriptive paragraphs for each farm; as such, they served almost exclusively to fill in the gaps left open by the other three sources.

The last remark is also indicative of the spirit with which I engaged in a multiple-method strategy. By contrast with the elevated reasons being often adduced in support of combining more methods of data collection,[14] my methodological choices were dictated more modestly by a mix of necessity and pragmatism. First, having being unable to delimit the scope of my inquiry on the basis of the observational data alone, and, on the other hand, being reluctant to replicate the ethnographic method in the face of obvious time and budget constraints, I had no choice but to settle for more "economical" techniques such as interviewing and, subordinately, questionnaires and documents. Second, even once I had clarified to myself my intentions, each data source turned out to be useful for correcting the fallacies contained by the others (Bryman 2012: 637).

2.2 Sampling

In choosing my three case studies, I followed a combination of purposiveness and convenience. The former logic underlay the very early phase in which I planned where to volunteer. Back then, within the "sampling frame" constituted by all the farms being listed as "available" on the WWOOF website at that moment,[15] I picked a handful of sites covering the widest possible range of rural settings, and notably both sides of the developed–developing divide, so as to maximize my sample variability (Bryman 2012: 419). Then, among those farms which answered positively to my application, I selected three, which was the maximum allowed by the time and financial means at my disposal.

On the other hand, crucial to my decision to reinterpret those fieldwork experiences in a key of retrospective ethnography was certainly the fact that they offered

[14] Among these reasons are: (i) enhancing the overall research credibility, provided that the findings deriving from the different data sources used converge; (ii) attaining a fuller understanding of the studied phenomena, in case of different yet complementary findings; (iii) raising interesting contradictions, should these differences be irreconcilable; (iv) using different methods in sequence for a variety of purposes, including (a) to clarify ambiguous results, (b) to delve deeper into certain details, (c) to provide concrete illustrations of certain phenomena, (d) to build new samples, and (e) to develop new research instruments (Hesse-Biber 2010: 3–5; Bryman 2012: 633–4).

[15] More precisely, the websites I consulted were two: "WWOOF Sweden" (https://wwoof.se) for selecting one farm in Sweden, and "WWOOF Independents" (https://wwoofindependents.org) for other two farms in as many low-income countries.

a readily available source of material – in other words, they constituted a "convenience" or "opportunistic" sample (Bryman 2012: 201; 419). Similarly, the choice to involve the protagonists of those very cases also in the ensuing survey-like stages of the research (i.e. interview, questionnaires, and informal chats) reflected not only a rather obvious desire for coherence, but also the fact that these people were more easily accessible than others, on grounds of our pre-existing acquaintance.[16]

2.3 Reflexivity

One last point related to my methodological choices pertains the ethical dilemmas that arose from them. Particularly critical was the compliance with the principle of "informed consent" of participants. This principle is transgressed, and the risk of deception creeps in, whenever the researcher fails to provide the participants with a clear exposition of his/her research goals (Bryman 2012: 138–43 ; Silverman 2014: 143). However, this was hardly the case with this study, for I could not possibly reveal to my informants what was not clear to myself either – other than vague references to my intention of "deepening my knowledge of organic agriculture". This is particularly true of the early observational stage, insofar as, at that time, I was not even certain of being doing research at all! In this respect, it could be argued that the method of retrospective ethnography represents by its very nature a form of "covert research", albeit involuntary (Bryman 2012: 133).

A principle which on the contrary I followed scrupulously is that of confidentiality, consisting in treating the information obtained from the participants anonymously. Although some of my interlocutors had nothing against their true identities being disclosed, eventually I preferred to call them by pseudonyms; likewise, I withheld too precise details on their whereabouts or, alternatively, replaced the real toponyms (including the farms' names) with fictitious ones (Bryman 2012: 136; Silverman 2014: 145). During the survey stage I also took extreme care not to intrude excessively into their privacy or offend their sensibilities. Thus, I avoided insisting too much on sensitive issues, while reiterating their right to refuse to answer to some (or all) of my questions (Bryman 2012: 142; Silverman 2014: 149).[17]

[16] In this sense, what I did was capitalize on the "rapport" that I had previously established with them so as to facilitate the resumption of our contacts two years after. Moreover, also our subsequent exchanges benefitted from that circumstance; amongst other things, I felt less obliged to put up a reassuring "front" before my interlocutors than would have been the case if I had been dealing with perfect strangers (Bryman 2012: 439; Silverman 2015: 166).

[17] However, the fact remains that the mentioned element of "covert observation" constituted a partial violation of the principle of privacy as well (Bryman 2012: 140-2)

Finally, in the course of the research the question arose whether I should correspond to my hosts' courtesy with some form of reward.[18] In the case of Gunhild, the problem was that, since she worked alone, she could hardly wish to waste time attending an interview, which eventually I obviated by taking some extra time to help her with cleaning her barn. As for the two Southeast Asian families, they were effectively indigent people, at least by Western standards. Therefore, since I first volunteered at their places, I made a point of contributing to their domestic economies by gifting them with some petty items (e.g. kitchen tools, toiletries) that nonetheless could make some difference to their daily lives.

Apart from these ethical issues, another set of problems I met had to do with the position that I, as a researcher, assumed in relation to the research settings. One first point concerns the reactions that the presence of a stranger may involuntarily arouse in the subjects of the study, in a sense "contaminating" their spontaneity (Bryman 2012: 495). This can happen for a number of reasons, not least the fact that they more or less consciously adjust their behaviours and accounts in line with what they presume to be the researcher's intentions (Alvesson 2003: 19; Bryman 2012: 281). Also the possibility that the interviewer leads the respondent towards a desired answer may be taken to fall into this phenomenon (Bryman 2012: 257). In this regard, the fact that both my interlocutors and I were unaware of the direction that this study would eventually take arguably reduced this sort of reactivity.

A similar argument can be done for my capacity to keep an objective stance towards the events narrated (Bryman 2012: 392). Provided that a certain amount of bias and prejudice – either value-related or of theoretical nature – is inevitable in every type of research (Bryman 2012: 39; Silverman 2014: 39), the fact that I developed my interpretative framework only at a very late stage arguably made my perspective less theory-laden and more resembling an ideal "blank slate" than otherwise (Bryman 2012: 407). Similarly, my neutral attitude in relation to the theme of organic agriculture – for I am neither in favour nor against it – probably helped me to maintain some "cold" distance from the events I was witnessing.

[18] Besides the moral implication consisting in "returning the favour" to one's informants (especially in the case of people from disadvantaged categories; Silverman 2014: 147), this practice may also conceal elements of "research bargain" (Bryman 2012: 151), and even of a "dubious" one (Silverman 2014: 147), insofar as it serves to lure otherwise recalcitrant subjects into taking part in a study.

3 Theoretical framework

This study avails itself of a number of theoretical contributions to do with collective social processes. I will sketch them summarily in the present section, while leaving their in-depth examination for the analysis of findings that I will carry out in Section 9.

3.1 Alberto Melucci on "new social movements"

As mentioned in the Introduction, one research problem examined by this thesis concerns the possibility of referring to the organic movement as a social movement. The latter has been generally defined as a form of collective action combining (i) a conflictual orientation towards clearly defined opponents, (ii) an informal organizational arrangement, and (iii) a collective identity shared among its members (Della Porta & Diani 2006: 20–1).

In order to put the three cases being studied in a political perspective, I will draw in particular on Alberto Melucci's ideas on "new social movements" (NSMs).[19] This label refers to a new wave of collective actors that were born in the post-industrial societies of the West during the 1970s and 1980s, such as the environmental, youth, peace, women's, and ethno-nationalist movements. Compared to their predecessors, notably the workers' movement of the industrial age, these movements shifted the emphasis from economic and political demands to more symbolic and "postmaterial" claims revolving around identity, ethics, and customs (Melucci 1989: 5). Specific examples include the battles over the definition of gendered identities (ibid.: 93); those centred on the ethical risks posed by scientific progress in the fields of nuclear engineering and biogenetics (ibid.: 86); and those in favour of – or against – certain evolutions in the sphere of private behaviours, for instance in relation with sexuality, reproduction, and marriage (ibid.: 149–160).

[19] Also called "contemporary social movements" (CSMs).

This thesis regards the organic movement precisely as one instance of such movements, whose inner workings are evidenced by the dynamics surfacing in the three case studies presented. In other words, not only are these cases clarified by the theory on NSMs, but they also offer further evidence supporting it.

3.2 Pierre Bourdieu on *habitus*

A second strand of thought to which I am indebted is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*. Unlike Melucci, who puts at the centre of his analysis social movements, Bourdieu focuses on social groups that share common values, norms, and objectives within specific social contexts called "social fields". The individuals' gradual adaptation to the dynamics of the field cause them to develop characteristic ways of reflecting and acting, which he refers to as *habitus*.

A focus on *habitus* is relevant here for two reasons. First, because it throws a light on the persistence of certain behavioural traits common to the organic farmers that are hardly explainable by common-sense logic: since they have been internalized through deep processes of socialization, such traits over time have acquired an almost unreflected, taken-for-granted character – in other words, they have been "naturalized". Second, because, despite this clear element of stubbornness, Bourdieu indeed leaves a possibility open for social actors to become aware of – and, under certain conditions, even modify – specific traits of their *habitus* (Inglis & Thorpe 2019: 202). How this possibility relates to the experience of organic farmers will be the object of the discussion conducted in Section 9.7.

4 Background

Before turning to the empirical cases lying at the heart of this inquiry, it is useful to contextualize them by fixing some coordinates relative to the organic movement as a whole. One first aspect to consider is the plurality of traditions that historically converged into one single organic movement, a point that will better clarify the dynamics of the Balinese case (see Section 7). Secondly, I will further elaborate on the differences that still persist in the current form of the movement, a point already touched on in the Introduction and which contains the gist of the discussion developed in Section 8. Finally, I will delineate the scope and purposes of the WWOOF network which, as noted in Section 2.1, provided the institutional framework for my fieldwork activities.

4.1 Origins of the organic movement

The origins of modern organic farming[20] date back to the end of 19th century, when movements such as "Life Reform" in Germany and "Food Reform" in the US championed the return to an idealized rural way of life (Vogt 2007: 12). Then, in the period between the two World Wars, these phenomena were joined by a more scientific debate that extended also to other countries (e.g. UK and India) and centred on what was perceived as a crisis in the chemical-intensive model of agriculture that had dominated until then. Proof of that crisis was in the generalized drop in soil fertility and yields, to which corresponded a declining food quality as well as the rapid decay of rural societies (ibid.: 10).

In this context, two separate currents emerged in the German-speaking area: one, more empirical, was called "natural agriculture" or "Land Reform" movement; and another, more speculative, known as "biodynamic agriculture" or "anthroposophy" (Vogt 2007: 14). Together with similar organizations that appeared in the UK and

[20] As distinct from "default" organic agriculture, which is as old as settled human civilization (Scialabba 2007: ix).

the US from the 1940s (ibid.: 25–6), and in France and Switzerland from the 1950s (ibid.: 17–8), these initiatives constituted the progenitors of the present-day organic movement.

In the following decades, the organic movement underwent important transformations in both form and substance. On the one hand, it strengthened its internal homogeneity and institutionalization, with the setting of the first organic standards in the 1960s (Scialabba 2007: ix); the founding of an international coordinating platform, called IFOAM, in 1972 (Vogt 2007: 17); and the multiplication of national-level bodies concerned with extension, certification, and marketing since the 1980s (ibid.: 19). Also the very terminology used to define the movement evolved, with the progressive replacement of the adjective "natural" with equivalents such as "biological", "ecological" and, lastly, "organic".

On a more substantial plane, the movement abandoned its most radical tenets, both of a technical and ideological nature, thus reconciling with mainstream agriculture, society, and politics (Vogt 2007: 17). These internal changes favoured the recruitment of a growing number of farmers, especially since the 1970s, as well as the gradual recognition of organic agriculture on the part of both governments and the general public (Lockeretz 2007: 4). In turn, the enlargement of the movement's constituency further strengthened the pragmatic repositioning that was already underway, with a clear prioritization of the environmental and health-related goals over any countercultural or philosophical suggestion (ibid.: 6).[21]

4.2 Shared values, different trajectories

Today most of the organic farming community identifies with the four principles of "health", "ecology", "fairness", and "care" (Scialabba 2007: xi). These principles refer to the overall goal of farming in a way that is, respectively, (i) propitious to the health of soil, plants, animals, humans, and the entire planet; (ii) respectful of the ecological systems and cycles; (iii) based on equitable social relationships; and (iv) attentive to the well-being of the future generations (IFOAM 2019). In the everyday practice of farm management, such general statements translate into a number of mid-range objectives and specific techniques. Examples of the former are:

- an integrated, closed-loop, locally-based management of natural resources;
- the maintenance and improvement of the soil structure and fertility;
- the enhancement of biodiversity;
- a limited dependency from external inputs;

[21] In particular, among the new – and, in a way, more "respectable" – adherents were former conventional farmers, esteemed agricultural scientists, and "agnostic" consumers who flitted indifferently between organic and conventional products (Lockeretz 2007: 6).

- the production of nutritious and high-quality food;
- the minimization of pollution and the maximization of carbon sequestration;
- a limited consumption of energy and materials, and a preference for renewable energy sources and recyclable materials;
- a careful use of water;
- ethical and healthy practices of animal husbandry;
- economic resilience, food security, and an equitable sharing of costs and rewards across the value chain;
- a preference for short value chains;
- the socio-economic development of local communities;
- a safe and healthy work environment;
- the safeguard of gender equality and labour rights; and
- the prohibition of GMOs (HDRA 1998; SOAAN 2013).

On the other hand, farming techniques commonly adopted by organic farmers include:

- crop rotation, multi- / inter- / multi-story cropping, and agroforestry;
- setting aside fallow lands and wild areas;
- the avoidance of frequent tillage;
- fertilization through composted food and crop residues, incorporation of plant residues into the soil (i.e. green manure), cover crops (e.g. legumes), mulching, and animal manure;
- the employment of natural forms of pest, disease, and weed control, including the encouragement of useful predators;
- a thoughtful planning of cultivations (e.g. in terms of time of planting, crop types, field size and shape);
- a preference for local, resistant, and/or perennial crop varieties; and
- the enhancement of the quality and diversity of genetic materials (e.g. seeds, animal breeds; HDRA 1998; SOAAN 2013).

Clearly, the number and mix of approaches adopted by the single farmers, as well as the priority they attach to the different objectives and goals, vary from one case to another. To this variance has been dedicated a vast scholarly literature, which can be roughly divided into studies about (i) the socio-economic characteristics of farms and farmers; (ii) the farming techniques used; (iii) the motives for converting to organic methods; (iv) the factors enabling (or discouraging) the conversion; (v) the trajectories of conversion; and (vi) the values attributed to organic farming.

For instance, Flaten et al.'s (2005) analysed differences in personal and farm attributes, farming practices, motives of conversion, goals, and attitudes among organic dairy farmers in Norway. Their results showed that newly converted farmers,

compared to early converts, are on average less educated, more inclined to perform certain activities (e.g. raising poultry, growing vegetables) and using certain methods (e.g. feeding herds on concentrates, recurring to veterinary treatments), and more oriented towards profit and leisure time.

A more indirect strategy focuses on the differences between organic and conventional farmers. Albeit treating organic farmers as a discrete group, this methodology permits to estimate the frequency among them of certain key factors, thereby certifying their uneven distribution. For instance, Karki, Schleenbecker, and Hamm (2011) found that the probability that Nepalese tea farmers convert to organic management is significantly correlated with such socio-economic factors as age, ethnicity, affiliation with cooperatives, training, distance from markets, and farm size.[22] Additionally, the decision to convert appeared influenced by such ideal motives as environmental awareness, market demand, profitability, and health consciousness. Many of these socio-economic and ideal factors will reappear in the next three sections, where they will set a benchmark for describing and contrasting the three farms I visited.

Finally, other studies have gone one step further by constructing typologies based on one or more of the six criteria above. Thus, Fairweather (1999) classified organic farmers of New Zealand into two main types: on the one hand, "pragmatic" farmers, whose loyalty to organic techniques is subordinated to the persistence of profitable price premiums; and on the other, "committed" farmers, for whom this condition is not necessary. Similarly, in an analysis of patterns of transition from conventional to organic systems among French farmers, Lamine (2011) contrasted transitions that are "sudden", "opportunistic", and "reversible" with others that are more "progressive" and "robust". The latter appear to be more likely the more intense the farmers' participation in professional networks is, and the less importance the consumers attach to visual criteria (e.g. size, shape, colour) when buying food.

4.3 Linking advocacy and practice: the WWOOF network

Organizations like the international IFOAM and FiBL or their national counterparts[23] represent but one instance of the organic movement's effort to support the activities of its members and gain visibility on the outside; the WWOOF network is

[22] Conversely, the study showed that this probability was not significantly affected by education, experience, gender, contact with extension services, access to loans, and household size.

