

ALTERNATIVE FOOD AND NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM: COMMUNITY GARDENS,
FOOD JUSTICE, AND THE CREATION OF SPACE IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

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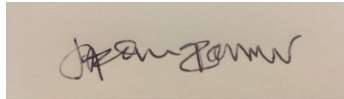
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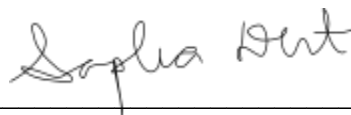
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Abstract

In this thesis I ask a set of questions to understand how community garden spaces function within the food justice movement: How do community gardens create a sense of place and space? How do the sensory experiences of gardening, of eating, and of working in the food system contribute to those spaces? Under what conditions do those spaces promote food justice? Under what conditions do they rely upon and reinforce the neoliberal food regime?

I conducted a comparative analysis of food-focused organizations between Boone, North Carolina and Durham, North Carolina, while being attentive to the way issues of identity work within the framework of the research. I focused on community gardens especially. I did this through eight interviews with people who work in the food system, through critical engagement with scholarship, and through participant observation with three organizations, two in Boone and one in Durham. These spaces are shaped by a number of factors, including the creation of community space, the temporalities of the gardens, the sensory landscape and healing practices, and the forms of knowledge implemented in the garden. They are also not insulated from the consequences of neoliberal capitalism and alternative food networks, including the commodification of food, the structure of power in the garden, the privatization of land or use of contested land, and the contexts of the social and natural forces of the garden (e.g. the materials, the people, and the socio-political-economic forces). These spaces simultaneously reinforce, are limited by, and resist neoliberal capitalist forces in the global food regime.

INTRODUCTION

From May of 2020 to August of 2021, I conducted research regarding community gardens, food justice, and alternative food systems, focused on Durham, North Carolina and Boone, North Carolina but including Oconee County, South Carolina. In this thesis I outline and analyse that research and develop answers to a set of research questions: How do community gardens create a sense of place and space? How do the sensory experiences of gardening, of eating, and of working in the food system contribute to those spaces? Under what conditions do those spaces promote food justice? Under what conditions do they rely upon and reinforce the neoliberal food regime?

Having completed this research, I argue that community garden spaces consist of and are transformed by the relationships among each part of the garden. Furthermore, the contexts in which the gardens are situated (relationships to the global food regime, food justice and food sovereignty movements, the intentions and identities of the gardeners, etc.) determine the garden space as well. Each community garden engages with those contexts differently, and those differences from garden to garden and within each one cause the spaces to simultaneously resist the global food regime and promote it.

In this thesis I begin with a story of the Oconee Food Sovereignty Movement in order to exemplify the types of concepts that are addressed in the rest of the thesis. I then introduce the key concepts regarding food and community gardens that support my analysis, including food movements, neoliberal capitalism and the global food regime, the critiques of dominant and alternative food movements, and different aspects of food systems that may or may not promote

justice in the food system. This literature review provides a foundation of knowledge for the reader to understand my analysis and thesis.

Next, I complete a positional analysis of my experiences and understandings in order to contextualize my perspective and acknowledge biases and prejudices I bring to the thesis. Then I review my research and methods, outlining the interviews and case studies that I completed. I highlight key points about and takeaways from each interview in order to provide examples of food organizations in Boone and in Durham as well as to show how the people with whom I spoke and worked think about food justice and food movements. Then I talk about the three case studies I did through participant observation, providing details about my experiences and the ways they relate back to my key concepts in the literature review. Finally, I analyze my research and bring my case studies and interviews back to my key concepts to show how neoliberal capitalism and food movements are expressed in food organizations, and I address and answer my research questions.

Since the summer of 2018, I have spent each summer living and working in Oconee County, South Carolina. This county is a rural area with 119 people per square mile over 626 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau 2019b), of which nearly 100 square miles are farmland (“Oconee County” 2017). Corporate agribusiness controls much of that farmland: Monsanto, Tyson, Perdue, and Georgia-Pacific are all present in the area (“Industry” 2021). My friend and coworker Ashley Townsend lives in Oconee County all year round and dedicates time to working in the food system there. I interviewed Townsend about the work she does to help create food sovereignty in the county. She describes Oconee County as an area with lots of farmland and farmers, but simultaneously with a high amount of food insecurity, especially since corporations dominate the agribusiness (Townsend 2020).

In 2019, Mandolin Bright, who also works in the Oconee County alternative food system, reached out to Ashley Townsend with the vision to create an Oconee County Food Sovereignty movement. Townsend works at the Chattooga Belle Farm in Long Creek, South Carolina— a farm, bistro, distillery, event venue, and popular spot for tourists and locals of Long Creek— and is passionate about good food. Bright is starting a Food Policy Committee in Oconee County (where Long Creek is located) made up of members of the food system and residents of Oconee County. This Food Policy Committee’s goal is to open a conversation about the food system of Oconee County, so they organized a Food Summit at the Belle Farm that would “connect the dots between people who have never really communicated with or understood each others’ roles, but rely on each other” (Townsend, 2021) in the food system. The Oconee Food Summit was held at the Belle Farm on February 28, 2020, and over 200 people attended. During the summit, the group created a recap of what the Oconee County Food System looks like. A panel of representatives of each part of the food system spoke about a range of things, including about food insecurity and each person’s role in the food system. Then a speaker talked about how the Oconee local food system relies on the Food Policy Committee. The participants in the summit went into breakout sessions based on their interests or fields and named three things each field wanted to change about the local food system before the group got back together as one and voted on the top three things they wanted to work on changing. At the end of the summit they established a list of goals for Oconee county: further develop the Food Policy Committee by determining its goals and role in the community, organize the farmers’ markets to collaborate more and support each other in schedule and resources, and support producers who work in animal processes to overcome barriers that prevent them from selling their food in those local markets.

While the first Oconee Food Summit was successful in identifying goals for local food system change, the committees established to work on these goals were stalled almost immediately due to COVID-19 in mid-March of 2020. Then, on April 13, 2020, a tornado came through the Utica neighborhood in Seneca, a very poor area of Oconee county, and destroyed not only many people's homes but also a BorgWarner plant that was the employer for a large number of the residents of that area, causing them to lose their jobs as well as their homes (Bowerman 2020). The impact of the tornado and COVID-19 together was devastating and revealed a lot of weak spots in the Oconee County system. The tornado's destruction took out power for at least three days for most of Seneca, which meant that farmers could not keep their food frozen, people could not prepare meals, and resources for help were less available to those who needed them. However, people, organizations, and producers in the county came together to provide food aid to 2000 people over the week following the tornado. COVID-19 and the tornado not only stalled the work of the food summit but also revealed more extensive problems in the food system. Townsend and others involved in the Oconee Food Summit were shocked to realize during this time how many people in the county are experiencing homelessness. "We are just connecting all the dots," Townsend says. "We're learning that there is a big crisis of people experiencing homelessness, and it is directly correlated to a lack of food banks" (Townsend 2021). The connection between food insecurity and industrial agriculture also became more clear: "right now it's basically just a bunch of chicken corporations who are abusing the farmers for their land" (Townsend 2020).

In March of 2021, the Oconee Food Sovereignty Movement organized a second food summit via Zoom meeting to talk about what happened during the pandemic. The representatives from the food summit shared each part of their story of what happened to their part of the food

system. Then, Bright got a grant from the state to continue developing a Food Policy Committee according to the goals of the Oconee Food Summit, and one of the first initiatives of the committee was to get a community food assessment in the area, creating a better understanding of the food system of the area, and to create a food frontline report to document the stories and experiences of the last year and the holes in the system. These projects help the Food Sovereignty Movement by “going in-depth by keeping it local” (Townsend 2021). Now, the Oconee Food Sovereignty Movement is further developing the Food Policy Committee and working on smaller projects such as the community food assessment to strengthen the local food network. Bright’s vision and focus of this work is through a food sovereignty framework, which means it has a goal of a self-sufficient food network regardless of the dominant one. The project also brings food justice, which means it has a goal of bringing justice within the current food network. Townsend talked about Oconee County as a food apartheid (a place where there are high rates of food insecurity), and the goals of the first Food Summit are focused on relationships and people as well as changing policy.

The long-term goals of the Oconee Food Sovereignty Movement are to preserve the farmland in Oconee county, sustainably and ecologically support the producers, establish what resources are available to educate and feed people, and make farming a viable career choice (Farmers are losing farmland as they retire and no one takes over their farms). One component of the movement that addresses those goals is an online farmers’ market among four counties that consolidated the farmers’ markets of the area and was used during the pandemic. Another component is the Walhalla Community Garden, which was started during the pandemic and had a large amount of support from people in the community and from people who attended the first Food Summit. Ultimately, the Food Sovereignty Movement wants to better the access to health

and the right to health through food. One of the notable ways the Food Sovereignty Movement is working on this is through the structure of the leadership of the movement. The Food Sovereignty Movement implements anarchism through its democratic leadership structure. The Food Summit focused on cooperative goal-setting to let participants in the food system decide the direction of and needs of the food system; for example, the Oconee Food Summit of 2019 attempted to do this. The movement is centered around self-sufficiency, self-determination, and a strong network and relationships among all who participate and work in the food system in the county. Townsend says that in order to change the food system to work for the benefit of the farmers, laborers, and consumers and so that people have the rights to land and to health through food, we need to take down capitalism and restructure our food and our health and wellbeing systems. If we do this, then we can implement food sovereignty and have a stronger, healthier food system.

This story illustrates key concepts that are relevant in this thesis. The promotion of food sovereignty in the movement supports an alternative food system that resists neoliberal capitalism, and while the movement is focused on food sovereignty, characteristics of food justice are prevalent also. The dialogue that the movement wants to create around food systems includes an analysis of how they may or may not resist the neoliberal food regime and in doing so address the differences between food justice and food sovereignty. For example, the Food Policy Committee is called so, rather than “Food Policy Council,” in order to convey that the group is a group of engaged participants in the food system rather than a group of removed government officials (Townsend 2021). This situates the Oconee movement in food sovereignty rather than food justice as it works to create a movement outside of the global food regime (food sovereignty) rather than create justice within it (food justice).

The Oconee Food Sovereignty Movement also addresses other parts of the global food regime. The connection between food banks and people experiencing homelessness (as noted by Townsend) and the impacts of COVID-19 and the April 2020 tornado on Oconee County reveal the vulnerabilities of the food system that the Oconee Food Movement wants to address. The loss of farmland to developers as farmers retire from corporate agribusiness-run farms shows the way industrial agriculture negatively impacts the local food system. Points like these are notable in the promotion of food justice and food sovereignty in each part of my research.

In the next sections I define and discuss the key concepts of my thesis in order to provide a base of knowledge upon which I can argue my thesis. First, I talk about food security and the food movements that work to reduce food insecurity, followed by a discussion of the global food regime and elements of it: commodified food, productivism, industrial agriculture, and the outcomes of the food regime. Then I connect the global food regime with alternative food networks, and finally situate community garden spaces within the food regime contexts. This discussion creates a basic understanding of these contexts by which my case studies and interviews can be analyzed as well.

Food Security and Insecurity

Most basically, food security is the state where someone has enough food at all times. There are four dimensions of food security: that the food is physically available, that the person has economic and physical access to the food, that the food is utilizable (i.e., that it is nutritionally sufficient in both what it is and how it is prepared), and that each of the above dimensions is stable (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2008).

Food insecurity, where a person or region is not food secure, may be chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity comes from long-term systemic issues and may be resolved by long-term systemic change or short-term accessibility to food. Temporary food insecurity comes from fluctuations in one of the aspects of food security. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2008). Food insecurity may also vary in severity and form, ranging from caloric deficits to a caloric surplus of empty calories. Ultimately, both chronic and temporary food insecurity comes from a vulnerability to an outcome (such as extreme and rapid fluctuation in market prices). These vulnerabilities differ in different spaces in the food system. For example, community gardens may not be affected by market prices, but grocery stores would be due to their dependence on commodified food. Community gardens are commons and thus exist due to people's engagement, and grocery stores are markets and thus exist due to market forces.

This approach to food security is rooted in the neoliberal capitalist global economy, as explored below. This approach also obscures the conflicting interests and unequal power relations in the food system (McKeon 2015). It presents the solutions to food insecurity as linear, blocking out interests of land ownership and sovereignty as well as limiting the decision-making power of producers: "food security as an approach might address issues of access... but it failed to answer the extremely important questions of where food should be produced, how, by whom, under what conditions, for whose benefit, and under whose control" (McKeon 2015, 76). This applies to community gardens, as access to them may be limited by who is in control of the garden, when and who can work there, what is required to get there and work there, and other factors.

Food security also does not require food to be culturally appropriate. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) did not include culturally appropriate

food in its first definitions of food security (“Hunger and Food Insecurity” 2021). Food security works to provide people with nutritious food, but often that food may not only be non-native but also not part of the existing cultural food knowledge, like how to cook and store it (Ignatova 2021, 14). However, food activists call for food that is culturally appropriate: the Nyéléni Declaration of 2007, an declaration for food sovereignty by over 500 representatives of over 80 countries, fights for a world where “all peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food” (Nyéléni 2007). While culturally appropriate food is not yet well-defined, negotiations at the (FAO) defined culturally appropriate food as “food that corresponds to individual and collective consumer demand and preferences, in line with national and international law” (Charles 2014).

However, the idea of cultural appropriateness in food does not address the historical and political contexts of food. In other words, no food is culturally appropriate or inappropriate because all food is situated in global and local contexts and histories. Therefore, calling food “culturally (in)appropriate” presents what is the political and social history of the food as instead a natural history (Chatterjee 2021). Despite this controversy of the idea of “culturally appropriate food,” the idea is used by food justice and food sovereignty movements to help motivate food system changes. Community gardens may work within this motivation to provide an opportunity for people to grow foods they want in their food system, including culturally appropriate foods that may not otherwise be available.

Amartya Sen shows an approach to vulnerabilities that understands various forces, situations, and interests that promote or undermine food security. One vulnerability is a vulnerability created by private ownership in the market economy. “Entitlement relations” are

the relationships that allow people to have ownership over things, such as a relationship where someone buys their entitlements with money they earned from working (Sen 1982). Entitlement relations may take multiple forms, including exchange entitlements, where one exchanges what one owns for something else. In the food system, this may manifest as exchanging other resources and products or as exchanging wages for food. When people are food insecure, it is because they do not have enough to exchange for enough nutritionally-sufficient food (Sen 1982). This may be because of a number of factors or vulnerabilities, such as employment, assets, market costs, labor power, access to land, and so on. For example, a person's employment situation, their wage, the number of hours they work, and their labor conditions all affect their vulnerabilities and entitlements (Sen 1982). When these contexts are insufficient for someone to exchange what they own for enough food, they are food insecure.

Community gardens connect to exchange entitlements because they can affect the available entitlements and access to food. Although communities may not have food due to an overall smaller exchange entitlement, there exists sometimes the opportunity to create a community garden and take away the need for exchange entitlements as food becomes part of the community entitlements.

Food insecurity, then, is not caused by a lack of food in the world. Rather, it comes from systems that increase people's exposures to vulnerabilities, creating barriers of access to the food. In fact, there is enough food in the world to feed 10 billion people (Akram-Lodhi 2013, 4). However, many people don't have enough resources (e.g., income, time, etc.) to use an exchange entitlement to get enough food. The food that exists plentifully in the world is distributed unevenly, and even when that food is plentiful in a region, it may still be inaccessible to those who live there (Sen 1982).

Because food insecurity is not a natural but rather a politico-socio-economic occurrence, there exist an abundance of organizations that work to change the relations that cause food insecurity. While each organization may be different, many of them work within designated frameworks, such as those of food justice and food sovereignty, to achieve those goals. Now I turn to food justice, followed by a discussion of food sovereignty and a clarification of the differences between the movements.

Food Justice

Food justice is a movement and concept that seeks to provide justice to those who are food insecure in the forms of both immediate food and legal and systemic changes that will provide food security and prevent food insecurity. This movement has a specific focus on racial justice, as food insecurity and food injustice is disproportionately experienced by people of color in the U.S. (e.g., Clannending 2016). This movement's solutions exist within the framework of capitalism; rather than seeking to create a food system independent of the state, it seeks to change the laws of the state to reflect justice and food security. Food justice also has a domestic discourse rather than an international one (Clannending 2016), which is a contrast from food sovereignty. Food sovereignty as a term was formed by the international organization *La Via Campesina* (1996), and has a focus on international support of food sovereignty, as I elaborate more fully later. Where alternative food systems in food sovereignty orient themselves as systems with power outside of the global capitalist system, alternative food systems in food justice orient themselves as working within the capitalist food system of their country. This is an important distinction between food justice and food sovereignty movements. As the Oconee County Food Sovereignty Movement carefully identifies themselves in ways that exemplify their

goals of food sovereignty outside of state forces (as expressed above), food justice movements identify themselves as working to change the state and existing system so that it becomes just. Reinvestment Partners in Durham, North Carolina, is a good example of this food justice orientation. Their produce program facilitates getting discounts on fresh produce for people on medicaid and food stamps (Curran 2020). This program uses the existing food and health systems of the United States to work for food justice.

