

CULTIVATING FOOD DEMOCRACY: TOWARD AN ECOFEMINIST POLITICS OF  
THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM

By

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To my grandparents and my mother

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This thesis proposes that there exists an opportunity for ecofeminism and the burgeoning international food movement to join together for their mutual benefit. The global food system is an important site of analysis for feminist scholars and one that can elucidate women's lived experiences in an increasingly globalized world. Even so, not many ecofeminists have examined food systems in their scholarship. Moreover, the limited ecofeminist work that has been done on food and agriculture happened mostly in the 1990s, before the food movement became as popular as it is today. Given the timeliness of the subject, ecofeminists would do well to revisit the food system. Because today's food movement has produced a large, interdisciplinary body of knowledge about the food system and has created a number of small but successful alternative systems, the movement can offer ecofeminists who are interested in exploring food a wealth of knowledge and experience. Rather than starting from scratch, ecofeminists can build off of work that has already been done. Conversely, there are gaps within this scholarship and activism that ecofeminism can work to close. In particular, ecofeminism offers an alternative worldview that can be used to transform

people's attitudes and raise consciousness about the food system and its social and environmental implications. Moreover, ecofeminism offers a particular kind of critical analysis that considers economic, environmental, and social justice that translates well in a discussion of the global food system.

The aim of this thesis is to illustrate how ecofeminism offers an alternative worldview. Alternative, that is, to the primacy of patriarchy, capitalism, and Western notions of progress and development above matters of social and environmental justice. It is a worldview that can be employed in order to effect social and environmental justice in the world. Additionally, this thesis examines how ecofeminism can inform the way we think about the global food system and points to the potential benefits of a future dialogue between ecofeminism and the food movement. Finally, in order to demonstrate what a collaboration between ecofeminism and the food movement might look like, this thesis presents case studies of two organizations: Navdanya, an India-based environmental nongovernmental organization, and Citizens Co-op, a cooperatively owned food market in Gainesville, Florida. Given the multifaceted nature of today's global food system and the variegated problems within it, such interdisciplinary communication and collaboration are critical for efforts that aim to create meaningful change.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, thousands of farmers across India have committed suicide. Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist activist-scholar, estimates that as of 2005, 30,000 Indian farmers have killed themselves (*Earth Democracy* 120). While there is some disagreement over these statistics, it is clear that these suicides have become a growing problem. Although the Indian government has denied such links, Shiva argues that there are direct connections between the failure of these small farmers' livelihoods and processes of globalization, free trade, and the industrialization of agriculture (*Earth Democracy* 120-30). She argues that, "Farmer suicide emerged in India in 1997. The policies of corporate-driven globalized and industrialized agriculture deliberately destroy small farms, dispossess small farmers, and render them disposable" (*Earth Democracy* 120). Whether or not globalization and free trade are to blame for the suicides in India, there is no question about the connections between these forces and the suicide of Lee Kyung Hae, a South Korean farmer and organizer who killed himself at the 2003 World Trade Organization Ministerial meeting in Cancún, Mexico. In *Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power, and the Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*, Raj Patel recounts:

He flipped open his red penknife, shouted "the WTO kills farmers" and stabbed himself high in his chest. He died within hours. Within days, from Bangladesh, to Chile, to South Africa, to Mexico, tens of thousands of peasants mourned and marched in solidarity, peppering their own calls for national support for agriculture with the chant: "Todos Somos Lee" ("We Are Lee"). (Patel 35)

Lee Kyung Hae was a cattle farmer who accumulated debt and lost his farm when the South Korean government lifted restrictions on importing beef from Australia. Lee took out loans to purchase more cattle in order to compete with international beef

corporations. When the price of beef dropped and stayed low, Lee and his family suffered (Patel 36). A man who “died to show the plight of Korean farmers” (Patel 36), Lee has also come to represent farmers around the world who have suffered and died in less visible ways. Other small-scale and otherwise marginalized farmers have endured a host of tragedies, and there exists a growing international movement to oppose these injustices of today’s global agriculture and food systems. This is illustrated by the global solidarity over Lee’s death. While this movement takes different manifestations around the world and has been called different names, scholars and activist groups like Slow Food International are drawing connections between various local and regional movements in order to foster an international food movement and create a larger discourse on the politics of food.

Ecofeminism, as both a social movement and a field of study, provides a useful framework for considering the global food system and the critiques of this system that food activists and scholars are making. At first glance, the connection seems odd. How is food production a women’s issue? How can feminism be used as a tool to think about agriculture? Ecofeminism unites feminism with what we might broadly refer to as environmental issues and argues that social and environmental issues must be considered one in the same. More specifically, ecofeminism posits that there are direct connections between the oppression of women and other marginalized groups of people (e.g., the poor and racial minorities) and the degradation of the environment. While ecofeminists disagree on whether these connections are biologically determined or socially constructed, many agree that women and other marginalized groups have a vested interest in redressing these interlocking social and environmental injustices. The

cases of Indian farmer suicides help illustrate how these issues play out in agriculture and food systems. Patel argues that, “Within rural areas, there’s mounting evidence to suggest that the burden of this tragedy is borne unequally. Women carry its brunt. In one district in Southern India, for instance, a study found that the suicide rate for young men was 58 per 100,000. For young women it was 148 per 100,000” (27-8). In cases in which women are widowed, the tragedy of their husbands’ suicides is exacerbated by other pre-existing social inequities. Patel says, “Women surviving under these conditions, especially after the death of a partner, are fighting hard. Sometimes, the extended family can help out...by sending along a few extra rupees to keep the children fed. In some cases, they can compound the disaster, handing the family land over to the dead husband’s brother, treating the wife and children like slaves” (28). In 2006, Chandra Bhan, a cotton farmer, committed suicide by pouring kerosene over his body and lighting himself on fire (Ahmed 2006). In a BBC news article, his wife, Rekha, said, “I’m very angry with him. I have to look after our two children, his old parents- and I have to pay his debt back” (Ahmed 2006). Widows like Rekha face the double burden of being responsible for both the reproductive labor in their households (i.e., care giving, cooking, and other chores) and paid labor in order to support their families and pay back their husbands’ debts. In conjunction with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other activist groups, women in India have organized to work toward food sovereignty and create viable solutions to some of the problems they face. For example, Diverse Women for Diversity (a transnational women’s group that addresses issues of gender, agriculture, and globalization) and its affiliated groups in India have created a women’s empowerment program called *Mahila Anna Swaraj*, also referred to as Sustainable

Livelihoods for Women through Small Scale Food Processing (*Proposal for 1*). The *Diverse Women for Diversity Proposal for Mahila Anna Swaraj* (forthcoming) explains that groups of women form to make jelly and jam, collect wild edible vegetables, and pick flowers in order to make colors for India's Holi festival (1). It says that, "Twenty-four *Mahila Anna Swaraj* groups are already functioning and adding value to their biodiversity thus helping conserve their resource base, improving livelihood and increasing and promoting eco-friendly, health friendly products" (1). This is only one of many examples of what we might call women's ecofeminist organizing for justice within the food system.

My personal interest in exploring food politics and its connections to feminism is inspired by my work with both the Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm in Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand, India and Citizens Co-op in Gainesville, Florida. After spending two summers at Navdanya, a model organic farm and research institute founded by Vandana Shiva, I have learned how ecofeminist visions for food production can be implemented in viable ways. Returning home with a desire to engage with these issues in my own community, I became an intern for Citizens Co-op, a group of people working to establish a cooperatively owned, community-based grocery store in Gainesville, FL. These experiences have challenged me to examine the problems and possibilities of the world's food system and the implications they have for social, economic, and environmental justice. The aim of this paper is to illustrate how ecofeminism offers an alternative worldview. Alternative, that is, to the primacy of patriarchy, capitalism, and Western notions of progress and development above matters of social and environmental justice. Additionally, it will examine how ecofeminism can

inform the way we think about the global food system and point to the potential benefits of a future dialogue between ecofeminism and the burgeoning food movement. Moreover, it will highlight alternative food projects and activism for social justice in food systems by engaging in case studies of two organizations: Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm and Citizens Co-op. This thesis is divided into five chapters. The next chapter presents a literature review of alternative food projects and the burgeoning international food movement. This review ranges from what some have called community-based, urban, or civic agriculture projects to the Slow Food International organization that connects people from around the world. Chapter Three provides a literature review of ecofeminist responses to the global food system. That is, it examines ecofeminist critiques of the world's current system and solutions or alternatives that ecofeminists, or people who are employing what might arguably be called an ecofeminist perspective, promote. Additionally, it explores gaps within this scholarship and the potential benefits of a sustained communication between ecofeminists and food activists and scholars. Divided into two sections, Chapter Four offers case studies of two organizations: Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm and Citizens Co-op, using ecofeminism as a framework for thinking about the work they do. Finally, Chapter Five presents some concluding thoughts and a more in-depth consideration of what ecofeminism might lend to future efforts toward food democracy. Before all of this, however, it will be necessary to provide at least a brief overview of the global food system, in particular, the aspects of it that ecofeminists and food activists and scholars critique.

As illustrated by the cases of farmer suicides, today's increasingly globalized food system is a hostile environment for small-scale farmers. The debt these farmers accumulate and the subsequent demise of their livelihoods are due largely to the systemic inequities farmers face around the world. Any vulnerabilities that small-scale farmers face has been and continues to be exacerbated by the increasing globalization and interconnectivity of the world's food supply. Within this system small-scale farmers are put in competition with large agribusiness conglomerates, and people and products on one side of the world are affected by markets on the other. In "How Sushi Went Global," Theodore C. Bestor explains how these dynamics play out in the global bluefin tuna trade. Although Japan is the primary market for sushi, sushi has become a global fad and is now available in countries around the world. Bestor explains that, "Japan's emergence on the global economic scene in the 1970s as the business destination du jour, coupled with a rejection of hearty, red-meat American fare in favor of healthy cuisine like rice, fish, and vegetables, and the appeal of the high-concept aesthetics of Japanese design all prepared the world for a sushi fad" (15). And just as the taste for sushi has become a global phenomenon, so has the production of it. Bestor describes bluefin tuna fishing in New England as a small-scale operation, fishers often using rod and reel or harpoons to catch the fish (6). Across the ocean, however, European countries also engage in the bluefin tuna market but utilize quite different methods.

Describing large-scale tuna fishing in Spain, Bestor says:

The waters and the workers are Spanish, but almost everything else is part of a global flow of techniques and capital: financing from major Japanese trading companies; Japanese vessels to tend the nets; aquacultural techniques developed in Australia; vitamin supplements from European pharmaceutical giants packed into frozen herring from Holland to be heaved over the gunwales for the tuna; plus computer models of feeding schedules,

weight gains, and target market prices developed by Japanese technicians and fishery scientists. (17)

Each stakeholder's interests are part of a tangled web of goods and services. For small-scale fishers, this new interconnectivity complicates an industry that was previously rooted in local economies (Bestor 19). "Now," according to Bestor, "a Massachusetts fisher's livelihood can be transformed in a matter of hours by a spike in market prices halfway around the globe or by a disaster at a fish farm across the Atlantic. Giant fishing conglomerates in one part of the world sell their catch alongside family outfits from another" (19). Although large fishing conglomerates are not immune to sudden changes or disasters in the system, they have more security and resources that small-scale operations might not enjoy. This case study of bluefin tuna and sushi can decidedly be applied to other goods in the global market.

But globalization in and of itself is not solely to blame for farmers' problems. Another force working against small-scale farmers within the food system is international trade agreements. If globalization has put farmers around the world in competition with one another, international trade agreements have dictated the terms in which these various players compete. The central institutions that create trade agreements have been the post-World War II General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which was established in 1995 and adopted GATT's core principles (Patel 96-7). Both GATT and the WTO have sought to liberalize trade and foster an interconnected, global economy. This global economy, however, does not ensure an equal playing field for all participants. In fact, many food activists and scholars argue that WTO has done just the opposite. Patel asserts that, "The new constitution for global economic development wasn't designed to deliver

wholesale improvements in the quality of life of the poorest. It sits, rather, as the latest episode in the long history of the generation of supplies of cheap food to prevent insurrection” (78). Moreover, he says, “Rather than giving choices and opportunities to the impoverished, international food politics has sought control through intervention, patronage and, occasionally, violence” (Patel 98). And while there exists an abundance of these cheap food supplies, the “architecture of the new global food order” (Patel 97) that the WTO has created facilitates unfair trading of this food. Shiva explains how, among other problems, WTO policies have encouraged the “dumping” of agricultural products onto the global market. She writes, “This dumping- selling products at below the cost of production- is legal under the WTO and resisting dumping has been made illegal. Farm prices are in a free fall, driven downward by export subsidies that create unfair and unjust trade, the forced removal of import restrictions (QRs), and the lowering of tariffs” (*Earth Democracy* 77). For small-scale farmers, stiff international competition and plunging agricultural prices are crippling. When Korea opened its markets to Australian beef, large corporations like Cargill Australia (owned by Cargill, Incorporated, a U.S. based multinational organization) profited, and farmers like Lee were not able to weather the changes. These structural inequalities within “free” trade deny the possibility of equal opportunity and fair exchange.

