

**FOOD SECURITY,
THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM AND LOCAL RESISTANCE:
A CASE STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK OF OTTAWA**

by Erika Westman, B.A.

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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ABSTRACT

Many have asked the question, what is an effective form of resistance to the social and environmental degradation rooted in the processes of economic globalization. In theorizing social and environmental change, David Harvey points to the importance of examining the dialectical relationship between place-based movements and the more abstract spatial relations of globalization. While Harvey focuses on labour-capital relations in his application of dialectics, I place more emphasis on resistance that takes place within a community-based movement. I draw on feminist theorists who stress the value of making connections between micro and macro scales of analysis. They have advanced a tradition of social research methods that allows for the exploration of micro-scale social relations. Actor-network theory adds another significant dimension to researching social change by arguing against dualistic formulations of local and global actors. In this thesis, the Community Garden Network, a local initiative, is observed as it creates spaces of resistance to the dominant global food system.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Erika: So is [learning] part of the reason that you continue with community gardens?

Molly:¹ Absolutely... I just like the whole environment of always learning something new. I love being able to put it into practice immediately and see the physical results in the garden... And not just about the garden part itself but I've learned so much about our society. And the whole food production aspects have really actually knocked me off my feet, some of the things I've learned about our food production...

Erika: Oh yah, like what?

Molly: Um, well like how one company can have many subsidiary companies... We did a grocery store tour once and... we were looking at the bread aisle. And there was, you know, ten different labels and ten different names and you think, "oh, you're getting ten different breads from ten different companies." It was all coming from the same place... Which means there's so much control of what you're eating that's coming out of one place. And I found that a bit scary... And stuff like how the chemical companies bind the farmers to buy their product and bind them to use only that seed and only that pesticide and just how controlled that makes the environment with stuff that's, that's iffy as far as our health goes. It was a real eye-opener.

Erika: Yah. So how does community gardening fit in with that?

Molly: Well, it's nice to have the freedom. I put the seed in the ground, it comes up, I know nobody has sprayed it, nobody has genetically altered it... I feel very confident when I'm eating out of my garden... So, I mean I'm not about to survive without grocery stores, um, but I think... the security of the quality of my food has just been raised probably forty percent... So yah, I could see it really changing the way that people think about the land that they walk on, about what they do with everything from your toilet water to your food scraps in your kitchen... It could change the physical landscape of the city...

Erika: ...I wanted to ask you about that, um, you know the whole issue of agency... Do people have the power to change these things?

Molly: Yah, yah, no question, no question. Whether or not you're conscious of it. My whole family, which is ten people... I mean if you include the extended it must be forty people, um, they have all changed. My sister started a garden in her yard, cause she said my own excitement was so contagious. So she's growing her own food and getting right into it. Her kids are learning. So all, the attitudes that are necessary to maintain a garden become a part of your life. You know, how to care for the soil, the whole cycle of what goes into you goes back into the ground comes out of the ground and being a part of all that cycle. So you can't not have an impact; that's being an agent of change.

The above discussion is an excerpt from an interview I conducted with a community gardener in Ottawa. It articulates the many acts of resistance that emerge

from the community gardens movement: raising awareness about the insecurities of the capitalist mode of food production, changing city dwellers' relationship to food production and the land, transforming the physical landscape of the city, and spreading the movement through networks of family, or, institutions and society in general. Molly's experience shows that community-based movements can be an important force for social and environmental transformation. Yet David Harvey (1996: 32-45, 203-204, 350-353, 424-426) warns that local movements forming their resistance within particularistic, place-based circumstances may neglect the central role played by global capital in broader, systemic forms of oppression. "The contemporary emphasis on the local, while it enhances certain kinds of sensitivities, totally erases others and thereby truncates rather than emancipates the field of political engagement and action" (Harvey 1996: 353).

Militant particularism

Harvey begins his influential book, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (1996), with a chapter on militant particularism, a key concept in his consideration of the tensions between particularistic and universalistic approaches to social change. The concept of militant particularism is drawn from the work of Raymond Williams, who noted that social movements arising from a collection of particular experiences of injustice located in place are able to mobilize a strong resistance by appealing to more general interests.

The unique and extraordinary character of working class self-organization has been that it has tried to connect particular struggles to a general struggle in one quite special way. It has set out, as a movement, to make real what is at first sight the extraordinary claim that

the defence and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact the general interest (Williams in Harvey 1996: 32).

Harvey interprets the concept of militant particularism as such:

Ideals forged out of the affirmative experience of solidarities in one place get generalized and universalized as a working model of a new form of society that will benefit all of humanity. This is what Williams means by “militant particularism” (Harvey 1996: 32).

The challenge in drawing a universal movement out of local community experiences, however, is to address the more general social processes involved that are not immediately apparent at the local level. As Dave Featherstone points out (1998: 20), the key is in just *how* particular movements can be “properly brought together”. Harvey also recognizes the centrality of this process:

And here is the rub. The move from tangible solidarities understood as patterns of social life organized in affective and knowable communities to a more abstract set of conceptions that would have universal purchase involves a move from one level of abstractions – attached to place – to another level of abstraction capable of reaching out across space (Harvey 1996: 33).

Harvey attaches several diverse movements to the concept of militant particularism. These include certain groups of environmentalists and feminists who call for particular kinds of social reconstruction for global ecological and social benefits, American civil rights activists who seek universal racial justice, and historically, the French Revolutionaries who made appeals for “the rights of man”. In his considerations of social change however, Harvey, like Williams, concentrates on working class resistance to capitalism which he ascribes to the traditions of Marxism. Because he is troubled by the possibility that such a diversity of militant particularisms may cause a “paralysis of progressive politics” (Harvey 1996: 358), Harvey makes the attempt to draw together the concerns of these diverse movements into a universal struggle against capitalism.

On the other side of this coin, however, the effort to unite opposition to the injustices of economic globalization may lead to the negation of the particular movements that give rise to more general struggles of liberation. Indeed, socialist politics has been criticized for neglecting the interests of women (Hamilton 1996), and workers' interests often come into conflict with the interests of some environmentalists (Harvey 1996).