[23] Among them, Lockeretz (2007) counts the British Soil Association, the Swedish Ekologiska Lantbrukarna (Ecological Farmers Association, EFA), the Argentinian Movimiento Argentino para la Producción Orgánica (MAPO), the Australian National Association for Sustainable Agriculture (NASAA), and the North American Organic Trade Association (OTA).

another.[24] Unlike the former bodies, whose missions often combines technical assistance (e.g. advice, training) with other initiatives of a more scientific (e.g. research and development), institutional (e.g. coordination, standardization), and promotional (e.g. publications and conferences, lobbying) character, the WWOOF operates on an eminently practical level.

Since its foundation in 1971, the WWOOF has aimed at linking organic farmers and volunteers by providing the latter with chances for hands-on experiences in organic farming (FoWO 2019a; 2019b). The contact between the two parties occurs directly online; the function of the association is limited to setting the (rather loose) conditions for the hosts' membership[25] as well as the (equally loose) rules concerning the WWOOFers' engagement. In fact, rather than as a centralized organization, the WWOOF can be better thought of as a federation of distinct national groups, each with its own website and a separate list of farm hosts (FoWO 2019b). For instance, when I applied for my first volunteership in Sweden, I did it through the website of WWOOF Sweden.

Nowadays there exist more than 130 WWOOF national communities all over the world. Other countries, despite not having a distinct coordination yet, nonetheless may have their local farms grouped into one joint list called "WWOOF Independents" (ibid.). This is the case for many developing countries, among which Cambodia and Indonesia, where I conducted my other two volunteerships. WWOOFing candidates are usually young people in their 20s or 30s, although in principle there are no upper age limits. The duration of their commitment depends exclusively on the agreement they reach with their host, ranging from a few days to several weeks or even months. In order to apply, no special qualities or skills are requested, apart from sharing a passion for "healthy food, healthy living and a healthy planet" (FoWO 2019c) and a willingness to contribute to the farm work in change for hospitality. Also the tasks assigned to them vary greatly from farm to farm: besides the more traditional activities connected with cultivation and animal raising, they can extend to construction and plumbing works, language tutoring, and even IT support.

[24] Whereas today the acronym WWOOF is commonly spelled out as "World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms", in the past alternative denominations have been "Working Weekends On Organic Farms", "Willing Workers On Organic Farms", and "We're Welcome On Organic Farms" (FoWO 2019b).

[25] Apart from organic farming in a strict sense, other activities performed by WWOOF hosts include "health and healing centres, pottery and arts, building and restoring buildings, organic restaurants, dealing with animals, eco villages, brewing and production of foods, nature guide centres, centres for the environment" (FoWO 2019b).

5 Results I: The Swedish case

This and the next two sections present the empirical results of my research. These consist of three "ethnographic narratives" that account for what I observed, listened to, and learnt during my interactions with the study participants, both at the time of my farm volunteerships – i.e. the ethnography or participant observation properly so called – and in the subsequent exchanges I had with them by way of my other methods of data collection. The narrative style I adopted makes large use of what Geertz (1973: 3) calls "thick description", that is, a detailed description of a social setting that favours "the contextual understanding of social behaviour" (Bryman 2012: 401). More in particular, the abundance of detours, subjective remarks, literary parlance, and ironic tones as well as a somewhat loose plot structure point at the conventions of the "impressionist tale" as theorized by Van Maanen (2011).[26]

Additionally, each narrative is supplemented by a preface and epilogue. The former provides an entry point to the specific case, by connecting it to some broad trends within the field of organic agriculture; the other summarizes its key features, also with reference to the discriminating factors that have been evidenced by the literature recalled in Section 4.2.

5.1 Organic farming as a "marginal culture"

In her study on the new generation of Japanese organic farmers, Rosenberger (2017) describes it as characterized by a "marginal" condition. By this remark, she means two things: first, that these people, much like the ones belonging to the earlier generation of organic farmers, live at distance from the centres of Japanese society, both

[26] Among these conventions are "[u]nusual phrasings, fresh allusions, rich language, cognitive and emotional stimulation, puns, and quick jolts to the imagination" as well as "[q]ualifiers, endearments, sotto voce tone, colloquialisms, irreverences, sarcasm, down-home argot" that serve "to keep the audience alert and interested" (Van Maanen 2011: 106–8).

physically – since they reside in remote, often mountainous areas – and metaphorically – due to their criticism of the current neoliberal regime.

Secondly, that, unlike their predecessors, they are able to break their seclusion by crisscrossing the multiple dichotomies characterizing their lives or, as she puts it, by engaging in forms of "edgework": between rurality and urbanity, nature and culture, ethics and profit, work and enjoyment, resistance and adaptation, tradition and modernity. Comfortable with living and working in dispossessed rural areas, nonetheless they often boast urban origins; while aspiring to an harmonious relationship with nature, they can look back on a solid education; despite their strong working discipline, they don't refuse bodily enjoyment; albeit opposed to the neoliberal discourse, they still find their way on the market as entrepreneurial subjects; and they are equally accustomed to old and new methods of farming.[27] As it will appear from the account that follows, both definitions of marginality – as a barrier against or as a bridge towards something else – seem to apply to the protagonist of my first case study.

5.2 A Scandinavian iron lady

In the languid Mediterranean, Sweden conjures up images of Bergmanian sobriety and IKEAn efficiency. The same do German people, with in addition a martial inclination dating back to their Teutonic ancestors. Gunhild Rapp, the forty-seven-year-old Swedish woman with German extraction who hosted me on my first farm experience, encompassed all these characteristics, plus a singular Stakhanovite attitude towards work.

She was at once general and troop of *Vänlig Gård*, the organic operation that she had run part-time but with iron fist for the last four years. In the remaining time, she worked as a Safety & Quality manager in a nearby factory producing steel pipes. Since her two sons had moved out some time before, she could rely solely on herself and, periodically, on the help of some neighbouring farmers, who owned the machinery necessary for attending her fields planted with fodder crops.

Apart from that, from time to time she filled her ranks by hiring one or two voluntary workers in the shape of inexperienced (and inexpensive) WWOOFers. Like Lars, the Dutch agronomy graduate with a bent for permaculture who joined us a few days after my arrival; or like Romane, an assertive French teen who came on my fourth week there, and one week later was already planning to desert in search of a quieter post.

[27] Similarly, the cited study by Flaten et al.'s (2005) on Norwegian organic farmers detected a more pragmatic and business-oriented approach among newcomers compared to the old guard.

Not that Gunhild was keen to praise the merits of these volunteers. Quite the opposite: in her frequent recalls of her past dealings with the category, those most cited were the bodybuilder who did nothing but scoff meals and harass the girl volunteers; or the maniac who threatened and insulted her – and once had even tried to abuse her rabbits! And then, there was the loafer who promptly vanished at the stroke of his fourth working hour, only to reappear just in time for dinner. Or, on a more compassionate note, the single mother too poor to afford the tickets for *Astrid Lindgrens Värld*, the theme park named after the creator of *Pippi Longstocking* that her two kids longed to visit, and yet too proud to accept Gunhild's offer to help. Once, to my question on how frequently she needed to hire helpers, and upon what criteria she did it, she dismissively answered that she followed no special rule except looking for "some that looks nice".[28]

I first met her on a late-March afternoon at the bus station of Ålåsen, a provincial town in the southern county of Kronoberg. She and her dog, a vocal Russian toy terrier, were waiting for me in an old Volvo 66 packed with empty milk boxes and other random stuff. In fact, she owned also a blazing Kia SUV, but she mostly used it to pull the trailer on which she hauled her goods to the markets. Her farm was located a few kilometres out of the town centre and totalled 16 hectares of land, therefore less than half the 41 hectares of the average Swedish farm (Statistics Sweden 2019: 27). However, when factoring in all the lands she rented from other people, as well as those she held in usufruct in exchange for the ecological services performed by her herds, that figure more than doubled.

Apart from the two-storey manor house, her property incorporated another disused residential building, a plastic greenhouse, a modular container converted to slaughterhouse, a henhouse, and two big barns. These accommodated the other animals she owned: at first rabbits, pigs, sheep, and goats; later, also pigs and cows. With the exception of the functional grey of the greenhouse and the slaughterhouse, the dominant shade was the copper red typical of the *stuga*, the traditional Swedish summer cottage. The area enclosed by the buildings was covered with lawn and fenced pastures; out of this circle, there lay the narrow strips of some dozen vegetable crop beds, followed by five wider fodder fields and, at last, the woods.

Yet this topography was highly contingent on seasonality as much as on the organic principles of ecological balance and optimization of synergies, in obedience to which Gunhild was constantly busy shifting fences, relocating animals, rotating crops, and putting into pasture new pieces of uncultivated land. To this end, she had recently bought a new digger, by which she removed logs and twigs to make room

[28] This and most of the following quotations of Gunhild's words are extracts from an interview I made to her on 30 September 2018. A few others are drawn instead from a number of short text exchanges I had with her on 16 February 2019. The full text of all these sources is available upon request.

for the pigs. Once the swine had ploughed the soil by treading on it, and fertilized it by defecation, she planted flowering trees and bushes, whose berries attracted insects and birds, thus fostering the local biodiversity; finally, she let her herds in to graze.

That night, after we had exchanged some brisk pleasantries and consumed a spartan dinner, she gave me a tour of the residence's amenities: no other heating than a fireplace at the ground floor, taps supplying only cold water, well-worn bed linen, and a toilet with no shower. In fact, what most resembled a bathtub, a medieval wooden tub equipped with a ladle and heated through a wood stove, was lodged in one of the barns in cohabitation with the goats, but we would not use it until the warm season. In the meanwhile, we could take advantage of the staff bathrooms of the steel factory, where we sneaked every two nights to shower and, occasionally, to pilfer wood pallets and rolls of toilet paper.

For the rest, the conditions of the house were those one would expect of a single person who is dedicated heart and soul to her land, as much as a confirmation to Lavoisier's maxim on the conservation of mass.[29] The living room was a bedlam of egg incubators, chick cages, and grow lights randomly mixed with invoices and agricultural magazines. In the kitchen, rabbit skins hung on hooks nailed to the ceiling; virtually every flat surface was occupied by all sorts of things that Gunhild had saved from their well-deserved place in the garbage, in the hope that eventually they might come in handy again. As she told me, when she was alone, she flushed the toilet only once a day, not to waste water!

The only concession to dissipation was a little radio in the kitchen diffusing commercial hits around the clock, albeit at a very moderate volume. Even though there was no evident filth, the cleaning was kept to the bare minimum. "It's because I have no time", she justified herself when I teased her about that, "I like to have it clean and organized, but I prefer to clean the stables or weed instead of making my own house clean". The same carelessness she dedicated to herself. During the month I lived with her, I barely saw her twice in other outfit than her regular farm coveralls or, at best, in a casual office wear. And when once she invited me out for lunch, she made a point that we should keep our muddy clothes on, as she *always* did. Even her own health took a backseat to the prosperity of the farm: she could well suffer from a chronic back pain that prevented her from staying seated too long, but her crops were invariably well looked after, her stables always reasonably neat, and her animals nourished with affection.

One further indication of this double standard came during my second visit to her, when she proudly showed me the farm shop that she had carved out in the same

[29] "In nature nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything changes".

container housing the slaughterhouse: an immaculate, cosy space with all her vegetables and herbs well arranged on wooden shelves, her animal furs hanging neatly on a wall, and other food items – spices, seeds, beans, candies – wrapped in brown paper or showing from glass jars. Even so, she objected that it might have looked better had the electricity cables been tucked out of view.

Life at *Vänlig Gård* was perhaps "friendly",[30] but certainly tough. Contrary to the indications provided by the WWOOF website, which approximates the average volunteering time at four to six hours a day, our working schedule never lasted less than eight (FoWO 2019b). The other WWOOFers and I started at about 8.30 a.m., by which time Gunhild had long completed the morning round of animal feeding.

Until the end of winter, we carried out mainly indoor activities, like cleaning the barns and the rabbit cages, or growing plants in the greenhouse. We started by sowing the seeds of endless varieties of flowers (violets, tagetes), vegetables (salads, cabbages, cauliflowers, broccolis, onions, tomatoes), and herbs (like dill) into multicell plastic trays filled with soil. Then, once the seedlings had grown enough, we transferred them into larger pots; or, in the case of the longer tomato seedlings, into milk cartons like the ones I had seen in Gunhild's car upon my arrival. She had an entire shed crammed to the ceiling with those cartons, which came both from her own kitchen and, especially, from friends and neighbours who set them apart for her. All these trays and pots and boxes were then placed in rows into bigger trays that Gunhild bought second-hand online; for this reason, they had to be carefully disinfected beforehand, so as to avoid contamination from unknown – and, therefore, potentially non-organic – species.

Later in the day, weather permitting, we went outside to fence some patches of land where the chicken would roam outdoors, under cover of a plastic net; or to clear by hand and shovel some crop beds of the roots left from the previous harvests and other spontaneous weeds. All this organic matter was then fed to the animals or piled up to decompose, thus turning into a natural fertilizer.

As a practiced farmer, she had clear ideas on how to use what and for what purpose: "I don't cover the soil with the leftovers from the plants. I give it to the animals. And then I take the shit from animals and put it back". Sometimes she engaged in elaborate strategies comprising multiple options, as in the case of pest control: "I only use a bacteria […] on the cabbage […] to take away the […] caterpillars […] only once a year. […] And inside the greenhouse I have used soap […] once or twice […] and some garlic. […] And if they are small I just put […] my hand and take it away". Similarly, to fertilize her fields, apart from spreading compost and the manure from the barns, she grew legume crops, whereas to control weeds she relied on

[30] As suggested by the farm's name, which in English translates as "Friendly Farm".

a mix of techniques including animal grazing, manual weeding, and covering the bare soil with blankets of straw, the so-called mulching.

With the arrival of the warm season, the fraction of time we spent outside increased proportionally, as we had to erect new fences, build outdoor wooden shelters for the animals, and transfer the biggest among them – cows, goats, sheep – to some pasturelands out of Gunhild's property. And then there were ditches to shovel around the crop beds, as a further defence against the weeds; and holes to dig in rows within them, where we would eventually transplant the greenhouse vegetables, seedling by seedling, with a pinch of pelleted chicken manure in each hole to boost their growth; and the fabric covers to spread all over the plants – both those in the greenhouse and the ones embedded outside – to insulate them from the night frosts; and the drip irrigation system to lay down all along the beds, in addition to the manual watering that we carried out by hand hoses.

Occasionally we also assisted Gunhild in packaging and selling her products, by loading and unloading them on the trailer and setting up her stand at some open-air market. Together with retail at her farm shop and advertising through Facebook, local markets and food festivals – "at most, sixty kilometres from here", she specified – represented her favourite commercial outlet. For a short time, she had also supplied eggs and spices to an organic coffee shop in Ålåsen; yet the collaboration had soon ended due to the scarcity of customers, and even more so for political divergences among the partners. As for the big distribution, she avoided it like the plague, because it demanded too high packaging standards and paid much lower prices. Only in case of overproduction, which happened sometimes with tomatoes, she accepted to sell the surplus to supermarkets, "for half price but … better than throw it away!".

That her profession was never going to enrich her was a point that she made plain often and passionately: "No, no, no, absolutely not", was her lapidary comment on that issue. One major source of distress for her was the price of electricity, which she used for pumping water from the well and milling the grain, as well as for the cooling room where she stored the meat. The solar panels that she was installing on the barn roof were intended as a first step in the direction of energy self-sufficiency.

Then, there were troubles more specific to her organic practice, like the fact that she could not get from her animals enough manure to fertilize the grain fields, which resulted in poorer harvests and thus in less hay for the animals, in a vicious circle. Eventually, the solution consisted in putting to fodder much greater areas than it would have been the case if she had used synthetic fertilizers: "So I have to have so much land […] to get enough grass […] instead of having not that much land and put on fertilizer". Even so, in times of drought, the feed produced internally would become insufficient, and she would have to either confront the "dead expensive" terms set by the external suppliers, or see her animals perish. Sometimes even both

things at once: “This year […] I could barely harvest anything by myself […] so I had to buy everything, and I have slaughtered so many animals”, she lamented when I interviewed her sometime after the autumn crop.

An additional burden put on organic farmers like her was represented by the expenses incurred for extricating oneself in a maze of organic certifications and registrations with various animal gene banks, one for each animal species: “[It] costs shit [sic] lots of money”, as she crudely put it. In the face of such hardship, apparently little relief came from the governmental subsidies to organic agriculture, although she always sounded a bit vague on the subject: “Tsk no … [I receive] some but … I’m not sure. It costs so much so I’m not sure I get the money back”, she deflected my question as to whether she was entitled to them. Nor was I more successful sometime later when, trying to probe more into that and other blind spots that remained in her account, I only elicited from her a sharp text message saying that “I’m pretty sure I have answered *all* the questions earlier”.