Similarly, biotechnology and patents on life forms have eroded farmers’ autonomy and allowed large agribusiness to gain more power within the global food system. Advancements in biotechnology have allowed scientists to genetically modify seeds in order to make desirable changes to the genetic material of plants. Moreover, current legislation allows developers to patent new or altered plant varieties that have

been genetically modified. Within the current discourse of food politics, food activists and scholars have focused on a number of issues relating to biotechnology and patents. Two such examples are the development of “suicide” or “terminator” seeds and lawsuits that large agribusinesses have launched against small farmers for “stealing” their intellectual property. “Terminator” technology, formally known as “control of plant gene expression,” was developed and patented in 1998 by the U.S.D.A. and the Delta and Pine Land Company (*Stolen Harvest* 82). Through genetic engineering, they were able to develop sterile seeds. Shiva, in *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, writes, “The result? If farmers save the seeds of these plants at harvest for future crops, the next generation of plants will not grow. Pea pods, tomatoes, peppers, heads of wheat, and ears of corn will essentially become seed morgues. Thus the system will force farmers to buy new seeds from seed companies every year” (82). After critics expressed concern about the implications of such technology for small-scale farmers, Monsanto, a U.S.-based multinational corporation specializing in agricultural biotechnology and owner of the Delta and Pine Land Company, promised not to commercialize the terminator technology (*Stolen Harvest* 84). Although this biotechnology is not currently in use in the global agricultural system, stakeholders are worried about the future consequences if Monsanto is able to release terminator seeds for commercial use.

Agribusiness lawsuits are directly related to the development and patenting of similar kinds of genetically modified plants. Because patents allow developers to claim intellectual property rights over their innovations, corporations like Monsanto have been able to file lawsuits against farmers for patent infringements. In 2001, the Canadian

division of Monsanto sued Percy Schmeiser, a canola farmer, when Monsanto representatives discovered their canola growing in his fields. George Pyle, in *Raising Less Corn, More Hell: The Case for the Independent Farm and Against Industrial Food*, explains that Monsanto's "roving seed snoops determined that he had been growing Monsanto's Roundup Ready canola, a crop grown for its oil, without having properly bought the seed from Monsanto, paid the fees, or signed the required agreements and licenses restricting its use to one year's planting" (165). Schmeiser, who claimed to be using his own seeds saved from previous seasons, asserted that the Roundup Ready canola (a species to be used in conjunction with Monsanto's "Roundup" brand herbicide) must have migrated from a neighboring field or passing truck (Pyle 166). The Canadian Supreme Court ruled in favor of Monsanto (Pyle 166). In addition to facing court fees, Schmeiser must cope with the reality that his canola crop has been contaminated by Monsanto's genetically modified material. In an editorial in the *Biotechnology and Development Monitor*, Schmeiser laments, "Today, we cannot sell our rapeseed [canola] abroad and other products are being affected too. Just recently the Netherlands rejected a consignment of Canadian honey because it was contaminated with GM [genetically modified] material. Organic farmers in our district have a particular problem because they cannot meet the GM-free standard for organic certification" (32). Schmeiser highlights the fact that farmers' livelihoods, especially those of organic farmers, are compromised when their products are no longer accepted in particular markets or no longer qualify for special certification.

Just as inequities within the food system affect marginalized food producers, so too do they affect people as food consumers. The same "architecture" (Patel 97) that

determines how and what food is produced and sold also frames how and what food the world eats. Patel writes that, “Today, when we produce more food than ever before, more than one in ten people on Earth are hungry. The hunger of 800 million happens at the same time as another historical first: that they are outnumbered by the one billion people on this planet who are overweight” (1). These statistics point to the fact that while the world is assuredly producing enough food, many people do not have the means to meet their nutritional needs. Furthermore, a number of forces within the food system that inform peoples’ food choices, such as government subsidies, food aid programs, and advertising, make unhealthy, processed foods more affordable and desirable than fresh, healthful foods. For example, the documentary film *Food, Inc.* makes connections between class, people’s access to healthful food, and the rise of illnesses like diabetes in the U.S. In *Food, Inc.: A Participant Guide: How Industrial Food is Making Us Sicker, Fatter, and Poorer-And What You Can Do About It*,” Eric Schlosser, in an interview with Karl Weber, says, “...the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that one-third of all American children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes as a result of poor diet and lack of exercise” (Weber 15). Relating this problem to economics, he says that while it might technically be cheaper to prepare homemade meals from scratch than to buy fast food meals for a family, most people do not have the time or skills needed for such a task (Weber 15). Additionally, he links fast food’s rise in popularity with a decline in minimum wage in the U.S. in the 1960s (Weber 15). Schlosser argues that, “When you cut people’s wages by as much as forty percent, they *need* cheap food. And the labor policies of the fast-food industry helped drive those wages down” (Weber 15). In short, economic disadvantages all but coerce some

people to make unhealthy food choices. Emphasizing the fact that these problems are systemic in nature, Schlosser says, "...we've created a perverse system in which the food is cheap at fast food restaurants because they employ cheap labor, sell products that are heavily subsidized by the government, and sell them to consumers whose wages have been kept low" (Weber 16). This system of fast, cheap, and unhealthy foods, in a process that scholars have called the "McDonaldization" (Shiva, *Stolen Harvest* 70; Pilcher 74) of the world's food, is spreading to countries around the world. In addition to carrying with it health implications for the rest of the world, this "McDonaldization" also presents a host of other problems. Shiva argues that this process destroys sustainable food systems, has failed to generate the employment it has promised, and exploits and pollutes natural resources (70-1). Echoing Schlosser's argument, Shiva demonstrates how labor conditions and livelihoods within the food system, in this case low wages and few job opportunities, inform and are informed by the food choices people can or must make. Additionally, she demonstrates how these social and economic problems lead to serious consequences for the environment. She says that:

Intensive breeding of livestock and poultry for such restaurants leads to deforestation, land degradation, and contamination of water sources and other natural resources. For every pound of red meat, poultry, eggs, and milk produced, farm fields lose about five pounds of irreplaceable top soil. The water necessary for meat breeding comes to about 190 gallons per animal per day, or ten times what a normal Indian family is supposed to use in one day, if it gets water at all. (*Stolen Harvest* 70-1).

This economically cheap food, in other words, is produced at the cost of human livelihoods and non-human life.

Indeed, environmental injustices, or those that affect non-human life, are inextricably linked to the social and economic issues that humans face with regards to

the food system. Food activists and scholars argue that conventional agriculture today has effected a host of environmental problems. While it would be impractical to address each and every one of these problems, I will touch on some of the most striking. One such example is the loss of biodiversity, or the diversity of organisms within an ecosystem, due largely to the primacy of monoculture farming systems and the valuing of particular plant species over others. The term “monoculture” refers to the practice of growing only one crop, rather than a variety of crops, on a particular farm. Critics of this method argue that it facilitates the erosion of biodiversity and leads to uniformity of the world’s food supply. This mass production of particular plants, coupled with the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides used to kill “weeds” and other potentially beneficial organisms, has lead to a decrease in biodiversity within agriculture. Providing examples of the value of many undesirable plants, Shiva says, “In West Bengal, 124 ‘weed’ species collected from rice fields have economic importance for local farmers. In a Tanzanian village, over 80 percent of the vegetable dishes are prepared from uncultivated plants” (104). Moreover, she says, “Since biodiversity and polycultures are an important source of food for the rural poor, and since polycultures are the most effective means of soil conservation, water conservation, and ecological pest and weed control, the Roundup Ready technologies are in fact a direct assault on food security and ecological security” (*Stolen Harvest* 105). Here she connects the economic value of species diversity with its ecological value, positing the erosion of biodiversity as a multifaceted problem.

Additionally, the dominant means of producing, processing, and transporting food from the field to the kitchen is taxing on the earth’s natural resources. Shiva states that,

“Fossil fuels are the heart of industrial agriculture. Fossil fuels are used to run the tractors and heavy machinery and to pump the irrigation water necessary for industrial farming. Industrial systems of food production use ten times more energy than ecological agriculture does, and ten times more energy than the energy in the food they produce” (*Soil Not Oil* 97). In her most recent book, *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*, Shiva develops this argument in order to demonstrate the links between industrial agriculture and climate change. She says, “Climate change demands that we reduce fossil fuel use and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It also demands that we ‘power down’ through decentralized and decreased energy use. Peak oil and the end of cheap oil demand a paradigm shift in our conception of human progress...” (*Soil Not Oil* 3-4). If climate change demands that the world scale down its use of natural resources, then energy hungry industries like agriculture must transform the way they operate. Shiva proposes ecological, or sustainable, agriculture as a viable solution. She contrasts industrial agriculture with a “localized, biodiverse ecological agriculture” that will “reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a significant amount while improving our natural capital of biodiversity, soil, and water; strengthening nature’s economy; improving the security of farmers’ livelihoods; improving the quality and nutrition of our food; and deepening freedom and democracy” (*Soil Not Oil* 97). People around the world are cultivating food systems that are based in such an ecological agriculture. Rather than offering a blanket solution to the world’s food system, they are creating place-based food projects that address the needs of their specific communities and environments. Chapter Two will explore these various projects in greater detail.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: ALTERNATIVE FOOD PROJECTS AND FOOD DEMOCRACY

Activists around the world are mobilizing to challenge the global food system and create viable alternative systems. Vandana Shiva, an Indian ecofeminist activist and scholar, refers to this type of activism as "food democracy." In *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply*, Shiva explains that, "Food democracy is an imperative in this age of food dictatorship, in which a handful of global corporations control the global food supply and are reshaping it to maximize their profits and their power" (*Stolen Harvest* 117). This corporate control of food, coupled with the industrialization and globalization of agriculture, constitute what Shiva calls a "food crisis" (*Soil Not Oil* 2) and are the targets of food democracy activism. Shiva notes that food democracy is being cultivated by a number of groups: environmental and sustainable-agriculture activists, farmers, consumers, and public-interest scientists (*Stolen Harvest* 117). Although food democracy activism exists around the world and participants have cultivated transnational alliances, many of the proposed solutions focus on local, or community-based, food systems.

Local food systems provide a number of benefits that promote food democracy and redress negative effects of the global food system. Projects like farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture facilitate face-to-face interactions that make food exchange more personal and transparent. Ecological agriculture and local food exchanges reduce human consumption of natural resources like water and oil. Local food delivery services provide marginalized segments of the population with access to fresh, local produce. Additionally, networks of saving and exchanging seeds of indigenous plant varieties help build support systems for food producers and foster food

sovereignty. Furthermore, they reject biotechnology and genetically modified seeds. These and other projects like them constitute what Thomas Lyson calls “civic agriculture.” Lyson explains that, “The term ‘civic agriculture’ references the emergence and growth of community-based agriculture and food production activities that not only meet consumer demands for fresh, safe, and locally produced foods but create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen community identity” (Lyson 2). Furthermore, he argues, “Civic agriculture embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system of agriculture and food production that relies on local resources and serves local markets and consumers” (Lyson 63). In short, civic agriculture encompasses the myriad ways people are working to create food democracy.

Emphasizing the relationships and interconnectivity within civic agriculture, Rebecca Spector writes about fully integrated food systems. In her article “Fully Integrated Food Systems: Regaining Connections between Farmers and Consumers,” Spector explains the importance of such systems. She writes:

With our food traveling on average 1,300 miles from farm to table, and the consolidation of distribution systems, consumers continue to get farther away from their food source, and farmers continue to receive lower prices for their products. A fully integrated food system connects the farm to its local community, allowing consumers to regain a lost connection with the farmers growing their food. (Spector 288)

Spector explains that since the 1950s, the average farmer’s income has decreased by 32 percent. She says that, “...for every dollar a consumer spends on food, farmers today now receive 10 cents or less, compared to anywhere up to 70 cents just a few decades ago” (Spector 288-9). Civic agriculture, or fully integrated food systems, can help ameliorate this problem. For example, community supported agriculture programs,

or CSAs, bring together local producers to local consumers in a relationship that allows them to share in the costs and benefits of producing food.

Spector explains:

In a typical CSA, community members purchase a share in a local farmer's operation at the start of each growing season and in return receive a fresh, nutritious box of produce directly from their grower on a weekly basis. In this arrangement, members agree to pay the costs of production regardless of the actual harvest, so many of the financial burdens typically borne by the farmers are shared by farmer and consumer. (292)

In addition to enjoying the benefits of sharing the financial risk with consumers, producers are able to receive a larger percentage of the food dollar (up to 100 percent) (Spector 293) because the middlemen (processors, packagers, distributors) are taken out of the equation. The number of CSAs in the U.S. has skyrocketed from approximately 50 in 1990 (Spector 292) to 12, 549 in 2007 ("Community Supported Agriculture"). CSAs provide small farmers with much needed financial stability and create direct links from the farm to the table.