In *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*, Harvey attempts to strike a balance between these two scales of action -- the local and the global, place and space, the particular and the universal -- by developing a dialectical approach to concerns of environmental and social justice (1996: 46-68).

Dialectics

For my analysis, the most important points to be drawn out of Harvey's principles of dialectics are the following: 1) the agency of each entity within a social structure according to internalized social relations, 2) the significance of recognizing contradictions within a system as catalysts for social change, 3) the question of how social structures sustain the appearance of permanence and stability, 4) the importance of symbolic capital in struggles over material resources, and 5) the imagining of possible worlds (Harvey 1996: 46-68). Each of these dialectical principles will be described briefly in the paragraphs that follow.

Dialectics offers an ontology and a method of inquiry that is quite unlike Cartesianism's dualistic explanation of the world (Merrifield 1993; Harvey 1996). A dualistic framework positions different sets of social actors, such as community gardeners

and global food corporations, as unrelated opposites.² Unlike Cartesian dualities, opposing or antithetical social forces in dialectics are mutually constitutive rather than singularly distinctive from each other.

In a dialectical framework, the grassroots community gardens movement, for example, is not entirely separate from the governing structures of the city. Rather, community gardeners internalize municipal policies and planning through their social and spatial relations with the city. Likewise, the municipal government internalizes community gardens as they incorporate the interests of community gardeners. Municipal policy makers and community gardeners are tied in a dialectical relationship whereby the relations between them form each entity, to some extent. As such, community gardeners are in a cyclical process of transformation as they form some of their own interests and activities in relation to the city's plans and policies, and, as they transform municipal policies through the relations between them. The two social entities are mutually constituted through interaction and internalization.

This mutuality means that no social being is purely the subject nor is any purely the object of social force, but each entity in society has some purchase in the other social agents to which it relates. In other words, each entity has agency, although it should be noted that the weight of agency depends upon a particular context of power relations.

The flux that takes place among the complex web of agents within a social system necessarily produces contradictions within the system. Contradictions are key to initiating social transformation, as they give legitimacy to calls for change. For instance, the prevalence of hunger in a world that produces a surplus of food is a contradiction that points out the need to address the inadequacies of the industrial food system. Ideological,

symbolic, and material struggles are significant to the processes of social change as they make the contradictions of the social system more apparent.

The principles of dialectics emphasize the dynamic flux of social systems as different agents within the whole system struggle over how the social world should be. Any appearance of “permanence” and stability is only a particular manifestation of how power functions to sustain its relative position of dominance in this dynamic social process. Social norms, governing ideologies, legal systems, cultural symbols, and material circumstances all help to sustain the dominant social order. Scrutinizing the processes that create the appearance of stability by sustaining particular social relations and systems is a major part of dialectical enquiry.

It is fairly evident that material structures help to sustain social systems so long as they remain permanent. However, ideology can also be a significant factor in maintaining the apparent stability of social structures. Likewise, the spaces and symbols of social struggle are central to the evolution of material and ideological systems. Ideological contestation is key to changing the material circumstances of life. This notion was central to the work of Gramsci who built on Marx’s idea that,

a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production... and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic -- in short, ideological forms in which men [sic] become conscious of this conflict and fight it out (Marx in Moore 1996: 127).

A dialectic of material and ideological conditions is fundamental to struggles over power and the transformation of social systems.

By emphasizing the mutual interdependence of culture and politics, Gramsci underscored how symbolic struggles effect material transformation. Values and beliefs mobilize action, shape social identities, and condition understandings of collective interests... Gramsci’s notion of hegemony -- that is, the process through which dominant representations color, yet never determine, practical consciousness and everyday lived

experiences -- reminds us that dominant meanings are continually contested, never totalizing, and are always unstable (Moore 1996: 127).

In tandem with ideological resources, there are also imaginative forces that play upon the instability of a social system. What Harvey (1996) refers to as an exploration of “possible worlds” is the abstract construction of alternative social forms. Integral to transformative processes is the imagining of new identities and social orders. This exploration of possible worlds is a continual part of current social processes. Rather than constructing social systems solely on known truths or general laws, the social world is continually experimenting with possible worlds, or the better worlds of our imagination. In Harvey’s application of dialectics he maintains that our imagined worlds become internalized to form real social systems.

I have used these principles of dialectics to analyze my research on the global food system and the Community Garden Network of Ottawa (CGN), the results of which will be presented in chapters three and four. There we will see that the conditions of food insecurity within the global food system give rise to resistance. The Community Garden Network offers spaces wherein an alternative system of food production is encouraged through material, ideological, and imaginative practices of resistance within local-global networks. As a point of focus for the thesis, I consider the spatial dialectic of the dominant global food system and the Community Garden Network with reference to food security.³

More broadly, my research elaborates on the connections between macro and micro scales of theory, research, and politics. As Harvey indicates, macro-analysis is extremely useful for pointing to the systemic injustices of large-scale social systems.

Micro-analysis, on the other hand, identifies key processes of social resistance and mobilization that occur in particular places.

However, in my approach to the politics of resistance amid these two scales, I have found that Harvey's work is limited in its engagement with the local. Indeed Harvey is rather cautious in his acceptance of militant particularisms that respond to globalization by appealing to the "possible worlds" of community (1996: 424-426). As Harvey rightly points out, drawing on mythical notions of community has limitations for dealing with the injustices and alienation of globalization and contemporary urban life.

[By] abstracting from the dialectic of thing-process relations, our vision of the possibilities for social action becomes so restricted by the rhetoric of community as frequently to be self-nullifying if not self destructive to the initial aims, however well intentioned (Harvey 1996: 426).

Nonetheless, there are examples of community-oriented social movements that do address the more complex dialectics of space and place, as my examination of the Community Garden Network will show. Yet Harvey's misgivings about community-based movements seem to have led him away from a serious consideration of their potential to create and sustain alternatives to the globalization of capital. Dave Featherstone has identified this limitation in Harvey's writings as well:

Harvey's reluctance to engage with micro-political "actually existing alternatives" is a weakness which makes his use of the term *socialism* drift as an entity divorced from people's lives, something which they can aspire to, perhaps, but not be active in constituting (Featherstone 1998: 21).