One critique of food justice is that food movements are dominated by white and middle-class privilege, as white, middle- or upper-class people tend to have time and resources to invest in food systems, where people of color and people living in poverty do not have the resources to do so (Rosol 2011). Even when they do, the white saviour industrial complex (Cole 2013) is prevalent, and white people take over and further oppress others (Guthman 2011). Both in spaces where there are a majority white people and where racial and ethnic diversity is more equal, structures of power that support white privilege and white coding still exist (Guthman 2011).

Another critique of food justice is that it focuses only on justice through organizations (Trauger 2017, 41). However, people who experience food insecurity often resist inequality in their individual and practical lives. Understanding individual actions and lifestyles is critical to understanding resistance. Reese (2019) argues that the cultural ethos of self-reliance, as seen through individual actions, is a consistent strategy for Black activism and social change. “Black leaders...operationalize self-reliance in their community-based work” (Reese 2019, 10). Ron Finley is a Black leader in South Central Los Angeles who formed an organization that plants and facilitates food forests and urban gardens in the parkways and other contested spaces in the

area (Finley 2013). Growing your own food as an individual or a community is a good example of self-reliance as resistance.

Food Sovereignty

“Food security [is] seen as being framed in neoliberal terms of increasing productivity per plant/animal, making food available through formal markets and imports, counting on economic growth to improve incomes and employment, and— along the way – reducing pressure for agrarian reform. In this logic, peasant-based production [is] backwards and inefficient. Food sovereignty emerged as a ‘counter-concept to combat the neoliberal frame’” (McKeon 2015, 77). As a movement, food sovereignty works to “counter the neoliberal frame” by creating a new framework for food systems.

According to Trauger (2017, 2) food sovereignty is a “definitional and material struggle.” The definitional struggle of food sovereignty is that it aims to reconstruct the food system away from the neoliberal food regime. The material struggle of food sovereignty is to prevent food insecurity across the globe, as well as to promote access to land, seeds, and food. The goal of food sovereignty is that the new food system is not founded on and permeated with white supremacy and global capitalism, but rather a food system that exists outside of neoliberal markets and white supremacy. It also seeks to create a food system where every person’s right to food is secure. Food sovereignty takes various forms, and this variation is purposeful, as limiting its definition would prevent people from uniquely applying it to their region or community.

La Vía Campesina (LVC) expresses a form of food sovereignty that differs from Trauger’s. LVC is an organization of *campesinos* (peasants and smallholder farmers) from around the world who work towards food sovereignty. They are made up of over 180

organizations in over 80 countries (*La Via Campesina*), and believe that food is a basic human right that can only be realized through food sovereignty as the right to produce. They fight against the liberalization of trade, which allows for global trade to be controlled by monopolies and corporations and which challenges food sovereignty (*La Via Campesina* 1996). Instead of an economy based on trade and profit, an economy needs to be based on respect for self and for each other, on food sovereignty, and on fair trade.

This economy can be achieved through agrarian reform. Ultimately, landless people and farming people should gain or regain ownership and control of the land on which they farm. Reterritorializing land will restore ownership to the hands of farmers who use sustainable care, management, and use of natural resources, and take land away from agroindustrial farming. This fight is especially important for indigenous people, who consider land and food to be sacred to their lives. However, those sacred elements of their peoples are threatened for a number of reasons, including as seeds are patented (creating problems with seed sovereignty) and as industrial agriculture and other neoliberal forces take land from indigenous people (LaDuke 2012).

Many people are affected by food policy beyond just those who fight for land reform. In the United States, some people have the privilege to operate outside of the neoliberal food regime and work in food justice: those people can buy food from farmers markets, sell their food at alternative markets, volunteer in community gardens, and so on. However, not everyone has that privilege. Many people do not have the money, time, or resources to do so. The distribution of these is usually based on identity. Factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender identity are determining factors for food insecurity (e.g., Reese 2019).

Neoliberal Food Regime

The movements of food justice and food sovereignty work to counter these ways that the global food system causes food insecurity and food injustice. This system is called the neoliberal food regime (Clapp 2020). Neoliberalism's influence on global markets has shaped the current global food regime, such as when food policy promotes productivist farms (Guthman 2019). The global food regime reflects food regime history as food is produced to the advantage of neocolonial countries (like the U.S. and Britain). Those countries reproduce neoliberal relationships through the food regime via practices that make other countries depend upon them; for example, tied food aid causes countries receiving aid to be forced to rely on products produced in the U.S. and therefore do not have sovereignty to produce their own products at their own price (el-Tahri 2004). Producers of that food are made economically unstable since they don't have power to set price points and make decisions about what they produce. Instead, neocolonial powers do have that power and control (Akram-Lodhi 2013).

Harvey (2019) breaks down neoliberalist theory as founded on the ideas of strong private property rights, strong laws, and institutional free markets and free trade. Not only does neoliberal theory contradict itself, neoliberal states in practice diverge from neoliberal theory significantly. Neoliberal theory shows contradictions in that it expects the state to be both removed from and an engaged player in global markets, it uses authoritarian control to appeal to ideas of individual freedoms, it claims a stable financial system but actually creates a volatile one, it values competition but creates monopoly, and its use of free markets to create reforms allows for negative freedoms (Harvey 2019). Neoliberal practices reduce social safety nets and replace them with personal blame for any individual failures, relieving itself of responsibility. Neoliberal theory aims to protect the entitlements of each person so that they may have things

like food and land, but in practice, neoliberalism threatens access to and equitable distribution of those things; for example, neoliberal policy allows for “accumulation through dispossession,” where big industry can out-compete small businesses, forcing them to sell their business to the large corporations (Harvey 2003, 147-150). In agriculture, small landowners sell farmland to industrial agriculture. In this way, local farms are dispossessed to become part of corporate industrial agriculture. Community gardens, on the other hand, are not at the same risk of being dispossessed as they are under the control of multiple people, and so can strengthen food systems when farms are threatened.

The neoliberal food regime increases food insecurity significantly. Using Sen’s framework of food security, the neoliberal food regime worsens vulnerabilities to food insecurity through not only its state and market policies that support multinational, corporate agribusiness, but also through its perpetuation of harmful rhetoric such as that of individual responsibility for food security. When this rhetoric interacts with privileges in the food system, they shape identities and beliefs about food.

Food as a Commodity

There exist a few key aspects of the neoliberal food regime that change the food system. The first aspect is that, in the global food regime, food is commodified. Food is sold as a product for value on the global neoliberal market and thus the costs of production and consumption of food are controlled by global market forces. The commodification of food is what enables the system today that puts value over values, destroys local markets, and drives food insecurity. Many of the organizations, such as food banks, that work to bring food security still use systems where food is commodified.

However, there are also many systems built on food that is not commodified, including community gardens. Guerilla gardening, for example, is urban gardening in spaces that are not designated for gardens, such as the Horta do Mount garden in Lisbon, Portugal, which was planted in an “ambiguously zoned space” (Trauger 2017, 56-60). Growing spaces such as these can produce food in a decommodified system. Some gardens, such as the Horta do Mount garden, are collectively held commons where food, meals, and resources are all decommodified (Trauger 2017, 56-60).

Productivism

Food is distributed unevenly partially because of production. Today, much of the world’s food is produced through industrial agriculture: “Within all...industries to agriculture, an increasing global and national concentration is taking place in the hands of just a few companies that dominate the markets” (Rep. Agriculture 2016). In industrial agriculture, large-scale production is achieved through the mechanization and standardization of monocropped agriculture. Industrial agriculture’s purpose is to increase yields and reduce the cost of production to increase productivity and profits. This is called productivism (McKeon 2015, 70). This means that a majority of the world’s agriculture consists of just a few plants, such as soy and sugarcane (*Together* 2015). This production style creates a surplus of food like grain, which is then exported to developing countries. McKeon (2015) shows that productivism, or a focus on increased production, is not a problem in and of itself (productivity is in fact good for increasing the success of growing). Rather, the problem is that the definition of productivity limits techniques of growing to “the right seeds and the right knowledge” (McKeon 2015, 72), i.e., based on Western scientific models and neoliberal market demands.

Industrial Agriculture

These neoliberal practices are reflected in the modes of industrial agriculture. Industrial agriculture practices that support productivity and development include the practices of using surplus as food aid, making countries receiving aid dependent on surplus for their food supply (Imhoff 2019). This dependency makes such countries vulnerable to the volatility of both agriculture and the markets. Industrial agriculture also uses practices such as standardization, the use of hybrid seeds, mechanization, monocropping, industrial irrigation practices, (Clapp 2020, 35), and the simplification of agriculture (Scott 2020). Industrial agriculture's focus on Western science creates a food system where only one form of knowledge is allowed and implemented. However, other knowledges exist around agriculture and how to grow. These various knowledges are "ontologies," or ways of being, and they conflict with the way neoliberalism understands growing and plants. Martinez-Reyes (2020) calls this conflict "ontological political ecologies," where there are "multiple versions of nature that are at play and simultaneously contested by people in different positions of power" (22). Western sciences dominate industrial agriculture, but these ontological political ecologies come into play in growing spaces that resist neoliberal agriculture, as explored later in this text.

In many systems, a person may farm and grow their own food as well as having another job in their community. This was true in Deanwood, Washington D.C. in the 1900s as well: people in the neighborhood would grow food and run farms and general stores, sometimes out of their homes while also fulfilling other community roles (Reese 2019, 25). Some systems may have non-Western ideas of jobs and entitlements. One example of this is gift economies, "a form of reciprocal social economy, in which food or other goods and services are exchanged through

ritualized giving” (Trauger 2017, 93). Another example of this is people who live on the periphery of capitalism, such as mushroom hunters in the Pacific Northwest United States who live with no wage job, no rented or owned living space, and— including hunting matsutake mushrooms— have many different “enterprises” by which they survive (Tsing 2015, 277-282).

Rhetoric of Responsibility

Neoliberalism also relies on the rhetoric of the responsibility of the poor and food insecure to resolve their own situations without acknowledging the ways it causes food insecurity. For example, part of the New Green Revolution in northern Ghana, facilitated by government and private entities, among other agents, is focused on professionalizing smallholder producers in the region. This means that “expert science” and Western knowledges are integrated into smallholder practices as the traditional agricultural knowledges are considered insufficient to development (Ignatova 2021). This rhetoric exists throughout the neoliberal food regimes, including in neighborhoods in the U.S. where community gardens and community food growth are seen as the responsibility of the individuals (Rosol 2012).

Framing Spaces of Food Insecurity

Guerilla gardens and community gardens in the United States are often planted and grown in neighborhoods where food insecurity is high. These neighborhoods may not have grocery stores close by or a community food system, such as Deanwood in Washington D.C., which has two grocery stores that sell poor quality food using poor quality service (Reese 2019). These stores tend to be overcrowded with customers, understocked, overguarded with surveillance, and have an under-planned future (Reese 2019, 49), and these characteristics reflect

the neighborhoods in which they are situated. These spaces, where enough fresh, nutritious, quality food is not available are often called “food deserts”. However, this term is not adequate to describe neighborhoods like Deanwood. As Karen Washington says:

I asked people to define it, and, of course, they gave me their cookie-cutter definition: “Communities who have limited access to food.” That means nothing. Who in my actual neighborhood has deemed that we live in a food desert? Number one, people will tell you that they do have food. Number two, people in the hood have never used that term. It’s an outsider term. “Desert” also makes us think of an empty, absolutely desolate place. But when we’re talking about these places, there is so much life and vibrancy and potential. Using that word runs the risk of preventing us from seeing all of those things (Washington as quoted in Brones 2018).

Not only do food deserts portray areas as ecologically barren (which is not true), they also fail to recognize the practical ways that residents work daily to get food. This term also does not acknowledge the way food insecurity is largely distributed based on class lines, which coincide with racial lines (Reese 2019). In fact, food insecurity in the U.S. comes in part from a systematic overtaking of local food economies followed by intentional withdrawal of supermarkets from poor, largely black and brown neighborhoods (Reese 2019, 19-42).

The term “food desert” reinforces multiple stigmas (De Master 2019, 241): classifying neighborhoods as food deserts puts a “deficit lens” (De Master 2019, 242) on the area (meaning the neighborhood appears as if it were incapable of being ecologically productive and growing food when in fact neighborhoods classified as food deserts often have the potential to be self-sufficient food economies); the term “food deserts” stigmatizes deserts as unproductive and incapable of life, when in fact desert ecologies are prosperous and complex (Washington, in Brones 2018); and the idea of food deserts stigmatizes the residents, structures, and cultures of those neighborhoods: “[food desert mapping] stigmatize[s] these places as bereft of any cultural, social, and community-driven resources and food-sourcing strategies” (De Master 2019, 251).

The concept of food deserts also oversimplifies, decontextualizes, and over-determines the factors that contribute to food insecurity and inequality (De Master 2019, 246); fails to question the power hierarchies that contribute to food insecurity such as white supremacy, patriarchy, and political power or disenfranchisement that shape discourse, policy, and access (De Master 2019, 244); and fails to “establish a convincing link between healthy food access and healthy eating” (De Master 2019, 242). The idea of food deserts also enforces “racial, ethnic, and colonialist codes” (De Master 2019, 242) through exclusionary practices. Finally, the idea of food deserts is an outsider term. People who live in neighborhoods that are classified as food deserts do not call them food deserts. They also do not say that they don’t have food (Washington, in Brones 2018).

The term “food apartheid” can be used instead of using the term “food desert” to describe an area with food insecurity. Calling a place with food insecurity a food apartheid opens up the discourse to critically assess what factors, powers, and policies caused or are causing food insecurity: “It brings us to the more important question: What are some of the social inequalities that you see, and what are you doing to erase some of the injustices?” (Washington, in Brones 2018). The concept of food apartheid addresses racially exclusionary practices that are reinforced when a space is labelled a food desert, such as how white supremacy normalizes white foodways and food aspects of cultures (Bradley and Galt 2013, 174). The concept of food apartheid also considers many forms of justice and is open to considering more forms of justice, including environmental, social, racial, *and* economic justice (Bradley and Galt 2013, 173). Food apartheid also look at the whole system of food and inequality to diagnose and solve, rather than focusing on specific aspects of the food system (Washington, in Brones 2018).

Outcomes of the Neoliberal State

Altogether, the contradictions of neoliberal theory and the practices of neoliberal states that counter neoliberal theory create an authoritarian state with an unstable financial system (Harvey 2019). This may be described as an “enterprise society” (Foucault 1978), where the state governs *for* the market rather than because of it. In other words, the state sets up the success of the market. The state has more control over the market and can govern how food is produced or is not produced. In the global food market, the state uses the privatization and commodification of seeds and agriculture to support the success of the economy, expropriating forms of knowledge that promote food security for the sake of production and profit (Ignatova 2021, 11). The volatile market contributes to this: those whose forms of knowledge and food security have been expropriated do not have the stability within the market to maintain enough power to make systemic change, whether they contribute to systems outside of or within the neoliberal food regime.

We see these contradictions in neoliberal practice versus theory represented in the neoliberal food system. Theoretical neoliberal reforms of the food system include privatization of land and agriculture and the implementation of institutional free trade and free markets. Neoliberal theory argues that these reforms would create a system that brings food security to all people. However, these practices deviate from neoliberal theory as multinational corporations monopolize parts of the industry (like Monsanto’s property rights over seed), institutions like the World Bank and United States government take advantage of developing countries, states use authoritarian coercion to enforce neoliberalism, and so on. The practices of these systems work to grow the value of products for the profit and productivity of multinational corporations. These systems do not prioritize the value of food and labor. In other words, they prioritize value over

values and profit over quality, nutrition, accessibility, and so on. Neoliberalism in the capitalist market uses the practices of industrial agriculture to promote development and a constant growth in productivity.

For example, Tyson— which, together with JBS, controls around 40% of the chicken industry, puts the profit from their chicken operations over the values of labor by cutting a lot of corners to reduce production costs (Fisher 2017, 146-147). Their work conditions are unsafe; they put farmers in debt, keeping them “in a position of indebted servitude” (Fisher 2017, 147); use many other techniques to “extract wealth from rural communities, leaving residents and workers impoverished” (Fisher 2017, 147); and reduce the rates of food security among Tyson farmers (Fisher 2017, 147), making those who grow and raise our food also highly unlikely to have secure access to said food. This happens in Oconee County, a place we residents know for its farmland, but that also has high rates of food insecurity and is susceptible to change based on corporate agricultural control. Tyson’s industrial practices show how value/profit are more important than values in the industrial agriculture system, and how a constant increase in development and productivity is valued above all else.