While CSAs help make agriculture a viable career for small farmers, not all consumers have the means to make an investment in such a program. Low-income households may not be able to pay one large sum of money at the beginning of a growing season or be able to risk losing money if there is a bad harvest. There are, however, civic agriculture programs that provide low-income individuals and families with access to affordable, fresh, local food. Florida Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc., a nonprofit organization based in Gainesville, FL, has created a program called the Gainesville Initiative for Tasty Gardens (GIFT Gardens). GIFT Gardens donates raised-bed vegetable gardens to low-income residents and community centers in Alachua County ("GIFT Garden"). GIFT Gardens provides the beds, the necessary tools and

resources, and offers ongoing technical assistance for the people it serves (“GIFT Garden”). The aim of the program is to help Alachua County residents with low incomes in becoming “more self-sufficient and increasing their ability to provide for some of their own food needs” (“GIFT Garden”). Other civic agriculture programs offer affordable delivery services. Growing Power, Inc., a Milwaukee-based nonprofit organization, have created a Farm-to-City Market Basket Program that delivers sustainable, organic, locally produced foods to residents in Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago (“Market Basket”). Delivery services like the ones Growing Power offers are crucial for civic agriculture projects working for economic and social justice. In “Community Food Security: A Promising Alternative to the Global Food System,” Andrew Fisher discusses what some have called “food deserts.” Fisher explains that supermarkets are predominantly located in suburban middle class areas rather than in inner cities and other impoverished areas (296). He says that:

Access to healthy and affordable food has become difficult for those without cars. In Los Angeles County almost one million people live in areas where food access is deficient. A nationwide study of nineteen metropolitan areas found that zip codes with high levels of poverty had 30 percent fewer supermarkets than higher income neighborhoods. (Fisher 296)

Additionally, Fisher argues, bus routes are rarely designed with community food needs in mind. This means that people with no car and no nearby supermarkets often have to spend their limited time and money on taxis or bus rides with multiple transfers (Fisher 296). While they do not eliminate the problem completely, delivery services provide people living in food deserts with fresh foods they might not otherwise have access to. Similarly, Spector notes that, “Many farmers’ markets are located in the heart of cities and are easily accessible by public transit. Additionally, produce at the farmers’ market is often cheaper than at the supermarket, especially if purchasing organic” (294). Most

farmers' markets also accept government-sponsored Women, Infant, and Children program (WIC) coupons and food stamps (Spector 294). Farmers' markets and local delivery services help foster a fully integrated food system without excluding marginalized community members.

Another form of alternative local food projects is seed saving and exchanging. Shiva writes about the importance of seed saving for small farmers in India and has made indigenous seed saving and exchange a central project of her nongovernmental organization, Navdanya, which means "nine seeds" in Hindi. For Shiva and for Navdanya the seed is "not merely the source of future plants and food. It is the storage place of culture, of history. Seed is the first link in the food chain. Seed is the ultimate symbol of food security. Seed is sacred" (Shiva and Bhar 167). Shiva's words point to both the seed's symbolic importance in alternative food politics and its value as the starting point, the most basic unit of food production. Shiva invokes the image of Gandhi's spinning wheel, likening seed saving in India today to the movement for India's independence from the British and Gandhi's passive resistance and *khadi*, or homespun cloth, campaigns. Shiva writes of how she "was reminded of Gandhi's spinning wheel which became such an important symbol of freedom not because it was big and powerful, but because it was small, and could come alive as a force of resistance and creativity in the smallest of huts and the poorest of families" (*Globalization's New Wars* 52). By invoking Gandhi and the Indian movement for independence, Shiva makes connections between policies and practices in today's global food system and those of British colonialism. She writes, "The seed can play the role of Gandhi's spinning wheel in this period of recolonization through 'free trade.' The native seed has become a

system of resistance against monocultures and monopoly rights” (*Globalization’s New Wars* 52). As mentioned above, seed saving and exchange allows farmers to cultivate support systems that provide sovereignty and independence from corporate controlled, genetically modified seed. A rejection of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), patents on life forms, and monoculture farming are central to Shiva’s critique of the global food system and her commitment to alternative systems.

In Shiva’s efforts to cultivate an alternative system, seed saving is joined with campaigns against GMOs and patents, promoting organic farming, supporting fair trade policies, and practicing biodiversity in farming. Shiva argues that seed saving is beneficial to farmers because the seed “reproduces itself and multiplies. Farmers use seed both as grain as well as for the next year’s crop. Seed is free, both in the ecological sense of reproducing itself, as well as in the economic sense of reproducing farmers’ livelihoods” (*Globalization’s New Wars* 51). Genetic engineering, however, works so that a seed is materially transformed (thereby legally changing it), so that it is no longer a common property but property of the developer who produced it. An institution that genetically alters an organism and can claim property rights is then free to patent it. Moreover, biotechnology has created what some call “terminator technology,” which allows seeds to be genetically modified in such a way that the second generation is sterile and cannot be used again. Farmers who save their own seeds and farm organically can save by reusing seed and avoid the costs of chemical pesticides and herbicides. Shiva explains that Navdanya farmers in India “are able to reduce their expenses by the 90 percent that was used to buy chemicals and create corporate profits” (*Earth Democracy* 67). Additionally, she says, “The incomes of

Navdanya farmers are three times higher than the incomes of chemical farmers . . . , and fair trade reduces farmer vulnerability to volatile markets and unfair rules of trade” (*Earth Democracy* 67-8). In other words, farmers are able to both invest less money and earn more. Additionally, they benefit from being able to label their food organic, fair trade, and GMO-free. These practices offer farmers self-sufficiency and work toward cultivating systems that are independent from corporate agriculture.

Another crucial component in creating alternative systems is education. Many local, alternative food projects work to educate both food producers and consumers about the problems of the global system and the possibilities that alternative systems offer. Moreover, like GIFT Gardens, some hope to teach consumers how to be producers of their own food. Alice Waters’ Chez Panisse Foundation and its Edible Schoolyard program is one of the most salient examples of this. Based in Berkeley, California, the Edible Schoolyard program is “a one-acre organic garden and kitchen classroom for urban public school students at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School” (“Welcome to”). The Schoolyard in Berkeley has been up and running since 1995 (“About Us”), and Chez Panisse has developed a network of affiliate programs around California, Louisiana, and North Carolina (“Affiliate Network”). This educational program for young people is coupled with a School Lunch Initiative that provides “wholesome, fresh, and seasonal” foods made from scratch to sixteen schools (“School Lunch Reform”). By cultivating a variety of projects that address different weaknesses within the current food system, this multifaceted program is able to attend to immediate, everyday needs (i.e., healthy school lunches for children) while chipping away at some

sources of the larger problem (i.e., the increasing gap between people and their food sources).

While all of the food projects mentioned above have the potential for wider application, they are all different and rooted in specific communities or areas of the world. Such particularities and diversity are crucial for creating alternative food systems that are viable and appropriate for the areas they serve. Gandhian farming philosophies might not resonate with inner city residents in the U.S., just as a home delivery service might not make sense in rural India. Even so, in order to give these systems a chance of standing up to the dominant global food system, there *must* be communication and collaboration among different people working for food democracy. Exchanging ideas fosters creativity and exploration into new ideas and projects, and transnational alliances create a critical mass needed to help influence large-scale policy changes (e.g., international trade policies and patents).

While there exist many transnational groups addressing food politics, one of the most salient examples of such cooperative efforts is Slow Food International. Slow Food is an international nonprofit organization that is supported by various member countries. Within the member countries there are also local Slow Food chapters. Founded in 1989, Slow Food works to “counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world” (*Slow Food International*).

Slow Food certainly does not represent *all* efforts to create alternative food systems, but it does illustrate how a transnational organization can articulate a single

(but flexible) philosophy about the world's food while still recognizing and respecting the different traditions, realities, and dilemmas that its diverse members face. The central tenet of Slow Food is that the food we eat should be good, clean, and fair. Alice Waters, in the Foreword to Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini's *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair*, explains that, "Our food should be *good*, and tasty to eat; it should be *clean*, produced in ways that are humane and environmentally sound; and the system by which our food is provided must be economically and socially *fair* to all who labor in it" (*Slow Food Nation* x). These three characteristics determine the quality of a particular food. Petrini believe that quality "is a commitment that is made by the producer and the buyer, a constant endeavor, a political act . . . , and a cultural act; and that in order to escape from the impasse of its relativity, quality demands a life-long education in food and taste, as well as respect for the earth, the environment, and the people who produce the food" (*Slow Food Nation* 93). If "good, clean, and fair" food is the theory behind Slow Food, then creating a network or system around that food is the practice. Petrini explains that the central project of Slow Food is to foster a food network. He says that we "belong to a food network, which goes from the global to the particular, and which exists both on a universal and on a local level, both for those who produce and those who co-produce" (*Slow Food Nation* 199). By *co-producer*, Petrini means a participant in the food system who shares in the cost of producing food (*Slow Food Nation* x-1). For Petrini, a critical element of this food network is diversity. He says, "The diversities thus become functional, a force for creation and expansion; they increase the common good (which does not mean that everyone has the same aim, but that everyone feels solidarity with and acts for the interests of all), and they guarantee

the survival of the system itself” (*Slow Food Nation* 199). Just as Shiva promotes diversity in farming (i.e., growing a wide variety of different crops rather than mass producing one or two), Slow Food a diversity of people and methods in its food network. At first glance, Slow Food’s emphasis on general terms such as “quality” and “good” food seems to promote a limiting, universal idea about standards for food and food production. Petrini, however, offers a more nuanced explanation of his vision for the world. He writes that, “It is difficult to find objectivity in all this. In fact, however, it is by renouncing objectivity, the desire to establish a rule that is valid for everyone, that one can arrive at an understanding of what is good” (*Slow Food Nation* 96). He adds, “What is good for the present writer is not necessarily good for the twenty-year-old Londoner, a Mongolian shepherd, a Brazilian samba dancer, or a Thai doctor, let alone for a Masai from Tanzania. And in a hundred years, if I could still be here to taste it, it might not be good for me either” (*Slow Food Nation* 97). Slow Food International provides a forum and the resources for food activists in different areas of the world to share information and come together in solidarity. Its founder and its philosophy encourage this solidarity, however, while resisting uniformity.

Though this philosophy is laudable, some question Slow Food’s ability to effect the kind of revolutionary change that is necessary for social justice to be served. Jeffrey M. Pilcher, for example, critiques Slow Food’s work in Mexico’s food politics. In his essay “Taco Bell, Maseca, and Slow Food: A Postmodern Apocalypse for Mexico's Peasant Cuisine?,” Pilcher argues that outside groups who have engaged with Mexico's food politics have not addressed the needs of the people affected by globalization and neoliberalism. He explains that while Mexico itself has done well

through the international Slow Food movement, topping the list of the organization's "Award for the Defense of Biodiversity" (Pilcher 75), Slow Food has not been able to successfully effect change for social and economic justice (Pilcher 69). He says that:

Although Slow Food offers an admirable program for personal life, it will never represent a genuine revolution until it confronts the dilemmas of class that have been complicated but not obviated by increasing globalization. Indeed, the Mexican case reveals the impossibility of drawing a clear dichotomy between slow and fast food in markets where global and local capital compete for the trade of middle-class tourists and equally cosmopolitan 'peasants. (Pilcher 69)

That is, the Slow Food movement, which originated in Italy in the 1980s (Pilcher 69), must find new ways to exercise its philosophy if it hopes to redress real inequities in Mexico's food system. The Slow Food philosophy that Pilcher mentions is outlined in the organization's official manifesto. It says, "We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes, and forces us to eat Fast Foods" (*Slow Food: The Case* xxiii). It also states, "May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency" (*Slow Food: The Case* xxiii). Although the manifesto points to the need to protect the environment and preserve healthy, traditional cooking practices, it also reflects the perspective of people who have the time and financial means to reflect on food politics and gain access to sustainably produced, slow meals. As Pilcher develops his critique of Slow Food and other international NGOs and NPOs, he explains that, "Despite their relatively small size, organizations from developed nations wield disproportionate power in a country such as Mexico, and as a result, they slant local activist movements toward middle-class agendas with little relevance for the needs of

common people” (75). In addition to disregarding class politics, such groups may also neglect the different experiences of marginalized ethnic groups in the countries they serve. In Mexico, while Slow Food has helped introduce branding and labels for organic or high-quality food items (Pilcher 77), it has done little to address the needs of Mexicans who have had to migrate to other countries in order to find work as agricultural laborers (Pilcher 76). In a country like Mexico, where there is a rich history of mobilizing for social change, the solutions to problems that groups like Slow Food have failed to address will likely come from the people most affected by them. Whether Pilcher’s analysis is applicable outside of Mexico or not is unclear. This would require case studies of the food politics within other regions of the world where Slow Food operates. Additionally, it would require research about *who* is actually participating in Slow Food’s local and regional campaigns. Is this divide between Slow Food activists and marginalized food producers present in other areas as well? While this case study does not provide a comprehensive analysis, nor is it meant as an attack on the work that the Slow Food movement does, it points to important issues that food politics scholars and activists must consider in their work.

E. Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman, in “Should We Go ‘Home’ to Eat?: Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism,” critique those engaging in food politics who do not consider the complexities that Pilcher addresses and challenge them to be more precise and critical. They critique what they call a “normative localism” (DuPuis and Goodman 359) that alternative food system activists and scholars have fallen into. DuPuis and Goodman explain that, “In activist narratives, the local tends to be framed as the space or context where ethical norms and values can flourish, and so localism

becomes inextricably part of the explanation for the rise of alternative, and more sustainable, food networks” (359). Moreover, they argue that, “This normative localism places a set of pure, conflict-free local values and local knowledges in resistance to anomic and contradictory capitalist forces” (DuPuis and Goodman 359). DuPuis and Goodman believe that this is problematic for two reasons: it ignores the politics of the local and might offer solutions, “based on alternative standards of purity and perfection,” that could be easily co-opted by the corporate system it seeks to challenge (360). This critique is not to say that localism should be tossed out. As the title of their article suggests, DuPuis and Goodman promote a particular localism that is critical, reflexive, and democratic. They pose a number of questions regarding the normative, unreflexive localism they see in alternative food politics. Their questions challenge “norms-based and ethical narratives” (DuPuis and Goodman 360) in food politics and the privileged status of the people who determine those norms and ethics. They ask, “But who gets to define ‘the local’? What exactly is ‘quality’ and who do you trust to provide you with this quality? What kind of society is the local embedded in?” (DuPuis and Goodman 361). The questions DuPuis and Goodman pose and the reflexivity they challenge us to adopt are necessary in order to acknowledge and include those who have been marginalized in both the global food system and in some alternative food projects. Without doing so, alternative food systems fail to achieve a social justice that is inclusive. It is in this reflexivity and critical perspective that ecofeminism can contribute to the movement for food democracy.

### CHAPTER 3

## LITERATURE REVIEW: ECOFEMINIST RESPONSES TO THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM

Drawing from both feminism and environmentalism, ecofeminism is a social movement and a theoretical framework that highlights the interconnections between the oppression of women and other marginalized groups of people and the oppression of the environment. Carolyn Sachs, in “Reconsidering Diversity in Agriculture and Food Systems: An Ecofeminist Approach,” explains that, “Ecofeminism is a new social movement that emerged in the 1980s as an outgrowth of both the environmental and women's movements” (6). Bina Agarwal provides a more developed description of ecofeminist thought that helps clarify these interconnections. Agarwal argues that in a patriarchal worldview “women are identified as being closer to nature and men as being closer to culture” (68). Moreover, women and nature are considered inferior to men and culture. Next, she explains that because the oppression of women and nature are intimately connected, women have a special investment in fighting for social and environmental justice (Agarwal 68). Finally, she says that a shared belief in “egalitarian, nonhierarchical systems” should unite feminists and environmentalists in a common theory and practice (Agarwal 68). Because ecofeminism is attentive to environmental and social justice and because local food projects often promote ecologically friendly agricultural practices and the well being of marginalized farmers, ecofeminism is an indispensable tool for an analysis of food systems and justice. Even so, not many ecofeminists have examined food systems in their scholarship. My aim in this chapter is twofold. First, I will examine what some ecofeminists *are* saying about the global food system and consider how their locations and lived experiences might inform their perspectives. Second, I will explore gaps in this scholarship, highlighting the fact that

some ecofeminists do not pay attention to food politics and many food activists do not pay attention to (eco)feminists. By doing so, I intend to both illustrate why it is important for ecofeminists to consider the global food system and point to the potential benefits of a future dialogue between ecofeminists, food activists, and the rest of the world.

Before introducing the various ecofeminist perspectives on food, I will provide a brief overview of *how* ecofeminists write and speak about food. Like other food activists mentioned in previous chapters, some ecofeminists critique the current global food system and the globalizing, industrializing and corporatizing forces and institutions that shape it. These critiques are often grounded in analyses of globalization and international development. Moreover, ecofeminists explain how women and other marginalized groups of people and the environment are most affected by the negatives consequences of the food system. More specifically, they speak about how women and the poor are affected as both producers and consumers of food and about how the environment and local communities and economies are affected by the global system. While some of these scholars and activists would explicitly identify themselves as ecofeminists, others might reject or simply not choose to include the term in their work. Still others might use the term *feminist* or *feminism* but not the *eco* prefix. That is, some write specifically about the connections between ecofeminism and food, while others use what can arguably be called an ecofeminist lens to analyze food. This chapter will look both at those who do embrace the term *ecofeminism* and those who do not. Finally, many offer theoretical and practical solutions or alternatives to the current system. While these alternative worldviews and systems have the potential for wider application, most are focused on specific communities or regions of the world. In other

words, because people experience the food system differently, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to meet everyone's needs. Borrowing from Adrienne Rich, I argue that these small-scale solutions constitute an ecofeminist politics of location. In her essay "Notes toward a Politics of Location," Rich shares her personal experiences as a growing feminist. She describes how she has moved beyond statements like "Women have always . . ." to a more critical kind of analysis that demands to know "When, where, and under what conditions have women acted and been acted on, as women?" (Rich 214). In other words, Rich values and challenges other feminists to value the particularities of different peoples' lived experiences and how those experiences are shaped by their specific subjectivities. For ecofeminists searching for alternatives to the global food system, practical solutions might not look the same in rural India as they would in a metropolitan area of the U.S. While most ecofeminists would most likely appreciate and welcome communication, exchange, and alliances across borders and boundaries, many solutions they offer are suited to fit their communities' particular needs.

Vandana Shiva is one of the world's most prominent ecofeminists and, in addition to doing work on water politics and climate change, has focused the majority of her activism and writing on agriculture and the global food system. Central to Shiva's perspective on the food system is a critique of the dominant Western model of international development. Writing from and about India, Shiva emphasizes the unequal power relations between the so-called "developed" and "developing" nations of the world and argues that development projects, such as the Green Revolution, have devastated Indian farmers' livelihoods and the environment. Indeed the World Bank and its Green Revolution have transformed the landscape of India and many other

“developing” nations. The Bank, an international lending agency, was established at the end of World War II in an effort to rebuild European countries (Goldman 53), but it has since shifted its focus to reducing poverty in the “Third World” through agriculture and rural development (Goldman 68). Michael Goldman, in *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*, argues that this shift began when Robert McNamara, who served as president of the Bank between 1968 and 1981, reformed the Bank’s lending practices (35) and created “knowledge-generating machinery” in the form of research institutes and training programs (85-6). According to Goldman, McNamara believed that, “The farmer himself in one short season can see the beneficial results of that scientific agriculture that has seemed so often in the past to be a will-o'-the-wisp, tempting him to innovation without benefit. Our task now is to enable the peasant to make the most of this opportunity” (70-1). Describing how this scientific agriculture paradigm operated, Goldman writes:

As the Bank reinvented the professional landscape in which the international agricultural scientist worked into one flush with financial and political rewards, this science-industry-government network enabled the Bank to overcome the historic skepticism of capital markets to invest in rural production. With its huge spillover effects on industry (e.g., energy, fertilizer, chemical pesticides, synthetic seed, farm machinery), the Bank’s green revolution became extremely lucrative for its Northern clients. (Goldman 86)

In the South, however, the Green Revolution had the opposite effect. Recipient countries in the Green Revolution suffered from high debt, a decrease in diversity of food produced, land enclosures that displaced millions of people, and plunging food

prices (Goldman 87). In other words, McNamara's efforts to alleviate poverty failed. It is these and similar consequences that Shiva and other scholars have examined in their critiques of international development, and, I would argue, that ecofeminists should continue to interrogate. In her first book, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Survival in India*, Shiva refers to the Green Revolution and other international development efforts as *maldevelopment*, a "violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected and interdependent systems, that sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequality, injustice and violence" (5-6). Central to maldevelopment is an "introduction or accentuation of the domination of man over nature and women. In it, both are viewed as 'other,' the passive non-self" (*Staying Alive* 6). According to Shiva, negative consequences of maldevelopment, such as poverty in the Third World, affect women disproportionately "first because they are the poorest among the poor, and then because, with nature, they are the primary sustainers of society" (*Staying Alive* 5). Women's disproportionate suffering occurs in a number of ways. In India, for example, mining, deforestation, and over-cultivation have contributed to groundwater depletion and river degradation, thereby facilitating water scarcity (*Staying Alive* 179). Shiva argues that, "Since women are the water providers, disappearing water sources have meant new burdens and new drudgery for them. Each river and spring and well drying up means longer walks for women for collecting water, and implies more work and less survival options" (179). Relating this back directly to our discussion of agriculture, less water means fewer options for growing and cooking food.

Shiva offers both theoretical and practical alternatives to the maldevelopment she critiques. Drawing from Hindu cosmology, she counters maldevelopment with a

concept she calls the *feminine principle*. Shiva explains that according Hindu cosmology, nature, or *Prakriti*, is the expression of *Shakti*, "the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos" (*Staying Alive* 38). Additionally, she says, "In conjunction with the masculine principle (*Purusha*), *Prakriti* creates the world" (*Staying Alive* 38). According to this belief, "Ontologically, there is no divide between man and nature, or between man and woman, because life in all its forms arises from the feminine principle" (*Staying Alive* 40). Shiva argues that this cosmology is not an esoteric concept but is one that organizes everyday life in India (*Staying Alive* 40). In her later writing and activist work, Shiva offers alternative visions that are perhaps more applicable or approachable to those who do not have knowledge of such traditions. Because globalization encourages many of the problems she addresses, she calls for a shift in the way we think about gender in light of the increasingly globalized world we live in. She says, "First, since globalization manifests itself primarily as a removal of national barriers to trade and investment, gender analysis needs to move beyond an exclusively domestic model of analysis . . . and toward an understanding of gender relations between actors at the global level" (*Earth Democracy* 131). This kind of analysis requires transnational communication and alliances. "Second," she says, "gender analysis needs to move from a focus on the end result, which victimizes women by only concerning itself with the impact on women. In order to effect change we need to adopt a structural and transformative analysis that addresses the underlying forces that form society" (*Earth Democracy* 131-2). In addition to these theoretical and analytical solutions, Shiva has engaged in a number of activist campaigns that illustrate

how alternative visions can be implemented successfully. Chapter Four will explore these campaigns in more detail.

In a different area of the world and in a different agricultural system, women are cultivating similar alternative food visions and campaigns. One salient example of such projects is community-supported agriculture (CSA), a concept introduced in the previous chapter. Although gender equality is not a central focus for CSA, nor are women the sole participants, some scholars have found CSA to be a pertinent site for ecofeminist analysis. In “Is This a Women’s Movement? The Relationship of Gender to Community-Supported Agriculture in Michigan,” Laura B. DeLind and Anne E. Ferguson provide a case study of Growing in Place Community Farm (GIP), a CSA located in Mason, Michigan, and question whether or not we might consider it and other CSA programs to be women’s movements. DeLind and Ferguson identify their research as “an effort to initiate discussion on gender and community-supported agriculture (CSA) to see women more clearly within the context of alternative systems of food and farming and to see CSA more clearly as an alternative food and farming institution” (190). DeLind and Ferguson characterize CSA as an example of new social movements which, in a break from the radical efforts of the New Left in the 1960s and 70s, aim to focus on civil society by creating democratic spaces and reshaping existing institutions (192). Their research findings come from a CSA member survey and focus group sessions with 15 CSA members, supported with information gathered from membership lists, board meeting minutes, photographs, and other organizational records (DeLind and Ferguson 194). DeLind and Ferguson wonder if, simply because women outnumber men “two and sometimes three to one as board members, as working-share

members and daily on-farm participants" in GIP and other CSA programs across the country, they can make the claim that CSA is a women's movement (190). At least for GIP, there is certainly no explicit feminist agenda. DeLind and Ferguson report that:

Women were clear that they did not join the CSA with any feminist identity aforethought, nor did they develop such an identity through their activities. In other words, there was little about their participation in the CSA that challenged or altered gender relations, roles or images, many of which (among both men and women) were based on biologically reductionist or role-focused models. (198)

Even so, they argue that certain characteristics of CSA, such as its emphasis on community-building, are especially conducive to women's participation. (DeLind and Ferguson 197). Additionally, many GIP members who participated in the interviews make connections between their involvement in GIP and their identities as wives and mothers (DeLind and Ferguson 195). While many feminists would resist such essentializing arguments about women's connections to food and community, organizations like GIP provide women who might not identify as feminists or activists with opportunities to participate in alternative food politics. Responding to potential critics, DeLind and Ferguson argue that, "In the feminist literature, women-centered movements like GIP are usually characterized as 'practical' or 'feminine' and are contrasted with more 'strategic' or 'feminist' movements that directly challenge and transform gender relations" (DeLind and Ferguson 198). According to DeLind and Ferguson, some postmodernist writers have questioned this distinction, arguing that "such a framework privileges strategic over practical interests and assumes that practical or feminine movements have not evolved into full-fledged feminism" (198). By valuing "strategic" and "practical" work equally, ecofeminists can promote a number of diverse opportunities for women's participation in alternative food projects.