Certainly, Harvey repeatedly states that each social being is an active agent in the dialectical production of social systems. However, while Harvey has successfully articulated the dialectic of the particular and the universal in *theory*, a clear example of the processes that emerge between place and space is missing from his writings. In order

to fill in these gaps in Harvey's research of the local-global dialectic, I apply feminist theory and actor-network theory to my research methodologies and analysis of the community gardens movement. Both of these theoretical frameworks will be described in the latter part of this introduction.

Harvey's perplexing politics

First, however, I wish to further address the ambiguity in Harvey's writing regarding his approach to the dialectic between place and space. Within the complexity of *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* it is clear that Harvey is encouraging a politics that addresses the particularities of diverse communities of resistance while it tackles the large-scale oppression of the capitalist mode of production. The centrality of the concept of militant particularism in Harvey's work indicates that he is striving to accommodate both micro and macro processes of social change. Yet, as Featherstone points out, Harvey's attempt to draw out the articulation of places and spaces through the concept of militant particularism,

is immediately made difficult by Harvey's refusal to engage adequately with some of the contradictions and ambiguities which run through Williams' writings... He derives his version of the concept of militant particularism from Williams in a quite uncritical way, rather than reconstructing it through situating his writings in their particular political and social context. The residual corporatist labor politics of areas like South Wales formed the problematic for Williams' political engagement, but remained locked in a rather uncritical invocation of a "genuine and real community" and did not engage with how... they were bound together by what were essentially male forms of solidarity... Harvey's reluctance to situate Williams' writing makes it hard to "generalize" the notion of militant particularism and to wrench it away from its rootedness in particular Fordist social relations. Thus the writing in [*Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*] around the concept reproduces a politics which is at times hardened and fixed, rather than creating something more pliable which could have formed an appropriate tool for understanding possible political action in fractured and unstable social realities (Featherstone 1998: 20).

While Harvey's theoretical understanding of the dialectics of place and space remains flexible and accommodating, the "hardened and fixed" nature of Harvey's politics is most clearly shown by the examples of injustice and social resistance that Harvey engages with in *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*. I will describe one of these examples in detail shortly. Included among them are events such as the closure of a car manufacturing plant in Oxford, a chief economist at the World Bank writing on how sensible it is to dump toxic waste in the "Third World", and a fire at a chicken processing plant in which several workers died. These examples of injustice and the possibilities for resistance that are therein implied point to Harvey's predilection to privilege the conventional (macro) categories of political economy: class, capital, production, and labour in particular. Busch and Juska (1997) suggest that these "agents" of political economic analyses are *metaphors* for far more complex social relations. They ask, what does it mean to say that state policies favor the growth of multinational corporations? Where did those policies come from? Who benefits from reifying the state, from turning it into an unstoppable behemoth that pushes everything in its way to the side? (Busch and Juska 1997: 691).

Using actor-network theory, to be described in more detail below, Busch and Juska indicate that a closer look at the micro-processes involved in the formation of large-scale power structures is necessary in order to open spaces for alternatives.

Nonetheless, it is indeed useful to analyze social systems according to the meta-categories of political economy. Much can be learned from such examples and Harvey is not wrong to investigate them. However, in the following paragraphs I wish to draw attention to the possible effects of Harvey's text which brings class and capital to the foreground while the social processes that emerge from community-oriented resistance (and other militant particularisms) are left in the background (see also Featherstone 1998;

Galano and Lipietz 1998; Young 1998). Less attention to the micro-scale in *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* makes Harvey's application of the dialectics of place and space problematic.

With the example of the Imperial Foods chicken factory fire in North Carolina, Harvey tries to show how particularistic concerns such as feminism, racial equality and class oppression can be brought together in a general resistance to the injustices of capitalism. As Harvey explains it (1996: 334-346), North Carolina's "friendly business environment" often translates into minimal enforcement of health and safety standards for manufacturers. On the day of the fire at the chicken factory in Hamlet, North Carolina, the exit doors were locked. The workers were trapped inside the factory as twenty-five of them died and fifty-six were injured. The chicken factory had not been inspected for health and safety standards for eleven years, and continued to operate with no fire extinguishers, no sprinkler system, nor any safety exit doors. Because the factory was located in a relatively small and remote town -- in a context of rural agricultural transitions from family farm bankruptcies to the dominance of large-scale mechanized food production -- the people of Hamlet were vulnerable to the exploitative conditions of the chicken factory which was the sole opportunity for employment for much of the town's population (Harvey 1996: 335-337).

In the heyday of labour politics, Harvey implies that an event such as the chicken factory fire might have initiated mass protests. He laments the lack of political mobilization to follow the 1991 factory fire in North Carolina. According to Harvey, many of the chicken factory workers' deaths could have been avoided were it not for the oppressive working conditions of the factory. Because the work force included women

and minorities, Harvey sees this event as an opportunity for feminists, anti-racists, and workers to unite against the oppressive forces of capitalism under the umbrella of class politics. Yet, as Harvey observed, the fire received little attention from the media and political activists. Events that drew more public attention at the time of the fire were concerned with the racial tensions that exploded after the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles and the feminist concerns with work place harassment marked by the trial of US Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas. Harvey is critical of the fragmentary politics that ensue from particularistic concerns.

This weakening of working-class politics... can be tracked back to many causes... one contributory feature has been the increasing fragmentation of “progressive” politics around special issues and the rise of the so-called new social movements focusing on gender, race, ethnicity, ecology, sexuality, multi-culturalism, community, and the like (Harvey 1996: 341).

He argues on behalf of the tremendous political significance of the fire in Hamlet, North Carolina:

of the 25 people who died in the Hamlet fire, 18 were women and 12 were African-American... The commonality that cuts across race and gender lines in this instance is quite obviously that of class and it is not hard to see the immediate implication that a simple, traditional form of class politics could have protected the interests of women and minorities as well as those of white males. And this in turn raises important questions of exactly what kind of politics, what definition of social justice, and of ethical and moral responsibility, is adequate to the protection of such exploited populations irrespective of their race and gender (Harvey 1996: 338).

