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Beyond No Fracking: An Anthropological Study of Individuals Pursuing Sustainable Lifestyles in Eastern Kentucky

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Abstract: This study combines research and oral histories that were conducted with eight individuals in Kentucky who are pursuing sustainable lifestyles through practicing methods such as homesteading, living off-the-grid, permaculture, and natural farming techniques. The paper provides a brief history of homesteading and details how the homesteading of today differs from off-the-grid living. It also provides some of the history of Eastern Kentucky and gives insights into the history of homesteading and sustenance farming in the area. The unrehearsed oral history interviews share information that includes, but is not limited to, interviewees' reasons for why and how they began their transition to their current lifestyle, the unique sustainable qualities to their homestead, and, in particular the interviews look into their perspectives on the natural world. Furthermore, the analysis explores the particular reasons why people choose to pursue homesteading today and contrasts their choices with the views or choices of 19th and 20th century homesteaders. The study also seeks to explain where some of the central philosophies and techniques originate, such as the concept of permaculture, Masanobu Fukuoka's natural farming techniques, and Stephen Scharper's definition of anthropoharmonism. Overall, the thesis finds that modern homesteaders, whether they

know it or not, use the techniques aforementioned in an attempt to align their lifestyles to live in harmony with the rest of the natural world.

Keywords and Phrases: thesis, homesteading, off-the-grid, sustainability, permaculture, natural farming, anthropoharmonism, oral history

Table of Contents

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Lastly, I would like to thank the Honors Program at EKU for this opportunity. It was an honors class that first inspired me to look into homesteading and off-the-grid living, and the entirety of the thesis process has allowed me to realize some goals for myself and my future. The experience has been truly life-changing and I am overwhelmed with gratitude; I am a different, but more importantly, a better person because of this experience. At the time of publication, the oral histories discussed in this

paper had not yet been donated to the William H. Berge Oral History Center. There is a clear and well established plan to have the interviews donated there under the heading "The Homesteading Project."

Part 1: Introduction

Although gaining popularity in modern media, blogs, and documentaries, homesteading and off-the-grid living are still concepts that not everyone truly understands. Certainly, it is not realized how common it is for people to be pursuing alternative lifestyles; Eastern Kentucky is no exception. While it is true that there are many people who live rural lives which often involve homesteading and subsistence farming, this is often out of necessity, poverty, or familial tradition. The main group this paper will address, however, is a group of people following this pattern of rural living and homesteading not as a last-resort, but as a new beginning. While following some of the ideas of homesteading of the 19th and 20th centuries, the mindset held by modern day homesteaders is very different and comes from a place of deep spiritual and philosophical connections with the natural world.

The title of this thesis, "Beyond No Fracking" refers to the "No Fracking" signs many environmentally-aware people put in front of their homes to show they do not support fracking. Those discussed throughout this paper, however, go way beyond simply placing a yard sign on their lawn. Their entire lives revolve around being environmentally conscious and they truly exemplify what it means to be environmentalists. In another way, many times individuals will see "No Fracking" signs and have a false or incomplete impression of the people that live on that land, often stereotyping them as hippies. Those on the other side of the signs unfortunately too often have no interest in getting to know people whose property looks unkept, have land covered in gardens and naturally growing

plants, live in a home that looks recycled, or just seem too "different" from them. For this paper, it was imperative for both the researcher and the researcher to go beyond the "No fracking" sign and learn what it is that makes a homesteader put it up in the first place.

History of Homesteading

The term homesteading comes from the Homestead Act of 1862, where any United States citizen who was at least 21 years of age or the head of a household could pay a small filing fee to move out west.[1] They would receive a deed, free of charge, to 160 acres of land if they maintained and improved the land for 5 years. This act was in place until 1972 so it changed a great deal throughout the years. For example, in 1873 The Timber Culture Act guaranteed extra land for settlers if they planted trees. Another amendment allowed for veteran soldier and sailors to gain land by living on it for one year[2]. Today, a homesteader is seen as someone who is living on the frontier out west, or those who live self-sufficient lifestyles, regardless of location. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a homestead simply as "the home and adjoining land occupied by a family."[3] For the purposes of this paper, all of those who are pursuing a self-sufficient lifestyle may be referred to as "homesteaders."

What does it mean to be "Off-the-Grid"?

Off-the-grid living refers to a lifestyle where people choose to not rely on one or more public utilities. The main utilities that are often spurned are energy, water, and waste disposal.[4] There are several ways for a person to be off the electrical grid; they

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[1] Hannah L. Anderson, "That Settles It: The Debate and Consequences of the Homestead Act of 1862" (History Teacher, 2011): 119-120.
[2] Ibid, 120.
[3] *Merriam-Webster.* s.v. "homestead," accessed December 6, 2017.
[4] David Black, *Living off the Grid: A Simple Guide to Creating and Maintaining a Self-Reliant Supply of Energy, Water, Shelter, and More* (Delaware: Skyhorse Publishing, 2008): 8.

could utilize solar energy, geothermal energy, or live solely by the sun, meaning to wake when the sun rises, sleep when it sets, and not use any other source of light during the day. Some would argue that to be completely off the grid, a person would also need to avoid most socio-political constructs or programs, including, but not limited to schools, healthcare, post offices, or even owning a deed to land. Although the term does not have a strict inclusion of these things, it makes sense, with these inclusions in mind, that very few people consider themselves to live completely "off-the-grid".

A Brief History of Eastern Kentucky

Jason Strange pioneered the oral history research with homesteaders in Eastern Kentucky, and with it he provided an important insight into the history of Eastern Kentucky.[5] Eastern Kentucky was inhabited by Native Americans until the 17th century when European explorers are said to have entered the region.[6] Throughout the region, there are many Indian cemeteries and burial grounds, some very large, that have since been plowed and planted over. However, when European immigrants arrived *en masse* and started to settle the area in 1775, it was largely deserted. Although no one knows for sure what happened to the indigenous people of the region, plagues were very common at this time and it is possible disease could have been the cause of a sudden demise of the population.[7]

Richmond and Berea became the most developed towns in Eastern Kentucky, while the rest of the area settled mostly into rural farm life. Because of this we have many records of the history of Richmond and Berea, and very little elsewhere. The hills and

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[5] Jason Strange, "Seeking Higher Ground: Contemporary Back-to-the-Land Movements in Eastern Kentucky" (phD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013).
[6] Gwynn Henderson and David Pollack, "A Native History of Kentucky" (2012): 15-16.
[7] Strange, "Seeking Higher Ground," 27.

mountains were hard to travel and made for a more remote existence for citizens residing there. A lot of the typification that goes along with citizens in rural Appalachian towns include that they were peaceful yeomen farmers who lacked the capitalistic structure of other towns at the time.[8] While this holds a bit of truth, it is not the whole story. From 1775 to 1940, Southeastern Kentucky was filled with subsistence farming and small-scale businesses. During this time, few changes took place besides population increase and a decrease in farm sizes due to city expansion and urban sprawl. Industrialization had not taken place, and much of the area lacked modern roads, technologies, medical care and schools.[9] There had been attempts after the Civil War to attract industry to the area by offering grants, loans, free-land, and more, which resulted in the rise of the coal and timber industries. Logging began in the early 1900s and had an immediate impact on the surrounding ecosystem, including, but not limited to, the loss of natural animal habitat, soil degradation, and creek flows being higher or lower than their historic levels.[10]