Given this grim picture, she could not figure how countries like Sweden insisted to import so much food, organic or not – a protectionist stance that, incidentally, she applied also to the open-door policy on refugees recently adopted by the government. “It’s a too big industry”, she complained, “it’s an industry … organic industry”. Apart from the damage it caused to local producers, what bothered her was the ridiculous waste associated with such a food orgy: “You don’t have to take in *that much* meat […] we don’t need *so much* food in Sweden […] to throw away”; or, similarly, the subversion of the natural generative patterns for the sake of nonconformism: “We don’t have to have tomatoes in January. We don’t need it”.

Ultimately, one organic farmer, in order to survive, faced the dilemma of either searching for alternative income sources – as she was already doing with her part-time factory job – or (re)converting to the more lucrative and solid business of industrial agriculture: “If I wanted the money”, she said bitterly, “I would have been *not* organic. […] Then I [would] get bigger harvests and everything”. And the she added: “You’re safer when you’re not organic”. As if to add evidence to these claims, she took some pride in noting that she did not need to lock her front door for, after all, “there is nothing to steal in here”.

So, if not for profit, why was she doing it? In part, it was a matter of domestic imprint. Despite her urban origins (“I’m a city girl”), and although over the years she had done also other than farming (“I've done a lot, […] almost anything you can imagine, […] everything from bringing newspapers in the morning to … sell stuff to people to […] carpentry to … plumbing factory to … kitchen work”), the organic connection had been a constant in her family: her father had owned an organic shop back in the eighties, while her mother’s current partner was himself an organic farmer.

But most importantly, having moved from farm to farm since the age of twelve – both those owned by others and her own ones – and familiarized herself with both conventional and organic methods, she had come to the conclusion that organic was the rightest choice for health and the environment. "I don't like all the pesticides and the methods [the conventional farmers] are working with", she explained. To her great dismay, "some of them don't use the shit [sic] *at all*!". Key to her view was an ideal of moderation and humility that she articulated in the following terms: "It's to make a small print as possible … also, to use as less as possible … don't use more than you need. Keep it as clean and safe as possible and be … *humble*?".

In this regard, Lars' open support to the organic cause – besides to other instances of "counterculture" such as environmentalism, vegetarianism, alternative medicine, the animal-rights movement, and the anti-globalization movement – made him a more suited assistant to Gunhild than I was.[31] Nonetheless, as convinced as she was of the soundness of the organic principles, her adherence to them never crossed into an outright condemnation of conventional agriculture. On the contrary, she espoused the rather unorthodox view that some compromise between the two methods could be reached:

> [Conventional farming is] both good and bad. They have good food … also hygienic … good food for the animals. […] I think … yeah … yeah, maybe you can mix it up a bit. […] You can use *half* the chemicals and *half* from the animals, maybe.

The same oscillation between scepticism and tolerance characterized her relationship with modern medical science:

> I only take medicine if I really, *really* need it […] and if they can tell me: 'If you eat *this*, it's against *this*'. So, I won't eat anything that *maybe* could help you. […] No, no. I won't do it!

Her versatility worked also in the opposite direction, from pragmatism to idealism, if it is true that she, who slaughtered her animals, nonetheless felt sympathy for the vegan movement. Indeed, she would have turned vegan herself, had she been unable to produce locally the meat she ate:

> I think it's good. […] If you live in a city […] and […] you can't get local meat […] you have no choice. You have to buy what's in the store. […] And if you turn vegan, I can understand it. […] Because I don't want to eat the chicken from Thailand either!

To her credit, it should be acknowledged that her keen sense of her limits – whether these were induced by a hostile environment or inherent in her own choices ("I do so much work for so small harvest", she conceded) – was hardly a pretext for her to wallow in self-pity. Rather, it acted on her as a formidable incentive to innovate,

[31] This and other citations of Lars' views come from an online questionnaire that I had him to fill in on 12 February 2019.

diversify, learn new techniques, try alternative solutions, and expand what she already had in place. This was the case with the courses she had recently taken in beekeeping, food hygiene, and slaughter, in addition to her high-school training in agriculture; or with her constant introducing new animals – the cows, the pigs, the bees –, plants – "next year I'll try the strawberries!" –, and machines – besides the digger, a forklift and a harvester; or, likewise, with her plans to install more solar panel, create a fishpond, set up a proper home office, perhaps even raise windmills…

Along this steady path, her main sources of inspiration and update had been in books and magazines:

> I have read a lot. […] Reading, reading, reading. […] I have searched information always. […] Since I could start to read, I've been reading about farming. […] Always, always search new information, new ways to make things. […] In all my magazines and everything you see here, and all books, there are pieces that I can use to make my solutions.

More recently, it had been Internet; in particular, she was active in a Facebook group of Swedish "self-sustainable women", with whom she exchanged ideas on "anything, from sex to children, to […] techniques, to how to build, how to pay your taxes to … anything". Curiously enough – given that some of her neighbours grew organically too – she did not belong to any organic farming association; yet, perhaps this was truer to her lone wolf nature.

At *Vänlig Gård*, one could feel the pioneering vibe of an old frontier territory, for better or worse; faced with so many activities, Gunhild slept only a few hours a night and seldom allowed herself a break, let alone a proper vacation: "I have no idea", she admitted when I enquired about the time of her last holiday. In this regard, she conjoined a realistic awareness of the gap between her objectives and her means with a proud detachment from the pleasures of life: "I'm a bit stressed up, I think. I have no control and it's so much … I want so much!", she confessed at one moment. "I don't need them [i.e. luxuries]. Yeah. I don't miss them. At all, actually. This is my way of enjoying life. I don't need to go on vacation!", she clarified the next moment. Only after becoming dead sure that Lars and I were reasonably worthy of her trust, one day she indulged in a morning nap, at the end of which she proclaimed that "I haven't felt so refreshed for ages!". We took her word on that.

On the birthday of one niece of hers, we were all invited to a small family party held at her mother's place, an elegant country house located in a nearby village. After few weeks spent in the seclusion of *Vänlig Gård*, it felt like being back to civilization. Despite their blood ties and occupational affinities, the gulf separating Gunhild's military discipline from the more relaxed manners of her relatives made her look like an alien. Surely, she had not inherited from her mother the same passion for travelling, an hobby well documented by a host of exotic souvenirs showing

on all walls and shelves of that house. On the one hand, she maintained good relations with these people, and even showed affection for them; on the other, she was keen to distance herself from what appeared to her as an unforgivable hedonism on their part.

The same patronizing attitude she dedicated to the "blue-eyed" city inhabitants, by which epithet she implied that they were naïve and impractical – only to then acknowledge how much she depended on them economically: "I think […] most of my customers are city folks […] that really appreciate my things. […] The people from Ålåsen […] don't buy in my shop. They have no interest in that, [regardless] if [they] have [their] own garden [or not]". Two other categories that did not meet with her favour were the "romantic" who moved to the country in the name of an idealized image of bucolic life; and even more so, the animal right activists who dubbed her "witch" because she ate rabbit meat, ignoring how much care she devoted to those creatures – before, during, and (especially) after their death.[32]

Clearly we, the "helpless helpers", were not immune from her reproaches either. Usually it was about our inability to understand *exactly* how she wanted things done – how deep we should dig an hole, how much space to allow between the plants, for how many minutes to water them, how large to draw a fence; this could mean that we had to repeat the same task twice. Other times it was rather about our excessive caution, and consequently our slowness in doing things, which once made her claim impatiently that "agriculture is not nuclear science!"

In our defence, I must say that her instructions were far from exhaustive, and she definitely took too many things for granted. Adding fuel to our daily discussions with her were also minor issues, such as our frequent infractions of the intricate rules regulating the pets' access to the house – "the dog yes, this cat never, that cat depends…" –; or my declared neutrality about the use of GMOs and palm-oil-based products – both Gunhild and Lars being resolutely against; or the fact that I consumed too much kitchen tissue and ashed my cigarettes in the dry lawn. Yet, ultimately, we felt sympathy for her; and when, on the day before my departure, she cooked a lavish dinner in my honour, I knew that in her own way she liked me too.

5.3 Swedish case summary

This case refers to a middle-sized certified organic farm located in a high-income country, Sweden. The farm owner, Gunhild, runs it in almost complete autonomy and out of any cooperative scheme. Only occasionally does she hire a variable number of WWOOFers, yet without putting much trust in their capacities and, often, developing conflictual relationships with them. The farm displays a wide range of

[32] For she sold their skins and furs.

farming techniques, crops, and animals; moreover, their numbers are bound to further increase the more Gunhild acquires new skills through a process of constant learning. Both her biography and her *modus operandi* recall in many respects the type of "edgework" that Rosenberger (2017) has attributed to the new generations of Japanese organic farmers. One first instance lies in her oscillation between the poles of nature and culture. The former is exemplified by her lifelong attachment to agriculture and the countryside; the latter, by her urban upbringing, her previous employment in a number non-farming positions, and her relatively high educational achievements.

Another trace of "marginality" in the abovementioned meaning appears from the way Gunhild reconciles a firm orientation towards ideals of healthiness and sustainability with her striving to make the farm into a modern and competitive business. However, such an effort is not matched with satisfying financial returns, as one can tell from her admission that things would be better if she farmed conventionally; nor do the public subsidies to organic agriculture appear to alter much this state of affairs. At the same time, this entrepreneurial spirit of her, which does not disdain recurring to the modern marketing technologies – apart from selling *in loco* or at marketplaces, she also advertises her products on Facebook – clashes with certain anti-market postures; for instance, the advocacy of safeguards for small local producers against the dominance of large retailers and import companies.

A similar tension arises between her predilection for basic and/or traditional farming techniques and health remedies and, on the other hand, a limited acceptance of the inputs coming from mechanization and modern medicine. Likewise, although not being vegetarian herself, she highly values this practice. Even her attitude towards conventional agriculture appears more conciliatory and less ideological than one would expect, albeit within an unequivocal choice for the organic one.

On the other hand, unlike in the case of Rosenberger's farmers, Gunhild's balance between duty and pleasure leans heavily towards the former. Far from constituting a source of regret – and even less of embarrassment – her full dedication to work, along with an exceptionally frugal lifestyle, is rather exhibited with pride, as a tangible sign of alterity in relation to the consumerism of modern times. This circumstance marks a return to a more traditional notion of "marginality", understood as an assertion of the superiority of the "organic model" and, conversely, a firm distancing from mainstream behavioural codes. Such an uncompromising stance, coupled with the "solo" business model she pursues, risks to undermine Gunhild's relationship with the rest of society, as represented here by her family, her neighbours and colleagues, and the WWOOFers. Ultimately, this conflictual stance risks to push her into a sort of "splendid isolation", which she breaks only to the extent required by her marketing needs.

6 Results II: The Cambodian case

6.1 Organic farming as a "social elevator"

According to Nadia Scialabba, head of the FAO's Organic Agriculture Programme, organic agriculture has great economic potential for all countries, but especially for low-income ones (Scialabba 2007: x). In this respect, two strategies are possible. The first aims at improving the trade balance of these countries by fostering their export of certified organic products, on account of their higher competitiveness and capacity to attract more lucrative prices – so-called "price premiums" – on the developed countries' markets (Scialabba 2000: 4–5).

The second strategy prioritizes instead the enhancement of the livelihoods of resource-poor smallholders through an increase in their land productivity. Rather than by tackling the supply of external – and often unaffordable – inputs, this goal is pursued by complementing the farmers' customary practices with modern agronomic knowledge and an optimal use of local resources. Compared to the first, export-oriented model, this "local-livelihood model" has the advantage of not requiring the establishment of formal systems of certification, since the harvest in this case is destined for either self-consumption or the sale on domestic markets (Scialabba 2000: 10). It is precisely a logic of social uplift of this kind that underlies the organic model enacted in the following case study from Cambodia.

6.2 A Sino-American hipster in the tropics

At the start of the following June, I was getting off the bus that took me from Phnom Penh to a small rural village situated in Kampong Speu province, about halfway along the road to Sihanoukville. My final destination, a two-hectare farm named *Song*, lay at a short *tuk-tuk* drive from the bus stop. As I would discover later, that name had nothing to do with music, but it simply identified the Khmer family who

lived there. The farm had been founded the year before by a Chinese-American woman, an NGO operator from San Francisco who had been working for some time in Cambodia and, eventually, had married a local man. Then, after the couple had moved to the US, it had been entrusted to the woman's younger brother, the 36-year-old Andy Wong. As a result, Andy had found himself playing the double role of farm manager and foreign head of the Song's household.

In its present configuration, the family consisted of: six adolescents equally divided between the two sexes, some of whom still attending school; one infant born from two of them; a middle-aged woman who was mother to Andy's brother-in-law and some kids as well as aunt to some others – whom we called "mom" for convenience; and her old mother, known accordingly as "grandma".

However, these numbers varied continuously with the coming and going of these and other people, as a result of complex migratory patterns motivated by marriage, work, study, or leisure. Among the exiles was the boy Chamroeun, who shared with Andy an apartment in Phnom Penh; there, he went to college while at the same time operating a small fast-food business, in obedience to a sound principle of diversification of the family's livelihood sources (Ellis 2000). To complete the picture, there were two WWOOFers: apart from myself, an American girl in her twenties called Beatrice. Rather than scholarly interest – as in my case – or a genuine passion for sustainability – as it had been the case with Lars back at *Vänlig Gård* – her main incentive for WWOOFing was the need to finance her gap year through the region in the cheapest way possible, that is, by volunteering on farms or anywhere else.

Leaving aside the sweaty heat of the tropics, or the discomforts typical of a developing rural area, the terms set for the volunteers at *Song Farm* were much lighter than those I had experienced at Gunhild's. Not only did they enjoy shorter schedules and richer meals, but also their presence was more appreciated, both for the contribution they made to the farm's activities and for that aura of cosmopolitanism they had about them.[33]

As for Andy, who came from college studies in Music & Event Management and had no agricultural experience whatsoever, he seemed to be perfectly at ease in his new identity as a Cambodian countryman. In this, he was facilitated by an innate practicality, as well as by an extreme adaptability to the challenges of the new environment. Foremost among these was the lack of running water. In particular, the drinking water came from two capacious filter tanks that they replenished regularly through a delivery truck service. For their personal and other domestic uses, the Song relied instead on rainwater, which they harvested in a half-dozen clay jars in

[33] On the other hand, since none of the indigenous Song could speak English, their ability to employ international volunteers depended on Andy's presence on the farm.

the lawn. Despite owning an indoor kitchen equipped with a gas stove, they normally cooked at an old fireplace lying in the open, under a metal roof; just as in the open were one of the two toilets available and the buckets where they washed their clothes and dishes.

Such a thin separation between in- and outdoor spaces clearly worked against the tidiness of their home, especially when the rain turned the lawn into a muddy swamp, an event all but rare in that climate. Nor it helped that hordes of chicken and ducks were at liberty to roam and defecate in the porch where we had our meals. Thus, beyond the official duties attached to my function, I took upon myself the unofficial one to improve the local standards of hygiene, either by setting an example (e.g. mopping the floor daily) or by donating them some basic yet (at least to my eyes) useful sanitary implements: toilet paper, flypaper, table tissues, sponges, a fan, and even a drain snake! For some time I also tried to draw a firmer line between fowls and food, by fencing the porch with some spare plastic net, yet with little success.

Apart from these minor – and, given the context, perfectly justifiable – drawbacks, *Song Farm* conveyed an overall impression of affluence. The family's two-story residence, with its solid concrete walls, ceramic floors, and a tiled roof, stood in sharp contrast to the neighbouring ones, and, in general, to those of most Cambodian rural households, which normally live in wooden shacks covered with galvanized metal sheets (NIS 2017: 9–11). Likewise, their farmland, albeit technically definable as a smallholding, exceeded the national average of 1.55 hectares, and even more so the provincial one of less than one hectare (NIS & MAFF 2015: 12, 29). Most of this land consisted of mangoes, coconut trees, eggplants, and green peas; the rest was grassland for their (few) cows to graze and their (many) fowls to roam in. With the exception of a rudimentary two-wheeled hand tractor, they cultivated mostly by hand and following customary, inherently organic methods.

All these orchards and vegetables and animals formed the traditional, extensive sector of the farm, the responsibility for which was shared by the family males. In practice, who did most of the job was the small yet exceptionally efficient Atith. Albeit descending from a secondary line of the family, Atith was the one who effectively run the place and took the important decisions. "Most of the time, he's the only one there, the [rest of] the family is pretty nomadic", Andy joked once.[34] For this reason, he was to take over the official leadership the day when Andy would leave them to pursue a Master's education abroad. Or, at least, that was the plan until it had to be adjusted to new circumstances, as Andy told me sometime later:

[34] Most of my quotations from Andy are drawn from a questionnaire he completed for me on 11 February 2019. The rest derive either from a short message exchange we had on 1 November 2018 (as in this case) or from an e-mail dated 11 March 2019. The full text of all these sources is available upon request.