Here, Harvey is stating that “a simple, traditional form of class politics” can encompass racial diversity and women, and can therefore adequately address oppression whether it is based on race, gender, or class. Although he refers to the specific case of the fire in North Carolina, the above quotation indicates that Harvey’s narrative tends to generalize the facts that he draws from that case. Indeed, a class based justice movement could have saved the lives of all the racial groups and genders involved in the chicken factory.

However, Harvey uses this point to animate the more general questions of defining social justice, ethics, and politics thereby creating the impression that a simple, traditional form class politics is adequate for all instances of racial, sexual, and class exploitation.

While recognizing the importance of local and particularistic resistance, Harvey implies that all significant forms of resistance should be funnelled into a global form of class politics. My concern is that Harvey's illustrations of his analysis can lead to the exclusion of some significant alternatives to capitalism that emerge outside of class politics. It is for this reason that I have focused my research on the local community gardens movement. Iris Marion Young is also wary of Harvey's politics in this regard.

It is both theoretically and politically counterproductive, it seems to me, to construct an account of our recent history as a fall away from the more correct class-based universalist politics to a fragmented and relativist politics of difference and to suggest, however qualifiedly, that progressives ought to abandon the latter and return to the earlier, more correct road. We should not interpret our current theoretical and political situation as a choice between universal and particular, class unity and the recognition of social difference, but rather as a challenge to move beyond these oppositions. Much of what Harvey says in [Chapter 12 of *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference*] does in fact take up this challenge, but in other ways he wrongly reinforces the opposition... Does it make sense to attribute a decline in class-based political organizing in the United States to a diverting of political energies to movements organizing on issues of race, gender, sexuality, environment, and the like? Would feminist women have joined strike support committees if they had not been organizing battered women's shelters? (Young 1998: 37-38).

Young's reading of Harvey points to the confusion that exists in Harvey's writings regarding the dialectic of place and space. On the one hand, Harvey suggests a form of global resistance that incorporates the diversity of militant particularisms based on, for instance, environmental, feminist, and civil rights movements. Yet on the other hand he identifies class politics as the ultimate category of resistance. How does Harvey extract this political allegiance from a dialectical approach to social and environmental change? Key to this ambiguity is Harvey's politics, which are wrapped up in Marxian analyses of

capitalism (Galano and Lipietz 1998). With these biases, an unpacking of Harvey's text requires a more careful examination of his class politics.

Class politics in the moment of production and labour-capital relations

Only through critical re-engagement with political-economy, with our situatedness in relation to capital accumulation, can we hope to re-establish a conception of social justice as something to be fought for as a key value within an ethics of political solidarity built across different places (Harvey 1996: 360).

In Harvey's conceptualization of social and environmental justice, class is at the core of effective resistance. Harvey defines class in a rather open and all-encompassing manner to mean "*the situatedness or positionality in relation to processes of capital accumulation*" (1996: 359; emphasis in original). Through the diverse and complex processes that build class politics, Harvey hopes to sustain a struggle to transform or revolutionize the socio-ecological processes of capitalist accumulation. In particular, it is the moment of production that Harvey considers key to generating an effective force of resistance to the concerted power of globalized capital. Following Marx, Harvey feels that the realm of production is the space where the greatest transformative power is held. "Production predominates not only over itself... but over other moments as well" (Marx in Harvey 1996: 63).

Marx... insists that the point of maximum leverage, the point of maximum transformative capacity and, in the famous last instance, the "moment" which exercises a "determinant" transformative power over the system as a whole lies within rather than without the domain of production. Transformative activities in other domains then only have relevance for the process as a whole when they are internalized within the production moment... *The* transformative moment in the whole process resides at the moment of production and... it is there where we have to concentrate our attention if we wish to understand the creative mechanisms by which the process (in this case the circulation of capital) is reconstituted, transformed, or enhanced (Harvey 1996: 64; emphasis in original).

An ambiguity exists here regarding the term “moment of production”. Is Harvey using the term in a strict sense to refer to capitalist-industrial production (i.e. the factory) or does he take it to mean something broader (i.e. any production of material “things”)? This question is key since he has identified the moment of production as the “point of maximum leverage” for social change. Unfortunately, Harvey does not explicitly define the moment of production. Harvey’s definition of class is broad enough to include every person on the planet since we are all, in some way or another, situated in relation to the processes of capital accumulation. However, the moment of production implies something much more specific. Harvey has distinguished production from other moments such as those of exchange, distribution, and consumption – although all moments are related in the dialectical whole of capitalism (1996: 64). Furthermore, given the examples with which he engages politically, it is relatively clear that Harvey identifies primarily with conventional class politics, the relations between labour and capital, and the places of capitalist production as the most efficacious spheres of resistance and social transformation.

The sense that Harvey applies a more strict usage of “production” is furthered by Harvey’s interest in labour. As Harvey explains, it is “the appropriation of all manner of creative possibilities and powers of the labourer... that allows capital to ‘be’ in the world at all” (1996: 65). The point of production not only signifies generalized material transformation, but is more specifically the point at which the powers of the labouring class are transformed into the power of the capitalist class. Harvey therefore indicates that by centring pressure for social change within the realm of labour we can gain the

most direct access to the transformative power of production as well as the overbearing power of capital.

By prioritizing a reductive class politics over other militant particularisms it seems that for Harvey, capital dominates the social and environmental world and is the primary source of injustice. Therefore, he suggests that liberation struggles should be focused on a collective anti-capitalist resistance.

Harvey it seems is so dazzled by capitalism that he cannot in describing its chaotic, wasteful, asphyxiating grip on our imaginations and lives seem to imagine anything which can oppose it except a meta-socialism ingrained with its own iron mask of totality (Featherstone 1998: 24).

In order to represent Harvey's position fairly, he recognizes the difficulties that this type of politics presents:

Only a global revolution, so the myth has it, can change anything. Opposed to this is the idea that the space-place dialectic is ever a complicated affair, that globalization is really a process of uneven geographical and historical (spatio-temporal) development that creates a variegated terrain of anti-capitalist struggles (1996: 437).