Strange's work shares stories from people who lived in Eastern Kentucky in the late 1800s and early 1900s. From these stories we know that Appalachian or mountain people were rather unaccustomed to strangers. It was very uncommon for anyone outside of the area to come around.[11] In previously collected interviews, people shared that if you had enough to eat you were seen as well off.[12] Everyone was a subsistence farmer because that is what they had to do, but it was not enough to live off of so people were

[8] Ibid, 28.
[9] Ibid, 30-1.
[10] Ibid, 34-5.
[11] Ibid, 37.
[12] Ibid, 37-8.

constantly looking for supplemental work.[13] When the coal industry started up in Eastern Kentucky, many men eagerly jumped on the opportunity.[14] Growing tobacco and selling lumber were other ways people tried to make ends meet, while still others worked on railroads or as farmhands.[15]

In the economic boom that followed the Great Depression, many Appalachians left to pursue industrial work in nearby states. This led to a severe decrease in farming, and, consequently, population size of small farming towns dwindled. Jobs also opened up in Berea and Richmond, including the Bluegrass Army Depot, which provided the opportunity for people to commute to a nearby city and work.[16] Small town local economies, however, saw little to no room for growth. In the 1940-60s, highways, dams, and power plants were added across the south, rural roads were built, and more modernization and industrialization finally began to occur in rural Appalachian towns.[17]

Today, modernization is still limited in much of Eastern Kentucky, and many people still wake up and travel to Berea or Richmond to work in factories and other industrial settings. Poverty, alcoholism, and drug abuse are unfortunate but common results of the area's trying history, but today, many are looking to Eastern Kentucky in a new light and seeing not what it lacks, but all it has to offer.

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[13] Ibid, 35, 38-40.
[14] Ibid, 35, 37.
[15] Ibid, 43-4.
[16] Ibid, 42-4.
[17] Ibid, 43.

Part 2: Tales from the Homestead

Holly Chiantaretto-Robinson

Holly Chiantaretto-Robinson was interviewed on her farm in Rockcastle County, Kentucky in April 2017.[18] She was born in Prescott , Arizona where she spent the first few years of her life before moving to Phoenix, where her parents maintained a garden and chickens. By the age of 14, Chiantaretto-Robinson was married, but was soon divorced and with her first son at the age of 19. Chiantaretto-Robinson shared in her interview that she has worked just about every low-paying job you can imagine, from day-cares, to suit stores, and waitressing.

For Chiantaretto-Robinson, the main motivation for transitioning to her current lifestyle was health-related. After meeting her now-husband and the passing of his children's mother due to obesity-related health conditions, she knew that she needed to make a huge change in her step-children's lives to improve their overall health. She started with purchasing organic food and growing a larger garden. As she describes in her interview, her choices to improve her loved ones' health became "a slippery slope."[19] To avoid costly consequences they moved to the home they live in now, began renovating it, developed several gardens, constructed a greenhouse, and started raising livestock.

For Chiantaretto-Robinson, food is an important part of being a part of the greater system. This not only includes growing vegetables but also raising livestock to use as food. She sees the animals she raises from its birth until it is slaughtered and processed for food. In discussing her views on raising livestock, Chiantaretto-Robinson said, "When

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[18] Holly Chiantaretto-Robinson, interview by author, oral history interview, *The Homesteading Project,* Rockcastle County, KY, April 9, 2017.
[19] Ibid, 08:26.

things are born it just makes you feel connected to that bigger life system," and although they kill the animal for food, she knows it had a much better life than in factory farms and meat processing plants.[20]

Today, Chiantaretto-Robinson teaches at a Rockcastle County school, which allows her the opportunities to have academic conversations and self-educate. Additionally, her teaching position gives her the summers off to work on the farm. Along with the soap she sells at the farmers market Chiantaretto-Robinson's educator's salary is her family's main source of income. Her husband left his job and became a full time farmer, and occasionally picks up some odd jobs on the side. She explains that while everyone was trying to get more money and more material possessions "...[they] decided [they] would try to live with less."

Chiantaretto-Robinson's farm may look like an ordinary farm from the outside, but it has many unique and sustainable qualities. They use a wood stove and no air conditioning, dry their clothes on a line, and even wash them by hand. Holly shared a humorous story about learning how to use the century old washer that was handed down to her from her husband's family. While teaching a history lesson to her students Chiantaretto-Robinson made a discovery that highlights a common occurrence for many homesteaders. The following story illuminates some of the ways that homesteaders are in touch with history:

> We were studying the industrial revolution and I was showing [my students] a video about Henry Ford and in that video there was a little clip of a woman who was hand washing her laundry with a ringer that was just

[20] Ibid, 01:29:00.

> like mine and I looked at how she had it set up and I thought "Oh my god, I'm so stupid"...I was like "oh that's how you do it!"[21]

As she elaborated on the washing machine, Chiantaretto-Robinson said her husband's uncles, who had memories of their mother using the machine, had been watching her use it and asked if there was an easier way it could be done. She explained, "I'm trying to make them understand that the value is not just in what you produce, it's also in the work."[22] She went on to say, "It was just something that they would have never thought to do again because they'd moved away from that."[23] This is a situation that many homesteaders encounter, especially when talking to local elders who used to use the same techniques modern homesteaders do, but out of necessity rather than desire. This concept will be discussed below in greater detail.

Chiantaretto-Robinson and her family also plan to go off the electrical grid in 2018 and eventually have their own water system, as they have convenient access to a spring behind their home.

When asked to describe her lifestyle, Chiantaretto-Robinson said that people usually just describe her. She has had students erroneously describe her as the hippie pot smoking teacher. Chiantaretto-Robinson does not consider herself a homesteader but she does embrace many homesteading ideas, like being free from utility companies and being part of the food system. Chiantaretto-Robinson emphasized that she identifies just as much with traditional farmers as off-the-gridders or homesteaders. In her interview, she elaborates on the fact that farmers have been using sustainable practices for a long time

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[21] Ibid, 27:03.
[22] Ibid, 57:42.
[23] Ibid, 57:31.

and, for the most part, their choices have not been recognized as living a homesteader's life.

When explaining challenges, Chiantaretto-Robinson said that "people are really resistant to you not wanting to participate in the consumer culture."[24] A person not wanting to go to the grocery to purchase their food from the store, but instead making the more labor-intensive decision to grow their own, or not wanting to spray their crops with pesticides although this would be easier, does not make sense to everyone.

Chiantaretto-Robinson shared that while her children struggled a bit at first with transitioning to this new lifestyle, especially because they were so used to unhealthful foods, they have now gotten excited about being a part of their own food system and, for the most part, enjoy what they eat. When comparing her life now to how it was before, Chiantaretto-Robinson said "I am infinitely more happy now...we're in the best health we've ever been in."[25] While this journey started for health reasons, Chiantaretto-Robinson has found even more reasons to stick with it along the way, including a connection to the land and her food system, and to make a smaller environmental footprint.