Food Movements and the Neoliberal Food Regime

Food justice works to counter the neoliberal practices and rhetorics by recognizing that neoliberal capitalist structures are the reason for food insecurity, as represented by the use of the term “food apartheid” instead of “food desert” (Brones 2018). One critique of both food justice and food security movements is that they attempt to challenge the political and economic structures that cause a need for them, but are not successful. Food security movements and policies are based on the rhetoric that food insecurity is a failure of self rather than a failure of

systems (Brown and Getz 2011, 122). Food justice may use this rhetoric with self-empowerment goals. Food justice movements also rely on volunteerism (Brown and Getz 2011, 126) and are often supplied by surplus from the neoliberal food regime. For example, food banks are often run or largely supported by volunteers. They rely on self-empowerment when they depend on people to come to the food bank to get food, thus needing time, transportation, and anything else to get themselves there and back. While some food banks use some donations from urban gardens sources, like the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank using food from Farm Church at the Seeds Community Garden in Durham, food banks also often distribute mostly surplus food, such as from donations, gleaning, and surplus from food services. This form of justice is called distributive justice, which works to distribute the products of neoliberal capitalism in a more even way (Trauger 2017, 41).

These movements don't challenge the systems that cause food insecurity. In fact, they rely on those systems— their surpluses and values— to operate (Fisher 2018). They can help temporarily reduce food insecurity, but they don't change the situation to prevent future food insecurity. They often are limited by neoliberalism: they are sometimes subject to the temporalities and rules of state control (such as short-term contracts) (Kotsila et. al. 2020), as with the urban garden Ron Finley created that was removed by city government after a complaint (Finley 2013). These movements even reinforce neoliberalism. Community gardens can, in their social and environmental resistance, gentrify a neighborhood (Kotsila et. al. 2020). They don't always create structural change, in part due to the fact that they may rely on volunteerism and distributive justice (Trauger 2017, 41).

These approaches allow for the creation of some alternative modes of food production, but do not address the ways the dominant food system produces and perpetuates food insecurity.

Alternative modes of food production utilize the marginal spaces where neoliberal capitalism does not have complete control. Mushroom hunters in the Pacific Northwest utilize this space, working in the forests where capitalism does not have complete control in order to make enough money off of capitalist demands to live, and they also live in temporary homes outside of capitalist control (Tsing 2015). While this work may help reduce food insecurity by providing food to people, they do not challenge– and in fact still enforce– the political and economic structures that create food insecurity and food injustice in the first place (Trauger 2017, 41). These alternative food systems may exist outside of industrial food markets (e.g., a farmers’ market that sells local food). However, those alternative food systems may still exist within a market system (Gray 2014). This makes it so they do not just provide economic benefits and value to local food and foodways, they also contain social contexts and values. This concept is called “embeddedness” (Jaffee 2007). Community gardens have high embeddedness as they are often started and maintained with a social purpose.

Community Gardens and the Creation of Space

While the current food regime is founded on the global neoliberal market system, the global market is not omnipotent. Just as the state exercises incomplete/partial sovereignty over space, allowing for contested spaces (Trauger 2017), capitalism exercises incomplete control over the global market (Trauger 2017), thus allowing space for alternative food markets.

Alternative food is “the broad range of practices and programs designed to bring producers and consumers into close proximity and to educate people of the value of local, sustainably grown, and seasonal food” (Guthman 2011, 264). They are typically regionally-centered systems of food (from production to consumption) that seek to challenge the

neoliberal food regime from either within or outside of it. Especially outside of the U.S., many alternative food systems work towards food sovereignty as they seek to create a food system outside of neoliberalism. Beyond that, alternative food systems may vary greatly in form and success. For example, a market in Mexico may provide a space for small-scale producers to sell their products and for consumers to buy and engage with that food, thus avoiding some if not all of the processes forced by neoliberalism (Núñez 2018). A food bank in North Carolina, however, may organize surpluses and donations into free food boxes for families in the area, which is dependent upon the neoliberal food regime as it creates and drives people to donate that surplus (Ramirez-Eve 2020). Furthermore, an alternative food system may vary in how it is defined and how clearly it is defined. Food organizations such as food banks, which provide food outside of a grocery store context, still work within neoliberal capitalist foodways (Clapp 2020).

Community gardens may differ from food banks in their purpose within the food system. Where food banks redistribute surplus from industrial agriculture, only providing food for a limited amount of time, community gardens provide more. They give people access to seeds, to food, to knowledges of growing, to community spaces, and to spaces that attempt to work outside of the neoliberal market (Trauger 2017). This characteristic of community gardens helps them reproduce spaces that may resist neoliberalism.

These spaces are reproduced intentionally and rationally, not randomly. Lefebvre, in his essay *Social Space* (1974), argues that the rationality of a space is created by the origin and source of the rationality of the activity done in the space. Therefore, a social space is not a product of its labor but encompasses the rationalities of its labor and its origins. In community gardens, the rationalities of labor and origins include rationalities of care as the gardeners work to care for the plants and the overall garden space. This is applied to spaces of food justice in that

the origin of their labor is to provide justice-based food security in response to an unjust neoliberal food regime. More specifically, a community garden space is rationalized with the goals of food security and justice done by growing one's own food in a commons.

However, the definition of a garden space or community garden space can be ambiguous. In order to define a garden, one must consider things like the boundary of the garden and how that is determined, who can or cannot enter the garden, what is or is not grown there, and for what reason it is determined so. Each garden space's different rationalities are seen in the expressed purpose of the garden: e.g., pollinator gardens, learning gardens, food gardens, colonial gardens, heirloom gardens, etc. The rationality of each garden also leads to power dynamics in who can shape a garden, which reflect the power dynamics of the larger food system. For example, colonial gardens were created with settler colonialism to collect plants from around the world and increase profit in trade, and today can still perpetuate those power relationships (Antonelli 2020). Furthermore, the boundary of the garden and the garden itself are dependent on land. Questioning where the ownership of land originated and to whom it belonged before the garden can reveal those power relationships. In these ways, the boundaries and rationalities of the garden are important to understanding their relationships to neoliberal capitalism and the global food regime.

Also, social spaces contain natural and social objects that are both things and relations, and are transformed by social labor (Lefebvre 1974, 74). In food production, not only do relations exist among plants but also between plants, humans, animals, and all nonhuman parts of the process (such as soil, machinery, money, and so on). These relations reproduce themselves and are engendered in and representative of spaces of food production (78). These relations, Lefebvre argues, are generally in the form of exchange (81).

Some spaces are states of contestation. Urban, guerilla, and community gardens can be an example of contested space as they exist in spaces where state powers are limited or where access to the gardens may be tenuous. Vacant lots, parkways, and yards are some examples of this. The rationality of those spaces produces limited state sovereignty: vacant lots have no labor, no maintenance, and are not a source of income, and thus the state has little interest in them for present times. Parkway are maintained by those who own the adjacent properties (like houses), but are owned by the state. While the state has privatized the space for their ownership, the activity of maintenance by individuals creates a rationality of blurred sovereignty over the space. Guerrilla gardens and urban gardens utilize the limited sovereignty of the state to grow, and in doing so also resist neoliberalist ideologies of privatization and enclosure.

Community gardens are representative of the relationships growers have with not only the garden but also with the neoliberal structures that necessitate, limit, and are resisted by the garden. They engage in knowledges and ontologies like permaculture, they reinforce non-Western relations by creating social space with decommodified exchange. In these ways, they use the production of space to resist the neoliberal food regime. While community gardens may contribute to these same dynamics of neoliberalism through volunteerism and self-empowerment strategies, they also can act as spaces of contestation and resistance in a few ways. First, they can resist hierarchical modes of production. They are often collectives or commons. Commons are community-based enclosures, and in the case of contemporary community gardens are a response to the enclosure and privatization of property as driven by neoliberal theory. They also use democratic, rather than hierarchical, decision making.

Urban gardens are an important example of gardens. The Peoples' Perennial Peace Garden in Athens, Georgia, uses commons in the garden by allowing anyone to garden and

anyone to eat from the garden or use its resources (Trauger 2017, 112-115). This garden structure “echoes the anarchist emphasis on nonhierarchical modes of relating” (114), showing how community gardens can be based on anarchism rather than neoliberal capitalism.

Urban gardens are commons that don’t just create shared space but also create community relationships: “the gardens are far more than a source of food security. They are centers of sociality, knowledge production, and cultural and intergenerational exchange” (Federici 2012). Commons like community gardens “are not possible without community” (Federici 2012) and also reproduce that community.

Despite the rationalities of many community gardens to resist neoliberal capitalism in many ways, the idea of gardens and community gardens comes from colonial efforts to beautify and aestheticize nature, as well as colonial botanical work to collect plants from other countries and bring them back to colonial ones to make profit (Chatterjee 2021; Antonelli 2020). Gardens historically have been used as exclusive spaces since colonialists who created gardens prohibited not only certain people from working in them but also certain foods and plants from being grown in them (Stouck 2005, 107).

Permaculture

Community gardens also resist neoliberal agriculture by growing food using methods that are rejected in industrial agriculture. They do not follow industry standardization regulations when growing or eating their food, such as regulations about size, color, and shape (Guthman 2019). They also accept, rather than reject, non-Western forms of agriculture. One of these forms is permaculture. Permaculture is a form of growing based on an ontology of integrativeness between nature and society. It is a form of cropping that relies on perennial and herbaceous

plants and trees to grow food in a way that is both productive and regenerative of the earth (Trauger 2017, 111). It has three core tenets: caring for the earth, caring for people, and returning surplus to the earth (Trauger 2017, 44).

Permaculture design resists industrial agriculture and neoliberal capitalism in a few ways. Permaculture gardens reclaim spaces for the purpose of growing food, as we see with guerilla gardening. These gardens take over spaces where neoliberal capitalism does not have complete sovereignty and reclaims them for food. The spaces are also reclaimed as anarchist commons. This is both an act of sovereignty and of contestation. By intercropping local and nutritious plants, often perennials, as well as livestock, the yield of the garden is higher and more nutritional than the yield of the same sized plot of industrial agriculture. Thus, more people and animals can more sufficiently feed themselves from the garden, therefore relying less on surpluses, imports, exports, and general food from the industrial agriculture system. Permaculture gardens also use fewer seeds when growing perennial crops. This act avoids the use of seeds patented by or interaction with multinational corporations. Multinational corporations then don't have the power over these community gardens. This allows for increased agency in a food system, which can create a space of food sovereignty outside of the system as people make their own decisions about what they grow.

Permaculture is a fundamental part of this radical collectivism, where “nature” and “society” are situated integrally and inseparably in our knowledge of food rather than removed from each other. Manifestations of permaculture include, but are not limited to, agriculture systems made up of food forests and polycropping of native plants to produce a wide variety of high nutrition foods with less required space. Not only does permaculture focus on the food production process, it also focuses attention on cultural change and nonhierarchical agricultural

systems and on relationships to non-humans. Some gardens utilize an anarchist approach to the social structure of the garden by not having designated leaders. There already exist multiple examples of anarchist permaculture practices in the U.S. and around the world. Government does not have complete sovereignty over space, and in spaces of contestation people can create urban gardens. In Leipzig, Germany, some urban gardens exist in abandoned or vacant plots and are supported by the municipal government as short-term use permits during times of economic downfall (Kotsila et. al. 2020). While these gardens are supported by the city short-term, they take advantage of the abandoned lots, spaces where the city does not have complete sovereignty and so are ideal for gardening. Ron Finley, the Los Angeles guerilla gardener, uses similar spaces for food, planting gardens in yards and parkways. The parkways are strips of grass between sidewalks and streets that are owned by the city but must be maintained by the residents of the area. Finley and his group, L.A. Green Grounds, use these spaces and others like them—including vacant lots, lawns, parkways, etc.—to plant food forests that are organized and run by volunteers and are completely free (Finley 2013). This is an anarchist organization of communal space that fights food insecurity. Finally, permaculture is a good way to work for food sovereignty because it can be done successfully within the existing food system (Trauger 2017, 110-112).

The idea of degrowth implements some of these same concepts as well. It is a direct counter to neoliberal capitalism and can be implemented in alternative food systems. This idea emphasizes that growth, through productivity and production, is problematic because it causes economic and environmental instability (Paulson et al. 2020). Instead of focusing agriculture and all other parts of the global society on growth and production, we should focus on degrowth, where society works to “move away from a monohumanist conception of humanity” (Escobar in

Paulson et al. 2020), instead implementing many knowledges and ontologies. Degrowth implements various knowledges in agriculture such as permaculture. Degrowth also moves away from hierarchical, capitalist governance in order to open up systems to structures besides the dominant ones.

Governance in Food Movements

Each form of food sovereignty and food movements is oriented around a certain governance structure. Amy Trauger proposes an anarchist approach in *We Want Land to Live: Making Political Space for Food Sovereignty* (2017). According to Trauger,

anarchy...rests on nonhierarchical, anticapitalist views and reframes land and space as communal, public, and open to political reinterpretation. Anarchist, autonomous food production undermines laws governing private property and challenges normative assumptions about where and how food can be produced and distributed (39).

Trauger states goals of “national food self-sufficiency,” a goal towards “rights-based resistance to the status quo,” and a goal towards “autonomous food production” (Trauger 2017, 34). This last goal of autonomous food production is based on self-governance or a very limited role of government. This system of power primarizes “radical collectivism” (Trauger 2017, 40), where collective rights take precedence over individual rights, and social justice completely transforms society. This alters the temporality of systems: the goal goes from individual change and rights, which can be achieved quickly throughout and during a lifetime, to collective change and rights, which must be sustained over multiple generations and takes more time to create and care for.

Trauger argues that, although this anarchist approach to food sovereignty may not achieve its goal worldwide, it is important because “the process is the work” (Trauger 2017, 128). In other words, we must be advocates and activists and must do the work in order to create the change we want in the existing food system.

Spaces of Healing and Connection

Community gardens create spaces of healing by connecting people with various parts of the process of food. They create connections to community. In the Horta do Mount temporary community garden, the commons structure of the garden made it open to all. The space is used not only for growing but also for educational activities and community meals. One of the goals of the garden was to increase and promote participation in collective food production (Trauger 2017, 58). From growing the food together to eating the food together, from seed to stomach, these aspects of the garden all helped cohere the group of people who engaged with the garden, making them a community. Karen Washington says that gardens aren't "just being used for food, but also for wellbeing and medicine" (Brones 2018).

Community gardens also create connections to the food itself. In Deanwood, Washington D.C., memories of growing one's own food are key to the identity of the individuals of the neighborhood and the neighborhood itself (Reese 2019, 27). Knowing and being intimate with the food throughout its whole process not only educates people about growing but also educates them about the way industrial agriculture alienates us from our food. Furthermore, eating nutritious local food that you grew can make people emotionally and economically invested in that food. These gardens create connections to the land as well. Not only does the act of growing make people feel connected to the earth they tend, eating and engaging with the food can create a sense of place based on the sensory experiences of the food. The tastes and the smells of local food, for example, create an idea of local space (Weiss 2011). Digging in the dirt, seeing the greenery, and interacting with the garden help connect humans and nonhumans and can be therapeutic sensory experiences.

Both Trauger and *La Via Campesina* believe that food production should be based in care. Care for the natural resources of the land in the growing process, as opposed to the standardized, mechanized, industrial processes we see now, will both counter systems that reinforce corporate control *and* produce spaces of sustainable care for the earth and for the farmers and producers. Kotsila et al. (2020) also frames food production in a rationality of care, as urban gardens require physical and emotional labor and time to be cared for and succeed.

Overall, community gardens serve a number of different purposes in the context of the neoliberal food regime. In some ways, these initiatives that work against food insecurity and injustice may reinforce and are dependent upon the neoliberalist system that created those same problems. In other ways, community gardens may resist neoliberalism through anti-hierarchical organization, decommodification of food, healing connections between people and food, and the use of non-Western growing practices, knowledges, ontologies. The collective values of the community garden outweigh the individual value of each thing it provides.

Positional Awareness

Being a student of anthropology has created for me a foundation of academic knowledge based on the concepts that reflect on power systems in society. Anthropology critically analyzes how power affects culture. For example, colonialism has affected much of the world by creating hegemonies of white patriarchal supremacy (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Neoliberal capitalism and globalization has influenced most of the world to participate in a market society or “enterprise society” (Foucault 1978). In anthropology, it is necessary to know these histories and contexts of power and relationship in order to study a group of people.

Cultural anthropology also uses ethnographies, written descriptions of immersive studies in storytelling forms, to present research on different peoples. The ethnographies are based on participant observation, where the ethnographer goes to the place they are studying and engages with those people in some sustained form as a participant in their culture before writing about that experience. This process inherently overlays the researchers' perspectives onto their research. The researcher then must be reflexive; they must acknowledge their own biases in their research. My work is influenced by ethnographic methods and reflexivity.