Yet this acknowledgement of the complexities of the space-place dialectic is further confused when Harvey reveals his commitment to a Marxist politics that weighs more on the side of universalism rather than particularism:

What Marx was interested in was *revolution*. He was concerned to understand how the *totality* of social ordering that constituted capitalism could change; how, in short, capitalism might be overthrown... This converges directly on the single most important question: what are the necessary and sufficient conditions to transform the structure of capitalist social ordering to produce an alternative kind of society called "socialist" or "Communist"? Marx's conclusion was quite simple and, I think, indubitably correct: the only way to transcend capitalism was through a class struggle waged against capitalist class and their associated interests across all moments of the social process (1996: 107; emphasis in original).

While Harvey accepts Marx's politics with little hesitation I am more apprehensive of the processes involved in the movement towards such a broad class struggle. I agree with

Harvey's general point that local movements can be more universally effective by attending to the dialectic of place and space, within which capitalism is an incredibly dominating power. However, the concerns of local communities may not all fit into a revolutionary Marxist agenda, nor should they necessarily if capitalist processes are not at the root of their concerns.

Furthermore, as Harvey recognizes, one of the fundamental difficulties in overthrowing the totality of capitalism across all moments is that capitalism is a complex and self-contradictory process of uneven development (Smith 1984). That is to say that capitalism manifests itself differently and often in contradiction to its own totality according to the conditions of the places in which capital becomes material. If capitalist development is an uneven process, then how are we to revolutionize the totality of capitalism through a universal form of resistance? Granted, it is highly beneficial to recognize and organize around the common patterns of economic globalization over vast geographical scales as Williams' concept of militant particularism suggests. However, place-based movements may be able to respond more appropriately to the particular manifestations of injustice -- some of which move beyond the injustices of capitalism -- across space.

It seems that Harvey's vision of resistance is less focused on place-based examples of dialectical processes that emerge from the diversity of new social movements. Harvey uses a somewhat rhetorical argument to back up his call for a global class resistance:

But why should we commit ourselves to that politics rather than some other? The answer is simple enough. The structure of permanences and internalized relations secured within the capitalist social order is, in Marx's view, extraordinarily damaging to the lives of untold millions; it is immoral and unjust, at the same time as it is life-threatening to the

human species and a travesty of denial of our species potential... the reality of human destitution, impoverishment and degradation in the midst of plenty becomes unbearable... Those who reject Marx's political commitment and the notion of class agency that necessarily attaches to it in effect turn their backs on his depiction of the human destitution, degradation and denial that lie at capitalism's door and become complicitous as historical agents with the reproduction of the particular set of permanences that capitalism has tightly fashioned (Harvey 1996: 108).

I emphatically share Harvey's dismay over the social and environmental degradation that the capitalist mode of production brings about. However, I am not convinced that class should be the political priority of all militant particularisms.

That may be a matter of semantics. As Harvey indicates, any movement that is against capitalism, or the effects of capitalism, is essentially a class resistance. Many feminist, environmentalist, post-colonial, and community struggles, including the community gardens movement, are indeed in opposition to some of the processes and effects of capitalism. However, the ways in which social movements define themselves, as either class movements or as something else, signifies an important consideration of political priorities and spatial imaginaries. Without negating the connections between different social movements, I ask the following questions. Which movements place their priorities primarily with class issues, or environmental issues, or feminist issues? Why do they prioritize certain issues over others? Do they necessarily prioritize one issue? Can a movement that prioritizes class address the needs of women? If so, which women? These are not questions that I attempt to answer here. I merely wish to initiate a deeper consideration of the diversity of militant particularisms and point to some of the possible exclusions that a class-based politics presents. Perhaps the most important question is to consider what differences political priorities make in regards to the alternatives they present to society. How do the possible worlds imagined by an explicitly defined class-

based resistance differ from those imagined by movements that identify themselves as community-based resistance?

By investigating the example of the Community Garden Network in this thesis, I attempt to fill in some of the holes left by Harvey's emphasis on class politics. While the community gardens movement is not void of class issues, class is not its main priority. (At least it is not explicitly declared a class movement, although it would not be difficult to present a class perspective on many parts of the movement.) Rather, the CGN indicates that healthy communities, environmental sustainability, and food security -- food security being an issue that prioritizes the needs of low-income groups but also transcends class boundaries with concerns about food safety, nutrition, and sustainability -- are the possible worlds that motivate the community gardens movement (Community Garden Network 2000). Additionally, as I will elaborate upon in chapter four, the community gardens movement provides symbolic spaces that encourage resistance to the inequities of the capitalist food system. Community gardens also include alternative forms of food production, exchange, and consumption that take place outside of the conventional relations of labour and capital. Furthermore, community gardeners take part in networks that extend structural resistance to the insecurities of the global food system into the spaces of municipal, federal, and world governance. These spaces and networks are integral to producing and sustaining counterhegemonic power.

As Molly expressed so well, there is no question in her mind that communities have the power to change the landscapes of the city and food production to some extent. While Harvey seems to imagine social change as a rational process requiring strategies

centred around class actors, particularly in the moment of production, Molly has experienced agency in her community garden.

Despite Harvey's political leanings, however, he does identify a crucial area of research by drawing attention to the concept of militant particularism and by developing the framework for a dialectical investigation of place and space. In this thesis I wish to augment Harvey's efforts by incorporating feminist and actor-network theories into space-place dialectics. The following two sections of this introduction show examples of food systems research that demonstrate articulations of the place-space dialectic. The examples presented are based on feminist theory and actor-network theory respectively.

A feminist linking micro and macro scales

Feminist theorists have shown that class-based movements have often excluded women's concerns (Hamilton 1996). Subsequently, feminists often turn away from the conventional categories of socialism and point to the significance of the domestic sphere (Cotterill 1992), as well as the community sphere (Milroy and Wismer 1994), in sustaining and transforming social structures.⁴ In this way feminist research provides a useful body of literature, which highlights some of the elements of political resistance that Harvey chose not to focus on.

Feminist political ecology is one example of feminist theory that extends the traditions of Marxism into feminist and ecological considerations. Rocheleau et al. (1996) emphasize that it is necessary to look at both macro and micro levels of social relations in order to understand social systems and social change. The linkages between

households, communities, states, and international politics have significance when it comes to how material resources are produced, distributed, and used.