Bob Martin

Robert (Bob) Martin of Rockcastle County was interviewed in his Rockcastle County home in May 2017.[26] Martin grew up in Campbellsville and Lexington, Kentucky before he briefly left the region to attend university. When reminiscing on his childhood, there is a clear sense that the way he lived in the country and his memories of picking

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[24] Ibid, 52:31.
[25] Ibid, 58:35.
[26] Robert Martin, interview by author, oral history interview, *The Homesteading Project,* Rockcastle County, KY, May 11, 2017.

apples, riding his bike, and caring for his dogs impacted him greatly; the experiences taught him how to live in accordance with nature. His family had a garden and his parents were both educators. He went to school for theatre in Hartford, Connecticut and afterwards moved to New York City where he met his now-partner.

In 2006 Martin and his partner were looking for a place to hold a commitment ceremony when they came across 87 acres of land outside of Berea that had been used annually for festivals. Coincidently, and to their delight the land was up for sale. They bought the land and have since held the Clear Creek Festival themselves for the past 10 years. The Clear Creek Festival brings together locals and local artists for a weekend to connect with the land and each other. Martin considers it a very important task in maintaining the rich culture of the community and celebrating local histories and traditions.

Martin explained the role he felt he played on his land when he commented that "early on we began to understand the difference between owning the land and owning a deed and I feel like owning a deed is the charge of being a steward of the land."[27] Clearly, Martin has a deep respect for the land and does everything he can to learn from it and not just use it, but instead become a part of it. Martin said in his interview that he is constantly trying to pay attention and ask himself and frequently considers, "How do I fit in as opposed to use domination to truck in the stuff I think I need...a lot of the stuff you think you need is probably already here if you take the time to learn and listen."[28]

[27] Ibid, 20:04.
[28] Ibid, 24:15.

Bob and his partner built their own house. They were inspired by a large white oak on the land and with the help of friends built a one-of-a-kind HDTV worthy home filled with ingenious designs, such as the ergonomics of the home, handmade cabinets, a beautiful staircase, and other unique design aspects to both the inside and outside of the home. They invested in solar grids which they are able to use even to power the annual festival that has become a part of their lives. They learned about the watershed and how to use it most efficiently so they can do the least amount of damage at times when water is scarce, but still have enough for them to use without having to be connected to county water lines.

Martin makes money through his theatre work and community theatre work he performs within the region. His partner does leadership development under post coal Kentucky initiatives that seek to reshape human land use patterns. Eventually, Martin hopes to create a space where artists can stay to work and groups can do professional or private retreats. He wants to have a long term camping area with a shower and kitchen setup and an indoor rehearsal space. They are also working on developing gardens to supply the food they require.

For Martin, being a part of the larger system is everything. He is extremely conscientious of what he eats, where he lives and what that is made out of, how they receive and use their water, and, more specifically, how they give back to the land. As he said: "The thing that I am learning is that there's so much wisdom in becoming part of the system as opposed to standing apart from that system and trying to dominate it."[29]

[29] Ibid, 01:02:34.

Mary and James Kniskern

Mary and James Kniskern were interviewed in their Berea, Kentucky home in May 2017.[30] Mary Kniskern grew up as a self-described, "army brat."[31] Her dad was in the United States Army so she spent much of her childhood living in various regions around the US and Ethiopia. She went on to pursue a Master's of Arts in Education and a Master's of Arts in Sociology. By 1999, Mary had designed a straw bale house and was hoping to move with her kids to Kentucky to build it. As she shared in her interview, Kentucky had always felt like home so naturally she leaned towards Eastern Kentucky as the site of her future homeplace. In 2002, she met her now-husband, James Kniskern, as they said simply, "on the dance floor."[32] He had been working on designing an Earthship-a passive solar house made of natural and recycled materials which is laid partially underground-which coinsided perfectly with Mary's hay bale dream. James had been in the military and moved around a lot before he and Mary met so they had the shared desire of laying down roots. They also realized they both longed to live a simpler lifestyle that was less materialistic and more sustainable.

The Kniskerns built their house almost entirely on their own. By watching YouTube videos and reading books, they became experts on everything from carpentry, to plumbing, to learning how to build using unconventional natural materials. They explained that the hardest part was learning which questions to ask since each skill-set deals with a completely different set of terms. They spent two years actively working on

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[30] James and Mary Kniskern, interview by author, oral history interview, *The Homesteading Project,* Berea, KY, May 30, 2017.
[31] Ibid, 08:24.
[32] Ibid, 09:43.

building their custom home. Today, they call it a work in progress. The home is a beautiful straw bale style house with cob walls creatively decorated with a large cactus, three little pigs (a dedication to living in a straw home of fairy tale proportions) and other intricate designs. In particular, there are beautiful inlaid jewels that catch the sun's light and add vibrant colors. The house is designed and directionally oriented so they get optimum sunlight to light the home, and they also have an independent solar power setup. They have built the ranch styled house for the long term, with the shower being able to accommodate a wheelchair, and they are able to add a ramp up to the porch when the time comes. Of their house, James said that "This is the one they're going to carry us out of feet first."[33] They have a garden and grow enough garlic, asparagus, nuts, and strawberries to meet their own needs.

The Kniskerns are a great example of permaculturists, a term which will be explained in a later section; they utilize the principles through creative designs in their home, including a geothermal system that uses a pipe to bring air from outside, underground, and then inside, where it is by that point cooled enough that it acts like an air conditioner. They also have several ponds around the homestead, which they use for irrigation purposes and to provide local animals with a safe and clean water source that is free of pollution and road or farm runoff. They are strict vegetarians and do not want animals until they are able to be useful enough that they are worth the work it takes to care for them. They plant more than they need, expecting the bugs will eat some, they will eat some, and the remainder will be shared with others.

[33] Ibid, 37:23.

Although they work hard, the things that sound like chores to some, like mowing the lawn with a scythe, are actually fun to them. They also hold regular full-moon gatherings, where the people who live nearby and share a similar mind-set can gather and socialize outside of what can be, to some, a rather isolated lifestyle. If they had to describe their lives, Mary said simply that she would describe them as "lucky." She goes on to say, "We have the privilege of being able to live a simple lifestyle doing pretty much what we want when we want to do it."[34]

Robert Weise and Margie Stelzer

Robert (Rob) Weise and Margie Stelzer were interviewed in their Richmond, Kentucky home in May, 2017.[35] They have been part of an intentional community, a group of people with shared values who share some extent of land and resources, for 12 years.[36] In Stelzer and Weise's case, they share land and a common house with a washer and dryer, but each family has their own house. People have come and gone throughout the years but what ties the community together is their spirituality. They used to hold prayer twice daily and it was expected that if you were around you would attend, but this requirement has become less strict as newer members of the community, some with young children and busy schedules, have arrived. Prayer is what they say gets them through the hard times. Having this common denominator, be it spirituality or something else, is what Stelzer said helps pull people together and make for a successful intentional community. Each family who lives there has their own home, and they share a common house with a washer and dryer.

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[34] Ibid, 03:22.

[35] Margie Stelzer and Rob Weise, personal interview, May 31, 2017.