> He [Atith] was studying fulltime to become a semi-truck mechanic, but he, hum, went away? We couldn't locate him for a few months. In the meantime, we had other members of the family take over the farm. As of right now, he is back with the family, but I couldn't tell you if he's on the farm.

For the time being, Andy was working on his idea of supplementing the farm's economy with a modern hydroponic system, which would enable them to produce more intensively more types vegetables – e.g. lettuce, cabbage, bok choy – with a soil-free technique and a minimum use of space. The system was to be lodged in a sort of parallelepiped-like greenhouse made from a metal frame and a plastic cover net.[35] The plant roots would then be immerged in a nutrient solution running through a series of plastic pipes, with holes pierced along each pipe to permit the seedlings to breath and thrive. Ultimately, the two sectors were supposed to work symbiotically, with the traditional sector supplying organic fertilizer to the modern one, and the latter generating revenue to be reinvested into the former.

Yet, at the time of my visit, the hydroponic project remained largely incomplete, with the pipes still empty and the cover precariously dangling from the frame. That is where Beatrice and I came in. In particular, our task was to secure the net more firmly by weaving together the sheets it was made of. Thus, armed with needle and thread, we proceeded from the ground up on top of steep ladders and, additionally, fastened the net edges to the frame with zip ties. Besides that, we also helped Andy to fix some drainpipes to the roof of the henhouse. Also in this case, we put to fruit the man's talent for low-cost, do-it-yourself solutions, by carving the new gutters out of slats of corrugated metal sheet that we had bent in a U-shape for that purpose. Eventually, the operation would enable them to fill with rainwater two additional tanks, thus doubling the hydric capacity of the farm.

For every ongoing project, there were as many still lingering in Andy's mind. Like the one to grow high-quality organic pepper, following a lucrative tradition long-established in the neighbouring province of Kampot. All these innovations were supposed to boost the farm's competitiveness with the least expenditure of resources, thereby securing the Song better living conditions than they had ever experienced. In other words, unlike with Gunhild, to the inhabitants of this Cambodian farm organic agriculture meant first and foremost a means to the end of their individual prosperity, insofar as it provided "more than enough to ensure the sustenance of all the people involved [in the farm]". Not that they ignored the positive externalities inherent in their organic choice, or the fact that it enabled them to keep faithful to the local farming traditions, without resorting to chemical additives. However, these considerations faded away when compared to the extra profits that would come from a mix of higher yields, lower dependency on external inputs, and

[35] Technically speaking, a "net house" or "shade house".

the possibility to target market segments wealthy enough to afford the organic premiums.

This was especially true when they sold their goods to organic stores, at prices exceeding from 10% to 15% the market values of the same goods grown conventionally; for the rest, they relied on the nearby market, direct sales and, unlike Gunhild, local traders. Despite the fact that most of what they produced was intended for sale, rather than self-consumption, the local scale of their business discouraged them from applying for official organic status. As Andy effectively summarized, "international certification is too expensive and complicated, and I don't export internationally; local certification is only good locally, and not needed [by my customers]".

Another major difference with Gunhild lied in the relative simplicity of their organic paradigm. This could be attributed to a number of factors, including the farm's very recent foundation and Andy's amateurishness. Also the lack of modern agronomic training on the part of the Song who had stayed on the farm – for they were either too young or too old – must have played a role. Whereas Gunhild had been mastering an impressive range of methods and species, the Song's approach seemed to be characterized more by absence (of chemical inputs) than by positive measures. These were essentially limited to the use of biological fertilizers – animal manure, compost, incorporation of crop residues into the soil –, the intercropping of tall fruit trees with small vegetables, and a generic preference for local varieties. From this perspective, the hydroponic project represented a step forward towards a greater complexity, both on a technical level and with regard to biodiversity; at the same time, it contributed to the diversification of income sources that the Song were already pursuing.

Also in terms of environmental commitment, their creed seemed less solid and consistent with what they practiced in reality than had been the case with Gunhild. Despite describing himself as an "active supporter" of the global environmental movement, and although in principle he put "environmental benefits", "health benefits for consumers, myself, and my family", "animal welfare", and "a harmonious relationship with nature" on a par with profit as important reasons for growing organically, Andy did not hesitate to admit his "mild support" to the cause of animals' rights, or even his plain indifference to vegetarianism. More crucially, he and his crew had no qualms in burning inorganic trash at some open dumps within their property: most probably a choice forced by the inadequacy of the local waste management system, yet hardly an ecological one.

One thing they shared with Gunhild was the solitary character of their business. Like the Swedish woman, they did not belong to any network of organic producers, both for lack of incentives and because, in fact, none of their neighbours were truly organic. Basically there were two categories of them: those who remained anchored

to default organic methods in the absence of better alternatives, and those who could afford the cost of chemical additives and thus made the leap to "modern agriculture". As Andy explained:

> They grow organically, without pesticides or growth formulas, because the cost of growing non-organically is too high. [However, this] is changing, the use of pesticides and growth formulas is increasing because they've realized that they'll get more harvests per year, [although] at the expense of the soil and trees […]. So, they're willing to trade the short-term benefits for the long term sustainability.

Moreover, and in contrast to Gunhild, the Song did not benefit from any external support to organic production either, whether from the government or from other independent agencies related to rural development.

A second point of contact between Andy and Gunhild lied in their pragmatic stance on health issues. Both of them looked favourably on alternative medicine, while at the same time not questioning the validity of the orthodox one. That the latter point held true for Andy could be inferred from various elements. One was the liberality with which he prescribed painkillers to one of the girls, the time when she complained of a bad headache; two more episodes concerned me personally. The first occurred just after my arrival, when he was able to address me to the right place where to get some vaccination I had forgotten about back home. Later on, when I injured myself at my arm and knee following a silly motorbike accident, he promptly took me to the local emergency room. In fact, this was little more than a pharmacy equipped with some basic first-aid tools; nonetheless, the staff sutured me with great competency and taking all the hygienic precautions needed, a fact for which I am still grateful to Andy's good judgement.

6.3 Cambodian case summary

This second case deals with a small-size farm located in Cambodia, a country that only recently has passed from low-income to lower-middle-income status (World Bank 2019a).[36] The farm was established as a result of the merger of a local peasant family, the Song, with the American and urbanized Wong. According to the division of labour between the two parties, the former share the workforce and customary know-how, whereas the latter, who are personified by the learned yet technically unskilled Andy, provide the capital as well as set out the lines for the company's future development. In particular, their strategy aims at joining the traditional, open-air practices of cultivation and animal raising performed by the Song with a modern

[36] In particular, in 2010 Kampong Speu province was ranked third in 24 in terms of human development, with a HDI of 0.663 against the national average of 0.638 (MEC & UNDP Cambodia 2011: 166). As a comparison, Sweden's HDI value for 2017 was 0.933 (UNDP 2018: 22).

hydroponic sector, both of which to be managed organically. In one case, the extensive nature of the activities involved requires some limited employment of machinery; in the other, the work is carried on manually on a small surface and without use of soil. The recency of the farm, along with the fact that neither party who manage it possesses a solid organic culture, justifies the somewhat scanty amount of crops grown and techniques applied therein.

Overall, the above arrangement comes close to that strategy of complementing customary farm practices with modern organic science and an optimization of local resources that organizations like the FAO recommend to smallholders living in deprived areas, as a simple but effective means of enhancing their productivity and, ultimately, their living standards. Unlike other solutions based on export, this strategy dispenses with the creation of complex regimes of formal certification, state subsidization, and cooperativism, all of which elements are absent in the case at hand. At the same time, unlike in the subsistence type of agriculture practiced by the poorest households of that category, the business model of *Song Farm* is firmly oriented towards domestic sales, both direct ones and those made via local intermediaries (e.g. marketplaces, stores, traders).

The apparent prioritization of material gains (e.g. private welfare) over idealistic motives (e.g. ecologism, food quality) being made by the people involved justifies what might be seen as their erratic commitment to farming. This is particularly true of the Song, who take turns to go periodically missing for the sake of alternative projects, including recreational ones; in Andy's case, a more crucial factor perhaps consists in his being a professional who is only temporarily "lent" to agriculture. Either way, this part-time dedication to the organic cause seems to reflect in a relative laxity on the plane of their values (e.g. loose environmental standards, pursuit of higher consumption patterns, openness to modernity) and behaviours (e.g. non-vegetarian diet, poor waste management, use of synthetic medicines). The same easiness pertains to their public relations, as demonstrated by the warm reception granted to the WWOOFers or, on a different level, by Andy's non-judgemental stance in relation to the conventional choice made by some of their neighbours.

7 Results III: The Balinese case

7.1 Organic farming as a total experience straddling body, land, and soul

The historical overview presented in Section 4.1 shows how the contemporary organic movement has emerged from the confluence of three distinct strands of thought. The first coincides with the idealization of rural traditions made by movements like "Food Reform" and "Life Reform" since the late 19th century. Rooted in urban contexts, these movements called for a rejection of the values and rhythms of modern industrial societies in favour of a more natural lifestyle. This included a vegetarian or low-meat diet, the elimination of industrially processed food, physical training, a preference for natural medicaments, and abstinence from alcohol and drugs (Vogt 2007: 12–3).

The second strand aimed to refound agriculture upon philosophical bases. While retaining the countercultural motives typical of the previous one, the groups adhering to it distinguished themselves for a greater esoteric inclination, reflected in an interpretation of nature as a "cycle of living particles" or, alternatively, as a "spiritual-physical matrix", wherein each farm acted as a "living organism" (Vogt 2007: 18–9).[37]

The third strand arose from the critique of chemically driven agriculture that took hold in the agronomic community since the 1920s; as a result, it rested on firmer scientific grounds compared to the first two. In particular, this current contrasted the damages caused by an indiscriminate use of synthetic inputs by favouring a fully biological understanding of the soil and natural methods of fertilization, such as the recycling of municipal organic wastes. Furthermore, against the prevalent model of

[37] These interpretations are imputable to, respectively, the Swiss "organic-biological" movement and the German "biodynamic" movement.

large and highly mechanized farms, it opposed a new paradigm based on small gardens cultivated manually or, at most, with rudimentary machines. Finally, in line with the vegetarian choice made by many of its supporters, it preached an ideal of "farming without animals" that prohibited all forms of animal exploitation, including as a source of draught power and manure (Vogt 2007: 14–5).

Over the decades, the last strand supplanted the first two, while at the same time relaxing some of its most rigid prescriptions, such as the ban on animals and technologies (Lockeretz 2007: 5–6; Vogt 2007: 17). Nonetheless, all the three cited features of the early organic movement – countercultural zeal, mysticism, and technical radicalism – were to survive in a minority of organic farmers, as the following Balinese case illustrates.

7.2 A mystic couple from the East

The last stop of my journey in the footsteps of organic farmers was the Indonesian island of Bali. The farm I had chosen there, *Safe Harbour*, was in a village situated in the southern-central part of the island, near the ancient town of Ubud. It belonged to a couple formed by a Balinese 34-year-old man called Ketut and his somewhat older wife Mio, who came from Japan.

The biographies of the two spouses are particularly instructive of their existential perspective, including their approach to the land. Their partnership in life and business had started in 2012, when they had both relocated from Japan to Bali following the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Before that, Mio had been moving through various urban careers as a teacher, dressmaker, and even foreign correspondent for a magazine. Yet, at some point, she had found her true calling in the variegated galaxy of healthy life practices, in particular developing an expertise in holistic nutrition, homeopathy, and permaculture. On the contrary, Ketut had always been farming: initially, on his own family's land in northern Bali; then, as a foreign labourer on some Japanese farms. During the almost ten years he had spent abroad, he had become acquainted with the latest agronomic trends, while at the same time developing a deep mistrust in the conventional methods being prevalent there.

The two had founded *Safe Harbour* shortly after they met, on some disused farmland owned by a friend of Ketut's; there they had built a small house and settled together with two children born from Mio's previous marriage. In a sense, the farm represented the capstone of two separate, yet parallel trajectories towards a deeper ecological awareness; at the same time, it marked the start of a new common path removed from the lures and threats of modern life.

Four years later, these preoccupations were still foremost in their minds, as I could learn as soon as I received my copy of the "Helper Handbook".[38] Among other things, the pamphlet instructed their future guests to neutralize any trace of radioactivity they might contract from the many Japanese tourists visiting the island: "Spend at least 24 hours in [an] alternative accommodation before visiting our farm; wash yourself from head to toe with a thorough shower or bath; carefully clean your bag and belongings with a wet cloth, to remove the [radioactive] dust". Rightly or wrongly, they imputed to that cause all their illnesses and, for the same reason, avoided any product imported from Japan.

Safe Harbour extended over as little as 0.2 hectares, corresponding to a quarter of the average Indonesian holding, or half the size of a local smallholding (FAO 2019b). This figure was in line with a tendency of Balinese farms to be smaller than in the rest of the country (Pakpahan 1992: 21); moreover, it did not count a rice paddy that the couple purportedly owned somewhere nearby, nor a share they retained in the bigger property that Ketut's parents and siblings were still managing back in his homeplace. The uneven morphology of the terrain implied that the farmland developed across two distinct terraces, which were joined together by a steep slope. Either level featured a dense patchwork of small plots, with each plot intercropped with an astounding variety of species: from fruit trees (papayas, bananas, coconuts, oranges, lemons, mangosteens), to vegetables (tomatoes, water spinaches, eggplants, salads, luffas, beans, pumpkins, chili peppers), to herbs and spices (lemon grass, centella, basil, coriander, cassava, turmeric, sesame, okra, mustard, mimosa, moringa, moroheiya).

Unlike in the other two farms, where the different plots had been demarcated by fences or, at least, some evident grass strip, here they followed one another in an apparently seamless manner, the only visible boundaries being constituted by narrow irrigation trenches and even narrower walkways. Adding to the sense of bewilderment was the fact that the grass, in itself copious due to the elevated humidity, was let thrive freely in them. This is because for Mio and Ketut weeding consisted essentially in topping the weed heads before they shed seeds, instead of uprooting the whole plant; moreover, rather than keeping the clippings in a separate compost pile, they put them back into the beds, both to prevent the growth of new weeds and as a natural form of soil nutrient. As a result, to the untrained eye it was almost impossible to tell apart the different plant types, or the good from the unwanted ones, everything blurring into one undifferentiated greenness. This could produce

[38] On 5 June 2016. Apart from it, other sources of quotations of theirs being cited in this section include a hastily completed questionnaire form (which they returned to me on 3 March 2019) and, more importantly, their official farm website. Unfortunately, whereas the first two sources are fully viewable upon request, the last one is not anymore: for some reason unknown to me, the site disappeared before I could print it, at some point in April 2019.

tragicomic effects, like when Ketut implored me not to exterminate his beloved seedlings by mistaking them for alien species!

Also due to the small farm size, the cultivation was done by hand or with simple tools, like shovels, picks, and scythes. The main part of it fell to Ketut and his close friend Wayan, who had been working with him in Japan; Mio and her sons joined them occasionally, once they were done with their respective routines. In particular, the kids attended a home-learning programme, whereas the woman was responsible for preparing and packaging some concoctions of fruit and vegetables they used to sell: herbal infusions, cacao powder, s*hiokoji*,[39] and various products – seasonings, dressings, even cookies – based on *miso*.[40] Finally, there were the WWOOFers. Perhaps due to the touristic appeal of the island, they were employed in larger numbers than on the other two farms I visited, and on a more stable basis: about twenty every year, for a minimum duration of two weeks.

In apparent contrast with the extreme crop diversification they pursued, and despite their complex work of landscaping and optimization of natural synergies, Mio and Ketut relied on relatively simple techniques of soil management. In this regard, they followed a conservative principle of respecting the plants' natural patterns of growth while avoiding all unnecessary interventions. One consequence was that they kept tillage to a minimum: "If the plant doesn't grow, maybe the soil isn't right for that vegetable right now. Tilling kills the land". Another was that they shun not only chemical fertilizers, as is mandatory in organic farming, but even animal manure, in the belief that less help would confer greater resilience and longevity on the plants: "Leaving them be results in less sickness, less weakness. […] All plants have the ability and potential to survive by themselves". As an example they mentioned the rice, which "lasts six months if you use fertilizer and farm it intensively, but if you grow it naturally, the plants can last up to two years".