Food security issues are illustrative of these linkages.⁵ The complexities of the macro-micro dialectic of food security will be explored in more detail in chapters three and four. In very basic terms though, the political economy of the global state and corporate systems determines to a large extent, the conditions of food production and distribution through global market regulation and the price system. Yet it is at the household and community level that the human and environmental costs of food insecurity are experienced. Therefore, resistance to the dominant food system often begins at the household and community level as well.

Bellows' (1996) study of the "Tested Food For Silesia" program is an example of feminist political ecology research that illustrates this macro-micro connection well. Silesia is in the most polluted region of Poland and suffers high rates of cancer, allergies, and respiratory illness. One in every ten babies from Silesia is born with deformities. However, the priorities of the Polish state are focused on industrial economic development. Both the former socialist government and the new capitalist economy of Poland put national industrial and economic growth ahead of Silesia's local environmental and human health problems (Bellows 1996: 256).

As a response to the devastating health problems in their families and communities, a group of female engineers formed the Tested Food For Silesia program. The women who formed the program identified food safety as an important aspect of environmental resource management because up to eighty per cent of heavy metal pollution – a cause of deformities – is absorbed into the human body through food.

Through grassroots networks with women's groups, environmental organizations, agriculturalists, and municipal governments, the Tested Food for Silesia group has drawn attention to food security as a priority issue. They have also educated urban gardeners about soil contamination. Perhaps the most significant work of the Tested Food For Silesia program in terms of its structural impacts is its success in the development of organic agriculture markets throughout Poland. Bellows asserts that the Tested Food For Silesia group "challenges the conviction that local action is a waste of time" (1996: 262).

This example illustrates that resistance often starts outside of the moment of capitalist production in the realm of the household and community. These spheres of action are not dichotomously opposed though. As the women of the Tested Food For Silesia program show, their personal concerns and community networks lead into modes of production and markets that include organic alternatives to industrial agriculture. With a feminist political ecology analysis, Bellows successfully illustrates the processes that created and sustained the resistance of the Tested Food For Silesia program. Her case study complements the work of Harvey, who concentrates on a more narrow sense of class politics, by providing an example of the space-place dialectic that has family and community health in the foreground.

Globalization through the lens of actor-network theory

Actor-network theory (ANT), a theory developed primarily by Bruno Latour and John Law (Murdoch 1998; Hetherington and Law 2000), also presents possibilities for augmenting Harvey's work by shifting the focus away from the "permanences" of social agents such as institutions or capital, and drawing attention to the processes of connection

(and disconnection) among mediators in networks that include people, objects, institutions, environments, animals, technologies and so on. Furthermore, ANT shifts away from the local-global dichotomy in a fashion that is similar to Harvey's approach to the space-place dialectic. ANT is perhaps more developed along these lines as it stresses that what is often referred to as "global" is actually embedded in place and vulnerable to local agents (Murdoch 1998). This is a significant emphasis as it may present alternative possibilities in terms of political action and social change.

Although some might categorize ANT and dialectics as separate academic practices -- as ANT is generally considered a part of postmodernist thought while dialectics derives from classical political economy -- I find that the two forms of analysis are compatible (see Busch and Juska 1997). ANT is useful for magnifying the specific actors and processes within a dialectical relationship. Dialectics, on the other hand, explains the effects that each actor and process has on social structures. As we shall see with the example of Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne's research (1997) actor-network theory can be applied to an analysis of political economic factors while, at the same time, it gives details of the micro-politics that are often neglected by political economists.

In Whatmore and Thorne's analysis of fair trade coffee networks, they place an emphasis on the argument that globalized capital is not a limitless and undivided power. Using actor-network theory (ANT), Whatmore and Thorne show that the participants of globalization, such as transnational corporations and the state, are situated in place-bound contexts that define some of the boundaries of their power. Moreover, global players are constituted by a series of local agents, or mediators, within a global network that includes

a diversity of individuals, cultures, institutions, technologies, and environments. It is important to note that some of these mediators may not be included in a narrow definition of class politics yet they can determine, in part, the conditions of production.

Whatmore and Thorne turn to ANT because they are critical of totalizing accounts of globalization.

No less heroic than the institutional complexes which it depicts, such an understanding perpetuates a peculiarly modernist geographical imagination that casts globalisation as a colonisation of surfaces which, like a spreading ink stain, progressively colours every spot on the map (Whatmore and Thorne 1997: 287).

In contrast to the imagery of capitalism as a “spreading ink stain”, ANT focuses our attention on incomplete networks that are continually being lengthened and shortened by the various actors along the lines of the network.

Networks are dependent upon each of the mediators along the lines of the network in order to function. As Murdoch describes, “it is only by enlisting heterogeneous others in sets of stable relations -- relations which allow for the transmission of action -- that things happen” (1998: 361). In other words, capital can function and “globalize” only to the extent that other mediators in the network allow it to. Furthermore, Heatherington and Law (2000) suggest that networks can fail when the established relations within a network change unpredictably. By exposing this vulnerability, the flux (as opposed to the “permanences”) of social systems becomes more apparent.

Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne observe that part of what has sustained the development of the dominant food system is the rhetoric that economic globalization is an inevitable process of the modern world (Harvey 1996; Whatmore and Thorne 1997).

One of the most serious consequences of orthodox accounts of globalisation... has been the eradication of social agency and struggle from the compass of analysis by presenting global reach as a systemic and logical, rather than a partial and contested, process...

There is nothing ‘global’ about such corporations and bureaucracies *in themselves*, either in terms of their being disembedded from particular contexts and places or of their being in some sense comprehensive in scale and scope. Rather, their reach depends upon intricate interweavings of *situated* people, artefacts, codes, and living things and the maintenance of particular tapestries of connection across the world (Whatmore and Thorne 1997: 288; emphasis in original).

Globalization is a process of uneven development that manifests itself differently across time and space (Smith 1984). This uneven development occurs, in part, because of the resistance to economic globalization that is activated by local people, objects, and environments. In the processes of economic globalization, each mediator in the network of the global economy has some characteristics that complement globalization and some that contradict the determination of global enterprise. The diversity of complementary and contradictory features either act to lengthen or to shorten the reach of global networks.