[36] Louise Meijering, Paulis Huigen, and Bettina van Hoven, "Intentional Communities in Rural Spaces," (The Royal Dutch Geographical Society KNAG, June 2006): 42-52.

Weise and Stelzer started the transition to their current lifestyle by talking with a group of people about justice. These conversations eventually led to the creation of two different intentional communities in Madison County, their own and Egret's cove, a more ecologically-focused community that is no longer active.

When asked why they decided to pursue this lifestyle, Weise replied that the "goal was not to separate ourselves. Our goal was to say "can middle class people live a reasonably comfortable life that's more sustainable...than we normally get? We're not rejecting the world...we want to be some sort of example."[37] It comes through clear that they believe in their potential to set an example because both Stelzer and Weise are very involved in the local community. Weise is an active History Professor at Eastern Kentucky University and Stelzer runs the Berea farmers market and works closely with The Community Farm Alliance, an organization that seeks to connect different farmers markets in the area.

Their home was built for them by an expert in natural builds. Like many other homesteaders, their home design maximizes space and airflow to minimize utility costs and utilizes passive solar methods and a wood burning stove. They have enormous gardens around the home with a self-watering system that irrigates through pipes that run along the ground. They also collect rainwater that they put through many different filters and are able to use for all of their water needs. One of the aspects Weise and Stelzer love about living in an intentional community is the ability to socialize. They love being able to go over to a neighbor's home if they have a few spare minutes to chat, instead of having to go through the fuss of scheduling a visit, which is often complicated in today's

[37] Ibid, 05:40.

modern world. This desire to socialize is a common theme in both modern and traditional homesteaders. The Kniskerns bring people together for their monthly full moon gatherings, and the Reeds (discussed later) have become involved in many aspects of their local community. In traditional homesteading, since it was common to be rather isolated, the need to be able to rely on your neighbors in times of strife, or for just as another friendly face, was imperative. If they had the chance to do it over again, Weise and Stelzer said they would always choose to live in an intentional community.

Kristina Deeg

Kristina Deeg was interviewed on a friend's farm in Irvine, Kentucky in August 2017.[38] Deeg grew up with her mother working as a historical preservationist, which for her meant that she would grow up with the ideas of reusing and sustainability ingrained in her worldview. She spent her high school years living with a family in Costa Rica and learning about the prominent conservation practices that are a part of Costa Rican life. There, she was off the grid without electricity at the age of 15. She said that "It all started in Costa Rica, seeing the way that people lived in a way that they weren't really impacting their surroundings and the environment. It made me think about what we're doing here in this country and what we're doing wrong."[39]

Deeg decided to go to an art school to pursue work as a photographer and geographer; her dream job being a position in the National Geographic family. She ended up changing majors and getting her Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science, where she had the opportunity to study renewable energy in Denmark and Iceland. Since

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[38] Kristina Deeg, interview by author, oral history interview, *The Homesteading Project, Irvine*, KY, August 9, 2017.
[39] Ibid, 04:30.

then she has worked for the National Parks service, Clifty Falls (an Indiana state park), zoos, and researched bats and primates. Most recently, Deeg was working at a zoo in Florida and living on a boat, before moving to her current Irvine, Kentucky home.

Upon moving to Irvine, Deeg and her husband built a yurt style home-a metal structure with canvas walls. Yurts are essentially large sturdy tents which were historically used by nomads in Mongolia, Siberia, and Turkey because of their portability and practicality.[40] The floor is wood that is covered by rubber and rugs. They use solar electricity, a wood burning stove and propane heater, and collect rainwater that goes through an extensive filtration system before being used. The home is two rooms, a main room with a bed, and the second contains their kitchen and eating space. It took them a mere three weeks to build, which is a testament to the fact that off-the-grid living does not necessarily have to take years to develop and set-up.

When choosing where to make their new home, Deeg and her husband searched worldwide-from Ecuador, Belize, and Costa Rica, to Oregon, Vermont, and Colorado. Eventually they settled on Kentucky for several reasons: it is near Deeg's Mom who lives in Indiana, they had heard there were increasingly more people living this way, and the land was inexpensive.

Deeg's long-term goals are to be able to live and work off the land. Another goal is to be able to survive on the property and have everything a person could want or need while still remaining off the grid. In addition, she would like to have an area on her land with a variety of display homes that are built using ancient building techniques. She hopes to provide an alternative building methods site where people can come and learn

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[40] *National Geographic Encyclopedia,* s.v. "yurt," accessed on December 6, 2017.

how to live and build like the ancients. She plans to use reclaimed materials for the displays to show people that it is possible to use the Earth while not destroying it.

Deeg's justification for her lifestyle goes well beyond herself and her family; her reasoning includes the entire planet. She shared how important she thinks it is that a more sustainable lifestyle becomes the norm when she concluded, "I think it is the only thing that should be done to save our planet right now. I think this planet is going downhill and I think this could potentially help save it with this kind of lifestyle"[41] Like many homesteaders, food choices are very important to Deeg. Her family eats only organic or foods they have grown, Deeg is vegan, and her two sons are vegetarian. She also believes in a food system where individuals grow their own food and share what they cannot produce, rather than importing much of their food from across the ocean.

After spending so much of her life traveling, Deeg thinks that she will finally be content staying where she is. As she said during her interview, "I get bored easily and traveling helped with that. I needed to find myself and I did and now I'm ok with just being where I am. So in the process of all that I felt like I needed to go places all the time…You could spend a lifetime learning about the plants and the trees and constantly improving yourself and the property. I don't think I'll get bored."[42] Not surprisingly, her attitude and perspective on the environment is shared by many homesteaders.

Robin and Mary Reed

Robin and Mary Reed were interviewed in their Irvine, Kentucky home in September 2017.[43] After four years of service in Iraq, the Reeds returned to their

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[41]Deeg, *The Homesteading Project*, 05:01.
[42] Ibid, 07:25.
[43] Mary and Robin Reed, interview by author, oral history interview, *The Homesteading Project,* Irvine, KY, September 2, 2017.

hometown of Lexington, Kentucky, where they came to the realization that it felt different than it had before. To combat this, they started up a buying club, "Good Foods Coop" in Lexington, inspired by those they had been a part of in Albuquerque. Today Good Foods is a popular local health-conscious grocery and restaurant.

In 1974, during the time the "Back to the Land" movement was starting up, Mary and Robin met many people through the co-op. Robin explained, "[They] met different types of people...[and] because those type of people had alternative brains, and they were alternative thinkers."[44] Through these connections, they found farms in need of "babysitting" and spent about three years traveling around the region and watching people's farms before deciding they wanted to have their own. They heard, through word of mouth, about 300 acres for sale in Irvine and went in with four other couples to purchase the property. Throughout the years, the other owners sold their rights, leaving Robin and Mary as the only original land owners still there. They said that at the time they moved, land was cheap and over 100 people were coming in from outside to move to the area. This was an odd occurrence for many of the locals, who were not used to people from outside the area moving there.