Shifting away from food production, other ecofeminists address women's experiences as consumers of food in the global system. Liz Butterworth, in "Thought for Food," like Rich in her politics of location, uses her own body as a starting point for analyzing global food issues. Although she has always had an interest in food, Butterworth's decision to lose weight after pregnancy is what inspired her inquiry into the relationship between gender and food (91-2). She writes:

Once my mind was focused on the idea of losing weight I began to notice rows of slimming aids in the shops, not to mention extensive advertising in the media. Women's magazines are bursting with ideas on how to feed the family, while offering slimming aids and diet sheets on one page and fashion hints on the next. The concern is to keep your husband well fed and satisfied and yourself slim, fashionable and attractive for him. (Butterworth 92)

This revelation, coupled with an examination of the causes of her own weight gain, inspired Butterworth to pursue a "fascinating and anguished exploration of why we eat what we eat" (Butterworth 92). Focusing first on women as consumers in the West, Butterworth points to women's "double shift," the notion that women who work full time are still expected to do all housekeeping and caregiving responsibilities. She argues that convenience foods (i.e., frozen meals and fast food) have become household staples for many (Butterworth 93). Moreover, Butterworth argues that increasing reliance on frozen and fast foods has alienated many people from "real" food (93). Although Butterworth does not define what she considers "real" food and does not offer an alternative vision to this alienation, there is a critical point that we can cull from her argument. By alienating themselves from the sources of the food they eat, privileged Western consumers also alienate themselves from the people who have produced that food and the conditions in which it was produced, sold, and transported. Noting this, Butterworth writes, "But this is still only half the picture. We in the West belong to rich

nations. Whenever and wherever they live, rich people eat first, and they eat a disproportionate amount of the food available” (96). Butterworth's point is an integral one. Because the world's food supply is so globalized and integrated, Western consumers' food choices are intimately connected to people and systems across the world. Although Butterworth does not provide advice on how Western consumers might make more conscious food choices, she does challenge Western powers to be more critical and responsible in their development interventions. She says, "Existing nutrition intervention concentrates on feeding the symptoms, not on dealing with the roots causes which are usually found to be social and political. Concern for the hungry should mean concern for their social situation” (Butterworth 96). Responsible food-aid programs would "be coupled with significant changes in the distribution of income or wealth in a country, a change in the consumption habits of the well-nourished portion of the population and a shift in economic development strategies and priorities” (Butterworth 96). In her brief, ten-page article, Butterworth makes hefty demands without suggestions about how they might be actualized. Even so, she offers a thoughtful ecofeminist worldview and illustrates why food is a relevant site of inquiry for ecofeminists (and everyone else). In her conclusion, Butterworth warns readers that:

The provision of food should be of concern to us all, not just to those who want to sell it and the women who have to deal with it. We must continually draw attention to the iniquities in the food chain, and take responsibility for getting back to the wider issue. If we remain enclosed in our limited world of the supermarket shelf and the kitchen, the system will not only expand, but we in our complicity will be helping to perpetuate it. (Butterworth 100)

The consciousness and holistic perspective that Butterworth advocates can serve as guiding principles for future action.

Like Butterworth's call for meaningful food-aid programs and responsibility in the food chain, others have argued the importance of a kind of feminist ethics of food. What Penny Van Esterik has called a "feminist food praxis" would bring together the various arguments that (eco)feminists have put forth in order to create a set of principles that could guide future feminist food theory and activism. The praxis that Van Esterik proposes is based on a ten-point model: it recognizes the social construction of women's relationships with food; its central aim is to eliminate hunger and examine women's power in the food system; it is nonreductionist, thereby considering both material and symbolic components of the food system; it considers both the individual and system and their relationships to food and one another; it examines continuity and change in food practices; it recognizes that food practices (i.e., feeding and eating) are nonpostponable and occur frequently; it argues that food praxis blurs the divide between work and leisure; it argues that cooking, feeding, and eating can be intimate acts and are all connected to the body; it is reflexive and critical about how "our" food choices affect "other" food systems; and finally, it argues that knowledge about food practice can and should be used to inform activism (160-1). Demonstrating the usefulness of this praxis and the value of analyzing food systems from a feminist perspective, Van Esterik says:

Feminist nondualistic thinking about food reminds us that ethnocentric oppositions such as production and reproduction, public and private, and self and other are a Western legacy of blinkered, binary thinking. Food practices confound the dichotomy between production and reproduction and between public and private and are part of both the formal and informal economy ('both...and,' not 'either...or'). (159)

In other words, feminist theory provides a more nuanced and complicated way of looking at the world, a way that rejects certain established dichotomies. Furthermore,

food practices provide a salient example of how such dichotomies can be blurred or broken down completely. Therefore, according to Van Esterik, examining food systems from an (eco)feminist perspective makes perfect sense.

This echoes Sachs' call for an ecofeminist analysis of agriculture and food. Sachs argues that ecofeminism is a useful tool for thinking about issues of diversity (biological, structural, cultural, and product diversity) in agriculture and food systems because it pays attention to issues of power and privilege. Sachs begins her discussion with a personal anecdote about a farm in Santa Cruz, California that she observed while walking with a friend on a neighboring nature trail. She notes that:

There was cultural diversity here- two white women looking at nature, white men in trucks supervising workers, and Chicanos doing the agricultural work. However, the presence of cultural diversity here did not signify a valuing of multiculturalism, but rather clearly portrayed the differential privilege of different racial and ethnic groups. (Sachs 5)

Moving beyond her personal experience to make a larger argument, Sachs says that while the U.S. has never lacked cultural diversity in its agricultural system, "this cultural diversity has occurred in the context of white, privileged ethnic groups owning land and controlling production and people of color or newly arrived immigrant groups performing the labor" (6). Here Sachs argues that cultural diversity is not inherently good or valuable. Such diversity is only good or fair when there also exists an equitable distribution of power and resources. In other arenas, Sachs argues, diversity in agriculture is on the decline. The tendency toward large-scale, monocultural farming systems is eroding biological diversity (5); fewer, larger farms and businesses have replaced small-scale productions, thereby compromising structural diversity (5); and finally, the diversity of products available in stores renders invisible the genetic uniformity within crops and the uniformity of the ingredients in processed foods (6). In

short, a small number of farms and businesses produce and sell a small variety of genetically-uniform crops. While there may be diversity in the labor force and in the grocery store aisles, such diversities do not preclude injustice within the food system.

Sachs' solution is to turn to ecofeminist thought and women's grassroots movements in order to think more critically about diversity and find alternatives. Offering a few examples, she notes women's traditional roles as seed keepers, women's and indigenous peoples' sustainable use of forests, and newer sustainable agricultural projects that emerged in the 1970s and continue to grow. By examining these marginalized or invisible alternatives to the dominant global food system with an ecofeminist lens, we are able to conceive of other, more just possibilities for producing and eating food. Furthermore, ecofeminism provides a framework in which we are able to recognize and value the work that women and others do.

Despite the strong arguments that this handful of scholars and activists makes about the politics of food, many (eco)feminists do not incorporate agriculture and food into their discussions. Sachs explains that, "Ecofeminism has for the most part been an urban-based movement, and only several writers have touched on the issue of agriculture" (7).

Because ecofeminist theory and philosophy are grounded in lived experiences and social movements, and many of those movements have taken place in urban arenas, perhaps agriculture would only be tangentially or indirectly related to the issues that many ecofeminists have written about. Additionally, Van Esterik explains that, "Feminists, not surprisingly, have resisted making too close a link between women and food; it is a troubled relation and one that will draw feminist fire if it is not analyzed with

care” (158). Moreover, she says, “Fears of essentializing women and of reducing them to food or to food providers have kept many feminists from delving into this relationship” (158-9). Looking specifically at ecofeminism, this concern over essentializing women becomes complicated because many ecofeminists disagree with one another when it comes to theorizing about women and their connection to nature. While some might celebrate women's bodily connection to the earth through menstruation, childbearing, and a naturally nurturing womanhood, others would reject such a connection. Instead, they note the material or socially constructed connections between women and nature, highlighting the gendered division of labor and false patriarchal dichotomies (e.g., man/woman, culture/nature, rational/emotional) that facilitate a simultaneous and connected oppression of women and the natural world. Furthermore, they note that because of this material connection between women and the environment, women are often the first to notice and take action against social-environmental injustices. Taking this second approach, Sachs says, “For example, gender divisions of labor that assign reproductive activities to women often result in women being the first to suspect the presence of toxics through noticing that their family members and neighbors are sick” and “their workloads often increase when natural resources are degraded” (7).

Returning to Van Esterik's reasoning, it is easy to see why social constructionist ecofeminists might be hesitant to discuss matters of food and the body. For these and possibly other reasons, many ecofeminists have not engaged in analyses of agriculture and food. Likewise, gender is largely absent from much of the writing and work of food scholars and activists. While it often touches on issues of economic, environmental, and social justice more broadly, there does not seem to be a public or sustained

communication between ecofeminists working on agriculture and food and participants in the burgeoning alternative agriculture movement. The exception to this would be Shiva and her collaboration with organizations like Slow Food International.

This communication gap is unfortunate, as both ecofeminists and food activists, in addition to the people marginalized within the global food system, have much to gain from collaboration. Clearly, women's contributions are integral to the world's food system and should be valued as such. Karen J. Warren, in *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*, argues that although women produce the majority of the world's food, the gender division of labor, wherein men predominantly produce cash crops and women produce food crops, has rendered female farmers invisible (8-9). She writes, "Historically, a failure to realize the extent of women's contribution to agriculture (e.g., by First World development policies and practices) has contributed to the 'invisibility of women' in all aspects of agricultural work (e.g., in plowing, planting, caring for livestock, harvesting, weeding, processing and the storing of crops)" (Warren 9). Redressing this invisibility should be a central goal to food activism that seeks to foster social change. If ecofeminists and food activists worked alongside one another, this kind of change would be viable. Ecofeminists can offer theoretical insight into the connections between the oppression of women, other marginalized groups, and the environment, and food scholars and activists can lend knowledge about particular agricultural techniques and systems that could be implemented in order to create alternative systems. Chapter Five will offer more concrete examples of the potential benefits of an ecofeminist-food activism collaboration. Before this, however, Chapter Four presents case studies of two

alternative food projects. The first is Navdanya, a nongovernmental organization in India that aims to put Vandana Shiva's ecofeminist agricultural visions into practice. The second is Citizens Co-op, a group of people working to create a community-owned food market in Gainesville, FL. While Shiva's Navdanya is a well-established organization that enjoys international recognition and success within India, Citizens Co-op has yet to open its doors. By considering the ecofeminist arguments mentioned above and the success of Navdanya, I seek to examine whether or not a commitment to ecofeminist principles could be used to predict success in future actions for food democracy.

## CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDIES: NAVDANYA AND CITIZENS CO-OP

This chapter offers case studies of two agriculture and food organizations: Navdanya, an environmental nongovernmental organization founded by Vandana Shiva in India, and the soon-to-be Citizens Co-op, a cooperatively owned grocery store that will be located in Gainesville, Florida. Before beginning a description and analysis of each organization, I will explicate the connections between the two organizations and my reasons for choosing to include these particular groups in this project. The first and least compelling reason for choosing these groups is simply access. Shiva's writing provided me with an introduction to the connections between ecofeminism and agriculture, and I jumped at the opportunity to visit the Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm through a study abroad program and to return the following year to serve as the teaching assistant for the program. I was inspired after my first visit and began working with Citizens Co-op in order to engage in similar work in my home community. With limited time and resources to examine other organizations first hand, I chose to incorporate the two organizations into my research. A second reason for looking at these particular organizations is that while their central program components and day-to-day activities differ, they are both working within a burgeoning international movement that critiques the global food system and advocates economic, environmental, and social justice through sustainable, community-based food systems. Finally, the major differences between the organizations allow me to illustrate the diversity of work happening in the international food movement. The most striking difference is the location of the two organizations and the food systems in which they operate. Navdanya works primarily with producers around India. Citizens Co-op will

work with both producers and consumers in North Central Florida and neighboring areas. Additionally, Navdanya is a well-established organization that enjoys international recognition and benefits from Shiva's reputation and connections within food politics. Citizens Co-op, on the other hand, has not yet begun operation and is organized by a small steering committee made up of members from within the community in Alachua County, Florida. Finally, a difference that is relevant for the sake of this project is the two organization's connections to ecofeminism. Shiva incorporates Navdanya's work into all of her writings and has developed and refined her scholarship as Navdanya has developed. For example, just as Navdanya has embarked on a new research project to study the relationship between agriculture and climate change (Shiva, Personal Interview), Shiva has released a new book, *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*, on the same subject. Taking into consideration the explicit and sustained connections between Navdanya's activist work and Shiva's scholarship on ecofeminism and food politics, I seek to assess the success of the collaboration between ecofeminism and food politics and its implementation from theory into practice. Using these findings, it may be possible to predict the success of Citizens Co-op and other organizations within the international food movement and see how their work might be enhanced by adopting an ecofeminist worldview.