One further benefit they saw in not applying manure was that it kept undiluted the nutritious power and natural taste of food: "The natural tomato is 100% vegetable. The one grown with organic fertilizer is bigger, but it's 50% fertilizer". Finally, they adopted very bland forms of pest and – as mentioned earlier – weed control, since they regarded both these elements as "a part of nature" and, as such, "valuable". One partial exception was the need to protect the newly planted seeds from the insects; yet even that was done in a gentle manner, simply by sprinkling water on them: "[We] *ask* the ants not to eat our plants. But even if they do, that is ok. […] We don't have to eat 100%".

[39] A type of fermented salt obtained by applying a mould called *koji* to the unrefined salt.
[40] A traditional Japanese paste made from soybeans fermented with *koji*.

The radicality of the techniques they adopted matched that of the environmentalism they preached. Unlike with the Song, to whom organic farming meant principally a source of income, or with Gunhild, whose ecological zeal concealed an equally solid pragmatism, in Mio and Ketut organic farming took on an almost mystical aura, and for two reasons. First, because it offered them a means of entering into dialogue with that sort of divinity they called Nature – both in a spiritual sense and literally, at least judging by Ketut's habit to "converse" with their plants: "I *talk* to the plants as I plant them, or care for them, or harvest them. The plants are always *listening*". Second, for the exceptional, even miraculous properties they attributed to organically grown food, not least the one they produced themselves: "After two years' fermentation, we consider this type of food *a medicine*". Similarly, of the coconut oil they sold they wrote that "if you drink two tablespoons per day, your body should be *cleansed of disease* after two months".

This amalgam of spiritual and therapeutic motifs translated into an imperative to catechize other people about the benefits of living naturally; or, to quote their highly inspired words, to "*raise up* the people" and "*help* the world heal and thrive". Such a civilizing mission eventually put them in similar a position as that of a mother towards her children, a parallel not so veiled in the definition of "*maternal* philosophy" they applied to their own creed; and just to make things crystal clear, they went on saying that "natural farming, *childrearing* and homeopathy are the three universal truths [sic] that *Safe Harbour* lives by. They form our cosmic trilogy [sic]".

Evangelical ambitions apart, economic matters occupied some place in their minds too, albeit a subordinate one. Among other justifications for their decision to grow organically – "health benefits", "a more harmonious relationship with nature" – they indicated a "higher profitability due to higher yields". A further advantage was the ability to command price premiums, all the more so since their business model, like that of my previous two hosts, was very much market-oriented. Although these markups were barely noticeable and greatly varying from case to case – for instance, 5% in that of basil –, nonetheless they helped the family to earn more than enough to meet their (indeed very modest) needs.

Their favourite market outlet was represented by some high-end stores catering to the foreign tourists that crowded the ancient town of Ubud or the beaches of Kuta and Seminyak: a whole range of organic *cafés*, restaurants, street markets, groceries, and food delis whose exotic names showed proudly in the "Partners" section of the farm's website. Like *Song Farm*, also *Safe Harbour* managed without receiving state subsidies or owing a formal certification; "'cause [it's] very difficult to find [one]", Ketut explained in reference to the latter, yet without elaborating on the exact nature of the difficulty. On the other hand, whatever ingredient for their preparations they sourced from the outside – as was the case for the cacao and part of the rice – came from rigorously certified suppliers. Another point of convergence with

the Song (and, partially, with Gunhild too) lied in their exclusion from any cooperative agreement other than the local *subak*[41]; also in this case, the reason was that they were the only organic growers in the area.

The four family members and their many cats shared the two floors of a humble stilt house standing at the front of the property. These cramped, messy spaces well reflected the parsimony of their human inhabitants. Aside from the metal roof, the building was entirely made of bamboo. It included a kitchen, a living room, a sleeping area, and a composting toilet, all of which brimming with assorted junk; here, too, the divide between in- and outdoor was purely conventional. The family collected what little non-organic waste they produced in the cavity between the ground and the kitchen floor, before taking it to a recycling point nearby. This was a substantial progress compared to the situation I had registered on *Song Farm*, and one open to various interpretations: if part of it could be imputed to Bali's overall good performance in terms of municipal waste management,[42] there is no doubt that the superior environmental vocation of my current hosts relative to their Cambodian equivalents did the rest.

Their consumptions were equally basic and limited to the strictly necessary, to the point that they handcrafted most of their everyday implements: besoms, wicker baskets, sponges made out of dried luffas, and even household and personal care detergents based on fermented rice. This mix of austerity, self-reliance, and empiricism was another common denominator across the three sites I visited. Thus, Ketut condensed his farming approach in the following sentence halfway between Homer's epics and the Galilean method: "I *experiment* for the optimum results. […] I keep *trying* new things and I *observe* what happens, and I don't get *defeated*".

Similar spartan rules applied to their health regimen. In order to minimize their ecological footprint and avoid toxic agents, they followed a vegetarian diet and medicated themselves only with natural substances, more or less the same as they ate for food. The latter circumstance in particular was not without consequences for their work productivity, since it tended to protract their times of recovery when they fell ill. Mio's case is exemplary in this sense. Having not seen her around since my arrival, at some point I asked Ketut what had become of her. As it happened, she was confined to bed by some intestinal disorder she was treating with the said cure-all remedies; unfortunately, but not too unexpectedly, she would have remained there until the day I left.

As a matter of fact, my hosts were by no means alone in their opposition to modern medicine, for many of my fellow WWOOFers harboured identical feelings.

[41] A traditional Balinese institution presiding over the water management of a certain area.

[42] That the waste management system of Indonesia as a whole outdoes Cambodia's one, is attested for example by Jain (2017: 28–30); on the other hand, MacRae (2010) documents the relatively higher standards enjoyed by Bali within the Indonesian context.

Thus, once I heard a certain Pierre from France bragging on how he had rejected his doctor's advice to take antibiotics; whether or not this helped to cure his ear infection, it certainly earned him a firm approval from everyone present. By comparison, Zoya, a young woman from India who consented to answer my questionnaire two years later,[43] held more nuanced opinions: a staunch vegetarian herself, she "strongly supported" veganism and alternative medicine, yet without distrusting the orthodox one. Similarly, her appreciation for the health and environmental benefits of organic farming did not prevent her from consuming non-organic food, nor from questioning certain utopic slippages of the organic thought, such as the ban on GMOs or the ambition to replace conventional farming on a global scale. In fact, the girl was quite candid about the fact that her presence there depended as much on a deep respect for organic farmers as on more trivial motives, such as the desire to travel and meet new people. In a sense, she represented a fair compromise among the many styles of farm volunteering I had met so far: from the "militant" one being embodied by Lars in Sweden; to the "cheerful" one that had characterized Beatrice back in Cambodia; to the "agnostic" one, exemplified by myself.

As far as the WWOOFers' status was concerned, the situation was ambivalent. On the one hand, they enjoyed the same high standards of hospitality and work flexibility as those offered by the Song. On the other, the burdensome nature of some of the tasks assigned to them largely compensated those bonuses, especially when it came to digging by pick and shovel some new irrigation ditch, under the scorching equatorial sun. Apart from their material help, the WWOOFers' presence was cherished also for the "social capital" it added to the farm – both in terms of "good company" and "international background" –; and even more so for the opportunities of mutual learning it produced. Thus, Ketut was keen to stress that there not only did they learn the basics of growing and living sustainably, but in turn they also shared their own skills. Such an emphasis on the cross-cultural value of the exchange probably rendered this farm the closest of the three I visited to that ideal of "life sharing" among "like-minded people" which inspires the WWOOF's vision (FoWO 2019a).

On top of that, *Safe Harbour* gave the most daring of its guests the opportunity to double the gain – and the pain! – by having part of their training on the twin estate led by Ketut's family. Avid for thrill, I took my chances and asked for a transfer to the new post. This stood in a remote village perched on a peak of the northern mountain range, in Seririt district. Its two hectares of steeply terraced land were fully consecrated to the cultivation of tropical fruits: bananas, mangos, papayas, oranges, durians, guavas, cacao; above all, the local speciality, clove trees, whose intense perfume pervaded the entire area. During most of the week I was there, I dedicated

[43] On 16 February 2019.

myself to perfecting my excavating skills by carving steps into a hill that was planted with the said trees, thus making it easier for the family to bring the clove harvest downhill; otherwise, I helped them to separate the clove buds from the stems. I also offered an unsolicited contribution to their house cleaning, whose conditions I found particularly critical. As it had been the case with the Song, the doubt remains as to whether this gesture constituted an undue interference in their private affairs; with any luck, they interpreted it as a legitimate part of our "cultural exchange".

7.3 Balinese case summary

Like the previous case, this one also takes place in a lower-middle-income country (World Bank 2019b). At its forefront is a non-certified, small-sized organic enterprise constituted by two separate farmsteads, both located on the relatively prosperous Bali.[44] One second analogy with the Cambodian initiative lies in the fact that both originate from the unusual alliance between an autochthonous and a foreign element: in this case, the Balinese Ketut and his Japanese wife Mio. The farm staff is relatively numerous and includes, besides the two spouses, Mio's two sons, Ketut's birth family, and a close fellow of the latter. Additionally, these permanent forces are joined periodically by a conspicuous number of WWOOFers, who are welcomed as initiates as well as bearers of new knowledge.

The farm presents at once a high crop diversification and a rigid application of the organic principles, to the point that some practices commonly accepted by present-day organic farmers (including the protagonists of the preceding cases) here are shunned as unnatural. In the absence of any external support (e.g. from cooperatives, certification bodies, subsidizing agencies, and the like), its main strength derives from the individual qualities of its managers: solid organic culture, strong entrepreneurship, familiarity with the Internet and, in Mio's case, good education and past experience in other careers. Eventually these assets, coupled with a dense network of partnerships with high-end retailers based in the area, which they supply with both raw and processed products, ensure the family margins that are more than adequate to their needs.

Technical puritanism apart, the major novelty of this case resides in its ideological fervour. Whereas on the two previous farms organic agriculture largely coincided with a precise technique of land management – albeit with significant excursions into the spheres of ideals and, partially, lifestyles –, here the latter dimensions take on a crucial role. Based on an unwavering faith in the healing properties of natural food, the protagonists of this Balinese farm turn organic principles into a

[44] In terms of human development, in 2018 Bali was ranked fifth in the 34 Indonesian provinces, with a HDI of 0.748 against the national average of 0.714 (Statistics Indonesia 2019).

veritable cosmology linking together environmental, spiritual, and bodily forces. In doing so, they ideally reconnect with the most radical elements that had connoted one or another brand of the organic movement in its early days. The result of this operation is duplex. Internally, it reverberates through all aspects of these people's everyday lives: from their diet and health choices, to their construction techniques, to the type of utensils they use. Externally, it orients their attitudes to the outer world in the direction of a defensive closure (e.g. against modern medicine and contaminated food) and, at the same time, an aggressive work of evangelization.

8 Discussion I: Variations on the organic theme

This and the next two sections are dedicated to an analysis of the empirical findings presented so far. The analysis develops in four stages: first, a comparison across the three cases; second, the formulation of a tentative typology of organic farmers; third, the interpretation of these cases within the conceptual framework of "new social movements"; and last, a prognosis of some risks to which the organic movement is exposed, given the characteristics highlighted in the other stages. The first two stages are set out below.

8.1 The three cases compared

The three ethnographic cases under study present a number of analogies and contrasts. With respect to the former, five aspects catch the attention. The first, and rather obvious, is that all farms involved apply organic farming techniques to some extent, a property which I will refer to as their degree of "rigour". However trivial this remark might sound, it is worth noting that such an application never occurs – or at least, not principally – in token compliance with rules set by external authorities such as certifying bodies, market standards, subsidizing state agencies, non-state donors and the like – provided that such authorities exist at all. Rather, it arises out of the farmers' practical wisdom and/or ideal convictions.

The last observation leads to the second point of convergence, namely, the great solicitude they all share for environmental sustainability and human health, which I will call their "idealism". This fact, too, is hardly unexpected, considering how crucial such themes are to the organic philosophy, as a cursory glance at its four fundaments – especially those of "health" and "care" – will attest. Yet, it might appear less futile when considering that ideal motives are only one among many factors that may lead a farmer to adopt organic methods, as the literature on motivations cited in Section 4.2 concurs to point out.

The third analogy lies in the fact that in all cases such a strong idealistic component coexists with an equally solid footing in market dynamics and business behaviour, or "entrepreneurism". Perhaps this is less self-evident, at least if one starts with the romanticized assumption that organic farming has everything to do with airy-fairy ideals of "going back to the land", and nothing with pragmatic calculations about crop yields and profit margins. At the same time, this confirms the observation that organic farmers have long dismissed their original prejudices against business and are prepared to come to terms with neoliberal economics.[45]

The fourth common thread consists in a tendency on the part of the protagonists to lead lives removed from comforts and pleasures. While this "ascetic" vein fits perfectly the said stereotype of the "hippie" organic farmer, as well as that counter-cultural tension which, as seen before, unquestionably dominated certain circles of the early organic movement, one should remember that things need not necessarily be this way. In other words, it would be a mistake to take for granted that growing organically entails *ipso facto* acting like an eremite; on the contrary, there is evidence that many organic farmers are now keen to enjoy pleasures.[46] Nonetheless, the fact remains that, in the cases under investigation, such hedonistic dimension is hardly visible, if at all.[47]

The last analogy stems from both their "idealism" and "asceticism", and consists in the adversarial posture they all assume in relation to mainstream codes of thinking and conduct. Such "antagonism" may take different forms, from the patronizing glance with which Gunhild looks at the debauchery of modern society – and the related impulse to flee therefrom –, to Andy's bitterness over the "profit myopia" of some of his colleagues, to Mio and Ketut's clear-cut distinction between "us" – the saved, the enlightened – and "them" – the lost, the blind.

However, the above five properties appear to be unequally distributed across the three farms. From a technical perspective, these operate according to different degrees of mastery of organic methods, variety of techniques used, and fidelity to the original precepts, which together add up to their "rigour". The range goes from the impromptu and limited application made in Case 2, to the balance between competency, versatility, and innovation realized in Case 1, to the strict fundamentalism of Case 3. In this respect, Cases 1 and 3 represent two complementary inflections of "rigour": on the one hand, they both feature high levels of competency; on the other, whereas Gunhild leans towards broadening her portfolio of activities and tools at the expense of tradition, Mio and Ketut do just the opposite.

---

[45] As the mentioned works by Rosenberger's (2017) and Flaten et al.'s (2005) point out.

[46] As documented by Rosenberger (2017) and Lockeretz (2017).

[47] At least when limiting the analysis to the main characters, namely Gunhild, Andy, and the couple Mio-Ketut. By contrast, some degree of enjoyment-seeking *does* appear in the Song's nomadic attitude, consistently with their ascending socioeconomic trajectory.

Likewise, given that all farms fare well in terms of "entrepreneurism", only in Cases 2 and 3 does this property concur with satisfactory levels of profit, and only in Case 2 is it immune from such anti-market postures as Gunhild's praise for local economies or the two Balinese's boycott of Japanese products. Even more crucially, the Cambodian farm is also unique in its prioritization of profit over environmental and health considerations (i.e. over "idealism"), which conversely are preponderant in Cases 1 and 3. This "ecological gap" is particularly evident when comparing the waste management habits of the different farmers. Thus, Mio and Ketut's irreproachable recycling policy is at odds with the much laxer rules enacted by the Song, also in view of the geographical and social similarities between the two cases. Incidentally, this polarity between idealism and pragmatism has also an equivalent on the WWOOFers' side, where it takes the form of an alternative between altruistic and hedonistic goals as their main reason for volunteering on organic farms. In this respect, Lars' devoted commitment and Beatrice's adventure-seeking stand at the two extremes of the spectrum.

A similar pattern applies to "asceticism", which appears to be pivotal and deliberate in Cases 1 and 3, while residual and accidental in Case 2. In Gunhild's case, this trait essentially manifests itself as a total dedication to work at the expense of leisure and self-care. As for the Balinese couple, they take it to the next level by making it their existential signature, regardless of whether it is about work, housing, diet, or even their own health. Quite different is the situation of Andy and the Song. Despite the unequivocal basicity of their lives, their "asceticism" seems to depend more on the financial constraints they face – at most combined with a certain leaning towards "going native" on the part of Andy – rather than on a deliberate choice they made in accordance with their organic beliefs.

The last two differences bear implications on the degree of aversion to mainstream culture exhibited by each farmer. In this respect, whereas in both Case 1 and Case 3 the coincidence of strong "idealism" and "asceticism" puts the protagonists on a collision course with the rest of society, thus resulting in a strong "antagonism", in Case 2 the last property shows only in an embryonic stage.