The Sustainable Development (SD) field also heavily influences this thesis. I took two classes this year in the SD department. The first was Environmental Justice, taught by Dr. Rebecca Witter, an SD professor, and Dr. Dana Powell, an anthropology professor. This class introduced me to sustainable development concepts and provided me with more knowledge about racial justice movements. Environmental justice, like food justice, deals with issues that affect both the earth/climate and people of color in the United States and in other countries. The other sustainable development class is Food Security and Sovereignty, taught by my thesis advisor, Dr. Jacqueline Ignatova. This class was largely influential on my thesis. This course helps students "explore the distinctions between food security and food sovereignty" (Ignatova 2020) and asks "How can food sovereignty be achieved in a globalizing food system characterized by persistent inequality and injustice? What is required of people in order to radically transform their food system to ensure both food security and food sovereignty?" (Ignatova 2020). The course taught me about food sovereignty and about food systems that resist and counter the neoliberal food system. This class and Dr. Ignatova introduced me to Amy Trauger, Jennifer Clapp, Julie Guthman, La Vía Campesina, and other people and organizations that have been fundamental in structuring my education and ideas about food.

I am also a white, female, cis-gendered, middle-class person in the United States. I grew up in a food secure household, benefitting from white supremacy in a developed country that is also a major world power. My understanding of food and alternative food, until recently, was solely from this context. I knew that food insecurity was a problem for people in my community: along with my experience in community gardens, 66% of students in my school district and 40% of the students ate free and reduced lunch (Free and Reduced 2017), with the national average at 52% and with 57% as the North Carolina average that school year (Digest of Education 2018); people experiencing homelessness came to my church to eat with us and get food bags; and so on. I also knew that race affected class, and class affected food access. However there were many dynamics in the food system that I did not know about until college. For example, I took institutions like farmers' markets to be wholly good (Guthman 2011). I did not know about neoliberal capitalism and the ways it affects the U.S. and the world. I did not know that the United States as a global power influences the global food system and globalizes local food systems (el-Tahri 2004). My knowledge of food, food justice, and justice in general was, and is, rooted in my privilege as a white, middle-class woman.

Finally, many of my connections to organizations for my research came through either a university connection or a faith-based connection. While I don't consider myself Christian now, I grew up in the Presbyterian Church (USA) at First Presbyterian Church in Durham (FPC Durham). FPC Durham is in downtown Durham, a block away from Urban Ministries of Durham and from what was described to me as a child as the "poorer side of town." This narrative around this location is important to the identity of the church as the church provides services, food, information, and a congregation to people experiencing homelessness downtown. The congregation and the church as a larger entity are proud of the relationship with other Durham

residents. However, my Christian upbringing did influence the way I view people and processes in a way that reinforced capitalism and racism and “othered” some people who were different from me. For example, we were taught to talk to people experiencing homelessness in a certain way to keep us safe, thus “othering” those people and reinforcing capitalist ideas about *why* people experience homelessness. While this church did work to teach race equity and equality, there were still ingrained biases and prejudices in the actions of the members and the church.

However, many of my connections in Durham are through the church community because I was raised in this church. This influences my research: almost all of the people I interviewed are people I know through this church community. My work in the St. Luke’s Community Garden is through this church community. Second to church connections in my research is university connections. Each method of my research is founded in the university setting. University education is also a middle- to upper-class institution embedded in white supremacy, and the academic scholarship that I studied for this thesis can be embedded in those same systems. Each of these factors in my own knowledge and perspective are important to acknowledge in order to understand how my own biases can reinforce systems of oppression in my research about systems of oppression.

RESEARCH AND METHODS

In this section I describe my research and the methods I used to complete in order to answer my guiding questions. I go over my experiences leading up to this thesis and how they guided me towards my research, and then review my three main methods of research— critical engagement with scholarship, interviews, and case studies— and detail what I learned from each

method. This section allows me to later connect the concepts in my literature review to the experiences and research of my thesis.

I grew up in Durham, North Carolina, a city with 320,000 people, of whom 15.6% are food insecure (Food Bank 2019). I spent my whole life there until moving to Boone for college, and my parents still live there, so it is still my home base. Because Durham is where I have spent most of my life, I have an extensive knowledge about the area, have worked in the food system in Durham, and have many connections to food organizations throughout the county. It is this connection to Durham, as well as my interest in its food system and community gardens, that made me want to include it as one of the locations in my thesis.

As a child of a city where activism is a prevalent and important part of how I view the city's identity, and as a child of parents who were socially conscious, I was around community gardens enough to develop a sense of how they worked within the community. We worked in community gardens in my Girl Scout troop and Youth Group; my mom (who knows everybody) knows many of the people who run or work in gardens in Durham; and most importantly, there were community gardens all around: in my neighborhood and those of my friends, at churches in the area, contributing to the restaurants where we eat, and so on.

My upbringing in Durham helped me to understand how community gardens can create a sense of space and place. I understood before coming to college that community gardens worked to provide food to the food insecure and could be successful in this task. I also understood them to be spaces where people came together to eat and to work, and in doing so were connected. This creation of community in the gardens has stuck with me since I felt it. For example, for a few summers when I was a teenager my family and many of the people we knew would help run a weekly dinner at a community garden at St. Philip's Episcopal Church of Durham, the church

that partners with the Urban Ministries of Durham. The dinner was run by volunteers but was welcome to everybody, and used a combination of food from the garden and of potluck donations. I remember meeting many people who were experiencing homelessness and food insecurity, and some of them worked in the garden as well. This dinner felt (to me as a young, white, girl with a stable home and food supply) as a safe space for many people to come together in communion to eat and for us to learn about each other. It was unique because in other spaces, the volunteers and the people who were experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity were separated by a hierarchy of roles that contributed to my own personal prejudices about homelessness, about ownership, and so on. In community gardens, it seemed, everyone worked and ate equally, which helped resist traditional ideas/biases about hierarchy and about one's character based on their belongings.

However, my experiences with community gardens and other food-based organizations in Durham also taught me that community gardens could struggle and face real and complex problems. The same garden that hosted the summer dinners was closed after the woman who ran it could not continue keeping up the amount of work it took. The space where it was is now a grassy but unused piece of land. I also remember having a conversation with a woman who started another community garden that was situated in a neighborhood that had high rates of food insecurity. She explained how the neighborhood was a "food desert," meaning that they didn't have fresh food, and that the garden's goal was to not only provide food for the area but also teach the residents about nutrition and growing. However, that garden faced issues of race as the leaders of the garden were white and from other neighborhoods and were attempting to insert their help in a neighborhood with a largely black population. This was a challenge for the

community members and the garden, which showed me that gardens are not separate from, but rather engaged with, issues of race and class.

My specific interest in food justice began after a conversation with a close friend where we talked about how many of the people that we know who grow their own food often use it as virtue signaling for sustainability rather than to make significant changes in their contribution to the food system. Once I got to college I moved to Boone, North Carolina, a small town of 20,000 people located in Watauga County with 56,000 people, with 18% of the population food insecure (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c). While Watauga County differs very much from Durham in things like population statistics, where Durham's population is bigger than Watauga County's by 264,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2019a); Durham's more urban context vs. Watauga County's more rural context (U.S. Census Bureau 2019a, U.S. Census Bureau 2019c); and ecology, as Durham is in the Piedmont area with hardwood and pine forests, and Watauga is in the Appalachian Mountain area in a temperate rainforest (Luczkovich 2001). Both counties, however, have extensive alternative food systems that support the food security of the area. While many of my friends go to the farmers' market and grow things like peppers, tomatoes, and herbs, most of them (myself included) still eat most of our food from Walmart and fast food restaurants.

I reflected on food networks and identity during that conversation with my friend and wanted to learn more about food. I had questions about food access and distribution: Who grows or does not grow food? Who is able to and why? What does growing food mean for affecting change in the current neoliberal capitalist food system? My experiences growing up surrounded by community gardens and alternative food systems and my interest in growing food led me to focus on community gardens..

From this context I developed questions to guide my research. How do community gardens create a sense of place and space? How do the sensory experiences of gardening, of eating, and of working in the food system contribute to those spaces? Under what conditions do those spaces promote food justice? Under what conditions do they rely upon and reinforce the neoliberal food regime?

I ask each of these questions in order to establish a framework of food justice and community gardens that addresses how community gardens engage with food apartheid, food justice, and neoliberal capitalism. Understanding this framework will provide not only an understanding about community gardens but also about how food movements can simultaneously support and prevent anti-racist, anti-capitalist work.

Critical Engagement with Scholarship

I used three main methods in order to answer these questions and to learn more about food justice and food systems, as reflected in the literature review. The first method is critical engagement with scholarship about food systems. This included, but was not limited to, scholarship about food justice, food sovereignty, food security, and community gardens. Throughout my research, a few pieces were especially influential in shaping my questions and how I went about answering them. Amy Trauger's *We Want Land to Live* analyzes food sovereignty according to its history and current manifestations. Trauger's perspective as a feminist geographer, along with her promotion of anarchist-based food sovereignty, guided me in my current ideas about how food sovereignty is effective, especially as compared to food security.

Another piece that was influential in my research was “Making Pigs Local” by Brad Weiss (2011). Weiss analyzes how pork tasting of locally-bred hogs in the Southern U.S. is shaped by a curated understanding of place. The taste of the pork, the meals cooked with it, the atmosphere of the tastings, and the narrative told about the pigs all contribute to a sensory field that creates a taste-based, place-based food space (Weiss 2011). This article helped me establish a focus on sensory experiences in the creation of space using food.

“Food Justice or Food Sovereignty? Understanding the Rise of Urban Food Movements in the USA” by Clannending, Dressler, and Richards (2016) was important in my foundational research to establish the difference between food justice and food sovereignty. Having done this, I could contextualize the rest of my research with both movements and outside of them, which was integral to answering the question of my research. Julie Guthman’s chapter in *Cultivating Food Justice* (2011), “If Only They Knew: The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food,” was important to understanding how race and white privilege play a big role in alternative food, and I was able to apply that to the way race and white privilege play a role in community gardens.

For the second component of my research, I conducted seven interviews over the phone or on Zoom with members or leaders of different food organizations in Boone, North Carolina and Durham, North Carolina. In Durham, I interviewed Reverend Allen Brimer of Farm Church, Abi Warmack of NC Glean, Margaret Rubiera of the Durham Task Force for Food Security, Julio Ramirez-Eve of Iglesia Emanuel, Neal Curran of Reinvestment Partners, and Sandy Demeree of the North Street Neighborhood. In Boone, I interviewed Reverend Anna Shine of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church. Rev. Shine’s interview is outlined in a later section of the paper. I also interviewed Ashley Townsend of the Oconee County Food Sovereignty Movement in Oconee County, South Carolina. For each interview, I had a set of questions that guided or framed my

interview, but I often deviated away from them to allow the informant to talk about what they wanted. These questions were as follows: What is your job or role? What are the biggest problems you see in the food system? How have those issues changed since you started your work? What needs to change to fix those problems? Do you or your organization think about food justice, and if so, how?

These interviews provide a closer look at various members or organizations in the community, including what their roles are in the food system and how they do or do not engage with food justice. I chose each organization based on both my connection to the organization and their role as organizations that promote food security in the areas I studied. In the following section, I briefly detail each interview in order to highlight some of the key organizations and initiatives that embody principles of food justice and food sovereignty in the food systems of Durham and Boone. I will then incorporate ideas and details from them into my later analysis of community gardens and food systems.

Reverend Allen Brimer– Farm Church: Durham, NC

Reverend Allen Brimer is one of the pastors of Farm Church in Durham. Farm Church started as a church with a farm program, focusing mainly on the congregation. Now, Brimer considers Farm Church to be a farm with a church program, focusing mainly on the farm and viewing the church as a subset of that. Farm Church, until COVID-19, used space at SEEDS Garden to congregate. Reverend Brimer spoke about the way Farm Church has had to address its identity within the SEEDS Garden neighborhood. The church grows food and donates it to food initiatives around Durham such as the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank (outlined later). Reverend Brimer acknowledged that while this does help provide people with food short-term, it does not

work to change the structural problems of the food system that initially cause food insecurity. Reverend Brimer noted that ultimately, one of his goals for the food system is to have a “meaningful, statistics-based impact on food resilience in community” (Brimer 2019). Reverend Brimer also spoke about the way Farm Church has had to address its identity within the SEEDS Garden neighborhood. The congregation of Farm Church is a mostly white, middle- to upper-class group, and the SEEDS garden is located in an urban, poor neighborhood where most residents are people of color. Thus, the congregation has had to question: “What does it mean to be in this neighborhood with integrity?” Brimer says that their work in food security also needs to address race equity, because “the need to address race equity is on the front burner.” Farm Church, which started with the intentions of working towards food security in a Christian setting, quickly moved to establish their work in a food justice perspective.

Abi Warmack– NC Glean, End Hunger NC, Society of St. Andrew

Abi Warmack is a Program Coordinator for the Carolinas at the Society of St. Andrew (SOSA). SOSA is a national nonprofit organization that “brings people together to harvest and share healthy food, reduce food waste, and build caring communities by offering nourishment to hungry neighbors” (Society of St. Andrew 2021). SOSA coordinates gleaning from agricultural areas: gleaning is salvaging edible produce from a field after a farmer has gathered and sold all that they can. This includes gleaning straight from the fields and collecting produce from distributors that cannot be sold commercially. Gleaned produce is donated to food banks (such as the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina). This practice works to not only reduce food waste, but to reduce the amount of methane gas released each harvest by rotting produce. Warmack says that there are two levels of change that need to happen in the food system: macro

political changes that address wealth gaps, distributions, and food apartheid; and micro changes to peoples' lives such as access to transportation, child care, more free time, and better incomes. In the context of food justice, Warmack points to ecofeminism to show that "the dynamics of oppression in society can be traced back to oppression of the earth." She argues that "if we eat a product of oppression then we are complicit in that oppression," and asks "what would I have to do to eat without engaging in this oppression? I can't escape this, so how do I make it better?"

Julio Ramirez-Eve– Iglesia Emanuel Food Pantry: Durham, NC

Julio Ramirez-Eve is the pastor of Iglesia Prebiteriana Emanuel in Durham, NC. During the 2008 recession, many of the Hispanic members of the community were in crisis because there was no support from the government for resources to increase food security. In response, the church started a food pantry that fed anywhere from 80-100 families each week. The arrival of COVID-19 in the U.S. greatly affected the hispanic community and the number of families that needed community support increased as unemployment rose. Iglesia Emanuel increased their food pantry services to feed over 500 families each week from Durham and surrounding areas, sourcing their food from donations from community members and organizations. This food included, but is not limited to, cow milk, rice, greens, pasta, and canned foods such as tomatoes and black beans. They have received grants to continue their funding, and food producers (including Farm Church) donate food to them. Ramirez-Eve describes their role in the community for people experiencing food insecurity as to find resources, be the link to other organizations that provide services, maintain conversation with support groups, provide different areas of assistance to people (e.g., through grants or programs), be in contact with other churches, and coordinate the people working on the food bank and the issue of food insecurity in

the community. Ramirez-Eve notes that it's difficult to know how to go about food justice in the Hispanic community because many people struggle to find jobs or work too many hours to do other things, and that the only resources available to many people are those like the Iglesia Emanuel food pantry. Therefore, the best way the church can take action is by addressing the urgent needs for food insecurity and other needs such as rent and emotional support.

Margaret Rubiera– Task Force for Food Security: Durham, NC

Margaret Rubiera works on the Task Force for Food Security in Durham, NC. This task force works to connect and support food organizations in Durham with grants, connections, and other things needed. It also connects food organizations by facilitating the sharing of the best practices across the board; in other words, the task force helps connect knowledge between food organizations so they can be successful. Rubiera and her husband Miguel worked with the Iglesia Emanuel food bank during the summer of 2020 as it grew rapidly in response to COVID-19's effect on the community. Rubiera helped bring fundraising to get financial and practical support for the food bank, as well as connecting volunteers and food donors. She says that "this has truly become a community project." While the food pantry is "simply and purely addressing needs... we *need* to go to systemic change" in the food system. The food pantry serves a largely Hispanic population, and Rubiera talked about how the Hispanic community has seen a simultaneous increase in COVID rates as well as higher rates of unemployment since many people in the community work seasonal, restaurant, or cleaning jobs that have ended during the pandemic. In a food justice framework, COVID has greatly affected the hispanic community in the U.S. and in Durham. For many people, food "becomes insanely expensive" due to factors such as availability

(e.g., the lack of available food in “food deserts”), transportation, time, and so on. Rubiera also mentioned the potential of community gardens in food system reform:

We’re big gardeners... we believe in that. If somebody could find the magic key to make community gardens really successful, they need to publicize it widely... it’s hard for people to stay the course, it’s really hard work [with] huge, long-term commitments.