They became involved in the local community, Robin starting up a choir and Mary becoming involved with the girl scouts. She began taking the girls on trips out of the county, which many of them had never done. She explained that because traditionally it was not seen as appropriate for women to drive, and the traditional ways of thinking are still very ingrained in many people, many women in the area had never even been off of the mountain. They have also hired locals to help with crafts and on the farm from time to

[44] Ibid, 13:18.

time. After years of living there, the two now feel like they are accepted but will always be outsiders because they were not born and raised in the area. They did, however, share many stories of the kindness and compassion of people in their community. For example, any time their car broke down, they said it did not matter whose house you were in front of, the homeowners would come outside and help you out. Such experiences demonstrate that even with many years passed, the Appalachian tendency to help neighbors is still alive and well, just like it has been since the early days.

Initially, the roads to and from the Reed's property were not paved and they were forced to use horse drawn carriages to get anywhere. They originally lived in a small metal building on the property, which had been the oil attendant's who pumped oil for the area, and, as Robin described, had been put together from a "house-in-a-box kit."[45] Eventually, they decided to build their home out of an old oil tank on the property. It took them 20 years to complete because, as Mary explained, "when you have time you don't have any money and when you have money you don't have any time when you're self-employed."[46] They purchased or found materials as they were able, and worked on it when they found the time. They tried to have professional contractors come in to help but most were unable to provide services due to the house's unique cylindrical shape. Nevertheless, the home was eventually completed and to walk inside anyone would likely agree that it was worth the wait. Their tank home utilizes passive solar and is made mostly of salvaged materials, from their floor made out of brick from an old high school, windows from screen doors, and, of course, the structure of the home itself from an oil

[45] Ibid, 30:00.
[46] Ibid, 30:53

tank. Robin built the staircase and with some help from a local carpenter, the kitchen cabinets. Walking around the house he can point out which parts of the walls or ceilings are made out of what trees, which demonstrates a connection to their home that many other homesteaders share.

There were plenty of challenges when they started their journey towards sustainability. Flooding was perhaps their biggest challenge. The Reeds found that they were consistently repairing washed out roads and fixing damage to their cars; most especially the brakes since they were always wet from the flooding. Making money was another issue. Robin would go with a group of men into Richmond or Lexington to work on a job for several days, or at times, drive up every day. For many people in the area, the lack of jobs is severe; the only job opportunities are those that require driving hours into and back from the larger cities. To earn some extra money, Mary learned about local Appalachian crafts and she picked up traditional folk art techniques that resulted in producing marketable goods to supplement their incomes. To this day, she still makes corn shuck dolls, ornaments, and baskets. The whole process of making the baskets is done by hand, from stripping the trees, drying the bark, dying it, and finally weaving it together. They also played around with making candles for a while by using wax that was spilled by trucks that delivered it to a nearby factory. The Reeds would fill up an old school bus with the spilled wax, then melt it again and add scents to make candles, which they would sell at local craft fairs and venues.

When asked why they have stayed all these years, Mary explained that it was a "Love of your land and nature that holds you there. If you didn't love it, you couldn't survive the hardships that go with it". Robin emphasized that the off-the-grid movement,

he believes, will soon be the norm. Solar farms are growing and he is seeing more young people become interested in a different way of life. To him, "It feels like the entire consciousness of the world is growing a little bit,"[47] which is a common theme among those interviewed.

Heather Patrick

Heather Patrick is co-founder of Wild Earth Farm and Sanctuary in Irvine, KY. There the author had many conversations with her throughout the summer of 2017. Patrick grew up in Southern Pennsylvania on a 40-acre hobby farm homestead that her parents inherited when she was very young. She spent much of her childhood roaming the land, picking berries and apples, walking through creeks, and riding her bike. She lived in Pennsylvania until she graduated high school as valedictorian and voted "Most likely to succeed." She then went on to attend a small liberal arts college in Connecticut.

After school, Patrick went on to work just about any and every job imaginable, including dog walking, photography, and working with a vegan company in Chicago. An avid traveller, she would come home and work for just enough time to save up enough to continue traveling. She has visited most continents and spent a lot of time interning and WWOOFing (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, which connects organic farms in need of workers with people seeking to learn farming skills through a work-exchange set up) at farms and animal sanctuaries. She has been vegetarian since she was young and vegan for 21 years.

While working in Chicago, Patrick made a friend, Joe Kilcoyne, with whom she decided to start looking for land in the hopes of eventually creating a farmed animal

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[47] Ibid, 01:59:00

sanctuary. After years of searching much of the Eastern United States, they settled on 200 acres in Irvine, Kentucky. They acquired the rights to an old church and a house near the property, which began their dream. The house is where Patrick and her daughter live now and the surrounding land functions as the current sanctuary. The sanctuary is home to 19 animals: dogs, cats, turtles, pigs, and ducks. Each species has their own large space to roam and a barn for night to protect them from predators.

Patrick tries to make the spaces safe and maintainable while allowing for natural additions like trees, ponds, weeds, and various areas within each space that replicate the natural habitat and environment that she feels the animals deserve and crave. Many of the animals in the sanctuary were taken on as pets but neglected by their caretakers, while others were found at parks, roaming around Chicago, or those animals that came from overcrowded animal shelters. Patrick is constantly receiving calls to place more animals, and while she cannot accept many new ones because she is at capacity, she always does her best to connect the people to local sanctuaries that can take in more animal residents.

The job of running the sanctuary is a big one, and since it is a dynamic space, her property constantly needs repairs and animals constantly need caretaking. Patrick relies on volunteers and interns to help, but, for the most part, she is single-handedly rescuing and caring for the sanctuary's residents. Patrick’s home utilizes a grey water system, composting toilets, and a veganic compost system, that is, one which does not involve animal products or by-products. There are also many gardens on the property. She incorporates the permaculture idea of zones, where the foods you need close to your kitchen, like salad greens and herbs, are off the back porch, while those like potatoes and eggplants are grown further away in less accessible areas. She envisions visitors being

able to come to the homestead to get ideas on how to set up their own small sanctuary. Eventually, Patrick hopes to be able to build her own home and be completely off the grid.[48]

Liam and Valentina Wilson

Liam and Valentina Wilson were interviewed in their Berea, KY home in the fall of 2015.[49] Liam Wilson's wife Valentina says he grew up a "spoiled American artist". He had been working as a piano instructor with many devoted students when he decided to take a break to travel around Europe. He met Valentina in Sicily, where she had been studying Thai massage. They soon after decided to travel, via bicycle, to Valentina's hometown of Kakhovka, Ukraine. They spent multiple years living in Kakhova before moving to the United States.

In 2012, the Wilsons settled in Berea, Kentucky. They say many people describe their lifestyle as simple, but in reality, Liam argues, "it is simple only in that it takes many things out of the mix." By "being able to free yourself from many of the trappings of our society" the Wilsons were living completely off-the-grid - they did not own their own property, rode bicycles to the farmers market where they sold bread, used no electricity, had a wood burning stove and candles, woke and fell asleep in accordance with the sun, and grew much of their own food.[50] They did their best to avoid any industry they considered corrupt, which were most of them, including, but not limited to, the government, the medical industrial complex, and the commercial food industry. In 2016, when Liam injured his foot in a sawing accident, they tried out different home

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[48] Heather Patrick, conversations with the author, July-August 2017.
[49] Liam and Valentina Wilson, interviews by author, oral history interviews, *The Homesteading Project.* Berea, KY., November 3 and 11, 2015.
[50] Ibid, 08:52.

remedies for months before he made a full recovery. Although he could potentially have recovered quicker had he visited a doctor, the Wilsons did not want to support the medical industrial complex so they chose to stick with the methods that they felt were better suited to their lifestyle. Many homesteaders make similar decisions and rely on homeopathic medicine as the first or preferred course of action.