Finally, there are properties that apply to certain cases and not to others. One is "esotericism", consisting in a propensity to charge organic principles with spiritual meanings; another is the related aspiration to circulate such meanings to new audiences, by way of what I call "proselytism". Both properties are blatant in Case 3 while being virtually absent in the other two. The second in particular entails a further distinction between two antithetic models of "antagonism", depending on whether the accent falls on the safeguard of one's comfort zone or, conversely, the conquest of new territories. The former, more "introverted" model focuses on one' solitary enactment of the "right" codes of conduct; it is exemplified by Gunhild's

striving for self-sufficiency and antisocial attitudes. Its privileged form of communication is that occurring with other like-minded people, in her case the Facebook community of the Swedish "self-sustainable women". Such a withdrawal tendency contrasts quite neatly with the assertiveness whereby Mio and Ketut publicize the advantages ensured by their products and lifestyles, for instance by running a very informative website and collaborating with fancy businesses. By this "extroverted" form of "antagonism", the couple attempts to reach a wider public than that of the already converted.

Table 1 below synthetizes the scores obtained by the three cases for the seven fundamental properties identified as well as recapitulating how these properties manifest themselves empirically in each case.[48]

[48] Since I will shortly build a typology of organic farmers based on these properties, I will define them "typology variables".

Table 1. The three cases compared. The table presents a comparison among my three case studies in terms of seven fundamental properties called "typology variables".

Typology variables	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Rigour	**MEDIUM** – Wide range of products and techniques High mastery of organic techniques High propensity towards innovation	**LOW** – Limited range of products and techniques Limited mastery of organic techniques High propensity towards innovation	**HIGH** –Wide range of products and techniques High mastery of organic techniques Strict adherence to the received precepts
Idealism	**HIGH** – Prioritization of environmental sustainability and food safety over other goals	**MEDIUM** – Appreciation of environmental sustainability and food safety albeit prioritizing other goals	**HIGH** – Prioritization of environmental sustainability and food safety over other goals
Entrepreneurism	**LOW** – Subordination of profit to other goals Commercialization of a high share of crop Good entrepreneurial skills Mixed attitude towards the market Low profitability	**HIGH** – Prioritization of profit over other goals Commercialization of a high share of crop Good entrepreneurial skills Positive attitude towards the market Good profitability	**MEDIUM** – Subordination of profit to other goals Commercialization of a high share of crop Good entrepreneurial skills Mixed attitude towards the market Good profitability
Asceticism	**MEDIUM** – Austerity as a sign of distinction from mainstream codes Total dedication to work at the expense of pleasures	**LOW** – Living a simple life but without making it an end in itself Intermittent dedication to work Aspiration to higher living standards	**HIGH** – Austerity as a sign of distinction from mainstream codes Total dedication to work at the expense of pleasures Organic principles transposed from farming to all aspects of life (e.g. health, diet)
Antagonism	**HIGH** – Criticism of mainstream farming methods and lifestyles Strong sense of "us" and "them" More "introverted"	**LOW** – Sense of superiority of one's own organic choices but without disparaging alternative ones Mild sense of "us" and "them"	**HIGH** – Criticism of mainstream farming methods and lifestyles Strong sense of "us" and "them" More "extroverted"
Esotericism	**NONE**	**NONE**	**HIGH** – Holistic fusion of body, spirit, and nature Attribution of healing properties to organic food
Proselytism	**NONE**	**NONE**	**HIGH** – Strong bent for converting other people to organic principles and a natural lifestyle

8.2 A typology of organic farmers

With some degree of simplification, one might see in the three cases I have exposed as many archetypes of how organic farmers nowadays interpret their identity and enact the organic philosophy. I will call these archetypes, respectively, the "wary", the "opportunistic", and the "zealot" paradigm. Thus, the "wary" organic farmer stands out for its suspicious attitude towards the exterior (e.g. institutions, market, non-organic farmers/consumers), to which internally corresponds a mix of high expertise, rigid work discipline, and subordination of all considerations (economic, personal etc.) to the pursuit of sustainability and self-sufficiency. Due to these characteristics, its ideal term of reference lies in that interpretation of the organic philosophy as a "marginal culture" which I introduced in Section 5, in the two-fold meaning of "separate from" and "dialoguing with" mentioned therein.

By contrast, farmers belonging to the "opportunistic" type, while not neglecting the positive effects that their work bears for society and the environment, look principally at the opportunities for personal advancement that the organic option ensures them – which, incidentally, accounts for a certain deficiency of theirs in terms of technical performance. In this sense, they ideally enact that model of organic agriculture as a "social elevator" to which I referred in Section 6.

Finally, "zealot" organic farmers subsume the highlights of the previous two types, except for a mitigation in the utilitarian component; at the same time, they add to them an uncompromising, "old-school" flavour that pervades at once their procedures, behaviours, and beliefs, coupled with a strong propagandistic orientation. Therefore, their model of organic farming is arguably the closest to any of the three distinct matrices underlying the early organic movement and recalled in Section 7, namely, the countercultural, the scientific, and the metaphysical one.

How each paradigm positions itself with respect to the others can be visualized with the help of a radar chart like the one contained in Figure 1 below. The chart shows a heptagon whose bisectors – the seven half-lines named respectively *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, and *g* – represent the seven typology variables identified earlier, whereas the three coloured polygons inscribed in it correspond to the three cases, each being assigned a score – among 0, 1, 2, and 3 – for each property. Thus, the blue polygon – corresponding to strong "idealism" and "antagonism", moderate "rigour", and low "entrepreneurism" – identifies the "weary paradigm". Similarly, the yellow polygon – equivalent to high "entrepreneurism", medium "idealism", and low levels of "rigour", "asceticism", and "antagonism" – represents the "opportunistic paradigm". Finally, the pink polygon – equal to a medium level of "entrepreneurism" and high

levels of all the other properties (including “esotericism” and “proselytism”) – depicts the “zealot paradigm”.

From the discussion on the analogies existing among the cases that I conducted at the beginning of this section, it should be clear that these three types are not mutually exclusive, for they share with each other a number of properties – and, in at least two instances, also the same magnitude relative to some of these properties.[49] This means that the assessment on which type any given real-life situation pertains to might not always be a straightforward one. It is equally evident that these types are not collectively exhaustive either, since further types might well be added to them – nor, of course, are they the only ones conceivable.[50] Indeed, the very fact that this scheme rests upon a sample of three cases only rules out any pretence of representativeness. For all these limitations, arguably it might still represent a heuristic tool useful for classifying and better understanding the dealings of other organic farmers.

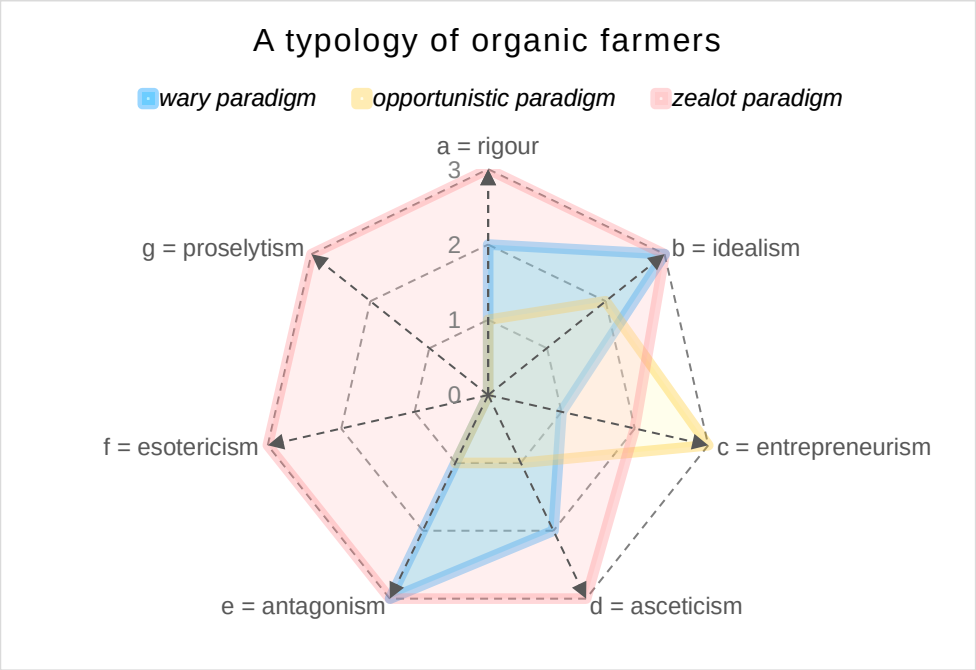

Figure 1. A typology of organic farmers. The chart shows the relative positioning of the three paradigms called “wary” (in blue), “opportunistic” (in yellow), and “zealot” (in pink). Each paradigm is assigned a score among 0 (none), 1 (low level), 2 (medium level) and 3 (high level) for each of the seven typology variables. These are represented by the heptagon’s bisectors *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *e*, *f*, and *g*.

[49] This is the case with “idealism” and “antagonism” in Cases 1 and 3. The lack of mutual exclusivity can be visualized as the overlapping areas in the radar chart of Figure 1.

[50] For instances of alternative typologies, see those of Fairweather (1999) and Lamine (2011) mentioned in Section 4.2.

9 Discussion II: Laboratories of a “new social movement”

By comparing the three selected cases and drawing a typology of organic farmers based upon them, the previous section has answered the first research question I had set forth in the Introduction. The present section will address instead the second one, by highlighting those elements that connect these cases – and, by implication, the organic the movement at large – to the category of “social movement”.

9.1 Social (in)action?

From the discussion conducted so far, it appears that the three cases under scrutiny present to some extent all the three ingredients of the definition of “social movement” cited in Section 3.1. One is the conflictual drive aiming at promoting certain interests and values in opposition to, and at the detriment of, those of competing actors, which coincides with the “antagonistic” dimension identified earlier. The second is a tendency to act out of too rigidly structured organizations and hierarchies, which is all too obvious in the cases at issues: beyond their loose connection with the WWOOF organization, there is no trace whatsoever of their belonging to institutions, political parties or other similar decision-making entities.[51] The third is a feeling of collective belonging and the shared commitment to a cause, which corresponds to what I have dubbed “idealism”.

That being said, it seems far more difficult to recognize in them the very prerequisite for speaking of social movement dynamics, namely, “collective action”, where the stress falls on both terms “collective” and “action”. Indeed, the protagonists of my three case studies, beyond their ideal belonging to a community of values, for all intents and purposes appear to be absorbed in their individual, narrow, everyday dimensions, rather than in a collective one. As for their “activism”, if one

[51] This second property does not exclude that a formal organization may participate in the life of a social movement, but rather that the two entities may coincide altogether.

sticks to the conventional meaning associated with the term, namely, highly visible and politically charged behavioural events (e.g. public conferences, lobbying, demonstrations, protests, acts of violence, strikes) more or less involving some degree of organization, then these people are anything but active.

For one to be able to situate these cases in a social movement dimension, a more inclusive notion of collective action is required. To this end, Melucci's observations on "new social movements" seems particularly fruitful, notably for what pertains (i) the issues these movements raise, (ii) their origins and social composition, and (iii) the specific forms that collective action takes on within them.

9.2 Battling over symbolic issues

As already mentioned in Section 3.1, NSMs are distinguished by a preference for symbolic rather than material issues; their challenge against contemporary regimes has less to do with political and economic claims and more with cultural, non-measurable, and thus non-negotiable objectives. Some of these principles centre on the right of the individuals to define and express their needs and identities in their everyday lives: from the control over one's own biological and affective dimension (e.g. on matters of family relations, healthcare, and procreation; Melucci 1989: 64; 135; 151) to the defence of one's subjective sense of space and time (ibid.: 103).

On a larger scale, another recurring theme of NSMs is the recognition of the unprecedented degree of interdependency characterizing contemporary societies, from the economic field to the cultural, political, and environmental ones. This awareness comes with a deep sense of the risks that the globalization poses to the survival of the planet, the most blatant example being the nuclear threat (Melucci 1989: 81). In pursuing the sum of these micro-level rights and macro-level concerns, NSMs bring to the fore questions previously eluded by the political power, thus shifting the boundaries of the public debate from the means – how to best achieve some unquestioned targets – to the very ends of decision-making (ibid.: 174–5).

It is easy to see how all three elements highlighted above – definition of novel and immaterial values, emphasis on individual choices, and global concerns – feature prominently in both the organic movement at large and my three cases in particular. Thus, such intangible ideals as the safeguard of human health and the respect of nature, which underlie to various degrees the action of all their protagonists, constitute as many alternative goals that these people strive to impose on the agri-food agendas of state and market actors, these being all too often dominated by more concrete interests such as efficiency, profit, and affordability.

Secondly, the declination of ecological sustainability in terms of self-sufficient farming, particularly acute in Case 1, reflects an aspiration to conjoin these values

with a firmer control over the conditions of one's own agency, thus affirming a principle of individual responsibility. The same applies to the resurgence of traditional healing and dietary practices occurring in Case 3: this phenomenon testifies to that need for reappropriation of one's biological sphere which the scholarship has interpreted as a new "culture of the body" and "demand for health" (Melucci 1989: 122, 137); or, alternatively, as a shift from "status" to "lifestyle politics" (Della Porta & Diani 2006: 60). Similarly, Gunhild's plea for more local and seasonally rooted patterns of production and consumption contains an implicit claim to a more personal inflection of space and time, as opposed to the rationality typical of modern corporate "food regimes" (McMichael 2009).

Finally, her adversarial stance towards globalized markets is indicative of her thinking on a global scale. This last aspect is also visible in the Balinese's worries about the globalization of epidemic risks, as epitomized by their boycott of Japanese food products; or, on a micro-level, in their strong perception of the interconnectedness of all the biological processes occurring on their farm.

9.3 New social cleavages

The thematic novelties introduced by NSMs stem from the characteristics that Western "complex societies" have developed since the 1960s.[52] Compared to the industrial era, the modern capitalist economy is far less centred on the production of material goods and more on that of information, meanings, signs, and social relations (Melucci 1989: 4). In this context, a fundamental tension has arisen between two opposite social imperatives. One is the need to secure individuals that are able to accomplish the increasingly complex tasks associated with information processing in full autonomy (ibid.: 45). The other aims at offsetting the resulting tendencies towards individualization and social differentiation through policies in support of integration and homogenization. The end result is a paradox: at the same time as the individuals are granted with a surplus of resources (of education, problem-solving, self-awareness etc.) and opportunities to act independently, the elective character of their conduct is denied by an effort on the part of the authorities to maintain control over them.

This genealogy of NSMs bears important consequences for their social composition, insofar as the conflicts in which they typically engage "develop in those areas

[52] Alternative definitions for these societies include those of "late-capitalist" societies (Mandel 1975); "post-industrial" or "programmed" societies (Touraine 1981); "technocratic" societies (Habermas 1991); "post-traditional" societies (Giddens: 1994); and "information", "knowledge", or "network" societies (Castells 2010).

of the system where both symbolic investments and pressures to conform are heaviest" (Melucci 1989: 12). This means that the social groups most exposed to the contradictory requirements of the system and, at the same time, most endowed with the information resources that are crucial to its functioning, are the ones most likely to get involved in NSMs (ibid.: 47). From a geographical perspective, these conditions hold true for all urban dwellers in general (ibid.: 218).

From a class perspective, they apply to the members of three classes in particular: one is the "new middle class", which comprises various professional groups endowed with high levels of education and social status; the second is the traditional middle class (e.g. farmers, craftsmen, and shopkeepers); the third coincides with that composite galaxy of individuals who occupy peripheral positions in the labour market, with "affluent marginals" such as students and women on top (Melucci 1989: 52–54). Furthermore, each of these groups and subgroups tends to mobilize with different levels of commitment and for different reasons, with those who are richer in core resources (i.e. "new middle class" and "affluent marginals") being likely to adopt a more assertive and style of confrontation and more progressive goals (ibid.: 98).

Although a thorough socio-geographical analysis of the subjects involved in this study lies outside its scope, certain features of their social backgrounds clearly fit the patterns evidenced by Melucci. First, it stands out how many of them either grew up in urban contexts or had their main residence therein. Thus, if Gunhild had been a city girl in her childhood, and Mio had been so until very recently, Andy was still shuttling back and forth amongst *Song Farm*, his private retreat in Phnom Penh, and his hometown San Francisco. Also Lars and Zoya in their questionnaires situated their own life and study backgrounds as prevalently or entirely urban.[53] Eventually, only the Song and Ketut turned out to have been rooted in the countryside for all of their lives.