A good community garden, according to Rubiera, takes work. It needs a lot of people from the community who are excited about it, even when it is hard. It is developed over time, not immediately, and needs a core, dedicated group of people who teaches others about how to work the garden. Rubiera “would give anything to see some really good community gardens” in the community.

Neal Curran– Reinvestment Partners: Durham, NC

Neal Curran is the Director of Food Programs at Reinvestment Partners in Durham, N.C. Reinvestment Partners is an NGO formed in 1986 that works “to foster healthy and just communities by empowering people, improving places, and influencing policy. [They] address the problems of poverty and social injustice in the areas of food, housing, community development, health, and financial services.” (Reinvestment Partners). Reinvestment Partners uses a polity perspective, meaning they focus on policy change to achieve their goals, to advocate for people in need. They established Bull City Cool Food Hub, a shared-use food storage space for local food distributors. The project is now managed by Farmer Foodshare in Durham. Now, Reinvestment Partners is working on a produce packaging project. This project addresses food insecurity from within the healthcare systems in order to frame food insecurity as a health issue. The program works to get more fresh produce to more people by providing discounts on fresh produce to people with benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP). They work with social services, grocery stores, and government policy such as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) act to make this happen. In the context of food justice, Curran says there is more potential to address food insecurity outside of the emergency food system (e.g., food banks that address immediate need). Addressing food insecurity is “more than just addressing hunger.” Everyone should have access to healthy, safe, affordable food and should have agency in what they choose to buy and how and when they choose to buy it. Curran points to the fact that 87% of SNAP beneficiaries are still food insecure, which is double what it was before COVID, saying that COVID has “highlighted the brutality of day-to-day lives” of people experiencing food insecurity.

Sandy Demeree– North Street Neighborhood: Durham, NC

Sandy Demeree is a resident of the North Street Neighborhood in Durham. The neighborhood is an intentional community with people with and without developmental disabilities. Three-quarters of each house in the neighborhood is for any person to buy and live in, and one-quarter of each house is rented at below-market rates to someone with a developmental disability. Demeree’s house, rather than housing another person, contains the community space. Demeree’s yard is the community garden of the neighborhood. This garden is open to anyone in the neighborhood, but is mostly run by Demeree and a few residents. Demeree emphasizes the importance of “Spiritual Gardening” in her practice. The spiritual intention of the garden is important, and Demeree’s intention is for the earth and for the water. She plants lots of pollinators, uses raingarden techniques that keep the water in the garden and decreases runoff into the rest of the city, composts, and only plants native plants. Demeree also uses biodynamics in her garden. This growing knowledge uses intention and natural materials to help the garden

grow, and Demeree says “it sounds crazy, but biodynamic veggies are more nutritious, and biodynamic vineyards make better-tasting wine.” She testifies that the North Street garden has done much better since they began using biodynamics. When I asked about food justice, Demeree asks: “Why did we start using the food system we have? It doesn’t work.” (Demeree 2020). She also points out that we (the United States) aren’t feeding the world, but rather are making the world worse off when we impose our system and foods on them. She says that we have to acknowledge that money influences the system away from health and wellness. However, her garden isn’t centered around food justice; instead, her garden is focused on growing and healing in the garden space. Gardens and gardening have been proven to improve both physical and medical health (Thompson 2018). Demeree shows this when she acknowledges that the act of gardening, of getting in the dirt, is healing for all the residents of their intentional community who choose to engage with it.

Participant Observation

Besides interviewing people in the areas I studied, I also engaged with participant observation in Durham, N.C., and Boone, N.C., in order to understand and experience the practical side of alternative food networks. In Durham, I volunteered during the summer of 2020 at the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank. Durham is a city of 320,000 people, where 16.5% of the population is food insecure (Food Bank 2019). The food bank serves mostly people of color and is run by a church attended by a largely Hispanic and Latinx population. While work for the food bank happened throughout the week, I volunteered on Wednesdays when people came to pick up their food. Volunteers helped prepare boxes of food for each family, bring the boxes out to and

put them in cars, and direct traffic. Typically I would help direct traffic and put food in cars as I was one of the few volunteers helping with that part of the food bank who spoke Spanish. I volunteered here before I formally started my thesis, but I was already interested in food systems. My intention for this time was two-fold: first, to contribute to the community of people and to the city where I grew up, and second, to participate in a food organization, especially one that is founded in a largely Latinx community.

I worked with two organizations in Boone, a city of 20,000 people located in Watauga County with 56,000 people. The 20,000 students at Appalachian State University double the population of Boone during the school year. 18% of Watauga County's population is food insecure. For Appalachian State students, two out of three experience food insecurity (Wall 2018).

I spent the late Fall and the Spring working at the St. Luke's community garden, located on a property between two churches in downtown Boone. This participant observation consisted of attending garden workdays on Saturday mornings that were open to the public and that typically had between 3-5 people in attendance. Because I am studying community gardens and the spaces they create within alternative food systems, I thought it important to work in community gardens during this project. I wanted to learn about these gardens with the framework and knowledge from my research specifically. We tended the garden, doing a variety of things including planting strawberries; harvesting peppers, kale, collards, and herbs; building plots, walkways, and staircases; and tilling the soil. At the end of each workday, Bill encouraged us to take food home with us. I took peppers, kale, and collards. While working in the garden and contributing to the space, I held my research questions in my head and I observed and listened to the people in the garden.

I also volunteered at the High Country Food Hub in Boone N.C. The Food Hub “supports farmers and local businesses” by working to “provide them with marketing and sales support so their income increases and they can focus on the important work of growing and producing high quality food” (High Country). They also work to “make it easy to buy local food” (High Country). I and others volunteered with them on Wednesday afternoons to help deliver people’s groceries to them. This involved gathering together different baskets already prepared for people (from the fridge, pantry, and freezer) of their groceries and bringing them to the shoppers who were waiting outside. I volunteered here in order to participate in and learn more about the functions and operations of the alternative food system in Boone.

Each of these sites contributed to my knowledge of alternative food systems in different ways. These methods created a foundation of academic scholarship and practical applications of food security, food justice, and food sovereignty work that helped me develop an ethnographically-informed thesis. This helped me grow my understanding of alternative food systems, how they contribute to a sense of place and space, and how they contribute to food justice and/or food sovereignty. It also shed light on their limitations and perpetuations of the neoliberal capitalist system.

In the following section I review my case studies. I talk about my work in Durham, North Carolina at the food bank at Iglesia Emanuel Presbiteriana, and then about my work in Boone, North Carolina at High Country Food Hub and the St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Garden.

CASE STUDIES

My work with the three organizations in Durham and Watauga Counties (Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank, High Country Food Hub, and St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Garden) served to help

me apply my critical engagement with scholarship to practical engagement with alternative food systems and community gardens. Throughout this work I both thought about how the theory I learned did or did not apply to these organizations, and just participated in order to have a deeper understanding and sense of the food systems.

Each of these organizations, as well as the interviews I conducted, contributed to a larger network of food systems and/or food system knowledge. Having multiple sources of information and participant observation worked to make a more complete picture of that network. However, it is important to note that, due to my positional awareness, the extent of my research, and the locations of my research, the picture is not complete. I address some of the things that are not represented in my research later in the paper.

While these organizations and interviews are not the entirety of alternative systems in North Carolina or elsewhere, they provide lessons about many other organizations or parts of organizations. For example, the St. Luke's Community Garden may be similar to other gardens based out of churches, and the High Country Food Hub may be similar to other food hubs. However, their location in Boone may also cause them to have different contexts from other comparable organizations, such as Boone's 95% white racial makeup (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c). Regardless of similarities and differences, my experiences with these organizations are critical to my overall analysis of community gardens and food justice in North Carolina.

Participant Observation in Durham

According to U.S. census data, Durham county has around 321,500 people. It's population consists of about 43% white people, 36% Black or African-American people, 14% Hispanic and Latino people, and 6% Asian-American and Pacific Islander people. Nearly 20% of

Durham households speak a language other than English at home. The median household income is \$60,000. There are a median of 936 people per square mile among 286 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau 2019a). The U.S. Census Bureau classifies an urban area as 1,000 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau 1994).

Durham has a strong network of food organizations that work to promote food security and food justice. There exist many organizations that support food movements besides those with which I interacted. For example, Farmer Foodshare is an organization whose mission is “to reshape the disconnected food system by removing barriers to growing and accessing local food” (Farmer Foodshare 2021) and does so through various food programs (such as a Bull City Cool, the wholesale food market that stores and sells local foods for farmers) and through helping provide access to other food resources (Farmer Foodshare 2021). Urban Ministries of Durham’s mission is to “connect with the community to end homelessness and fight poverty by offering food, shelter and a future to neighbors in need” (Urban Ministries 2021). They provide three free meals a day to residents of the shelter every day of the week, as well as a food and clothing pantry available to people based on certain eligibility criteria and a number of other resources for people experiencing homelessness and poverty (Urban Ministries 2021). These are two of a number of organizations in Durham working towards food security and/or food justice.

Iglesia Presbiteriana Emanuel Food Bank

I volunteered for the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank in Durham over the summer of 2020. When interviewing Ramirez-Eve and when volunteering at the food bank I came across much of the same information and experiences. The bank is at the building where both Durham Presbyterian Church and Iglesia Presbiteriana Emanuel are located in downtown Durham. While

the work of the food bank happened throughout the week as people donated food, organized food, prepared for and cleaned up from the food bank day, and so on. I volunteered on Wednesdays during the time that people from around the piedmont came to pick up boxes of food. Cars line up around multiple city blocks through a residential area and wait to turn into the Iglesia Emanuel parking lot to get their food. Volunteers take food from the storage in the church, organize it into boxes with a certain amount of food per box, and move the boxes into people's cars as they drive through the parking lot. The food is given out until there is no food left, and cars line up around the block and into the surrounding neighborhood as they wait for food. I often worked either directing cars in the parking lot or bringing boxes to cars, as my proficiency in Spanish and fluency in English allowed me to communicate with more people than the volunteers who only spoke English or only spoke Spanish.¹



As a volunteer at the Food Bank, I and my friends who volunteered were small parts of a large operation that works to feed over 500 families each week. However, I felt more connected to the Durham community through this process. I learned more about food insecurity in Durham, and especially how COVID has affected food security in the Latinx community. I learned about

¹ Figure 1: Volunteers at the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank putting food boxes into cars. July 2020

how quickly a community can come together to grow from feeding 100 families to 500+ each week: The Task Force for Food Security in Durham, Farm Church, individual donors, the Presbyterian churches in Durham, and many other organizations and people came together to support Iglesia Emanuel's work via funding, food donations, volunteer support, community outreach, provision of other services, and so on. More personally, Iglesia Emanuel is the sister church to First Presbyterian Church of Durham (FPC Durham), the church I attended growing up, and while through FPC Durham I have interacted with Iglesia Emanuel, I felt more connected to Iglesia Emanuel while volunteering. Finally, each Wednesday when the food bank was done, the volunteers my age would walk to a local popsicle shop and get popsicles to eat on our friend's porch. This not only reinforced the community of volunteers but also felt like a quintessential Durham experience of walking to a local food place with friends.

Volunteering at the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank was also unique from the other volunteering I did because it was not led by white people. Iglesia Emanuel worked to serve a need it saw in its own church community, and in doing so reached many more people, a majority of whom are a part of the Latinx community of Durham county and surrounding counties. Despite the higher diversity of those contributing to the food bank, my friends who volunteered still were mostly white, and all of us were college students, and while I speak Spanish, I didn't talk much to the volunteers who only spoke Spanish. Regarding the population of people who came to get food, almost all of them had cars with which they could drive to the church. A very few brought reusable bags and carried their food through the summer heat or rain to where they live. However, the food bank policy was that anyone could get food, no questions asked, and that was very important to the growth of the number of people getting food because they did not have to prove that they needed it, be documented residents, or pay anything in order to get food.

Participant Observation in Boone

I have lived during the school year in Boone, North Carolina for the past four years while I attended Appalachian State University, leaving every summer to work elsewhere like many of the other students. I thus experienced Boone through the perspective of a middle-class university student with stable housing, food security, and access to both transportation and university resources. Many of my connections in Boone are through the university. As a student, I learned about many of the food organizations that support the alternative food system in Boone, such as F.A.R.M. cafe, the High Country Food Hub, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, and the Watauga County Farmers Market. I knew going into this thesis research that Boone had a strong food network, but that Boone was significantly different from Durham in many ways, and for that reason chose to consider it in my thesis.

According to U.S. census data, Watauga county's population consists of about 95% white people, 2% Black or African-American people, 4% Hispanic and Latino people, and 0.4% Asian-American and Pacific Islander people. 4% of Watauga county households speak a language other than English at home. The median household income is \$47,500. There are a median of 163 people per square mile among 313 square miles (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c).

Boone also has a large network of organizations, farmers, and consumers who contribute to the alternative food system in the area. A few of those organizations came up multiple times in and around my research, as well as those organizations around which I did more extensive research. F.A.R.M. cafe is community kitchen that seeks to “build a healthy and inclusive community by providing high quality & delicious meals produced from local sources, served in a restaurant where everybody eats, regardless of means” (F.A.R.M. Cafe 2021). Blue Ridge

Women in Agriculture (BRWIA) is an organization that works with and supports most of the other food organizations that I know about in Boone. “Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture is a women-led organization that builds an equitable, sustainable High Country local food system by supporting producers and cultivating community connections that educate, inspire, and increase the demand for local food” (“About” 2021). BRWIA was started by a group of women who faced sexism in their roles as farmers and started an organization working to build a network that supported women farmers. The Hunger and Health Coalition “strives each and every day to ensure that our local community members have every chance of leading healthy lifestyles of their own” (Hunger and Health 2021) by working with local and regional healthcare to fight food insecurity, working to provide fresh, healthy food to people, and supporting the local food system (Hunger and Health 2021). Each of these organizations works together to support individuals in Watauga County and promote food security. For example, BRWIA works closely with F.A.R.M. cafe to support their food needs, the High Country Food Hub sells the products of other food justice- and food sovereignty-oriented organizations, and all the organizations work together in the Watauga food council.

High Country Food Hub

The High Country Food Hub was started by BRWIA. It is an organization that provides storage space to local farmers and an online market to connect farmers and consumers. Their building has coolers, freezers, and shelf space that farmers can use, and they facilitate the organization of food and products from local farms into groceries that people in the Watauga County area can buy and pick up. They buy the food by ordering which products they want online early in the week, and then picking them up in person a few days later. This process

depends on trust from the farmers and artisans that consumers will buy their products, and trust from the shoppers that the farmers and artisans will provide quality products. I volunteered there on Wednesdays during the time when shoppers come to pick up their food. I first volunteered during the week of Thanksgiving, when we sorted turkeys for online orders. The staff of the Food Hub had participated in the killing and preparing of the turkeys at the farm and were all excited to have been a part of the process from then on as they had both more knowledge about the process and also more connection to the food they were going to cook and eat on Thanksgiving day.

The grocery orders for each week from the market included meats and vegetables, including greens, potatoes, radishes, and so on, as well as products like bread, desserts, candles, and lotions. While volunteering, we picked up orders from the shelves, cooler, and freezer and brought them out to the shoppers, who were waiting in the parking lot, and then washed the bins which carried the orders. Some volunteering times were quite busy, with around 10 people volunteering, and all the volunteers and staff would be getting orders. During these times I learned about what the food hub does and how it creates an alternative food system in and around Boone. The Food Hub helps enable producers by providing a space for them to store their food. The Food Hub also provides relatively cheap, local, fresh, nutritious food outside of supermarkets and farmers markets to the area. Witnessing all the types of food and products available through the online market made me realize how much more local producers there are in Boone than I thought. Especially outside of the college community but even among some of my friends, producing food outside of industrial agriculture is more important and a bigger part of Watauga county than I thought before learning about the Food Hub. Importantly, the Food Hub connects those producers with consumers, including consumers like me who otherwise would

not have known how to get fresh, local food. Further, the Food Hub uses the Double Up Food Bucks program, where recipients of SNAP benefits can use those benefits at local farmers markets and food organizations, and every dollar you spend, you get an extra dollar through the program. This helps people with low income have access to markets besides supermarkets and get fresh, healthy, and local food. In 2020, this program reached 228 families in the High Country and doubled \$23,000 of SNAP benefits, supporting both recipients of SNAP benefits and local farmers (Blue Ridge, 2021).