Liam explained how their concept of poverty differs from others when he explained that, "The idea of poverty is a concept that people think they understand and they think that they can put a monetary level on it to explain it...We make less than 5,000 dollars a year and we're not in poverty. We live very, very well. We have everything that we want and we never worry about money"[51] He explained that it is all about perspective, and to them, they do not need all of the things that some consider necessary.

Liam explained that while he does hope more people will follow their lead, he also believes, "We're all on our own individual path and timing is everything. We can be exposed to something but we may not be ready to embrace it until it steeps with us or we have certain life experiences that may compel us to change our point of view." He went on to conclude in an interview that, "I hope that once someone has been exposed to a higher truth they will in time come to understand it and make some changes."[52] After they moved to Kentucky many people began showing an interest in their lifestyle and sought them out to learn more. They also shared that they have more support here than they could have imagined. When their previous home burned down, more than 50 people showed up to help them rebuild.

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[51] Ibid, 03:36.
[52] Ibid, 7:00.

To the Wilsons, the way to change the world starts with the individual. As Liam put it, "I don't see that we're changing much by living the way that we live but we're changing ourselves and to me that's all we can do. Certainly we've found that that's the only way to change anything, to change oneself."[53] Indeed, there are many people in and around Berea who met and were inspired by the Wilsons, and would say they were personally affected and influenced by them; in this way the Wilsons certainly made a great change. Of all those interviewed, the Wilsons were certainly the most passionate about rejecting most aspects of modern society and Liam even said, "We're still alive so in that respect you can't not be a part of the modern world, but we don't embrace it."[54]

The Wilsons spent 5 years in Berea before they lost the land they were staying on and decided to move back to Ukraine. Since they did not believe in owning land, land loss was something they knew at any point could happen, and was a fear. About their move, Valentina said that life was getting too easy and it was time for a challenge. She hopes to dedicate the rest of her life to helping people live with less in the war-torn country.

Bringing it All Together

There are a lot of surprising similarities between the Eastern Kentucky homesteaders that were interviewed. For example, many of them are highly educated people who spent a great deal of time traveling, after which they decided that they were ready to settle down, lay down some roots, and use what they had learned abroad.

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[53] Ibid, 15:12.
[54] Ibid, 14:34

Another common theme is eating choices. Many of the homesteaders were vegetarian or vegan and, for them, this directly related to the way they viewed their role in the world.

This goes on to a broader topic of what connects modern homesteaders. No two got into sustainable living for exactly the same reason, but at the same time, what they all seem to have in common, is that they, some intentionally and some not, are all working to put themselves into the greater system of the Earth. Many of the interviews, such as those with Bob Martin, Liam and Valentina Wilson, and Kristina Deeg, specifically mention the desire not to simply take from the land, but to learn from it, and learn how to use it while not harming it. An example of this is grey water recycling, which is a process of reusing water that has been used once, for example, to do dishes, gathered from baths or showers, or in dehumidifiers. The water can be reused to water plants or flush toilets. Another is composting toilets, which are utilized out of the idea that rather than creating waste treatment facilities to deal with our waste and then using expensive fertilizers to improve our soil, we can use a safe, efficient, healthy process of humanure to create natural fertilizers. Many of the homesteaders are interested in pursuing composting toilets, although all are also very aware of the potential legal challenges.

Another common theme is the idea of not creating but using what is already available. Liam and Valentina used only dead trees for firewood. It is not simply a desire to be more sustainable or to waste less. The root of the desire is to the core - zero waste, total efficiency of resources, and no footprint. The goal is to be like any other animal on this Earth, a part of the natural cycle that does not take more than it needs and gives back with as natural a process as the setting of the sun. The not-so-new wave of thought is that

all of these resources are the Earth's property and if they are to be used, should be so minimally, only when necessary, and should be replaced when possible.

Part 3: Related Literature, Agriculture, and Philosophical Ideals

Anthropoharmonism and the Ecozoic Era

Thomas Berry described humans' consumption of resources and the resulting effects on global species' extinctions as the beginning of a new era. In this new era, the Ecozoic, humans govern everything. Berry explains the importance of humans by saying that "while the human cannot make a blade of grass, there is liable not to be a blade of grass unless it is accepted, protected, and fostered by the human."[55] He says that the Cenozoic Era, which began with the extinction of the dinosaurs, is currently ending as the Ecozoic Era begins. Extinction is taking place on a scale now that has not been seen since the Mesozoic Era. Berry explains that with this new era must come a shift in human consciousness. The goal of the Ecozoic Era, in fact, is to change the exact mind-set that has put the planet into the state of affairs it is in now.[56]

Stephen Scharper of the University of Toronto coined the term "Anthropoharmonism" as another way to describe the Ecozoic Era. Anthropoharmonism describes a state where people are in harmony with nonhuman life, rather than in Anthropocentrism where humans are simply egocentric. Scharper describes this outlook on the human role in existence in the following terms:

> what we do not have to do is see ourselves as lord, master, conqueror, and centre of all that is. And so that's why "anthropo-harmonism" is

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[55] Thomas Berry, *The Ecozoic Era* (Great Barrington, Mass.: Schumacher Society for a New Economics, 1991).
[56] Ibid.

> suggested: while we don't drop the anthropo, as we will always read reality through a human lens, we can drop our hubris that suggests we are the centre of both the biotic and the cosmic journey. Instead, we accept that we're in a "radical intersubjectivity" with all of creation.[57]

This idea necessitates a founding of new relationships between humans and nonhumans. It is not just "going with the flow" but actively taking part in our wider ecosystem. Rather than seeing ourselves as masters, as Scharper explains, we must begin to see ourselves as just another part that is no more or less important than any of the other million parts that create our functioning planet. To achieve Scharper's goals, humans must gain a newfound respect for non-humans, which is a theme amongst those who were interviewed.

Anthropoharmonism recognizes that humans will never be able to see the world the way any other animal does, and we should not expect ourselves to be able to. It is known that we will always have this distinctly human outlook on the world, but because of that, it is our duty to also care for humans in a special and empathetic way. To care for humans, we must bring about social justice within the human community.

Social justice was an underlying message in each of the homesteader's interviews. Mary Reed was very involved in women's rights in her community, and she and Robin are both active in community functions in the small town. Bob Martin uses Clear Creek Festival and his community theatre work to bring people together, let them celebrate their history and traditions, and find a voice through theatre. Most everyone was engaged in the community in some way or another and found it important to share their lifestyle with

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[57] Stephen Scharper, Redeeming *the Time: A Political Theology of the Environment* (New York: Continuum, 1997): 181-184.

others and expose them to a life they otherwise may not see, either through farmers market, offering classes at their homestead, or by working as an employee at a local institution. Providing opportunities to learn and experience new ways of doing things is certainly another way to spread equality.

