

Fieldnotes

Project: AFC Archie Green Project/VFC2014-0005

Interviewee: Jonathan Corcoran/AU2011-1006

Interviewer: Andy Kolovos

Interview Date: November 13, 2014

Interview Location: Vermont Folklife Center studio, Middlebury, VT

VFC met Jonathan Corcoran through his association with ACORN (Addison County Relocalization Network), and explored interviewing him about ACORN and its work supporting local foods. Jonathan is the founder and the Executive Director of the organization.

Conducted interview at the VFC studio—spent an hour and forty minutes with Jonathan since he has much to say.

What stuck out most strongly to me is his business orientation—not necessarily expected on my part since I really didn't know Jonathan prior to our conversation—and the way he applies his business-orientation to formulate solutions to the problems he sees ACORN as addressing. This is not a criticism or dismissal of Jonathan by any stretch, but rather an acknowledgement on my part of my own biases and assumptions about the perspectives of those who engage professionally in the support of localizing economic activity, local food production and alternative energy. Jonathan believes that capitalism has transformative power and argues for bringing this power to bear against a range of things (fossil fuels, pesticides, agribusiness) that he sees as threatening the well being of the planet. As this implies, although he openly embraces capitalist economic models, his social vision is not conservative nor is his interest here in accumulating personal wealth. From my reading he feels that that business/capitalism can play a role in supporting what many would view as classic progressive social and environmental issues. Not everyone who engages with said issues would necessarily agree.

The entrepreneurial perspective expressed by Jonathan certainly has its adherents in the contemporary local food/agriculture sector in VT. Another interesting avenue to explore. On the one hand business-side of farming is not often considered but is certainly integral/fundamental to the professional practice of farming and always has been. On the other because it would be interesting to see how the business/entrepreneurial perspectives of those engaged in local agriculture might differ generationally or regionally or in relation to how new one might be to farming or between different sectors of the agricultural economy.