### **Navdanya**

Shiva's work is situated in a field of study that addresses the relationship between international development and gender. As the field of study has developed and become more nuanced, it has shifted names from "Women in Development (WID)," to "Women and Development (WAD)," and finally to "Gender and Development (GAD)" (Manion 2-3). What began as a discourse that posited women as *beneficiaries* of development

(Eyben and Napier-Moore 1), it has since come to recognize women's roles as *agents* of development. Amartya Sen, in *Development as Freedom*, describes this change as women's movements shifting focus from a concern for women's *well being* to a concern for women's *agency* (189). He says, "Not long ago, the tasks these movements faced primarily involved working to achieve better treatment for women- a squarer deal....and it was a much needed corrective" (Sen 189). He continues:

The objectives have, however, gradually evolved and broadened from this 'welfarist' focus to incorporate- and emphasize- the active role of women's *agency*. No longer the passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help, women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of *both* women and men. (Sen 189)

Additionally, the discourse has evolved from strictly discussing women's productive roles to also considering women's *reproductive* roles as relevant to discussions on international development (Manion 3). Furthermore, it has become more radical in its politics, questioning "the existing power structures leading to oppression" (Manion 3). Another theory that closely relates to this evolving discussion is "Women, Environment, and Development," also known as "Gender, Environment, and Development." This body of knowledge focuses on issues that many ecofeminist are also concerned with. This theory presents a new perspective that "was created to acknowledges the needs of the environment and take those needs into consideration when applying development models" (Manion 3). While many ecofeminists do not incorporate international development into their analyses, the connection between ecofeminism and the various theories on gender and development is central to Shiva's activism and scholarship. As noted in Chapter Three, critiques of international development, particularly agricultural

projects like the Green Revolution, are integral to Shiva's work. Challenging what she calls *maldevelopment*, Shiva argues for more just agricultural and food systems.

In an effort to put her alternative vision for the world's food system into practice, Shiva established Navdanya, an environmental NGO, in India in 1991 (Shiva, Lecture).

In a personal interview, she explains that she started Navdanya because if she kept merely offering critiques of the food system, large agribusiness would have control of the world's seed supply (Shiva, Personal Interview). Additionally, she says, "You can have a philosophy, but for philosophy to be realized, it needs the doing" (Shiva, Personal Interview). What started as an indigenous seed-saving endeavor has grown into an extensive agriculture program with branches located across the country.

Demonstrating the development of the organization, she says, "Navdanya today has thousands of members who conserve biodiversity, practice chemical-free agriculture, and have taken a pledge to continue to save and share the seeds and biodiversity they have received as gifts from nature and their ancestors" (*Stolen Harvest* 3). Although Shiva presents her own visions for the future of the world's food in various texts, it will be important to examine the explicit vision and mission of Navdanya, as they provide the framework in which the organization operates and make clear the organization's end goals. Navdanya's vision, as articulated on the organization's official website, is neither succinct nor easy to summarize. It is founded on a number of principles that are woven throughout its vision statement: it believes that all beings have intrinsic value, it rejects "gigantism and centralisation," and it advocates for biological and cultural diversity ("Our Vision"). Explaining its vision for promoting diversity, it says:

Through biodiversity, we envision improving the productivity and incomes of rural communities, thus combining the conservation of nature with removal

of poverty, destitution and misery. Biodiversity also enriches our lives by sustaining cultural diversity. And it is through the flourishing of diverse cultures [that] conditions are created for peace and harmony among the human community. (“Our Vision”)

Thus, Navdanya aims to honor the intrinsic value of all life forms through creating and sustaining biological and cultural diversity. Additionally, Navdanya says that, “A globalisation of the local, rather than a globalisation driven by giant corporations and institutions is our vision. Ecological recovery cannot be based on centralized and globalised control over resources. It has to be based on the decentralized logic of Gandhi’s ‘ever-widening, never ascending’ circles” (“Our Vision”). Recognizing M. K. Gandhi’s influence on Navdanya’s work, like that of many other contemporary social movements in India and around the world, this portion of the organization’s vision incorporates Gandhi’s own vision for the relationship between individuals, the nation, and the world. In it, he argues that, “In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual ...” (Gandhi 189). Additionally, he asserts, “Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it” (Gandhi 189). Emphasizing “ecological recovery,” Navdanya incorporates non-human life into Gandhi’s nonhierarchical circle imagery. In addition to drawing from Gandhi, Navdanya cites an excerpt from Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which articulates a right to a “standard of living adequate for the health and well-being” of all people (“Our Vision”). Moreover, it specifies motherhood and childhood as “entitled to special care and assistance” (“Our Vision”). By building off of these preexisting visions and pledging to

realize them in its own work in agriculture, the organization articulates a kind of ecofeminist critique of globalization and a vision that considers social and environmental justice together.

Navdanya's mission statement is equally dense and lengthy and illustrates how the organization aims to achieve its vision. It begins simply enough by stating that its mission is "to protect nature and peo[p]le's rights to knowledge, biodiversity, water and food" ("Our Mission"). But it continues, declaring, "Navdanya's mission is to promote peace and harmony, justice and sustainability. We strive to achieve these goals through the conservation, renewal and rejuvenation of the gifts of biodiversity we have received from nature and our ancestors, and to defend these gifts as commons" ("Our Mission"). Additionally, it commits the organization to "improving the well being of small and marginalized rural producers through non violent biodiverse organic farming and fair trade" ("Our Mission"). Outlining the ways in which it works to realize these goals, it notes Navdanya's various projects that set up community seed banks across India; promote organic, biodiverse farming and fair trade; build campaigns against patents on life forms; run cafes to foster an alternative "food culture;" create partnerships with other organizations, such as Slow Food International; enhance "food literacy" through a "Little Chefs" program for "school children and street children;" and facilitate women's participation through work with Diverse Women for Diversity ("Our Mission"). Navdanya conducts these various programs through its branches across India. In addition to its Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm, also known as Bija Vidyapeeth, or Seed University, the organization has offices in the capital cities of Delhi, Dehra Dun, and Mumbai. Although Vandana Shiva is the face of Navdanya, the organization is

comprised of more than 50,000 farmer members across India (“Navdanya: An Overview”) and employees people in its three major offices, farmers at the Biodiversity and Conservation Farm, and regional coordinators who oversee Navdanya operations in 250 villages (Shiva, Personal Interview).

Has Navdanya turned an ecofeminist vision into a successful ecofeminist practice through these programs? “Success” is a subjective term and is not something that can always be proven. In the case of organizations working for environmental and social justice, how can these goals be measured? Farmer suicides are on the rise in India (Pinglay 2008), and Monsanto India is still in operation. Even so, Navdanya has proven itself to be a viable organization, evolving and expanding since the 1990s. Moreover, it seems to be creating positive change for the farmers it assists. According to Shiva, farmers that have transitioned from conventional to organic agriculture with Navdanya’s assistance have reduced their expenses by 90 percent (*Earth Democracy* 67). Additionally, Shiva explains that Navdanya “just completed a survey comparing the farmers growing GMO seeds and the farmers doing organic farming with Navdanya in Vidarbha, where the suicides are really extreme, and the difference in incomes is ten times. Navdanya farmers are earning ten times more” (Personal Interview). While proving Navdanya’s success is a difficult, if not impossible, task, it is still possible to speak of how well it has or has not put ecofeminist theories into practice and how these theories have structured and enhanced its work. To begin with, Navdanya’s principles and practices acknowledge and affirm ecofeminism’s central argument that the oppression of women and other marginalized groups of people is connected to the degradation of the environment. Indeed, Navdanya seeks to eradicate these problems

together, rather than treat them separately. Looking back at its vision to foster biodiversity, cultural diversity, and livelihood security, this point is well illustrated. Additionally, Navdanya recognizes that these problems are ideological and systemic. Agarwal explains that, “In the ecofeminist argument . . . the connection between the domination of women and that of nature is seen basically as ideological, as rooted in a system of ideas and representations, values and beliefs, that places women and the non-human world hierarchically below men (68-9). Shiva illustrates this point in her concept of *maldevelopment*. She explains that international economic development, or maldevelopment, is based in an ideology that values “Western technological man” and devalues women and nature (*Staying Alive* 5). She argues that this ideology “superimposes the roles and forms of power of Western male-oriented concepts on women, all non-Western peoples and even on nature, rendering all three ‘deficient,’ and in need of ‘development’” (*Staying Alive* 5). In Navdanya’s commitment to respect what they believe is an intrinsic value in all life forms and to promote a globalization that is non-hierarchical, the organization challenges the dominant ideology of maldevelopment. Finally, in keeping with the evolution of “Gender and Development” and the transition from thinking about women’s well being to thinking about women’s agency, the organization promotes marginalized farmers’ participation in the Navdanya movement as a means to achieve autonomy and livelihood security. That is, rather than thinking about farmers as beneficiaries of Navdanya’s work, it envisions the organization as facilitating the work that farmers do. This sentiment is expressed in its mission to “create living economies based on living democracy, with producers and consumers shaping their food cultures through participation and partnerships through cooperation

and caring” (“Our Mission”). Shiva has said that she has “consciously developed Navdanya in such a way that it’s not a black hole of aid, which many projects are” (Personal Interview). Rather than continuously “pumping money in,” Navdanya has helped train farmers and set up sovereign producer communities (Shiva, Personal Interview). Navdanya has proven itself to be a viable organization and, as this evidence suggests, capable of coupling ecofeminism with food politics in both theory and practice. While there is certainly no one-size-fits-all method for creating such a collaboration or ensuring its success, Navdanya’s work provides an example of how these politics can come together in a meaningful and transformative way. By turning next to Citizens Co-op, a younger organization with no explicit ties to ecofeminism, I hope to assess its potential to effect environmental and social change and examine how it might benefit from implementing some of these ecofeminist practices.

### **Citizens Co-op**

Citizens Co-op, although not yet open for business, is a group working to become part of both the civic agriculture movement, which I have discussed in previous chapters, and the cooperative (also spelled “co-operative”) movement. Rather than explore the rich history of the cooperative movement and its various manifestations around the world, I will briefly consider a few characteristics of cooperative businesses and the role of cooperative grocers in the civic agriculture movement. Cooperatives, or “co-ops” as they are often called, are businesses that are collectively owned and operated by the members that they serve. Furthermore, according to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives are founded on a particular set of values: “self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity” (“Statement on the Co-operative Identity”). Additionally, the Alliance expects individual co-op members

to adhere to values such as “honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others” (“Statement on the Co-operative Identity”). A function of cooperatives that is particularly relevant to the civic agriculture movement is their facilitation of community economic development. Kimberly Zeuli, in “The Role of Cooperatives in Community Development,” explains that, “In the narrowest sense, community development involves increasing the number or quality of jobs so that individual and aggregate incomes expands. In recent years it has become common to use an expanded definition of economic development that includes various quality of life measures of residents over time” (2). Moreover, she says, “With local ownership and control, and net profits distributed to those who use the cooperative, cooperatives are considered by some to be an ideal model for local economic development” (Zeuli 1). Demonstrating how cooperative businesses can be economically viable while still prioritizing their members’ needs, Zeuli identifies three major strengths of the cooperative business model: community interest, flexible profit objectives, and financial advantages (2). “Community interest” suggests that because cooperative businesses are owned and operated by people living within the communities they serve, there will be a stronger commitment to community development than in businesses owned by investors outside of the community (Zeuli 2). “Flexible project objectives” refers to the notion that without pressure from investors to maximize profits, cooperative businesses are able to focus on providing services and fulfilling community needs (Zeuli 2). Finally, “financial advantages” indicates the financial benefits cooperatives enjoy, such as eligibility for grants and loans, tax advantages, and low labor costs as a result of member volunteering (Zeuli 2). Because civic agriculture proponents often emphasize the

importance of strong local economies and community building, the cooperative business model is compatible with the aims of the movement. Furthermore, most cooperative grocers specialize in “natural,” organic, or otherwise sustainable items. Some, such as in the case of Citizens Co-op, also prioritize selling locally produced goods.