Permaculture

Permaculture was founded by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in 1974 in Australia. There are varying definitions of permaculture, but for this study Bill Mollison's provides one of the best explanations. Mollison defines permaculture as a "system of assembling conceptual, material, and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms. It seeks to provide a sustainable and secure place for living things on this Earth". The word "permaculture" is a combination of three other words - permanent, agriculture, and culture. It seeks to mimic nature's patterns in a way that the resulting habitat will become permanent and be able to self-regenerate and intuitively fix it is own problems. While the permaculture system will not be never-changing, it will be permanently sustainable, and set the stage for a healthy ecosystem for many generations to come. It is a form of agriculture, and is one of the best known forms of agro-ecology.

Another useful description of permaculture, from David Holmgren, is "that humanity can reduce or replace energy and pollution-intensive industrial technologies, especially in agriculture, through intensive use of biological resources and thoughtful, holistic, design, patterned after wild ecosystems?"[58] Projects of permaculture include "community gardens, campus greening initiatives, educational efforts, and less

[58] David Holmgren, *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* (Victoria, Australia: Holmgren Design Services, 2002).

commonly, demonstration and/or research sites, periodicals, and farming-focused education and support efforts."[59] However, permaculture is not simply for those in rural environments. The concept extends to those living anywhere, from vast farmlands to apartment complexes. The tools of permaculture are meant to be used to make the most of available space. The concept's tenets emphasize that it is not how much space you have, but rather what you choose to do with that space.

For example, one can live in the suburbs and have a large backyard and front yard and choose to keep it completely mowed and weeded and allow only a few bushes and some non-native flowers to grow in a very organized manner. Alternatively, someone living in a city can have the same amount or even less land, but by using permaculture designs, play into the system at work and add in a small pond for amphibians and insects. Or they could keep the grounds less well-kept but more friendly to native plant and animal life, and include a small backyard garden. While neither situation stems from either person needing to necessarily be a farmer or invest their entire life to their landscaping, the city-dweller using permaculture designs is much more ecologically beneficial.

One notably important concept in permaculture is the idea of zones. Zones are represented as many concentric circles. The middle zone, or zone 0, is the home, the next zone, 1, is just outside the home, like a garden right outside the back door or the bushes and shrubs off of the front porch. This continues outwards until you reach the outermost zone, which is wilderness. The idea is that the innermost zones require the most

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[59] Sarah T. Lovell and Rafter Sass Ferguson, "Grassroots engagement with transition to sustainability: diversity and modes of participation in the international permaculture movement," Ecology *and Society* 20(4), 39.

maintenance and the outermost require no maintenance. Someone would perhaps use the lettuce in their garden on a daily basis, but the potatoes would be found farther down in their yard or in a community garden; they would be planted and then returned to only when it is time to harvest them. The wilderness at the edge of the zone does not need to be visited, but someone may decide to visit for a nature walk and not interfere.[60]

The human-non human interaction in permaculture is one of respect but also boundaries. While animals are a necessary part of the human realm and may play an active role in grazing and adding fertilizer to a garden, they also play a more passive role at a level where they are not interfered with by humans, animals often being left to their own devices in the further off zones. This is one aspect of permaculture that is very anthropoharmonic in spirit, in recognizing the need both for human-non human interactions, and respecting the need for the two to have their own space.[61]

The three main principles that make up permaculture are "care of the Earth" "care of the people" and "setting limits to population and consumption."[62] The first, care of the Earth, calls for using resources minimally, replacing or replanting when possible, and following the natural systems at play. Care of the people involves promoting social justice and equality, and respecting every person. This principle is important because oftentimes in ecological discussions care for the Earth and for nonhuman life are emphasized, while caring for humans is deemphasized and forgotten. Permaculture encourages people to have respect for all life, both human and nonhuman. Finally,

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[60] William Faith and Graham Burnett, "Vegan Permaculture Design Course," Series of lectures at the vegan permaculture design course at Wild Earth Farm and Sanctuary, Irvine, KY, July 16-27, 2017.
[61] Mark Hathaway, "The Practical Wisdom of Permaculture: An Anthropoharmonic Phronesis for Moving Toward an Ecological Epoch," 460.
[62] Bill Mollison, "Permaculture" (1994): 53.

"setting limits to population and consumption" calls for taking only as much as needed and not more. This includes not wasting resources and is perhaps even a call to wealthier countries to not create more resources than they need, while less-developed countries suffer, often because they are the ones losing their resources in order to give them to the wealthier countries.

Bill Mollison explains that we should avoid using any natural resource but when we find it absolutely necessary we should do as much as possible to reduce waste, replace lost materials, account for all energy used, and assess all the long term negative effects on the surroundings and do our best to mitigate them. Mollison concludes his theory by stating that in our interactions with people and the environment we have two choices in how we can view a situation, by asking "What can I get from this land or person" or "What does this person, or land, have to give if I cooperate with them?"[63] Rather than seeing the Earth and other people as resources abundantly available for our use and disposal, Mollison suggests viewing the Earth as something we are a part of, and therefore doing our best to avoid wasting limited resources, and replacing resources when we need to use them. Mollison speaks a lot of the interconnectedness of humans with the Earth and other lifeforms. If we are to be concerned about human survival, we better expand our concern to include all natural systems, or neither one will last long.[64]

Permaculture moves beyond the theoretical framework of anthropoharmonism to describe many concrete practices. One example of this is the principle of "produce no

[63] Ibid, 54.
[64] Ibid, 55.

waste", which suggests avoiding packaging, taking care of one's own waste through reusing, and compost systems for food, human, and animal waste.

Cooperation and mutual responsibility is a key concept in permaculture. It is the joining of these two concepts that make the idea work. One must display responsibility for their own actions and the effects they have on their surroundings, while simultaneously cooperating with other people and their environments. Permaculture describes life as cooperative rather than competitive, the latter creating war and waste, while the former creates peace and plenty.[65]

Permaculture Applications

The spread of permaculture can best be seen in permaculture design courses, which take place across the world and inspire and encourage people in all different types of lifestyles to start, as they are often referred, their own permaculture "experiments". While some have pointed out the lack of cohesiveness between available permaculture courses (that are not regulated by anyone), others argue that since one of the principles behind permaculture is that it can be applied to anyone in any part of the world, some diversification within the classes is necessary.[66]

One of these diversifications was seen at the vegan permaculture design course at Wild Earth Farm and Sanctuary, co-founded by Heather Patrick, which is, as of Fall 2017, the only vegan permaculture design course in the United States. Because of this, many vegans from across the country travel to attend. Along with these travellers, Wild Earth's PDC also boasts delicious vegan food and two permaculture teachers, William

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[65] Ibid. 54.

[66] Joshua Lockyer and James Veteto, "Environmental Anthropology Engaging Permaculture: Moving Theory and Practice Towards Sustainability" (2008): 49-50.