Second, most of these people possessed medium to high levels of education, in line with the attributes of the social segments identified by Melucci. Thus, at the time of my fieldwork, Gunhild had just supplemented her high school diploma with some university courses, Lars was attending a bachelor's degree, and Andy and Zoya were about to step from bachelor's to master's level. As for Mio, although I ignore her school record, her subsequent career path seems to be compatible with similar educational levels as the others'. Such elevated standards would suggest a

[53] More precisely, Lars defined himself as "quite close" to organic farming in that, "albeit coming from an urban context, I have done studies in the agricultural field" (Lars, personal communication, 12 February 2019). By contrast, Zoya chose the option "quite distant", adding that "I've grown up in an urban context and studied other subjects than agriculture" (Zoya, attachment to personal communication, 16 February 2019).

familiarity with those cultural resources that are the hallmark of both the "new middle class" and the "affluent marginals".[54]

The same goes for their employment records. These show a clear prevalence of what the scholarship focused on the "new middle class" refers to as "service sector". For instance, Gunhild's part-time job as a safety and quality manager might fit the definition of "producer service". Likewise, both Andy's past career as an event planner and Mio's incursions into the information and education sectors stand as examples of "cultural services". Finally, Zoya's forthcoming internship at an INGO in Jakarta, as well as Lars' intended career in agricultural consultancy, arguably fall under the category of "administrative services". Here, too, Ketut and the Song stand out as exceptions, owing to their low educational achievements coupled with a lifelong commitment to agriculture – or, in the case of the Song, the alternation of husbandry with other low-knowledge activities, for instance the fast-food business. Even so, it is remarkable how their involvement in the organic movement concurs with their forging alliances with such exponents of the urban, educated, and highly skilled stratum as, respectively, Andy and Mio.[55]

Finally, my cases seem to validate also Melucci's prediction about the coexistence in NSMs of both progressive and regressive traits. In particular, the environmental sensibility and the attention to health issues arguably speak for a forward-looking and, in broad political terms, "leftist" orientation. By contrast, certain isolationist tendencies *vis-à-vis* a "corrupt" society, certain slippages towards anti-science thinking, as well as certain anachronistic cries for commercial protectionism, all point at a conservative and "rightist" horizon of thought.

At the same time, on the basis of the data available, it seems impossible to associate particular political orientations with specific geographical or class belongings. On the one hand, the environmental and health concerns appear to be shared by all farmers and WWOOFers alike, albeit to different degrees – for instance, less pronounced in Andy and the Song than in the other farmers, or in Beatrice compared to the other WWOOFers. On the other hand, the regressive and anti-modern pulses, although being peculiar to certain subjects while absent in others, similarly escape easy categorizations based on socio-demographic factors. Thus, it may happen that isolationist and/or protectionist stances are equally championed by a working-class

[54] This apparent prevalence of well-educated subjects among my informants might well result from a "sampling bias", at least as far as the subsample of farm hosts is concerned. This is because hosting within an international network that caters mainly to Western youth presupposes an adequate literacy in both English language and social networking, which normally (and especially in developing countries) chimes in with a middle-class education.

[55] By anticipating a Bourdieuan theme to which I shall return in Section 9.7, it might be hold that Andy and Mio have played a crucial role in the "socialization" of their companions into a new "organic *habitus*" (Inglis & Thorpe 2019: 200).

exponent like Ketut, a "new-middle-classer" like his wife Mio, or a veritable "cross-breed" like Gunhild. Likewise, I could hear the same prejudices against orthodox medicine being voiced indistinctly by the Balinese couple as well as by some of their "marginally affluent" guests.

9.4 "Latency" and "practice"

If the dynamics of complex societies contribute to explaining the distinctive symbolic charge of NSMs, the latter influences the way in which collective action manifests itself within them. Of particular relevance in this regard are the two interrelated concepts of "latency" and "practice".

By the former concept, Melucci alludes to the fact that NSMs only sporadically manifest themselves through public forms of mobilization. Rather, they often consist of invisible networks that are "submerged" in the pre-political dimension of "everyday life". As such, they act as laboratories in which their affiliates experiment first-hand those alternative lifestyles and cultural meanings they aim to disseminate. In this view, "latency" ceases to be a synonym for inactivity, while taking on significance on its own as potential resistance (Melucci 1989: 6). The distinction between "visible" and "latent" forms of participation in social movements echoes that drawn by Bartholdson (2007: 40) between those actors who are an "integral" part of a social movement and those representing its "interconnected auxiliaries". Albeit pursuing interests that are not fully assimilable to the movement's core identity, the "auxiliaries" fulfil a vital role in mainstreaming its agenda.

Apart from reducing the scope for "visible" – or "integral" – militancy, NSMs are also characterized by relatively fleeting forms of commitment to the "latent" – or "auxiliary" – dynamics of the movement, what Melucci calls "movement area". As he observes, "actors [belonging to NSMs] are mobilized for a definite period of time and only for certain issues of concern to them; (…) following their period of mobilization, they are drawn into other channels, towards the market or other institutions" (Melucci 1989: 78).

The other fundament of Melucci's take on NSMs is the concept of "practice". This refers to the fact that the lived experiences of their members, as well as the practical ways in which these people organize themselves and establish relations with each other, act as "signs" or "messages" that indicate to the rest of society alternatives to the dominant codes (Melucci 1989: 5).[56] As a result, the organizational arrangement of a movement ceases to play a merely instrumental function –

[56] Similarly, Della Porta and Diani (2006: 3) note that contemporary movements can achieve their goals also "through actions which affect individual lifestyles and private behaviour".

as a means to an end – and acquires a self-referential one – as an end in itself (Melucci 1989: 60).

Taken together, the two concepts of "latency" and "practice" help to frame my case studies within the dynamics typical of "new social movements" as theorized by Melucci. Although the situations depicted in them bear no signs of mobilization as traditionally understood, they do exemplify "the submerged reality of the movements before, during, and after events" (Melucci 1989: 45). When seen from this perspective, the apparent detachment of the actors involved from more active and structured forms of militancy should not be mistaken for tepidity towards the organic cause, nor interpreted as a symptom of a general decline of the organic movement, but rather as a normal expression of its "latency".

Likewise, their absorption in the daily routines of farming and farm life arguably testifies to the experimental role played by the "movement area". Within this area, farmers and volunteers alike contribute in their small ways to "practicing" those farming techniques, lifestyles, and forms of socialization they hope to disseminate to the broader society. In doing so, they achieve three distinct goals: first, to set an example for others to follow; second, to reinforce the movement's collective identity; third, to create a reserve of experiences and symbols that can be reactivated on the next occasion of mobilization, either by themselves or by other affiliates.

Clearly, the duration of the commitment to this "movement area" on the part of the individual actors varies greatly according to their personal life trajectories. In this regard, an obvious distinction is that between those actors (e.g. Gunhild, the Song, and Mio and Ketut) who depend economically on farming for their living and those who do not. Whereas the former of necessity must engage in this process on a quasi-permanent basis, the latter do so in more contingent and voluntaristic ways, their commitment being often reduced to a parenthesis of a few years – as in Andy's case – to a few weeks – as with the WWOOFers. On the other hand, the last remark supports Melucci's claim that the protagonists of todays' movements tend to engage only on selected issues and "part-time", pending their return to their previous occupations or their inception of new projects in other areas.

A different issue is the intensity of their commitment. Here an important distinction is that between a model of action in which the organic identity embraces most aspect of one farmer's life, and another whereby it coexists comfortably with other, unrelated experiences. Whereas Gunhild's stakhanovism, and even more so the holistic approach of the Balinese couple, are imputable to the first model, Andy's easy-going attitude and the Song' inconstancy typify the second. That quantitative and qualitative dimension not necessarily coincide appears clearly from the case of the Song who, despite being supposedly bound to their farm – at least as a family – for the rest of their lives, nonetheless go back and forth from it to other places, where they cultivate other identities than that of organic farmers.

9.5 Social constructionism

The three cases presented in this study are also indicative of one characteristic that Melucci attributes to all collective actors, whether old or new ones, namely, their "socially constructed" nature. This point refers to the fact that all social movements are much less homogeneous entities than they are often claimed – and claim themselves – to be. In fact, they achieve their apparent unity and solidarity only at the cost of continuous tensions and negotiations occurring at the "latent" level. In particular, these tensions have as their object the definition of the ends, means, and environment of collective action (Melucci 1989: 25).

That the protagonists of my cases hold diverging views on the ends and means of their action should be obvious from the comparison conducted in the previous section. Here I will address two more points, concerning respectively their relationship with the WWOOFers and modern science. The former point pertains to the unequal treatment granted by each farmer to its WWOOFers, and can be taken as a further example of the plurality of strategies that coexist within the organic movement. In this regard, two alternative situations are possible. In one, the volunteers appear as "allies" of the farmers – which highlights the common militancy of the two groups for the organic cause – or as their "disciples" – which stresses the transmission of knowledge from the latter to the former – or even as their "equals" – with an emphasis on the mutual nature of the exchange. In the other, they figure as mere parties in a fortuitous (but not always felicitous) professional collaboration. Among my cases, these two poles took place, respectively, in the Balinese and in the Swedish farm.[57]

The farmers' attitudes towards scientific progress are rather illustrative of their disagreement about the "environment" of collective action, and especially the identification of "others" as opposed to "us". The contrasting feelings nourished by Gunhild and the Balinese couple on conventional agriculture – respectively, of respect towards a possible interlocutor or of outright hostility – is one clear example. Another is the ambiguity surrounding traditional healing practices, which go from being just one viable option among many – as is the case for Gunhild and Andy – to representing the only choice available as well as an integral part of one's identity as an organic farmer – as with Mio and Ketut.[58]

[57] This distinction recalls in part that between "extroverted" and "introverted antagonism" traced in Section 8.

[58] Clearly, this anti-scientific stance of Mio and Ketut has quite a lot to do with their "esoteric" brand of organic farming, to which I have referred in Sections 7 and 8.

9.6 Four risks …

Having established a correspondence between the organic movement and NSMs, it may be presumed that the former follows the same evolutionary patterns as the latter, including an exposition to the same risks. From Melucci's account of NSMs' dynamics, four such risks can be inferred. One consists in a hyper-exaltation of the local, sacred, and traditional dimensions of social life. Examples of this tendency include the localistic and securitarian instincts typical of ethno-nationalist movements (Melucci 1989: 89); the religious revival made by spiritualist and/or orientalist movements (ibid.: 220); and the resumption of popular beliefs concerning health and the environment that accompanies traditionalist movements in general (ibid.: 135; 143). What unites these phenomena is a mythologization of the past in reaction to the pressures towards cultural homogenization and instrumental rationality that characterize modern societies; in the worst cases, this may turn into forms of obtuse thinking and ahistorical crusades against modernity, an outcome that I will label "anachronism".

That certain "anachronistic" elements feature in all the three cases presented here – and, by implication, in their corresponding paradigms – has already emerged on a few occasions; in particular, when I addressed their class composition and relationship with modern science.[59] In Cases 1 and 2, these elements are all in all modest, being limited to a somewhat old-fashioned lifestyle (especially in Case 1), bland references to customary farming practices (especially in Case 2), and an equally tepid appreciation of natural medicine (in both). Only in Case 3 do they appear preponderant, consistently with the return to the original roots of the organic movement that distinguishes it. Besides in their campaign against antibiotics and nuclear technologies, Mio and Ketut's backward-looking orientation appears also in their exhumation of a whole range of methods – of construction, water management, fermentation of food, nutrition, healing and, of course, farming – that are deeply rooted in the cultural heritages of Bali and ancient Japan. Likewise, the holistic-energetic framework through which they interpret the relationship between man and the environment largely echoes motifs typical of Eastern religious traditions.

A second possible risk is "narcissism", that is, a tendency of some NSM's militants to retreat into a dimension of pure self-gratification, thus indulging in a sort of magnification of the "Dionysian ego"; or, similarly, to seek refuge within the safe perimeter of a like-minded community, which leads to a state of "political tribalism" (Melucci 1989: 209). It is easy to recognize symptoms of "narcissistic" regression in both the "wary" and "zealot paradigm", represented respectively by Case 1 and 3. In the former, it manifests itself as an unusual suspiciousness towards basically

[59] See, respectively, Sections 9.3 and 9.5.

everything and everyone other than the protagonist herself and her own farm – institutions, neighbours, WWOOFers, and even her own family – to which is added a protectionist stance in the commercial domain. In the latter, it takes rather the shape of a hyper-defensive attitude towards whatever originates from nuclearized Japan.

In any case, the mechanism at work is one of severing one's ties with those societal elements that are perceived as threatening or morally unacceptable, followed by a retreat into a dimension shaped in one's image and likeness – whether it be physical (e.g. one's own premises, an entire island) or virtual (e.g. a Facebook community). However, there is also an important difference. Whereas in the Balinese couple this inward movement is somehow compensated by an outward tendency to "proselytism", as illustrated by their assertive presence on Internet or their welcoming attitude to the volunteers, an equivalent counterweight is largely missing in Gunhild's situation. Indeed, the only corrective to her self-imposed isolation appears to lie in her sporadic and half-hearted recruiting of WWOOFers. Paradoxically, for all the mixed feelings they arouse in her, their presence seems crucial for enabling her not only to maintain a semblance of social life, but also to keep in touch with the most "institutional" aspects of the organic movement (in this case, the WWOOF network).[60] It is not hard to see how, in the absence of adequate checks, "narcissistic" logics of this kind might easily lapse into forms of eremitism and escape from reality.

The third risk is "sectarianism", consisting in the fragmentation of a movement into a multiplicity of factions that, acting much like sects, preach alternative versions of the "new gospel". Like with "narcissism", also this situation ultimately dooms a movement to atomization and political irrelevance (Melucci 1989: 72; 221); additionally, it introduces a qualitative dimension that has to do with the prevalence of its most radical and intolerant elements. "Sectarian" outcomes are particularly likely in those movements drawing upon the "culture of the body" I mentioned in Section 9.2 (ibid.: 122); albeit professing the liberation of the bodies and minds from the enslavement of social inhibitions and public control, movements of this type end up creating segregated communities whose members are exposed to more, not less, dependence and manipulation (ibid.: 124).

The fourth and last risk is defined by Melucci "naturalism", a rather ambiguous term to which I prefer that of "essentialism".[61] This consists in a tendency on the part of a movement to represent its claims as natural, as if mirroring in an immediate and pure fashion the "true" nature of things (Melucci 1989: 119). In fact, such an idea betrays a pathological denial of the constructed and variable character of human

[60] Eventually even this last bridge was burnt: "I'm not a member [of WWOOF] since two years […]. I don't have WWOOFers anymore" (G. Rapp, personal communication, 5 March 2018).

[61] For the reasons of this ambiguity, see Bryman (2012: 49).

needs, thus making a movement refractory to change and compromise; at the same time, it constitutes a fertile ground on which the other three negative tendencies can thrive,[62] a circumstance to which I will return to it in a few moments.

The last two dangers seem to be the sole prerogative of the "zealot paradigm" enacted in Case 3. First, the protagonists of this case offer ample evidence of a "sectarian" bent. On the one hand, their outright ban on such ordinary practices as tillage and fertilization ("rigor") on the grounds that they "kill" the soil or "dilute" the energies contained in the plants ("esotericism") precludes any dialogue not only with conventional farmers, but also with the most accommodating fringes of the organic movement itself. On the other hand, the fervour with which they catechize their guests ("proselytism") about the superiority of their "ascetic" lifestyle, the dichotomy they establish between the "raised-up" and the profane, as well as certain inflated expressions used to embroider their esoteric creed – "maternal philosophy", "universal truths", "cosmic trilogy", etc. – all ensure that the organic philosophy assumes here the contours of a revealed truth for initiates.

Second, this system of beliefs and practices is embedded into an "essentialist" narrative about its immediate connection with nature. According to it, Mio and Ketut's asserted habit to converse with their plants (and even with ants!) legitimizes their claim to interpret and respect the "true" needs of the environment, including those of the human body. Ultimately, a coalescence of "sectarian" and "essentialist" elements such as the one occurring in the Balinese case threatens to spawn forms of fanaticism that are as much intolerant and virulent to the outside – towards the "non-enlightened" majority – as they are manipulative and hazardous to the inside – towards the minority who is already converted to the organic faith. In this respect, both Mio and the volunteer Pierre, with their stubborn refusal to cure their illnesses for the sake of naturality, can be taken to exemplify the health risks in which a too "zealous" interpretation of the organic principles can incur.

9.7 … and one remedy

It is not difficult to see how the essentialist outlook just described is at odds with the social-constructionist perspective through which Melucci observes social movements. At the same time, it well reflects what Bourdieu sees as an innate tendency of collective actors to think and act according to a specific *habitus*. This consists of a "system of practice-generating schemes" that is imposed upon them by the peculiar social conditions in which they operate, without them being fully aware of it

[62] In particular the "sectarian" one: for instance, Melucci notes that "appeals to 'spontaneous' nature […] can justify every act of submission" (Melucci 1989: 121).

(Bourdieu 2010: 172). Since they go unnoticed, these schemes are experienced by the actors as "things as they are", as pure *doxa* (Inglis & Thorpe 2019: 200).