Other volunteering times were slower and we could talk a bit and learn about each other. Where in many cases in Boone the standard questions that strangers ask each other are about school, work, and other daily life things, while volunteering we often talked about food, justice, or topics that related to the work of the Food Hub. We talked about why we are volunteering there, and many times it was because people were interested in food and alternative food systems. Two of the people I met grew up in Boone, moved away for school or work, and came back to Boone and began working to support the alternative food system. One person was planning to move to Colorado and work on a ranch there. Hearing these stories contributed to an atmosphere during the volunteering where everyone was learning about and/or passionate about food and systemic change to the food system. While the work itself was not difficult, being in a space where the people and the organization all had intentions of supporting food system change was impactful, especially because I learned about the many ways one can be involved with food justice and alternative food systems besides being a producer or only buying and eating certain foods.

However, while the Food Hub uses the Double Up Food Bucks program, a person needs online access to order the food, a means of transportation to the hub, and extra time to pick up

the food. Furthermore, High Country Food Hub is a queer-friendly space, but many of the people I worked with were women. Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture is one of the organizations in Boone that connects the alternative food network in the area and started the High Country Food Hub, and gender plays an important role in how the organization defines itself and its resources. However, the predominantly white-appearing, female-presenting organization leads to the question of how race and gender identity affect the Food Hub and the Boone food system in general. The organization does acknowledge this, and works to ensure that their space is open to all people, but is affected by larger trends in the food system as well.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church Community Garden

I also worked at the St. Luke's Episcopal Church community garden in the fall and spring. This garden is a function of a church, which shapes the way it is used, who interacts with the garden, and how the community of the garden forms and is transformed. I worked in the garden for 5 four-hour workdays and 2 two-hour meetings of the Presbyterian-Episcopalian Campus Ministries (PECM). During the workdays, I worked with Bill Marr and Anna Shine, two members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church. We did a variety of things in the garden, such as planting strawberries, harvesting peppers, weeding plots, tilling the soil, and installing new stairs.²

We worked in the sun and heat, in the fall chill, and in light spring rain. During these times we talked to each other



² Figure 2: A bed of strawberries in the St. Luke's garden that we harvested in the fall and planted again in the spring. May 2021

about the garden and about our lives, getting to know each other more, and at the end of the day we took home harvested produce along with the sweat, dirt, and experiences. Although I interviewed other gardeners in my research and have worked in community gardens in the past, this experience allowed me to apply my research practically to the garden experience and both understand and witness theory in practice.

The St. Luke's Episcopal Community Garden is run by Bill Marr. Bill is a semi-retired handyman who manages the garden. On my first day working in the garden, a warm day in late September 2020, Bill told me about how and why he started the garden. Bill grew up farming. One of his earliest memories is his father teaching him how to use a tiller at 7 years old. His childhood of farming and growing created in him a passion for growing that inspires him to run the St. Luke's garden as well as grow on his own land. He saw the plot of land, a hill next to the St. Luke's church building that has rich soil and no rocks, and envisioned the garden there. He got grants to start the garden, and has built it up from its original size. It now covers the entire hill and has a fence, a shed, steps, and a terraced layout.

I know very few things about gardening and growing and have a history of all the plants in my house dying, so I was a little bit nervous when I first came to the garden. A small voice in my head told me that I wouldn't be able to get the hang of gardening and growing. However, Bill was there to teach everything I could need for each task we did to maintain the garden. His knowledge ranges widely enough that he can do whatever needs done in the garden to make it successful.

While learning how to garden from Bill, he told many stories. Whether about his childhood farming, his wild experiences as a college student at App State and then a young man after graduating, or his grandchildren, whom he loves dearly and about whom he will talk to

anyone who will listen. This made me feel comfortable in the garden for a few reasons. Firstly, Bill's actions made me comfortable in the garden. He talked to me as a friend, cracking jokes and using curse words, despite the age and generational difference, so I did not worry about being polite and professional and instead could focus on forming a relationship. Secondly, I realized that the apparently innate knowledge of growing and gardening comes from practice, of which Bill has a lifetime. This means that I can learn how to keep plants alive and care for them, despite my track record of not doing so, with knowledge and more importantly with experience that brings that knowledge. I realized that growing food doesn't have to be for people who identify as farmers or gardeners; it can be for anyone who wants to grow food. If we as a society practice growing, then we can implement more growing into our neighborhoods and households and be more self-sufficient.

Reverend Anna Shine is St. Luke's Missioner for Creation Care and Social Justice as well as the campus minister for App State's Presbyterian Episcopal Campus Ministries, and is my connection to the garden. She started this job in 2020, just before COVID came to the U.S. Her role as Missioner for Creation Care and Social Justice is to encourage and empower members of the church to continue or expand their social justice work and to bring creation care and social justice to the faith community. Anna works to "think theologically and biblically about social justice, including food justice," (Shine 2021) and incorporate that in the church life of St. Luke's. In other words, Anna wants to bring social justice and religion together in the social and religious practices of the church community. One of the first ways Anna did this was to start services in the garden, which happened quickly because regular church services were cancelled for COVID. Anna also wants to bring two programs of the church together by putting fresh produce from the garden in the summer lunch program that the church supports. This program

packs lunches in the summer for Watauga county students who eat free and reduced lunch during the school year.

Anna has a vision for a way to bring growing, food, and faith together:

My dream is to start an intentional community that focuses on creation care, on taking care of the earth, and on thinking of the earth, the land, as a member of the community itself, of having a voice and a vote in what happens on the land (Shine 2021).

Anna wants this community to include a food forest, an apiary, a tiny house village, and watershed discipleship. Watershed discipleship incorporates the watershed into faith, not only learning about the watershed and how to care for it but also asking questions like “what water do we use to baptize people? Do/would we use water from the watershed to baptize? If not, why not, and what can we do to change that? Are the flowers on the altar native or not? Why should we care?” Anna’s work in the church and the garden both work to bring social justice and creation care to the church and provide her with “a space of learning more how to take care of the earth... and [a space of] building relationships with the people who receive the food as well” (Shine 2021).

I also engaged with the garden space during two meetings of PECM. The first time we used the garden, in mid-September, we had a small service there, led by Anna. This worship was centered around St. Hildegard of Bingen and her focus on a deep connection between religion/spirituality and the land. The second time PECM engaged with the garden was a workday in early April. Bill showed us all what needed to be done: some tilling, cleaning up piles of old rotten wood that we replaced with new 4x4 beams, and weeding. We worked together to carry the wood, collect the rotting material, and so forth for a little over an hour while Bill and Anna guided, instructed, and worked with us. It was a warm spring evening, one of the

first warmer days after winter, and we got to appreciate the “golden hour” light as we worked. Bill continued to tell stories to me and my friend as we weeded. During this time, I also instructed some people in the tasks that I had already learned how to do, such as carrying beams of wood to the garden plots to create new plots and weeding the wild onions to prepare for planting. Afterwards we gathered together to close the space before we left, and were encouraged to take home as many collard greens as we could carry, which I did. The workday was a unique PECM because it allowed us to talk to each other freely, where PECM typically has guided conversations, and I was able to get to know the people in the group with whom I had never had individual interactions. Getting in the dirt, working together, and having the time to converse brought us closer together.

The garden space reinforced community each time I worked in it. Where I would typically view Anna and Bill as my superiors because of their leadership roles, and therefore I would have respect, politeness, and professionalism guide my behavior towards them, working with them in the garden, hearing their stories, and all of us working in the dirt helped me feel more comfortable around them. This was unique to this volunteering experience as compared to the other experiences I had for this thesis. At Iglesia Emanuel and the High Country Food Hub, I was a volunteer who was told what to do by staff, and all the volunteers completed the same repetitive tasks until the job was done. While this was partially because of the limited amount of time that I volunteered at each organization, the difference in structure was nevertheless notable. At the St. Luke’s community garden, I was still working under the direction of Bill, but we all worked together to complete the tasks. Each week we did something new, and the slow pace of the work we did gave us plenty of time to talk to each other and know each other.

We all worked for the plants, and having the common goal of growing and a shared passion for food gave me something with which I could connect with them. I know that the St. Luke's community garden has helped other people feel community, from the PECM members during our workday and service to the other members of St. Luke's church who came and worked in the garden as well. The space where the garden is, while technically part of St. Luke's church, facilitated a different community than the church community— I do not attend St. Luke's nor am I Episcopalian, so I do not feel like a community member of St. Luke's church. However, I did feel welcome in the garden and that my learning through Bill and Anna gave me a place within the garden space.

Working in the garden not only brings a sense of community in the space of the garden, it also works as a healing practice. Feeling the soil with your hands, sweating in the sun or getting wet in the rain, and being outside away from computers and phones are all good for mental health. Not only do I feel grounded and more mentally stable when I work in the garden, my peers in PECM and Anna have all talked about the same sense of healing. Working in the garden, during the school year especially, helps us not only have a short reprieve from the stress of our schedules and lives, but also helps us connect with the earth on which we live and the food we can eat.

After volunteers plant, grow, and harvest food in the St. Luke's garden, it goes to various places. Every time we harvested something, from peppers to collard greens, Bill always encouraged us to “take whatever we can carry.” However, people don't always do this. The garden is also open for anyone to take food. Some of the food is also taken to older housebound members of the church or is given away at services held in the garden. However, most of the food is donated to Hospitality House and F.A.R.M. Cafe. Last year, the garden donated a

recorded 600 pounds of food to those two organizations during their season (early spring to late fall), and an estimated 400 unrecorded pounds beyond that. This food included potatoes, tomatoes, corn, pepper, kale, collards, squash, and more (Shine 2021).³⁴



ANALYSIS

“Gardening is the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do” - Ron Finley

In this section of my thesis I bring together all the previous components (the literature review, the research and methods, and the interviews and case studies) to support my thesis and show the complex relationships among neoliberal capitalism, alternative food systems and

³ Figure 3: A label to show what is planted in the St. Luke’s garden. May 2021

⁴ Figure 4: The St. Luke’s community garden at the beginning of the planting season. The terraces have just been renovated and the stairs have just been rebuilt. May 2021

movements, and community gardens. I address different parts of neoliberal capitalism and how each part manifests in the community gardens with whom I worked. Concepts of interest to my analysis include commodification of food, structure of power, privatization of land, the sensory landscape of the garden, healing spaces, the creation of space and exclusionary space, forms of knowledge, temporalities, degrowth, and alternative food networks and the global food regime.

Each of my case studies, as well as each of the organizations I interviewed, interacts with neoliberal capitalist foodways in different ways. Some of these organizations work within the neoliberal capitalist food regime to provide emergency food relief to people in a community. Food banks are important sources of food for people, and use the surplus from the food regime to feed people, especially during times of crisis such as during COVID-19. This need is clear with the growth of and local dependence on the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank in Durham, which grew 500% in the beginning of the pandemic (Ramirez-Eve 2020). However, food banks and food pantries can be limited by and work within the global food regime. Food banks may receive donations from local farms and community gardens, but may also rely on donated food that is redistributed to those receiving food from the bank (Bazerghi 2016). This donated food is often surplus food from the corporations in the food regime: food that those who are food secure have the ability (financially or otherwise) to acquire and that they do not need. Furthermore, those who receive food from food banks must either decide from a limited set of options or cannot decide what food they get, so they may not have the option to eat culturally appropriate food. One story I heard while working at the Iglesia Emanuel food bank was of a person who donated a bunch of white rice, but did not consider the type of rice typically eaten by the largely Hispanic recipients of the food boxes and whether they would want to or be able to use and store the rice.

Another example of an organization that works within neoliberal capitalism is N.C. Glean. Harvesting leftover crops after a farmer has harvested is a practice that has existed since biblical times (Lev 19:9-10, New Revised Standard Version) and helps supply food banks. However, as with food banks, gleaning organizations today rely on the global food regime to operate. The industrial agriculture model, emphasizing high production and standardizing products (Clapp 2020), leaves an excess of food behind that either does not meet the supermarket standard or is too much to continue harvesting, which provides the opportunity for gleaning, as opposed to biblical gleaning where small, local farmers intentionally left food in their fields to glean.

Thus, in times of economic crisis, food shortage, ecological crisis, and so on, these organizations may struggle and be unable to provide as much food as during times of market stability. This means two things: food banks and similar organizations are dependent upon the global food regime to operate on a principle of constant growth and production, thus creating a surplus with which people can donate food; and food banks are limited by the contexts of the neoliberal capitalist market in which they exist. If either of those factors change or fail, so may food banks. Thus, any temporary food security that food banks supply is conditional.

Some organizations I worked for or interviewed aim to promote food security by attempting to create change from within the neoliberal capitalist system, thus fulfilling goals of the food justice movement or instilling values of the food sovereignty movement. The Task Force for Food Security in Durham, N.C., does use a food security perspective to support food organizations like the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank. One of its roles in the Durham County food system is to facilitate the connection between food organizations and their sharing of knowledge. This information network and support among food organizations aligns with the *La Via*

Campesina movement's food sovereignty concept of a *diálogo de saberes*, or a dialogue of knowledges (*La Vía Campesina* 2021). A *diálogo de saberes* is a flow of information among farmers about how to farm or grow so that they may help each other learn and succeed. Another organization promoting the food movements' goals is the Durham-based Reinvestment Partners. They work within the food justice movement framework to support well-being through fresh food through their produce packaging project, which changes the policy of not only the global food regime but also the neoliberal capitalist health system of the United States. This project works towards food justice by providing justice within the global food regime for people living in poverty as they have increased access to fresh food.

Some organizations with whom I worked create and support alternative food systems outside of the neoliberal capitalist system, resisting the global food regime. The High Country Food Hub is one such organization. The Food Hub connects farmers, artisans, and consumers through an online farmers' market that "support[s] farmers and local businesses" and "make[s] it easy to buy local food" (High Country). The Food Hub is an accessible resource for local food outside of supermarkets and food banks because it provides a wider variety of food like meats, breads, vegetables as well as other products; includes discounts for SNAP program beneficiaries; and is located in the center of town.

Most of these organizations interact with neoliberal capitalism in a variety of ways by resisting it, being limited by it, and/or reinforcing it. The Iglesia Emanuel food bank is limited by neoliberal capitalist food ways and supplied by surplus from industrial agriculture. However, it does engage with some foodways outside of the global food regime. For example, Farm Church in Durham grows food and gives it to the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank. This food is decommodified and donated as one of main uses for Farm Church food (i.e., it is not donated as

a surplus but as a main goal of growing). The Task Force for Food Security in Durham does support organizations like Iglesia Emanuel that run food programs that operate within neoliberal capitalism, but The Task Force also works outside of it to create a *diálogo de saberes*. These and other organizations therefore engage in multiple ways with neoliberal capitalism from resistance to modification to compliance.

Community Gardens

Community gardens are often situated within all three engagement positions. They can resist neoliberal capitalism; be limited by or reinforce neoliberal capitalism; and/or work to change or create justice with neoliberal capitalism. When interviewing Rev. Brimer of Farm Church in Durham, I asked how and if the garden and the church were working towards or thinking about food justice. Rev. Brimer described the “theory of change” as the way that Farm Church wants to make a difference in the food system. The “theory of change” works by enacting a proposed model of change (from the neoliberal food regime) and improving it in practice until it works well. From there, one can move forward to proposing policy that enforces and matches the new model already proved successful in that particular space (Brimer 2020). In this way, Farm Church can affect change in the food system. Rev. Brimer shows that Farm Church is thinking along a food justice framework by working to bring change and justice within the current global food regime. Farm Church is also limited by the global food regime. For example, Brimer asked in our interview “what can be changed [about the food system through Farm Church’s actions]?” (Brimer 2020). He responded to his question by saying that Farm Church can have a goal of helping to provide a few families with enough food to no longer be

food insecure. By doing so, those families can spend energy and time on other things, like affecting change in their lives or in the world with the knowledge and experiences they have. However, Brimer followed this response with the critique that the goal does not fit into the theory of change to influence substantial systemic change in the neoliberal food regime and promote food justice. This shows these limitations: Farm Church has a small number of resources as compared to an industrial agriculture farm, and so has fewer options and less power in how it can successfully change the neoliberal food regime to be more just.

Unlike Farm Church, the North Street Neighborhood garden in Durham, run mainly by Sandy Demeree, does not produce food for people outside of their community. This garden follows the framework of food sovereignty rather than food justice as its products are used to supply food or plants within the community. It isn't seeking to change the global food regime; rather, it exists for the sake of the neighborhood. It is a self-contained, self-supported garden, and in this way aligns with the goals of food sovereignty to create alternative food outside of the global food regime. However, the garden does not actively create an alternative food source. It is not the main food source for the neighborhood or the individuals in it. Demeree does not have goals of food justice or food sovereignty in the management of the garden. Demeree implements a non-Western knowledge called biodynamics that counters the industrial agriculture system of scientific, standardized, monoculture farming. "Biodynamics is a holistic, ecological, and ethical approach to farming, gardening, food, and nutrition" (What is Biodynamics?). The core principles and practices of biodynamic farming and gardening include: "A biodynamic farm is a living organism," "Biodynamics cultivates biodiversity," "Biodynamic farmers cultivate awareness," and "Biodynamics contributes to social and economic health" (Biodynamics Principles and Practices).