The spatial imaginary of ANT allows Whatmore and Thorne (1997) to examine “alternative geographies of food” in detail by looking at the actor-networks of fair trade coffee. Fair trade coffee signifies an attempt to create an alternative to the environmental and class exploitation involved in conventional forms of coffee production. Proponents of the alternative attempt to advance justice in the coffee trade by giving coffee cultivators a fair price for their produce, and also seek to address concerns of environmental sustainability and workers’ health through organic production.

The fair trade coffee networks that Whatmore and Thorne (1997) studied involve complex connections between the environmental conditions of the coffee growing regions, the cultivators, the labour agreements of the agricultural cooperatives producing the coffee, the organic certification agencies, the fair trade marketing enterprises, and the consumers of the coffee. Coordination and cooperation between all of these agents is

required in order that the fair trade coffee system works. Consumers must be willing to pay for fair trade coffee, the conditions of the environment must be adequate for producing a good crop, growers must meet the conditions determined by the organic certification agencies, cooperatives need to offer fair prices to the growers, and so on. As each of these mediators participates positively within the network, the alternative mode of production is sustained.

Whatmore and Thorne provide an extensive investigation of the local-global mediators involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of coffee. While the coffee is traded through international networks, the entire market depends upon mediators that are situated in place. These mediators include class agents such as the workers and cooperatives, but it also includes other mediators that extend beyond labour-capital relations: the environment, the culture that underpins organic certification, the consumer demand for fair trade, organic coffee.

Harvey concentrates on a traditional class politics in the spaces of the dominant mode of production: the car manufacturing plant, the World Bank, the chicken processing plant. Significantly, Whatmore and Thorne show how the partial alternative, fair trade coffee, is created and sustained by the lengthening of actor-networks. These networks clearly weave through, but are not limited to, a narrow class politics. As Busch and Juska suggest, through the detailing of mediators within a social system, actor-network theory is “a way out of the modernist box” (1997: 692).

Summary of Chapters

This chapter has introduced my investigation of the local resistance of the Community Garden Network of Ottawa. In *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* David Harvey (1996) points out that local movements cannot engage a challenge to the processes that give rise to their resistance (i.e. capitalism) without addressing the dialectics of space and place. He introduces the concept of militant particularism to show the value of drawing on resistance that emerges in particular places to form more general movements. However, the universalization of particular movements is a thorny pursuit because the general spatial processes that produce particular circumstances in place are not readily apparent at the local level. Moreover, the specific concerns based in place can be lost in the transition from the particular to the universal. What is required is an analysis that bridges the gaps between the local and the global, place and space, the particular and the universal, without becoming too relativistic nor too totalizing.

Harvey uses the principles of dialectics to form this type of analysis. Dialectical inquiry involves a process-oriented ontology. Social systems are in constant flux as a result of the contradictions and internalized relations between and within their various institutions and agents. By virtue of the processes of internalized social relations, each entity within the whole of a social system has agency. Although social systems are constantly changing, they may appear to have permanence. The structures that sustain permanences are key points for dialectical investigation. Material and ideological constructs can help to either sustain or challenge permanences. As well, possible worlds

are dialectically related to the flux of social systems. Dialectical process forms the base of my analysis of the community gardens movement.

As Harvey applies the principles of dialectics to his politics though, some confusion emerges. The value of his theory is that it points to the importance of linking particular struggles with more general claims to justice. In the attempt to practice this dialectical mode of analysis Harvey is faced with the difficult task of generalizing without negating more specific concerns. Because he has concentrated so intensively on capital and class it seems that Harvey's analysis lacks a balance between the significant interests of other movements that include concerns about the environment, community, women, racial minorities, imperialism, and so on. In an attempt to complement Harvey's investigation of militant particularism and the space-place dialectic, I contribute my analysis of the community gardens movement.

I find that, while dialectics remains central to my analysis, feminist theory and actor-network theory allow me to analyze the dialectic of micro and macro processes with more precision. Feminist political ecology, as an example, emphasizes the linkages between different scales including households, communities, and the state, as well as the centrality of the environment in political-economic relations.

Actor-network theory challenges local-global dualities. It attempts to show that the metaphor of "globalization" is in fact a complex and vulnerable network that depends upon the actions of local mediators. Many of these mediators act to shorten the reach of global economic powers, partly because capital and class are not at the forefront of their actions. The dynamic of actor-networks shows that globalization is a partial and contested process, rather than an all-encompassing structure.

Bellows' (1996) and Whatmore and Thorne's (1997) food systems analyses demonstrate the connections between place and space. They provide examples of how the concept of militant particularism can be applied to local movements and universal concerns that do not necessarily prioritize a reductionist notion of class.

My research fits with these food systems analyses by looking at the micro-macro dialectic of the Community Garden Network of Ottawa in relation to the global food system. In chapter three, I outline an interpretation of the political economy of the global food system. Then one of the principal contradictions of this food system, food insecurity, is explored in more detail.

In chapter four I describe the resistance to food insecurity that takes place within community gardens. Additionally, I examine the food security networks that the Community Garden Network is involved with. By doing so, I bring out the points at which the community gardens movement and the global food system meet, indicating the dialectical agency of the community gardeners. With this evidence, I attempt to provide more balance to Harvey's militant particularism by introducing an example of social transformation that is emerging from a community-based movement.

First though, I address my research methodologies. In chapter two I outline the application of feminist methodologies in the field. Feminist methodologies, combined with a political economy analysis of food systems (presented in chapter three), allow me to address both the macro-structures of the dominant food system and the micro-processes which sustain and/or challenge that system. In addition to engaging with feminist methodologies, chapter two outlines aspects of the biographical approach to urban agriculture research (Pottier 1991). Both of these approaches provide the tools

required to perform a micro-analysis of the Community Garden Network. They include techniques such as long-term participant observation and semi-structured interviews aimed at discovering respondents' individual perspectives, as well as more general social norms. Two other methods that proved useful in my field research of the Community Garden Network are participatory research and a focus group discussion. All of these methods will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

FIELD RESEARCH WITH THE COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK

Introduction

Before going on to report my empirical findings, it is necessary to outline the research methods that were used in the field in order to reveal the empirical foundation of my analysis. In this chapter, I outline Johan Pottier's (1991) biographical approach to field research, one of the primary models for my methods. I then report on my experiences using four approaches: semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion, participatory research, and participant observation. In reference to each of these methods, I will give a concise rationale for choosing the method, and then provide the details of how the method was applied to my research of the Community Garden Network. I will conclude each of these four sections by briefly reflecting upon the successes and shortcomings in their application.