Citizens Co-op relies on both the ICA’s Statement on the Co-operative Identity and Zeuli’s conception of cooperative businesses as community development institutions in its marketing and public relations endeavors. In its public presentations and promotional materials (e.g., slideshow presentations, official website, information sheets, newsletters), Citizens Co-op emphasizes the community-building aspects of cooperatives as well as the economic benefits for members and the larger community. Moreover, this information is contextualized within a larger discussion of food politics and the need for sustainable, community-based food systems. For example, its member-investor information states that, “A limited focus on economic efficiency has brought us low prices and convenience through large supermarkets ... , agribusiness and factory farms, while starving many other aspects of our food lives, like our personal relationships with our food and with the people who produce it” (“Investor Information”). In addition, it says, “By investing in your community co-op, you are enabling our citizens to restore the relationship between ourselves and our food and to honor the authentic origins of one of our most basic needs. By investing in the food co-operative you can help to foster a rich and vibrant curative community” (“Investor Information”). Examining the organization’s vision, mission, and structure can help elucidate the connections that Citizens Co-op makes between community, economy, and food politics.

Identifying its organizational mission, Citizen Co-op aims to “help grow a

community-based food system through the establishment of a cooperatively-owned food market” (“Mission and Vision”). It articulates its vision through a sixteen-point plan: it plans to open a full-service grocery store; sell “nutritious, wholesome food and other socially responsible goods and services to the community at fair prices, including an on-site café, juice bar, freshly prepared foods, and a certified kitchen for members’ use;” serve as a “dependable market” with fair prices for its producer members; pay staff members living wages; engage in sound financial practices; operate within a “non-hierarchical business model;” buy the majority of its goods from local producers in order to “create a strong economic base in the community and move toward regional self-sufficiency;” to engage in environmentally sustainable practices; set up a local distribution network; offer a delivery service within Alachua County; allow all members to sell goods in the store; provide community outreach and food education; reach out to underserved members of the population (e.g., low and fixed income households); collaborate with other local groups that work toward “progressive fundamental social change;” offer a variety of workshops related to food production and food politics; and finally to serve as a “thriving and vibrant community center” (“Mission and Vision”). Until the storefront is up and running, the foundational work for Citizens Co-op will be managed by a steering committee that will periodically meet with a community advisory committee and the larger membership of the organization. Over the past two years, the steering committee has been comprised of five to nine members, and the larger membership of the organization is approximately 450 households (“Citizens Co-op Newsletter”). Once the storefront is open, the organization will consist of a five-member board of directors and consumer, producer, and worker members (“A Guide to Citizens

Co-op”). In addition to enjoying a share of the co-op’s profit, each member is eligible to run for a position on the board of directors and allowed one vote in all voting decisions (“A Guide to Citizens Co-op”).

Although Citizens Co-op does not explicitly engage in ecofeminist practices or pay particular attention to gender in its organizational vision and mission, it does acknowledge the interconnection of economic, environmental, and social issues within food systems. In particular, it addresses the need to reach out to “underserved” populations, specifically mentioning low and fixed income households, and create a dependable local market for producers in Florida (“Mission and Vision”). Furthermore, although it does not specify so in its vision and mission, Citizens Co-op critiques the dangerous but commonplace practices within the global food system that have led to food safety issues (e.g., chemical herbicides and pesticides in plants, antibiotics and hormones in animals, and mad cow disease) and environmental degradation (e.g., air pollution, global warming, and peak oil) (“A Guide to Citizens Co-op”). Its commitment to sell “socially responsible goods” and operate using “environmentally sustainable practices” is an effort to resist this dangerous norm. Moreover, like Navdanya, it sees a sustainable, community-based food system as a solution that can redress all of these problems together. Citizens Co-op’s success in reaching out to underserved people and creating the fundamental change that it hopes to will most likely depend on the organization’s ability to incorporate these people into the organization as participants, rather than just beneficiaries or clients. In other words, the organization would do well to follow the lead established by Gender and Development proponents and ecofeminists and focus on both well being *and* agency. Doing so would require Citizens Co-op to

make sure that underserved groups are well represented in the organization's steering committee, advisory committee, and, eventually, its board of directors. It might also benefit from collaborating with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences and Florida Organic Growers and Consumers, Inc., a Gainesville-based nonprofit organization that has conducted research on social justice and Alachua County's community food needs. By analyzing research and working with representatives from these institutions, Citizens Co-op would be better able to assess Alachua's food needs and how it can work to meet them. Additionally, Citizens Co-op will need to better define what it means by "underserved" people. This will require examining more than household incomes, taking into consideration other factors, such as gender and race. By finding out *who* in Alachua County is actually underserved and *how*, the organization will be better equipped to make meaningful change. In the next chapter, I will explore how the larger international food movement can benefit from these and other ecofeminist insights in order to cultivate holistic solutions that address economic, environmental, and social justice issues in the global food system.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

There exists an opportunity for ecofeminism and the food movement to join together for their mutual benefit. As the body of ecofeminist work on agriculture and food that I reviewed in Chapter Three demonstrates, the global food system is an important site of analysis for feminist scholars and one that can elucidate women's lived experiences in an increasingly globalized world. Because today's food movement has produced a large, interdisciplinary body of knowledge about the food system and has created a number of small but successful alternative systems, the movement can offer ecofeminists who are interested in exploring food a wealth of knowledge and experience. Rather than starting from scratch, ecofeminists can build off of work that has already been done. Conversely, there are gaps within this scholarship and work that ecofeminism can work to close. In particular, ecofeminism offers an alternative worldview(s) that can be used to transform people's attitudes and raise consciousness about the food system and its social and environmental implications. Moreover, ecofeminism offers a particular kind of critical analysis that considers economic, environmental, and social justice that translates well in a discussion of the global food system.

Shiva presents one version of this worldview in her discussion of *maldevelopment* and the *feminine principle*. Shiva contrasts the dominant model of Western development, or maldevelopment, with the feminine principle and argues that the feminine principle is founded on a number of positive values: "(a) creativity, activity, productivity; (b) diversity in form and aspect; (c) connectedness and inter-relationship of all beings, including man; (d) continuity between the human and natural; and (e) sanctity

of life in nature” (*Staying Alive* 40). Illustrating the benefits this worldview offers, she explains that, “The revolutionary and liberational potential of the recovery of the feminine principle consists in its challenging the concepts, categories, and processes which have created the threat to life, and in providing oppositional categories that create and enlarge the spaces for maintaining and enriching all life in nature and society” (Shiva, *Staying Alive* 46). Stated differently, this feminine principle can inform a worldview that challenges the dominant concepts and categories that order the world and creates new understandings that place equal value on all human and non-human life. Here Shiva seems to be positing a dichotomous relationship between development, or maldevelopment, and her own worldview. Certainly neither can be inherently good or bad, and these issues become more complicated once they are put into practice. Therefore, this is not to say that the feminine principle, or any other ecofeminist worldview, is the only perspective from which to interpret the world and the global food system. It can, however, offer a fresh, radical perspective that promotes social and environmental justice in development, globalization, and the food system.

In addition to this worldview, ecofeminism has an analytical “toolbox” with which it can critique these same issues. Far from merely taking a multicultural approach or blindly promoting diversity, ecofeminism pairs its worldview(s) with a critical eye. Chapter Three presented this critical eye through Sachs’ essay on ecofeminism and diversity in food systems. Sachs argues that without an equitable distribution of power, resources, and value, diversity in and of itself is not just. She writes, “Supporting diversity without simultaneously shifting social relations through redistributing power leads down a dangerous path” (Sachs 6). She provides an example of cultural diversity

within the U.S. agricultural system, noting that its abundant diversity does not preclude uneven power and privilege between a predominantly Chicano labor population and white, male supervisors (Sachs 5). It is here that ecofeminism can intervene.

Ecofeminism “reveals that diversity is meaningless to most people in the world without changes in systems of domination and questioning of existing gender, racial, class, and national relations” (Sachs 10). Feminist perspectives on power, privilege, and how people experience these can lend insight into food politics, and ecofeminism can intervene in the food movement in a number of ways and at multiple levels. Ecofeminist worldviews and analyses can be implemented in local endeavors, such as the many community-based food projects presented in previous chapters, and in transnational alliances, like Slow Food International and the International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture, which will be introduced below. By engaging with one another at multiple levels, these movements will be likely to create a sustained dialogue and positive change for food democracy.

At the local level, ecofeminism can lend critical insight into problems that food scholars and activists have already identified and aim to redress through community-based food systems. Decidedly, proponents of local, sustainable food systems have cultivated critiques of and alternatives to global, corporate, industrialized agriculture, and their efforts have focused on both environmental and social justice. Even so, there is still space for ecofeminists to interject. Returning to Chapter Two and DuPuis and Goodman’s call for a “reflexive localism,” this point is clear. Critiquing what they call a “normative localism,” DuPuis and Goodman argue that (at least within the U.S.) food activists have tended to pit the local against the global, pairing “pure, conflict-free local

values and local knowledge's" with the local and "anomic and contradictory capitalist forces" with the global (359). For DuPuis and Goodman, this is problematic. They say that, "First, it can deny the politics of the local, with potentially problematic social justice consequences. Second, it can lead to proposed solutions, based on alternative standards of purity and perfection, that are vulnerable to corporate cooptation (DuPuis and Goodman 360). With critical feminist insight, however, this "normative localism" can be challenged by a strong "reflexive localism."

In "Searching for Common Ground: Ecofeminism and Bioregionalism," Judith Plant explains how ecofeminism can offer this type of reflexivity and critical perspective to a movement called *bioregionalism*. Although bioregionalism does not exclusively address issues of agriculture and food, its philosophy is squarely in line with that of food activists working to build community-based food systems. Additionally, the established feminist scholarship on bioregionalism is relevant and useful for a discussion of the convergence of ecofeminism and food politics. Plant explains that, "Bioregionalism means learning to become native to place, fitting ourselves to a particular place, not fitting a place to our pre-determined tastes. It is living within the limits and the gifts provided by a place, creating a way of life that can be passed on to future generations" ("Searching for" 81). This act of "becoming native" to a place requires a shift in morality, attitudes, and behaviors on the part of human beings (Plant, "Searching for" 81). In "Revaluing Home: Feminism and Bioregionalism," Plant adds to this definition, explaining that, "Bioregional action is based on local control and decentralization; nonviolence; sustainable lifestyles; and on a revaluing and redefining of home" (21). In short, bioregionalism is a movement for the creation of sustainable local communities.

And food production and consumption are critical concerns in bioregionalism's efforts to foster these sustainable lifestyles and communities. Greta Gaard, in *The Nature of Home: Taking Root in a Place*, explicates the relationship between bioregional efforts and food issues. She says:

When the economies of a region- the water, the crops, or the industries- no longer support a people's existence, inhabitants are faced with a very simple choice: leave home or die. Under the looming threat of globalization, some communities are creating a third choice by developing locally owned, sustainable economies. These structures give people more control over their lives, more control over the social and environmental practices of businesses. They allow people to "stay put." (Gaard 1)

Because food, in addition to water and other resources, is critical for survival, engaging in local and sustainable food practices is necessary for bioregional communities.

Moreover, aside from fulfilling basic needs for survival, food acts as a catalyst for building these communities and relationships between people and their environment, or home. Gaard explains that:

Food brings a community together. Families share breakfast; students and coworkers meet for lunch; friends gather over dinner. Sharing food and feeding one another affirm our goodwill. Food is a part of our rituals of celebration and of mourning, trystings and weddings, funerals and farewells. Feeding each other, we affirm our desire for life itself. Food is also the way that we partake of the earth: at every meal, we consume water, air, soil, and seed, transforming the elements of the earth into our very selves. (158)

Bioregionalists' efforts are ostensibly connected to, or at least similar to, the work that food activists are engaging in. While these movements promote positive social and environmental change, there are a number of areas in which ecofeminism can problematize and ultimately enhance their work.

Although bioregionalism and the food movement aim to effect positive change, the movement's emphasis on place and "becoming native" leaves it susceptible to the

same kind of “normative localism” that DuPuis and Goodman critique. Moreover, because the “home” has been such a contested site for women, failing to uphold its aim of “revaluing and redefining home” could reproduce negative social consequences that feminists have worked hard to combat. Offering a solution to this, Plant says, “. . . home has been a very isolated place for women. To be different from this traditional situation, home, as such, needs understanding, valuing, and redefining. Here a partnership between bioregionalism and feminism can provide fertile ground for deep societal changes” (“Revaluing Home” 21). Feminism has exposed the ways that women have traditionally been confined to the home, or the private sphere, and been excluded from the public. Although feminism has worked to change this, and many women now enjoy access to the public sphere, women’s unpaid/reproductive labor in the private sphere remains to be undervalued. Plant explains that this is because “this work has been done in the context of a society which has traditionally undervalued both home *and* women” (“Revaluing Home” 21). This echoes Shiva’s argument about maldevelopment displacing the feminine principle and devaluing women and the work they do. She says, “When commodity production as the prime economic activity is introduced as development, it destroys the potential of nature and women to produce life and goods and services for basic needs” (Shiva, *Staying Alive* 7). According to Shiva, this happens through ecological destruction and the denial of people’s basic needs (7). She says, “Women are devalued first, because their work cooperates with nature’s processes, and second, because work which satisfies needs and ensures sustenance is devalued in general” (7). In order to resist perpetuating this devaluation of women and the home and acknowledge and work through the politics of the local that

DuPuis and Goodman describe, bioregionalism and the food movement would do well to collaborate with ecofeminism. Ecofeminism's worldview(s) and critical eye provide helpful tools for negotiating issues of the home within agricultural and environmental movements.