The St. Luke's garden is also structured outside of the standards of industrial agriculture. It does not use pesticides or fertilizers, does not use monocropping, and the food harvested is not subjected to standardization. The garden is limited by neoliberal capitalism as well. In order to start the St. Luke's garden, Marr had to get grants and raise money to buy all that was needed for the garden. Seeds, tools, materials, and so on come from capitalist markets and exchange entitlements rather than alternative systems like anarchism or trade-based systems. Also, the garden workdays that church and community members attend are scheduled for Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, both times outside of the traditional 9-5, Monday-Friday workday.

The complexities of and tensions between each organization's goals and resources cause each of them to be situated in multiple simultaneous but critically different relationships with the neoliberal capitalist food regime that shape the organization as a whole.

Commodification of Food

One significant aspect of community gardens and their relationship to neoliberal capitalism is that the food that is produced from them is not commodified. This is true of Farm Church in Durham. The products are donated to various places, including the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank. Thus, while the food bank is receiving most of its food from surplus in the global food regime, Farm Church's donations of non-commodified, local food resist that food regime surplus model.

The North Street Neighborhood garden does not produce food for outside organizations. The food produced in the garden is non-commodified and goes towards community meals and to individuals of the community. This resource of alternative food critically resists neoliberal

capitalism as it produces local food, from and for the neighborhood community, from soil to table without commodifying it.

The St. Luke's community garden donates a significant amount of food to other organizations in Boone, with the intention of working towards food justice. The garden is also open for anyone to take food to eat. In this way, the garden resists neoliberal capitalist commodification and market society.

Structure of Power

Trauger (2017) shows how community and urban gardens can resist neoliberalism through anarchism. The Oconee County Food Sovereignty Movement and food initiatives in the area working with that movement utilize anarchism to create goals for and make decisions about the county's food system. However, each of the community gardens I interacted with had a clear leader and a hierarchy in decision making. When working in the St. Luke's garden, Bill Marr was in charge. He did most of the work in the garden and has done since he started the garden. I learned from Anna as well while I worked, but mostly, Anna and I learned from Bill. Sandy Demeree is in charge of and one of the main workers of the North Street Neighborhood garden. Allen Brimer has legitimate power as a Reverend of his church, and that power affects how decisions about the garden are made.

Privatization of Land

Each of these gardens also is on private land. In this way, these gardens do not resist neoliberal privatization. However, Farm Church lives within the SEEDS Community Garden. While the garden space is owned by SEEDS, Farm Church uses some of that garden space and

works somewhat with the goals and neighbors of the SEEDS garden. St. Luke's garden is on land owned by Crosspoint Community Church, next door to St. Luke's, but the garden is operated and managed by St. Luke's members. These two gardens resist neoliberal capitalist forms of property ownership and the idea of private property by sharing the land. St. Luke's further does so by opening their shared private land to the public for anyone to work in or eat from. However, the St. Luke's garden is fenced in and two blocks away from King Street. Thus, again unlike Finley's gardens, the food in this garden, while a non-commodified source of food, is inaccessible to the public. Farm Church also grows food that is not commodified but is not open to the public, and SEEDS garden is fenced in as well. The North Street Neighborhood garden grows food for the neighborhood, not the public.

The boundaries of each of these gardens is determined by a physical boundary and a social boundary. This determination comes back to the idea that the definition of "garden" may be ambiguous, so in defining it one must consider many other factors. The definition of these gardens is supported by those boundaries. According to Elinor Ostrom's principles for managing a commons, commons are defined by clear boundaries, and this is true in garden commons as well (Walljasper 2011). Garden commons that exist on private land, like the ones with which I engage, may uphold values of commons such as an anarchist social structure, open access to the food, and community efforts to grow the food. However, other community gardens are commons, such as the Peace Perennial Garden in Athens, Georgia (Trauger 2017, 112-115).

Sensory Landscape and Healing Practices

Each time I worked in the St. Luke's community garden I felt like my mental health improved. After a year of working in online school, as with many people, I struggle with getting

outside, feeling motivated, and balancing mental health. However, every time I worked in the garden I did not have my phone. I felt the sun or rain on my skin, could smell the soil as the dirt got onto my hands, tasted the food we took home in the meals I made after working, and got to be in a green space and outside for a few hours. I was productive and doing work, but the work did not exhaust me like doing classwork on a screen did. I looked forward to working in the garden and after each workday my mood had improved. I also was able to develop better relationships with Anna and Bill. When PECM worked in the garden for only an hour or so, we were able to talk to each other in an unstructured way, and I got to know better some people whom I had seen all year but hadn't had many conversations with.

Anna Shine frequently talks about how working in the soil is healing. When she and I work in the garden, we don't use gardening gloves so that we can feel the dirt. In my interview with her, Anna asked: "What does it mean for our faith when we get our hands in the soil and pay attention to the earth and animals?" (Shine 2021). Shine challenges the community members of her church to be fully present to what is happening in the natural world in order to not only care for the world but also to enhance spirituality and well being.

Sandy Demeree, when telling me about the North Street Neighborhood garden, talked about how the garden is a healing space for not only her but also the neighbors who work in it. The residents are people with varying abilities and disabilities, and Demeree noted the importance of the community events and spaces to the health and well-being of not only the residents individually but also the community as a whole. The garden is a space where this well-being is improved greatly. By working in the garden, people of many different abilities can work on tasks that together become a space of growing, food to eat, and community experiences,

and the sense of accomplishment and togetherness that comes from the garden strengthens the neighborhood.

Rev. Allen Brimer talked about how Farm Church has transformed in identity or framing from a congregation on a farm, with the congregation as the main part of the church, to a farm that has a congregation, with the main identity of the church being the farming. The congregation is a supporting agent in that identity. Rev. Brimer says “the farm is the thing which can do far more than the congregation” (Brimer 2020) in the effort towards food justice, social justice, and race equity. This assertion shows that the farm itself, and the act of working in it as a congregation, is the support of the health of the community. Brimer reiterates this point in other assertions, such as asking: “How can we bring the resources we have to those organizations [which work on food security and race equity]?” (Brimer 2020).

Each part of the garden provokes sensory experiences as people work in it. As Rev. Shine shows with her experiences and her support of others’ experiences, taking time to pay attention to the earth and to ourselves when we garden and throughout the other parts of our lives makes us more attuned to the nuances of environmental and personal well-being. Putting one’s hands in the soil and being close to the plants improves well-being. As Demeree shows, working in the garden empowers individuals and communities. Harvesting and eating the plants that they grow is an important community activity to the neighborhood. As Rev. Brimer shows, the garden or growing space can be an entity of its own that is used to promote justice of many kinds, not just food justice. In my own experience, the garden grounds us, improves relationships with other people, and improves daily mental health. When I worked in the garden, I reflected on each of their words as well. While I tend to stay inside in cold weather because I prefer summer, being in the garden in the fall and spring helped me be outside in a way I enjoyed. Harvesting, cooking,

and eating the plants from the garden connected me to the garden and to local foods. For example, we harvested collard greens, which are a traditional Southern food that I have never cooked. I got to look up recipes for how to prepare them and ate foods I had only eaten when cooked by others. I felt connected with my Southern upbringing by the taste and experience of those meals, such as cooking collard greens. Furthermore, the greens, peppers, and other foods I took home from the garden (and those we tasted while working) were much fresher and had more flavor than those that I buy from Walmart. From seed to stomach, each sensory interaction with the garden brought me gratitude and joy.

Creation of Community Space

Community gardens create spaces that resist neoliberal capitalism. Firstly, the geographic landscape of the garden influences how the garden is both understood and interacted with. Urban gardens in Dublin, Ireland share ownership over spaces with their City Council, and the structure of power over those spaces varies for each one (Kotsila et al. 2020). The use of contested spaces questions the tensions of the ownership of that land, opens the gardens up to anyone who walks by them and wants to access them, and purposefully blurs the line between garden space and urban space. This resists capitalist ideas about industrial agriculture and about land ownership, and promotes food justice and food sovereignty. The gardens such as the ones I worked with create a different garden space. St. Luke's and Farm Church are fenced in, and the North Street garden is within a neighborhood. There are clear borders between the garden and the urban space. People who work in these gardens can then enter the space of the garden and, by being in a defined space, set an intention to interact with the garden a certain way, such as Rev. Shine's present-ness in creation care.

The sensory landscape of gardens contributes to both of the aforementioned types of space. Green spaces throughout urban areas, such as guerilla gardens, bring new sensory inputs of looking at and understanding plants and food outside of stores and rural farms. One of the sensory inputs that comes from community gardens is the sense of taste as we eat the food from the garden, which is an important part of the creation of the community garden space: taste and place as a sensory field can “help us understand how places are made” (Weiss 2011). These spaces can lead people to question the ways neoliberal capitalism produces food and the ways industrial agriculture dictates our eating, diet, and experiences with food as well as food insecurity and food injustice. Throughout the last year, as I have worked on my thesis, I have learned more about what types of organizations I can interact with in order to support the local food systems, and I question more the sources and effects of my food. Community gardens such as St. Luke’s garden do this as well by asking how we pay attention to food and our environment in our day-to-day lives, and how we incorporate care, spirituality, well-being, and social justice and race equity in our food and interactions with food.

Social spaces are also created by the relationships and labor between the natural and social objects in the space (Lefebvre 1974, 74). Thus, tending the garden, building it, growing the food, harvesting the food, and eating the food or donating it elsewhere all transform the garden space and the people working in it. This is true of a group of Oaxacan immigrant farmers in California who started a community garden. Their experiences gardening in Oaxaca, combined with their experiences farming in California, transform the way they tend the food they grow in their garden. This transformation reflects back onto their identities as growers and as immigrants as the relationships between the space and every aspect in it is created and changed (Minkoff-Zern 2012). Furthermore, as each garden is different (in what it grows, how it

is grown, who works in it and how, what the food is for, and so on) the space of each garden is different. These differences are inherently resistant to capitalist norms of standardized knowledge and production. However, the differences in space also account for the variation in how each garden interacts with neoliberal capitalism, whether resisting it, reinforcing it, or somewhere in between.

The gardens and the varieties in the gardens are made of not only the relationship between the growers and the materials in the garden, but also between each natural and social element of the garden. These structures influence the way the gardeners understand and interact with the garden, as well as the way each part of the garden (e.g., plants, materials, soil, tools, etc.) is shaped by those forces. Rev. Anna Shine's understanding of social justice and creation care as a way to promote food justice, which works to change the neoliberal capitalist food regime to be more just, shapes the way she frames the garden as a space to bring that understanding to others.

The social spaces of not only the community gardens but also the other organizations with which I worked were also spaces that rely on trust. The High Country Food Hub uses trust when the shoppers order on the online farmers' market. The shoppers do not get to see the food beforehand, so trust that it will be good. Recipients of the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank must trust that the food they receive will be in good condition and that it will be a certain amount of food for the week. The St. Luke's community garden relies on the trust of those working in and entering the garden to respect the garden space. The neoliberal idea of "value over values" is resisted in the existence of and reliance upon trust in these spaces. Also, the embeddedness of these spaces is high as not only do they provide food to people, they also create these spaces of trust and community.

This narrative supports Trauger's "the process is the work" perspective on food system change (2017, 127). Trauger argues that the public needs to advocate and work for change, resist the neoliberal regime, and engage in alternative food movements knowing that they are not perfect but that every effort helps. This is true of the organizations in my research as well, as they each both contribute to and resist the neoliberal food regime, but importantly put forward an effort to resist it.

Creation of Exclusionary Spaces

Within the creation of community garden spaces exists elements of exclusionary spaces as well. Food movements, as seen above with the term "food deserts" can put responsibility on the individual to make change to the food system. Community gardens can do this as well, as efforts to "upgrade" a neighborhood or improve it with community gardens can instead gentrify it (Rosol 2011). Furthermore, the gardeners who run community gardens tend to be middle-class, white gardeners because of the privilege they hold, which allows them to take the time and resources to upkeep the garden (Rosol 2011). This is consistent with the larger food movement that is dominated by whiteness and white privilege (Guthman 2011).

Community gardens also do not necessarily grow food that all people would eat. In other words, when community gardens produce and distribute food to a community, it is not necessarily culturally appropriate food. When Farm Church donates produce to the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank (as with the conflict of types of rice from a donor of theirs) the food may not be culturally appropriate and goes to food boxes that do not have the privilege to be culturally appropriate. Considerations such as cultural appropriateness of food are important parts of food justice but are often left behind.

Forms of Knowledge

Trauger talks about the use of permaculture as an anticapitalist mode of production (2017,110-112). Permaculture counters the scientific-based, expert knowledge-based industrial agriculture in practices and theory, and other forms of agriculture and knowledge do so as well. One of the more prevalent ways I saw community gardens resisting neoliberal capitalism was through the implementation of non-Western knowledges such as the use of biodynamics in the North Street Neighborhood Garden. Neoliberal capitalist knowledges enforce industrial agriculture, which is centered around scientific expertise, standardization, monocropping, and the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, among other practices. However, community gardens not only do not implement those practices, they also use other forms of knowledge and knowing.

Rev. Brimer of Farm Church talked about the farm being the main entity of the church, with the congregation being an aspect of the farm. Rev. Brimer understands the church as made up of the land rather than the people, and that the people are an addition to the church. This understanding gives agency to land, food, and the growing process, which resists the industrial agriculture ideas of agriculture that see land and food as something to be productive and then commodified. While Farm Church does not necessarily implement directly an alternative form of knowledge, the framing of and ideas behind the church enforce concepts that are not included in and also resist industrial agriculture.

Sandy Demeree of North Street Neighborhood uses biodynamics in the garden. Rev. Shine of St. Luke's Episcopal Church wants her intentional community to use Watershed Discipleship. She also connects faith and spirituality with agriculture and growing with food and justice. During her time in seminary, she meditated with specific trees multiple times each day

for many weeks. Throughout this meditation she began to notice more and more about the trees and her environment, and because of this practice was able to sense things like the changing of the seasons sooner than the people around her. She said that when you are paying attention, you start to notice these things more than others do. This, along with contributing to the sensory experience of working in the garden, is a form of practice and knowledge that counters the high-production, low-attention care of industrial agriculture.

Temporalities

This contradiction between high-production, quick-results industrial agriculture and high-care, multi-annual results community gardens is also expressed through temporalities of the spaces. Community gardens create “clashing temporalities,” where multiple time frames exist and cause tension in the garden space (Kotsila et al. 2020). Community gardens require physical labor and time in order to succeed in both growing food and delivering that food to people to eat. However, the temporalities created by that labor and time are dependent on slow growth, seasonal effects, and the care of the gardeners. That dependence creates a tension between the garden and the temporality of the neoliberal contexts of the garden. The garden needs a high level of structural support in order to provide social benefits, but the state provides a low amount of that support. Also, the garden’s success happens over a long and slow time frame, throughout a season and along many seasons, but municipal growth is fast and short-term, causing the temporalities of success in the garden to be at odds with each other (Kotsila 2020). In the garden where I used to eat community dinners, the clashing temporalities of care eventually caused the garden to end since the main gardener could not keep up with all the work by herself. While working in the garden I experienced this slow temporality as I went from the constantly busy

schedule of school to a few hours where I could slow down and not be rushed. Finally, gardens are affected by the time frame of seasonal patterns or irregularities, so their productivity and level of care required may be irregular. The amount of labor and care that a garden requires changes seasonally, involves time-sensitive tasks, and so is not consistent year-round. Late frosts, droughts, flooding, and other weather patterns may also make those temporalities subject to change.

These clashing temporalities exist in food networks that I researched in Boone and Durham. When I interviewed Rev. Allen Brimer of Farm Church and Margaret Rubiera of the Task Force for Food Security in Durham, they both talked about how community gardens should be a large part of our daily lives, but that creating community gardens is difficult, and the “huge, long-term commitments” (Rubiera 2020) make it hard for people to do that work (Rubiera 2020; Brimer 2020).

The Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank and the High Country Food Hub also engage with these clashing temporalities. Both organizations face the challenge of addressing immediate need for food relief for people who are food insecure as well as the need for long-term systemic change. Both organizations also counter the neoliberal temporality of a 9-5, Monday-Friday workweek by providing food to people on Wednesday afternoons. This practice “disrupts people’s typical purchasing patterns” (Ignatova 2021b) and makes it so one cannot just buy food at any time and from wherever but must come to a certain place at a certain time. This temporality challenges the neoliberal food regime’s market that is open virtually 24/7.