Faith from Chicago and Graham Burnett from the United Kingdom. The class teaches much of what you would find in a standard permaculture design course, including, but not limited to, efficient home and garden designing, techniques for working with the natural ecosystem, following weather, sun and wind patterns, and zoning concepts. Instead of humans using animals as workhands on the land, in a vegan permaculture system, animals that live on the land do so as they please, without having any sort of jobs or tasks assigned to them, but contribute to the ecosystem in its natural ways such as eating, fertilizing the soil, and fertilizing plants.

In *Environmental Anthropology Engaging Permaculture: Moving Theory and Practice Toward Sustainability* by James Veteto and Joshua Lockyer, the authors discuss ecovillages, a different form of intentional communities than the one Weise and Stelzer are a part of, as a model of permaculture. In an ecovillage, you are producing a miniature society, but it is done by keeping all of the resources within the community, so money stays among the people who live there. If resources can be found within a single community, there is no need to ship in these materials from other places, which saves money, as well as precious fuel and natural resources. If these resources are then kept and traded within the community, the internal economy flourishes and allows the community as a whole to grow and thrive. Although no ecovillages were included in the oral histories, it is an active model of permaculture that is very relevant and also related to what the Eastern Kentucky homesteaders are doing. Robin and Mary Reed seriously considered moving to a well-known Tennessee ecovillage. Other homesteaders mentioned the importance of shopping locally. With the history of Eastern Kentucky, which has struggled to keep money within their local economy, it is especially important

for local producers to help in any way they can. Margie Stelzer, Robin Reed, Holly Robinson, and Liam and Valentina Wilson all take part in their local farmers markets, where they are able to sell locally, and also trade goods with others.

In "Timebank and Sustainability: The Permaculture Approach" time banking is explained as a system that can be integrated into permaculture ideals, specifically in the "care for people" and "setting limits to population and consumption" components. Time banking is a system of "banking" one's time in exchange, or instead of the use of currency. In this way, 2 hours of garden work may provide the person not with money, but instead, a 2-hour piano lesson or a basket of fresh produce. Some of the important principles of time banking include:

> "We are all assets – every human being has something to contribute.
>
> Redefining work – rewarding the real work in our society by creating a currency which pays people for helping each other and creating better places to live.
>
> Reciprocity – giving and receiving are basic human needs which help to build relationships and trust with others.
>
> Social Networks – building people's social capital is very important, belonging to a social network gives our lives more meaning"[67]

These ideals are being tested in several cities and communities around the world and show an optimistic prospective for our future. A prime example can be found in Ithaca, New York. which for a time utilized Ithaca hours, which exchanged an hour of labor for a special type of currency, the "Ithaca hour" that could be used like any other form of

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[67] Veronika Jašíková, and Válek Lukáš, "Time Bank and Sustainability: The Permaculture Approach" (2013): 988.

currency. A few of these hours are still in circulation today. [68] Another example being trialled now is an app that allows people to exchange their skills and services.

People like Robin Reed speak of practicing time banking by spending a day working on someone else's farm, then having the same returned to him in exchange. Those who participated in the farmers market also essentially traded the profits of their time when they bartered their goods with other farmers.

Natural Farming

Masanobu Fukuoka was a Japanese philosopher and the creator of natural farming. His method of do-nothing farming de-emphasizes the need for modern farming methods that involve tilling, frequent weeding, fertilizers, and pesticides. Instead, he emphasizes four simple principles: no cultivation, no chemical fertilizer or prepared compost, no weeding by tillage or herbicides, and no dependence on chemicals. His method of farming is minimal, time-saving, and relies on trusting nature and following its natural cycles. Liam and Valentina were ardent followers of Fukuoka's teachings, and utilized his four principles in their own bountiful garden, rich in color and with more ripe fruit than they could eat. Other homesteaders, although they did not mention Fukuoka's name specifically, mentioned using methods he believed in, namely his four principles.

Although idealistic in theory, Fukuoka's methods work. He presented at multiple conferences where he was told time and time again that the world was not ready for this type of agriculture, or he was fought by large agricultural companies that feared losing their business if people turned to natural farming. He explained that research had gotten to the point that no one was willing to listen to his side before running every possible

[68] Martin Shubik, "Simecs, Ithaca Hours, Berkshares, Bitcoins and Walmarts" (2014): 1-4.

research test, so ironically, science, which should be taking steps forward, was (in some ways) holding the world back. Going along with the theme we have heard from other agricultural methods, Fukuoka said that "The more people do, the more society develops, the more problems arise." By this he meant that we need to do less interfering with the natural systems at place, much like anthropoharmonism and permaculture both preach.

Fukuoka explained the essence of natural farming by saying that "When it is understood that one loses joy and happiness in the attempt to possess them, the essence of natural farming will be realized. The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings." So again, we see that humans are an important part of the system, and taking care of humans cannot be forgotten about when taking care of the Earth. Like Mollison and Holmgren's permaculture design courses, Fukuoka took on many interns who he taught how to use his natural farming techniques and who carry on his legacy.[69]

Part 4: Conclusion

The question still remains: why do Eastern Kentucky people homestead? While looking back on and trying to emulate history is a seemingly reasonable answer, it is not the most correct one. It is obvious that homesteaders today borrow a lot of ideas from homesteaders of the past. Holly Chiantaretto-Robinson used her old washing machine because it did not use energy or fuel and worked well without needing to be fixed or constantly replaced. Many other interviewees recalled or suggested similarly, and said they used older technologies found in thrift stores or relatives' homes as a way to save

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[69] Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming* (Emmaus: Rodale Press, 1978.)

energy or for practical reasons. They also turn to traditional social experiences: farm shares and farmers markets, visiting dance halls for weekly hoedowns, throwing traditional Appalachian festivals, and relying more heavily on neighbors and friends than is generally done in mainstream society.

However, homesteaders are also looking forward. They utilize solar energy, geothermal energy, and techniques they have themselves invented to make their homes more comfortable, warmer, or more adapted to the 21st century. It is clear that a complete rejection of all modern inventions and comforts is not what it going on.

In review, while homesteaders learn from the past and have a lot to teach us about both our past and our future, the reason for homesteading is less that of historical replication and more a unique philosophical and ecological mind-set which few people outside of the homesteading, permaculture, and the off-the-grid world seem to have internalized. Whether they know it or not, individuals pursuing sustainable ways of living such as homesteading are attempting to align their lifestyles with the natural systems of the Earth through techniques such as permaculture and natural farming practices.

The ideas of anthropoharmonism, permaculture, and natural farming were explained over and over again through the oral histories in the language of the interviewees. Liam and Valentina Wilson saw Masanobu Fukuoka as an inspiration and teacher and the couple followed his techniques in their own garden. The Kniskerns, Stelzer and Weise, and Heather Patrick all discussed permaculture as one of the core tenants of their agricultural practices. The mindset of athropoharmonism, a harmony with nature and respect for all life, human and non-human, was weaved into every oral history, either explicitly or implicitly. It is difficult to describe a state of mind that cannot truly be

explained unless one attains it, at least partially, for themselves. This is the state of mind held by modern day homesteaders; it calls for aligning their lives with the natural systems of the ecosystem, and is best explained through permaculture, anthropoharmonism, and natural farming.

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