Similarly, ecofeminism can and has successfully collaborated with the food movement on a transnational level. Transnational alliances are crucial for the food movement, helping to connect and strengthen local and regional efforts. Without a larger, unified movement, alternative food projects will continue to be small, isolated pockets of change. Without a larger movement, there will not be a critical mass needed to influence international policy and regulations, development, and trade practices.

Shiva explains that:

... one reason the food movement hasn't made a big difference ... is because we splinter ourselves. Just like scientists become super specialists in a field where only three of them can understand what they're saying, ... in the food movement, ... you're part of sustainable agriculture, but then you're either a permaculturist, or a biodynamic farmer, or an organic farmer who believes in internal inputs, or an organic farmer who believes in external inputs, and it goes on and on and on, divide, divide, divide 'til you dissipate your energy .... (Personal interview)

In other words, in addition to being geographically dispersed and often isolated, these food projects differ from one another in their focus and methods. In an effort to foster a larger movement, Shiva and Navdanya have joined Slow Food International and similar groups in creating food campaigns together. Additionally, Shiva, the President of the Region of Tuscany Claudio Martini, Carlo Petrini, and a number of "activists, academics, scientists, politicians and farmers from North and South" ("About the Commission") have come together to create the International Commission on the Future of Food and Agriculture. According to the Commission's official website, the effort is "an on-going

collaboration between a regional institution and a group of leading civil society representatives” that “seeks to strengthen forces for global democracy through helping construct a network of regional and local governments and movements working on sustainable food security systems” (“About the Commission”). Shiva explains how she and Navdanya have brought a new perspective to Slow Food, which was previously a “tasting” or gastronomy movement, and to the Commission (Personal interview). She says, “. . . our work brought biodiversity into the landscape of Slow Food. Our work brought the peasant into Slow Food . . .” (Personal interview). Contrasting Slow Food’s prior reputation of being a “tasting movement” with the work it does today, Shiva explains that the organization used to focus on enjoying “the best wine and the best cheese” (Personal interview). In other words, what was previously an organization that largely served only those privileged enough to have access to fine foods, has become an organization that works for social and environmental justice. Although Shiva has not made an explicit link between her ecofeminist politics and Navdanya’s role in radicalizing Slow Food and the International Commission, I would argue that Shiva’s ecofeminist worldview and critical analysis of the world’s food system, coupled with Navdanya’s history of organizing for peasants’ rights and environmental justice, has informed these transnational food organizations.

The Navdanya-Slow Food collaboration, in addition to the other theoretical and actual connections that some ecofeminist scholars present, demonstrates the potential benefits of an ecofeminist politics of the global food system. Looking at Navdanya’s vision for the future and the work it does to fulfill this vision, it is clear that an ecofeminist worldview and mode of analysis can be implemented in alternative food activism.

Furthermore, employing an ecofeminist perspective in order to assess current food activism illuminates blind spots within the movement and new strategies for the future. For example, Citizens Co-op is a young organization that has not yet opened its doors. While it proposes a commendable vision and mission, its success in effecting substantial social and environmental change will require the organization to engage with a number of issues that many ecofeminists have been tackling for decades. Moreover, because it focuses on localism and community-based systems and promotes many of the same values that the bioregional movement does, ecofeminism could lend a beneficial, critical perspective to its politics. These case studies provide concrete, relevant examples of what an ecofeminist food movement might look like.

This is not to say that ecofeminism is *the* solution to the world's food problems. Indeed, many of the critiques of and alternatives to the world's food system I have presented serve as testaments to the need for multiple and varied solutions. Ecofeminists are well equipped to analyze the food system and strategize solutions, but they should do so in conjunction with other actors. Jasmin Sydee and Sharon Beder, in "Ecofeminism and Globalisation: A Critical Appraisal," offer similar sentiments with regards to ecofeminism and its analysis of globalization, and their insights are helpful in thinking about global agriculture. They write, "Ecofeminism has strengths in its ability to highlight the impacts of globalization and their significance, particularly with respect to its impacts on women and children and on cultural and biological diversity" (Sydee and Beder 301). Even so, they argue, ecofeminism has a weakness in "its focus on only one of the characteristics of capitalism [(women's oppression)], and perhaps one of the less important when it comes to the capitalist drive to globalism" (Sydee and Beder

301). Furthermore, Sydee and Beder argue that ecofeminists, even those who reject essentialism, have had a tendency to alienate men through generalizations and assumptions that they are “spiritually marginalized” and all want to conquer nature (301). Countering these depictions of men, Sydee and Beder say, “These sentiments and blanket statements may arise from a rage that should not be devalidated, but the experiences of men have variety just as women’s do. Men, like women, are divided by class, ethnicity and so forth. Many suffer poverty and human rights abuses as do women” (301).

These critiques of ecofeminism are problematic. Central to an ecofeminist worldview is the notion that women’s oppression is connected to the oppression of other marginalized people and the degradation of the environment. Therefore, it is impossible to engage in an ecofeminist critique of something (e.g., globalization) without examining issues of race, class, and the environment, *in addition to* gender. Moreover, while some ecofeminists might rely on essentialism and generalizing statements about men, this is certainly not true of all people who do ecofeminist work. Nor is *ecofeminist* a label reserved exclusively for women. Ecofeminism provides room for analysis of both men *and* women’s participation in and resistance to systems that effect social and ecological injustices. Demonstrating this point, Plant says, “Ecofeminism gives women and men common ground. While women may have been associated with nature, they have been socialized to think in the same dualities as men have and we feel just as alienated as do our brothers. The social system isn’t good for either of us! Yet, we *are* the social system” (“Searching for” 80). Furthermore, like Sydee and Beder, ecofeminism

recognizes that people are never simply men or women but in fact inhabit a host of intersecting identities.

Despite these blind spots in Sydee and Beder's analysis, they are right to argue for an interdisciplinary approach toward issues like globalization (291-92). A plurality of perspectives and knowledges can complicate and enhance these discussions and contribute to a more holistic understanding of problems and solutions. Sydee and Beder say, "Ecofeminists argue that 'truth' is contextual and plural and reality is like a patchwork quilt with no absolute story within. Perhaps this is the way in which we should view ecofeminism itself. Not as 'the' truth but as a contribution to understanding that can be augmented from other sources with different viewpoints" (301-2). In this "patchwork quilt," ecofeminists can join food activists, farmers, scientists, economists, and a host of other actors working within the academy, civil society, and government institutions in order to work toward meaningful change.

In working together with the food movement, ecofeminism can contribute its perspective and its skills to a movement that seeks to make positive change and promote economic, environmental, and social justice in the global food system. Such a collaboration would challenge feminists to take up issues that they have largely neglected, and it would challenge proponents of the food movement to seriously consider feminist perspectives that have largely been ignored. The aim in a collaboration between ecofeminism and the food movement is to work together to create a movement that looks more holistically at issues of economic, environmental, and social justice in the global food system than either movements could undertake separately. Ecofeminism and justice are not one in the same, but an ecofeminist

worldview would have social and environmental justice as its ultimate goal. As I have shown in Chapter Four, both Navdanya and Citizen's Co-op are effectively empowering their local communities by promoting small farmers' economic security (e.g., through seed saving and the creation of reliable, local markets), by reaching out to people who have been marginalized within the food system (e.g., through creating women's collectives and a home delivery service), and by supporting alternative forms of agriculture (i.e., organic and polycultural) that sustainably utilize natural resources. Yet, by ignoring gender and racial components of food distribution in the Southeast United States, Citizen's Co-op ostensibly ignores critical factors that shape different people's various food needs and preferences. While its pledge to reach out to underserved populations and offer a home delivery service is commendable, such an endeavor will fail if the organization does not seriously consider the many relevant factors that determine people's access to food. It is here that ecofeminism can inform the work that Citizens Co-op and other similar organizations do.

Through its critical attention to intersecting identities and interlocking oppressions, ecofeminism is able to look holistically at systems (like global agriculture and food) and how various human and nonhuman lives experience them. Moreover, through its equal valuing of different human and nonhuman lives, ecofeminism can conceive of systems that are more mindful of and equitable for those who have been marginalized by the world's current systems. While an ecofeminist worldview in and of itself cannot effect justice, it can be used to guide activism and scholarly endeavors that seek to create positive social and environmental change.

While this thesis does not claim to be comprehensive in identifying how ecofeminists and food activists can more fruitfully benefit from each other's knowledge and insights, the case studies on Navdanya and Citizen's Co-op demonstrate that without focused attention to gender, racial, and class dimensions of the variegated struggles for social and environmental justice, food movements can neither achieve widespread popularity nor will their successes be socially comprehensive. If we are to cultivate food democracy in the global age in which we live, ecofeminist perspectives will need to take a more central place in the conversations among the various stakeholders concerned with agriculture and food.

APPENDIX  
IRB PROTOCOL INFORMATION

Please note that in between the time the IRB protocol was approved and I began conducting research for this thesis, the nature of my research changed and I did not use any human research participants. I am enclosing the information regarding the protocol for documentation purposes, but the protocol was not used in research for this thesis.

**Informed Consent Document**  
**Protocol Title: Sovereignty and Justice in Local Food Systems**

**Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.**

**Purpose of the research study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine local food systems and small-scale food projects (e.g. food cooperatives, farmers' markets, community-based agriculture, seed exchange programs, and activist groups promoting alternative, organic agricultural methods). This study will address the production, exchange, and consumption of food. Data from this interview or questionnaire will be used as a resource for my Master's thesis, which will address the possibilities for and challenges to creating economic, environmental, and social justice through local food systems.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:**

As a participant in this research study, you will be asked to participate in a short, semi-structured interview and/or fill out a short questionnaire. Questions will focus on your participation in local food projects and your attitudes toward the global food system and the local food system in your community.

**Time required:**

No longer than 1 hour

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2009-U-393  
For Use Through 04/03/2010

**Potential Risks and Benefits:**

There are no anticipated risks or direct benefits to you as a participant in this research study.

**Compensation:**

No compensation is offered for your participation.

**Confidentiality:**

For interviews:

With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interview. My faculty supervisor, Dr. Anita Anantharam, and I will be the only two people with access to the audiotape. I will personally transcribe the audiotape, which will be erased after transcription. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. Dr. Anantharam and I will be the only people with access to the list connecting your real name to this pseudonym. The list will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Anantharam's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your real name and any identifiers will not be revealed in the

final manuscript.

**For questionnaires:**

My faculty supervisor, Dr. Anita Anantharam, and I will be the only two people with access to your completed questionnaire. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. Dr. Anantharam and I will be the only people with access to the list connecting your real name to this pseudonym. The list will be kept in a locked file in Dr. Anantharam's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your real name and any identifiers will not be revealed in the final manuscript.

**Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Meredith L. Kite, Master's Student, Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research, 200 Ustler Hall, PO Box 117352, Gainesville FL 32611; mkite@ufl.edu; 904-705-5654.

Anita Anantharam, Ph.D., Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research, 203 Ustler Hall, PO Box 117352, Gainesville, FL 32611; aanita@ufl.edu; 352-273-0383.

**Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:**

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; 352-392-0433.

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**Agreement:**

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02  
Protocol # 2009-U-393  
For Use Through 04/03/2010

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DATE: April 8, 2009

TO: Meredith L. Kite  
PO Box 117352  
Campus

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair *ISFdl*  
University of Florida  
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol #2009-U-0393

TITLE: Sovereignty and Justice in Local Food Systems

SPONSOR: None

I am pleased to advise you that the University of Florida Institutional Review Board has recommended approval of this protocol. Based on its review, the UFIRB determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants. Your protocol was approved as an expedited study under category 7: *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.*

Given this status, it is essential that you obtain signed documentation of informed consent from each participant. Enclosed is the dated, IRB-approved informed consent to be used when recruiting participants for the research. If you wish to make any changes to this protocol, *including the need to increase the number of participants authorized*, you must disclose your plans before you implement them so that the Board can assess their impact on your protocol. In addition, you must report to the Board any unexpected complications that affect your participants.

It is essential that each of your participants sign a copy of your approved informed consent that bears the IRB approval stamp and expiration date.

If you have not completed this protocol by April 3, 2010, please telephone our office (392-0433), and we will discuss the renewal process with you. It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research protocol.

ISF:dl

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Meredith Kite graduated from the University of Florida in 2007 with a bachelor's degree in Journalism and a minor in Women's Studies. After completing the UF in India study abroad program in summer 2008, she returned to the university for the Master of Arts program in the Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research. Her area of concentration is gender and development. Her experiences at ecofeminist Vandana Shiva's Navdanya Biodiversity and Conservation Farm in India in 2008 and 2009, in addition to her internship with Citizens Co-op in Gainesville, have informed her research interest in the convergence of ecofeminism and food politics.