The community gardens and local farms of each area also engage with these clashing temporalities. As growth in the gardens is not guaranteed, the contributions from the garden to food security programs cannot be guaranteed either. Also, the care required for each garden is

large, and in the three with which I interacted the most, all three have one or a few people who are dedicated to committing that care and are then in charge of the garden. This counters neoliberal industrial agriculture because, while industrial farming also provides no guarantee of products, elements of industrial farming such as its scale are more aligned with the high-speed, high-production neoliberal market.

I also experienced these temporalities in the St. Luke's garden because I worked in it during the fall and the spring. The winter in the garden did not bring work, and the types of work, how difficult it was, and the time it took changed from the fall to the spring. For example, in the spring we worked on rebuilding the garden stairs and terraces, which we did through two of my workdays and during more of the days that Anna and Bill were there. Other activities like watering the garden can be required one or more times a day in the spring and summer, but can change depending on how rainy, dry, hot, or cool the season is. All of the tasks in the gardens contribute to the temporality of the garden that clashes with the neoliberal temporalities of consistency and of low-effort, high-profit.

The temporalities that exist within gardens draw attention to other elements of gardens as well. When gardeners engage in a slow, attentive care, they also pay attention to the sensory landscape of the garden, which is made clear by Shine's increased perception.

Degrowth

The concept of degrowth is a direct resistance to neoliberal capitalism. Aspects of alternative food and food systems can promote or support productivity and growth. For example, food banks' dependence on the global food regime forces them to operate on a principle of constant growth and production. Community gardens can aim for constant growth as well,

especially when they need to support themselves despite limitations and expectations from state powers (Rosol 2011). However, community gardens can also promote degrowth. They create relationships with other people and with the natural elements of the garden such as the earth and rain. The understanding of the earth and land as an entity with agency and the implementation of alternative knowledges are both characteristics of degrowth (Paulsen et al. 2020). By integrating characteristics of degrowth in community gardens, they resist neoliberal capitalism.

Alternative Food Systems and the Global Food Regime

Community gardens contribute to alternative food systems in multiple ways. Firstly, they can contribute food to the food system, such as the food donated to F.A.R.M. cafe and Hospitality House by St. Luke's community garden, or the food donated to the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank by Farm Church. Secondly, the people who work in community gardens also contribute to alternative food systems by talking about food and food justice. Rev. Anna Shine is passionate about food and growing, and incorporates food justice into her job, her faith, and many aspects of her life. Because of this passion and work she brings new people into the discourse of food justice, educating people and helping them support food and social justice as well. She also grows connections between St. Luke's and other food organizations, which helps strengthen the alternative food network of Boone. The Oconee County Food Sovereignty Movement helps bring together each component of the local food system, including producers, distributors, and consumers through Food Summits, the Food Policy Committee, and the creation and use of community food system goals (Townsend 2021). Each of these organizations augment their local alternative food systems.

Food Sovereignty

Community gardens can promote or create tension with food justice movements (such as through clashing temporalities (Kotsila et al. 2020), and they can also enact elements of food sovereignty in their practices and structures. The North Street Neighborhood garden supports the food sovereignty value of having the power of the food system in the hands of the community (Clendenning 2016) by growing whatever they want for themselves each year. Rev. Anna Shine brings food sovereignty ideals into the St. Luke's garden with the goals and passions: in her dream of creating a neighborhood with a food forest and a web of supporting elements, Shine brings in the idea of a self-supporting community that protects the natural resources of the area, establishes agrarian reform with landless people and women in control, and reorganizes the food trade for the individuals of the neighborhood so they can be self-sufficient and in control of their food. By having this understanding of how food communities can work, Shine brings these values into her work at St. Luke's Church and the St. Luke's garden as well.

Each of these sources does have elements of food sovereignty practices and ideals. However, one critique of U.S. food justice movements and efforts is that even if they do have elements of food sovereignty, that is not enough for them to create systemic change in a food sovereignty framework. Food sovereignty is about the “why” of the movement (and setting the intention to achieve that through relationships) rather than the practical “how.” It works to solve the problems of how to create a system where food is well provided and what values will be the foundation of the system rather than altering current systems with other values (Trauger 2017). Food sovereignty addresses the embeddedness of the market system and attempts to embed certain values. The Oconee County Food Sovereignty movement in South Carolina better

addresses this critique as it is framed around food sovereignty, and has goals that better align with those of other parts of the global food sovereignty movement.

Findings

In this section I return to my original research questions and incorporate them into the rest of my research. These questions are: How do community gardens create a sense of place and space? How do the sensory experiences of gardening, of eating, and of working in the food system contribute to those spaces? Under what conditions do those spaces promote food justice? Under what conditions do they rely upon and reinforce the neoliberal food regime? I do this to show that community gardens, alternative food, and neoliberal capitalism have complex and multilateral relationships.

After conducting this research and forming a broader understanding of food justice and alternative food systems, I came back to readdress and answer my research questions. I started this research with a conversation about how identity affects gardening and food security. Under what contexts do community gardens promote justice for people with varying identities? More specifically, how do race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, age, and ability affect the ways community garden spaces promote justice? The North Street Neighborhood in Durham is centered around people with disabilities. The garden is an important part of the numerous aspects of the community that bring people together and is accessible to all the people in the neighborhood. The garden empowers people of all abilities to plant and grow things, to learn about their food, to eat their food, and to come together in work and food. In this way, it is a space where people of different abilities are all enabled to garden. However, ability likely still affects access to growing food, who grows food, and how. Firstly, disability is a major factor in

risk of food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen and Nord, 2013). Secondly, differently-abled people may interact with the garden differently. For example, people who use wheelchairs may not be able to access the garden. Also, children with ADHD or other neurodivergencies may benefit from the sensory inputs of the garden as they are outside and working (Kuo and Taylor 2004).

Another factor in how identity affects community gardens is age. Bill Marr is partially retired, which gives him more time to work in the St. Luke's garden and commit enough time to it to make it successful. As a college student in my 20s with a job, my schedule during the school year did not permit me to keep a garden in the way Bill can. This is one of the ways I saw age affecting the ability to grow food and maintain a community garden. However, I did have free time to come to the garden workdays, and if I had different responsibilities or limitations such as being a parent or not being able to drive, I may not have participated in that way.

Age also affects agriculture beyond community gardens. In Oconee County, apple farming has decreased because farmers tend to be older, and as they retire, young people (children of the farmers or otherwise) do not take over the farming business, so the farms close down and the farmland may be lost (Townsend 2021). This increases food insecurity in the area as local farming decreases. This created a need to reinvigorate the local food network to fight food injustice and insecurity, which the Oconee County Food Sovereignty Movement does, and the Walhalla Community Garden does as well as a part of the Oconee County movement. This problem and the Oconee County movement are not solitary happenings in the United States. In the Hudson Valley in New York, farmers “eat, sleep, and drink the bottom line- profitability” (Trask in Gray 2014, 71) in order to keep their land and farms rather than giving it up to industrial agriculture (Gray 2014). Other growing land is being lost to development besides farms. In Boone, North Carolina, Appalachian State's Roots Community Garden was threatened

by development, but the community members came together and protested the decision and saved it. We can conclude that age does affect community gardening in many ways, whether helping people access and work in community gardens or causing further food insecurity and the need for alternative food systems.

Race and ethnicity also affect the way community gardens promote food justice. Firstly, the concept of food apartheid helps us understand how race and class are significant determining factors in food insecurity. The framework of food justice is focused on bringing racial justice and equity to the neoliberal food regime. Therefore, when we analyze community gardens through a food justice perspective, we must analyze how race affects them and is affected by them. In my experiences during this research, race was prevalent in two ways. Firstly, almost everyone I worked with and/or spoke to appeared white. This is partially because the population of Boone is 94.8% white (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c). This is also because most of my connections to people within the alternative food network are connections to people who appear white. However, this is also because whiteness can dominate food system work (Conrad 2020 and Guthman 2011). Furthermore, the presence of white feminism in food movements brings individuals or organizations into a competitive, white world, forcing those individuals and organizations to vie for their own success, rather than transforming the world to support individual and community success (Beck 2021a). Recognizing the ways and reasons that whiteness dominated my experiences during this research supports the assertion that race does affect food justice and food justice work in alternative food systems and specifically in community gardens. My understanding of how community gardens interact with food systems is limited by these experiences and may be incomplete because of them.

The second way race was prevalent in my research was during my work with the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank. Iglesia Emanuel is a church with a mostly latinx congregation, and the food bank serves a mostly Latinx population. When I spoke with Ramirez-Eve about the bank, he noted that the Latino community was experiencing higher rates of unemployment and food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing the need for the food bank (Ramirez-Eve 2020). Here, race and ethnicity both affect food insecurity in Durham during COVID-19 in addition to food apartheid in the city, but also affect the way the food bank works, for whom, and why. One of the practices of the Iglesia Emanuel Food Bank is that it does not ask any questions of the people who receive food. This practice and others support the accessibility of the food bank for the community benefiting from it. From each organization in my research and through the framework of food justice, it is clear that race and ethnicity impact community gardens, alternative food networks, and food justice.

While these were the two ways in which racial and ethnic identities came up most in my work, there exist other significant and important aspects of race and ethnicity in community gardens. Indigeneity is one of those aspects: “through the process of community gardening, immigrants find a new interpretation of their own shifting indigenous identity, based on culinary and agrarian practices in a new place” (Minkoff-Zern 2012, 381).

Gender also impacts food justice and community gardens. The large majority of the people with whom I worked were female-presenting. Women run most of the gardens I learned about. Community gardens rely on volunteer labor, and that labor tends to disproportionately fall on women in the community. This causes injustices in the responsibilities of food and labor based on gender. During my volunteering at High Country Food Hub, the majority of people with whom I worked were women. High Country Food Hub was started by Blue Ridge Women

in Agriculture, so the presence of female leadership is integral to the way both organizations support and fulfill their missions. While the prevalence of female leadership in community gardens promotes progressive gender politics (Rosol 2011) and combats the injustices mentioned above, having largely female- and white-presenting leadership shows not only the presence of whiteness in alternative food but also the presence of white feminism in alternative food. This presence of whiteness and white feminism can cause alternative food spaces to be exclusionary spaces because whiteness and white femininity is coded in those spaces and considered to be the universal norm for successful alternative food (Guthman 2011, Beck 2021a). In other words, this dominance in both leadership and general workforce limits perspectives in alternative food work to largely the perspective of white women. Each of the organizations does recognize that whiteness may be coded in their work, and while making efforts to address this (such as making their information available in Spanish), whiteness may still be coded in those spaces (Guthman 2011).

Geographic location also impacts community gardens. The alternative food system of Watauga county is influenced by the fact that the county is in a rural area in the Appalachian region of North Carolina, with 163.4 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau 2019c). Durham is a more populated, larger city in the Piedmont, with 935.7 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau 2019a). The rural versus urban populations affect what type of alternative food is needed due to factors like transportation, farmland, household situations, and so on. Another geographical factor is where and how the community gardens are situated. As we have seen, the location of a garden when it is close to highly-trafficked areas of a city, like on a greenway, increases its accessibility as compared to a garden that is fenced in and further away.

Identity does affect how community gardens promote justice. Community gardens may or may not promote food justice in a variety of ways and at the same time, in part due to these factors. As I researched, I considered how community gardens spaces do or do not reinforce the neoliberal food regime. More specifically, I thought about how various individual factors of community gardens (e.g., the privatization of land versus the use of land as commons) worked within or outside of neoliberal capitalist theory and practice. As analyzed in this thesis, community gardens interact with the neoliberal food regime in multiple ways. They can resist neoliberal capitalism, such as the way community gardens may implement non-capitalist ontological political ecologies (e.g., Demeree's use of biodynamics in the North Street Neighborhood garden). However, they can also be limited by neoliberal capitalism. Materials, seeds, soil, and plants can be examples of this when they are bought from the capitalist market. Finally, practices in community gardens can reinforce the neoliberal food regime. Sometimes, the variety in these interactions comes from a variety of practices among different gardens. For example, the community gardens in Athens, Greece, are a mix of publicly and privately owned spaces, and therefore each have different implications for justice (Kotsila et al. 2020).

Community gardens can also have different practices within one garden that each affect and are affected by the neoliberal food regime differently: in the St. Luke's garden, Bill Marr's leadership of the garden does not resist the neoliberal hierarchies of power, but the incorporation of religion and spirituality, growing and agriculture, social justice and food justice, and alternative forms of knowledge together in the garden space does resist industrial agriculture's "scientific-only" framing. Importantly, singular aspects of a community garden may both resist and reinforce neoliberal capitalism at the same time. When Rev. Anna Shine brings works to bring social justice and creation care together in the community garden to affect food justice, it

reinforces the neoliberal food regime because it legitimizes the existing system as the norm. However, it also resists this system in its implementation as an alternative lifestyle and framework to gardening, faith, and food. The fact that singular aspects may both reinforce and resist neoliberal capitalism creates tensions within the garden space and the larger food justice movement.

These tensions show how community gardens exist in the food justice movement as agents of justice and agents of the global food regime. In my research, I asked how community garden spaces promote food justice or do not promote food justice, and by understanding how they engage with neoliberal capitalism and identity helped me answer this question.

Community gardens, as with their resistance to the neoliberal food regime, can promote justice, perpetuate injustice, or do neither. Almost every part of the alternative food systems with which I interacted was a part of the food system dominated by whiteness, which is both a limitation of my research design and of the criticism of the food system that food justice brings. The gardens also use their privilege to grow food outside of the neoliberal system, but in my case studies do not work to change system policy that creates that neoliberal system in the first place. On the other hand, in Leipzig, Germany, urban gardens exist in abandoned and vacant lots and are meant to be spaces of protest against municipal failures, thus protesting food system policy (Kotsila et al. 2020). In 2020, Neal Curran of Reinvestment Partners noted an active project to change food policy as well. The food policy program on which he is working addresses food insecurity outside of the alternative food system (through the healthcare system instead) that may be more effective in bringing food security and food justice. This applies to community gardens as well, as they can contribute to food justice through the donation of non-commodified food to

food organizations, among other ways. However, these donations often go to food banks, which reinforce the neoliberal food regime.

However, each garden also works to promote justice. St. Luke's community garden promotes food justice by donating its food to the Hospitality House and F.A.R.M. Cafe and through the incorporation of social justice into creation care and into the church. Farm Church as a congregation is actively thinking about how their relationship to the neighborhood around them is impacted by inequality, and how they need to bring race equity into their relationship with the neighborhood as well as their actions as a farm with a congregation (Brimer 2020). The North Street Neighborhood garden promotes food justice by supporting a community that supports and centers around people with disabilities. People with disabilities have an increased chance of experiencing food insecurity (Heflin 2021), and the North Street Neighborhood's community garden and community support helps counteract this. Each of these gardens does work to promote justice, but may not get at the root of injustices in the food system.

One of the components to my understanding of community gardens is an analysis of the spaces that they create; more specifically how those spaces are created and how they contribute to food justice. In doing so, I looked at the way the sensory experiences of gardening, of eating, and of working in the food system contribute to community garden spaces. As shown above, sensory experiences are an integral part of the creation of community garden space. Interacting with the food through the labor of the garden, noticing the sensory landscape of the garden, experiencing eating the food, and framing the purpose of the garden creates a relationship among the parts of the garden and the people who work in the garden that contributes to the space of the garden. Gardens are seen as empowering, healing spaces because of the sensory landscape that working in the garden creates. This landscape contributes to the space of the garden and helps

transform that space and its relationship with its contexts (the neoliberal capitalist food regime, food justice, etc). Including and beyond the sensory landscape, my research helped me answer the question “What spaces do community gardens create?”

Community gardens create complex spaces that are transformed by the labor, temporalities, and frameworks of the garden and the gardeners. These spaces promote local food, community support, food justice, and a discourse of food and food justice among members of the community and food network. They create spaces that are resistant to neoliberal capitalism. They also create spaces that may reinforce the neoliberal capitalist food regime and race and class privilege. These spaces hold tensions among their forces, causes, and effects within themselves and among different community garden spaces, and the tensions transform the space as much as each of the elements do individually. Community gardens create these spaces in a number of ways that each support and contradict each other. In order to better understand that, I asked how community gardens create a sense of place and space.

Community gardens create a sense of place and space in many ways. The sensory experiences of working in the garden, the experiences of growing one’s own food and then eating it or contributing it to the food system, and the social and emotional impacts of working in and interacting with the garden create that space and the way the individuals understand, think, and feel about it. The implementation of various forms of knowledge in the garden space and how those ontologies may both resist and be limited by neoliberal capitalist food structures create that space. The production of food within a market society creates that space, as well as the way that food exists as a counter to market society and contributes to organizations that depend on that market society to create that space. The hierarchy of each garden creates that garden space, and the use of land (whether private or public, rural or urban, contested or not, enclosed or open, or

accessible or less accessible) creates that space. In each aspect of the community garden, space is created, transformed, and maintained, and impacted by the world around it.

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