Given his main interest in social classes, Bourdieu imagines that the individuals are inculcated with a class *habitus* since they are born. On the contrary, the social group examined here, beyond the class analogies – also significant – which I have highlighted, consists foremost of a professional community sharing a specific method of cultivation. Consequently, if any process of socialization ever takes place in this context, this will occur primarily as a result of experiences accrued in the individuals' adult lives. That being said, it remains the impression that certain mental attitudes and bodily practices adopted by the organic farmers (and, to a lesser extent, by their helpers) arise from their uncritical acceptance of a sort of "organic *habitus*". Moreover, part of this *habitus* would exert a "symbolic violence" to de detriment of both the well-being of these people and, more in general, the subsistence of the organic movement as a social movement (Inglis & Thorpe 2019: 199).

So far so bad, so to say. The good news is that Bourdieu himself acknowledges the possibility for social actors to acquire some degrees of "reflexivity" about their condition and, by this way, to challenge (at least in part) their *habitus* (Inglis & Thorpe 2019: 202). In the specific case at hand, this operation requires that the organic farmers and their allies open their eyes to the hazards – of reactionarism, isolation, and manipulation – to which an exasperation of their "anachronistic", "narcissistic", and "sectarian" impulses may lead them. In this respect, those farmers who situate themselves far from the "zealot paradigm" – and the "essentialist" tendencies inherent in it – are likely to be at an advantage.

10 Conclusions

Throughout this study, I have attempted to provide the widest and most impartial picture possible of organic agriculture and the movement that developed around it. Thus, I have acknowledged the existence of arguments both in support and against the spread of organic methods, while also touching on the most common among them. That being said, my purpose has never been to thoroughly review and assess the pros and cons of these methods, let alone to take side for either camp. Likewise, while raising considerations that pertain to the economic, environmental, and health-related repercussions of organic systems, my main interest has been constantly directed to their social dimension.

Within this focus, my first objective has been to evidence the plurality of social arrangements that today coexist under the common label of "organic agriculture". This has led me to classify organic farmers into three types, which I have named respectively "wary", "opportunistic", and "zealot". It is important to note that, while putting the stress on certain "properties" or "variables" rather than on others, these types do not coincide with any one in particular. On the contrary, each paradigm corresponds to a peculiar combination of motives for growing organically, farming techniques, lifestyles, social attitudes and, more in general, ways of conceiving one's own identity as an organic farmer.

Having ascertained the highly heterogeneous nature of the organic field, I verified the possibility to meaningfully retain for it the unifying definition of "social movement", by isolating those elements that could lend themselves to a loosely political interpretation. To this end, I privileged a framework of collective action less focused on its most visible expressions and more on its "latent" dynamics. From this perspective, the internal differentiation of the organic movement, as well as the apparent detachment of its members from the traditional forms of political engagement, could be read not as a sign of weakness or decline, but rather as a development that is largely expected in a so-called "new social movement".

In this respect, my study testifies to the persistent vitality of the organic movement; at the same time, it calls attention to some involutions that, if left unchecked,

might become detrimental to it. In particular, I have identified four of them, namely, "anachronism", "narcissism", "sectarianism", and "essentialism". These negative outcomes seem to be more likely in those organic paradigms – like the "zealot" and, to a lesser extent, the "wary" one – in which there is a clear predominance of ideal and/or philosophical motives over pragmatic and/or economic ones. Therefore, the third endpoint of this study is an invitation to the supporters of organic agriculture to "keep it real"; for it would be sadly ironic if an approach born under the sign of sustainability should turn out to be itself unsustainable, either for the well-being of its practitioners or in terms of its own prospective diffusion.

Overall, the three achievements just summarized constituted an attempt to ascend from the empirical evidence I had gathered to a more abstract level, through what is often called "theoretical generalization";[63] and, by this way, to add to our knowledge about the current state of the field of organic agriculture. Yet, for all they say, there remain other points that were left merely sketched or altogether unaddressed.

One area that arguably demands further attention consists in the risk analysis I conducted in Section 9.5: whereas I provided concrete examples for each identified risk, more examples from new cases are needed in order to better substantiate these categories. What instead is missing is an investigation of the visible forms in which the organic farmers' collective action manifests itself, to be integrated into the one concerning its "latent" articulations that I have developed in Section 9.4. Such an investigation would require to look at different settings from the ones I considered – possibly, urban streets and legislative assemblies more than farms – as well as to include other types of actors – besides farmers, also lobbyists and union officials.[64]

One last open question concerns the "empirical" generalizability of the types I have built upon it. This amounts to wondering how representative these types are of the generality of small organic farmers; and, additionally, to reflect on their relative frequencies, and on how much weight each of their constituent properties carries within them. To answer the first question, it would suffice to replicate my methodology to other comparable cases, in a "case-to-case-transfer" logic; such new data would then either confirm the plausibility of my categories or suggest ways for modifying or supplementing them with new ones. The other two questions perhaps would be best answered by switching to quantitative survey methods; even so, the ideas I have set forth in this study could represent a valuable starting point for devising the instruments required for that type of inquiry.

[63] For the idea of "theoretical generalization" (also called "analytical generalization" or "abstraction"), as well as for the opposite concept of "empirical generalization" (or "case-to-case-transfer") being mentioned below, see Bryman (2012: 406; 426) and Lund (2014: 226–7).

[64] An example of this type of analysis is the cited work by Curran (2001).

References

Alvesson, M. (2003). Beyond neopositivists, romantics, and localists: a reflexive approach to interviews in organizational research. *Academy of Management Review*, 28(1), 13–33. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/30040687 [Accessed 2 August 2019]

Bartholdson, Ö. (2007). *From slaves to princes: the role of NGOs in the contemporary construction of race and ethnicity in Salvador, Brazil.* Stockholm: Stockholm University.

Bolwig, S., Gibbon, P., & Jones, S. (2009). The economics of smallholder organic contract farming in tropical Africa. *World Development*, 37(6), 1094–1104. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2008.09.012 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Borlaug, N.E. (2000). Ending world hunger: the promise of biotechnology and the threat of antiscience zealotry. *Plant Physiology*, 124(2), 487–490. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1104/pp.124.2.487 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Bourdieu, P. (2010). *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste*. London: Routledge.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Castells, M. (2010). *The information age: economy, society and culture.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* 4th international student ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Curran, M.E. (2001). Foucault on the farm: producing swine and subjects. *Southern Rural Sociology*, 17, 12–36. Available at: http://journalofruralsocialsciences.org/pages/Articles/SRS%202001%2017/SRS%202001%2017%2012-36.pdf [Accessed 18 July 2019]

De Cock, L., Dessein, J., & de Krom, M.P. (2016). Understanding the development of organic agriculture in Flanders (Belgium): a discourse analytical approach. *NJAS - Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 79, 1–10. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2016.04.002 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). Social movements: an introduction. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

European Commission (2019a). *Sustainable land use (greening).* [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/income-support/greening_en [Accessed 17 July 2019].

European Commission (2019b). *Rural development 2014-2020.* [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-development-2014-2020_en [Accessed 17 July 2019].

Eyhorn, F., Ramakrishnan, M., & Mäder, P. (2007). The viability of cotton-based organic farming systems in India. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*, 5(1), 25–38. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14735903.2007.9684811 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Fairweather, J.R. (1999). Understanding how farmers choose between organic and conventional production: results from New Zealand and policy implications. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 16, 51–63. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007522819471 [Accessed 2 July 2019]

FAO (2019a). *Organic agriculture: mandates and reports.* [online] Available at: http://www.fao.org/organicag/oa-mandate/en/ [Accessed 17 July 2019]

FAO (2019b). *Smallholders dataportrait: farm size.* [online] Available at: http://www.fao.org/family-farming/data-sources/dataportrait/farm-size/en/ [Accessed 2 July 2019]

Flaten, O., Lien, G., Ebbesvik, M., Koesling, M., & Valle, P.S. (2006). Do the new organic producers differ from the 'old guard'? Empirical results from Norwegian dairy farming. *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems*, 21(3), 174–182. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1079/RAF2005140 [Accessed 2 July 2019]

Flöistrup, H., Swartz, J., Bergström, A., Alm, J.S., Scheynius, A., van Hage, … PARSIFAL Study Group (2006). Allergic disease and sensitization in Steiner school children. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, 117(1), 59–66. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2005.09.039 [Accessed 2 July 2019]

FoWO (2019a). *About WWOOF*. [online] Available at: http://wwoof.net [Accessed 2 July 2019]

FoWO (2019b). *History of WWOOF*. [online] Available at: https://wwoof.net/history [Accessed 13 August 2019]

FoWO (2019c). *Frequently asked questions: why WWOOF?* [online] Available at: https://wwoof.net/#faq [Accessed 13 August 2019]

Frouws, J. (1998). The contested redefinition of the countryside: an analysis of rural discourses in the Netherlands. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38(1), 54–68. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00063 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, A. (1994). Living in a post-traditional society. In U. Beck, A. Giddens, & S. Lash, eds. *Reflexive modernization: politics, tradition and aesthetics in the modern social order.* Cambridge: Polity. 56–109.

Habermas, J. (1991). *Toward a rational society: student protest, science and politics.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

HDRA (1998). *What is Organic Farming?* [online] Coventry: HDRA Publishing. Available at: https://www.organicconsumers.org/sites/default/files/what_is_organic_farming.pdf [accessed 6 August 2019]

Hesse-Biber, S.N. (2010). *Mixed methods research: merging theory with practice.* New York: Guilford Press.

IFOAM – Organic Internationals (2018). *Leading change, organically: 2017 consolidated annual report.* [online] Available at: https://www.ifoam.bio/en/our-library/annual-reports [Accessed 16 July 2019]

IFOAM – Organic Internationals (2019). *Principles of organic agriculture.* [online] Available at: https://www.ifoam.bio/en/organic-landmarks/principles-organic-agriculture [Accessed 5 August 2019]

Inglis, D., & Thorpe, C. (2019). *An invitation to social theory.* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jain, A. (2017). *Summary report: waste management in ASEAN countries.* Thailand: UNEP. Available at: http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/21134/waste_mgt_asean_summary.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed 6 September 2019]

Karki, L., Schleenbecker, R., & Hamm, U. (2011). Factors influencing a conversion to organic farming in Nepalese tea farms. *Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tropics and Subtropics*, 112(2), 113–123. Available at: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hebis:34-2012011740355 [Accessed 21 July 2019]

Kirchmann, H. (2019). Why organic farming is not the way forward. *Outlook on Agriculture,* 48(1), 22–2. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0030727019831702 [Accessed 20 July 2019]

Lairon, D. (2010). Nutritional quality and safety of organic food: a review. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development*, 30(1), 33–41. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1051/agro/2009019 [Accessed 20 July 2019]

Lamine, C. (2011). Transition pathways towards a robust ecologization of agriculture and the need for system redesign: cases from organic farming and IPM. *Journal of Rural Studies,* 27, 209–219. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2011.02.001 [Accessed 2 July 2019]

Lockeretz, W. (2007). What explains the rise of organic farming? In W. Lockeretz, ed. *Organic farming: an international history.* Wallingford, UK: CAB International. Ch. 1.

Lund, C. (2014). Of what is this a case? Analytical movements in qualitative social science research. *Human Organization,* 73(3), 224–234. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17730/humo.73.3.e35q482014x033l4 [Accessed 26 July 2019]

Mandel, E. (1975). *Late Capitalism.* London: Humanities Press.

MacRae, G. (2010). An ocean of rubbish. *Inside Indonesia.* [online] 16 December. Available at: https://www.insideindonesia.org/an-ocean-of-rubbish [Accessed 2 July 2019]

McGrath, M. (2014). The bizarre life (and death) of "Mr. Organic". *The New Republic.* [online] 8 August. Available at: https://newrepublic.com/article/119007/bizarre-life-and-death-mr-organic [Accessed 18 July 2019]

McMichael, P. (2009). A food regime analysis of the 'world food crisis'. Agriculture and Human Values, 26, 281–295. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-009-9218-5 [Accessed 6 July 2019]

Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present: social movements and individual needs in contemporary society.* London: Hutchinson Radius.

Ministry of Environment of Cambodia, & UNDP Cambodia (2011). *Cambodia human development report 2011: building resilience – the future of rural livelihoods in the face of climate change.* [online] Available at: http://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/library/human_development/cambodia-national-hdr-2011.html [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Misiewicz, T., & Shade, J. (2018). *Organic agriculture: reducing occupational pesticide exposure in farmers and farmworkers.* [online] Washington D.C.: The Organic Center. Available at: https://www.organic-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Reducing-Occupational-Pesticide-Exposure.pdf [Accessed 19 July 2019]

National Institute of Statistics (2017). *Cambodia socio-economic survey 2016.* [online] Available at: https://www.nis.gov.kh/nis/CSES/Final%20Report%20CSES%202016.pdf [Accessed 2 July 2019]

National Institute of Statistics, & Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (2015). *Census of agriculture in Cambodia 2013: national report on final census results.* [online] Available at: www.fao.org/3/I9428EN/i9428en.pdf [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Pakpahan, A. (1992). *Increasing the scale of small farm operations: III. Indonesia.* Bogor, Indonesia: Agency for Agricultural Research and Development. Available at: www.fftc.agnet.org/htmlarea_file/library/20110726142657/eb344c.pdf [Accessed 2 July 2019]

Pimentel, D., Hepperly, P., Hanson, J., Douds, D., & Seidel, R. (2005). Environmental, energetic, and economic comparisons of organic and conventional farming systems. *BioScience,* 55(7), 573–582. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1641/0006-3568(2005)055[0573:eeaeco]2.0.co;2 [Accessed 20 July 2019]

Rosenberger, N. (2017). Young organic farmers in Japan: betting on lifestyle, locality, and livelihood. *Contemporary Japan,* 29(1), 14–30. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/18692729.2017.1256974 [Accessed 3 July 2019]

Scialabba, N. (2000). Factors influencing organic agriculture policies with a focus on developing countries. In *IFOAM 2000 Scientific Conference*. [online] Basel, Switzerland, 28–31 August. Rome: FAO. Available at: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Factors-Influencing-Organic-Agriculture-Policies-a-Scialabba/022f7da795c95761c215e9fa1ff1cd30928ea8ec [Accessed 3 July 2019]

Scialabba, N. (2007). Foreword. In W. Lockeretz, ed. *Organic farming: an international history.* Wallingford, UK: CAB International. ix–xi.

Silverman, D. (2015). *Interpreting qualitative data.* 5th ed. London: SAGE Publications.

SOAAN (2013). *Best practice guideline for agriculture and value chains: public version 1.0.* [online] Sustainable Organic Agriculture Action Network (SOAAN) and Bonn: IFOAM - Organics International. Available at: https://www.ifoam.bio/sites/default/files/best_practice_guideline_v1.0.pdf [Accessed 6 August 2019]

Statistics Indonesia (2019). *Human development indices by province, 2010–2018 (new method).* [online] Available at: https://www.bps.go.id/linkTableDinamis/view/id/1211 [Accessed 18 July 2019].

Statistics Sweden (2019). *Agricultural statistics 2019 including food statistics & tables.* [online] Available at: https://www2.jordbruksverket.se/download/18.643c21e416b9421f4f8a4d09/1561707945214/JS_2019.pdf [Accessed 4 August 2019]

Touraine, A. (1981). *The voice and the eye: an analysis of social movements.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Trewavas, A. (2002). Malthus foiled again and again. *Nature*, 8 August, 418, 668–670. Available at: https://www.nature.com/articles/nature01013 [Accessed 18 July 2019]

Trewavas, A. (2004). A critical assessment of organic farming-and-food assertions with particular respect to the UK and the potential environmental benefits of no-till agriculture. *Crop Protection*, 23(9), 757–781. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cropro.2004.01.009 [Accessed 20 July 2019]

Tuomisto, H.L., Hodge, I.D., Riordan, P., & Macdonald, D.W. (2012). Does organic farming reduce environmental impacts? A meta-analysis of European research. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 112(15), 309–320. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2012.08.018 [Accessed 20 July 2019]

UNDP (2018). *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 statistical update.* Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf [Accessed 13 August 2019]

Van Maanen, J. (2011). *Tales of the field: on writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vogt, G. (2007). The origins of organic farming. In W. Lockeretz, ed. *Organic farming: an international history.* Wallingford, UK: CAB International. Ch. 2.

Willer, H., & Lernoud, J. eds. (2019). *The world of organic agriculture: statistics and emerging trends 2019.* Frick: Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), and Bonn: IFOAM - Organics International. Available at: https://www.organic-world.net/yearbook.html [Accessed 16 July 2019]

World Bank (2019a). *The World Bank in Cambodia: overview.* [online] Available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview [Accessed 3 July 2019]

World Bank (2019b). *World Bank country and lending groups.* [online] Available at: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups [Accessed 3 July 2019]