To begin, though, I discuss the methodological foundations of my research. I explore the connections between the analytical framework of my thesis, based on Harvey's dialectical approach, and the feminist methodologies that informed my field research (Reinharz 1992; Harding 1987).

By no means does the use of feminist methodologies imply that the community gardens movement is a women's movement; both men and women participate. In fact, women's issues are generally not an overt part of the Community Garden Network discourse.

That being said, one of the most important reasons for introducing feminist methodologies in my research is to create a discursive space to consider the details of processes of micro-scale relations in social transformation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Harvey's application of the place-space dialectic seems to miss the importance of community-based movements (and others) in the resistance to globalization because he is too narrowly focused on class politics in the moment of production. Feminists have been at the forefront in showing that domestic and community spaces are integral to the processes of social change (Milroy and Wismer 1994; Hamilton 1996; Rocheleau et al. 1996). Accordingly, feminist methodologies encourage an examination of micro-scale relations in order to develop a more complete understanding of social systems and processes.

From that theoretical position, feminist research fans out to encompass a variety of epistemologies, methodologies, and methods.⁶ Many feminists use the four methods applied in my research, although they do not encompass the full set of research methods used by feminists (Reinharz 1992). Nor are they, by any means, unique to feminist research. What makes feminist research unique is the methodological and epistemological position that it expresses.

Feminist researchers argue that all research is a subjective and intersubjective pursuit that constructs only partial knowledge, not objective and universal facts. Bearing resemblance to a postmodernist position, the epistemological argument that follows the feminist position supporting the subjectivity of research is that knowledge is contestable and hence an expression of power relations (Butler 1992; Fraser and Nicholson 1990; Hartsock 1990). These methodological and epistemological positions feed back into the

specific methods or techniques of field research. For example, feminists emphasize the importance of being reflexive about the power relations of the research process. Below is a more detailed outline of feminist research practices.

Feminist research: “objective” knowledge, subjective research

Feminists share a fundamental directive in their methodological and epistemological approach to research. That directive, namely, is to challenge the authority of so-called objective knowledge (Reinharz 1992). The positivist notion that researchers can objectively reveal the universal facts of the world is what Donna Haraway refers to as the “god-trick” (1988). This label captures both the universal claims to knowledge that positivist research endeavors to establish, and the power enshrined in such claims.⁷ Feminists have shown that researchers are not omniscient observers who stand outside the world they study. Rather, their personal experiences situate them within particular contexts of social relations. “Knowledge is inevitably both ‘about somewhere’ and ‘from somewhere,’ and... the knower’s location and life experience are somehow central to the kind of knowledge produced” (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 35). Researchers’ observations of the world, therefore, are grounded in a particular perspective that is partial and subjective rather than universal and objective (England 1994).

However, subjective and partial knowledge is not meant to be taken as an extreme form of relativism. Despite the subjectivity of the research process, there are recognizable patterns of commonality that can lead to an understanding of social relations

and structures. The point is that every researcher has a subjective view of the world and therefore the knowledge that they produce is partial rather than universal.

Not only is the subjectivity of the researcher implicated in the production of “knowledge”, but so too are the intersubjective relations between the researcher and the respondents. The way that the researcher and respondents interact with each other affects the outcome of the research. With respect to intersubjectivity, the issue of being an “insider” or “outsider” in relation to the community being researched has been a key consideration in feminist methodologies (Naples 1992; Reay 1996).

There are certain advantages to an outsider position: someone who comes from outside of a particular social context may observe telling characteristics that the members inside the community overlook or take for granted. As well, in interview contexts, some respondents more readily share intimate information with a stranger than with someone who is part of their everyday social setting (Naples 1996: 84).

However, many feminist researchers emphasize the advantages of an insider position. Complementing Pottier’s (1991) advice to spend time in the field “watching and living”, feminists argue that through the development of an insider position in the community, researchers can often access information and subtle understandings that are not available to outsiders. Through a long-term commitment to the people and community being researched, relationships of trust can be nurtured. Good rapport between researchers and respondents often leads to more accurate data.

A further contribution to the insider/outsider debate comes from Nancy Naples who warns against rigid and dualistic definitions of insiders and outsiders:

“Outsiderness” and “insiderness” are not fixed or static positions, rather they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differentially experienced and expressed

by community members. By recognizing the fluidity of “outsiderness”/ “insiderness,” we also acknowledge three key methodological points: as ethnographers we are never fully outside or inside the “community”; our relationship to the community is never expressed in general terms but is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in particular, everyday interactions; and these interactions are themselves located in shifting relationships among community residents (Naples 1996: 84).

Researchers and respondents alike have multiple positions as insiders and outsiders which are dependent upon the varying social relations of the research context and community. Significantly, this positioning on the inside and outside is negotiated, or in other words, reflects the power relations within the group.

Examining power relations is key to feminist research, which is explicitly engaged in a critical examination of domination and aimed at the politics of liberation (hooks 1989). The central epistemological point of the argument for subjective research is the recognition that “facts” and knowledge can be contested. With a positivist stance, knowledge has been used as a very potent form of social power and domination. Those who define knowledge as “objective” truth can take a dominant social position by validating their experiences as fact, while marginalizing others’ experiences by labelling them irrational, hysterical, or superstitious.

The power/knowledge relationship, in which the subjective and partial experiences of one group dominate and subordinate the experiences of “others”, is a primary cause of oppression and injustice (Fanon 1968; Harding 1991, 1992). Therefore, as producers of knowledge, researchers have an ethical responsibility to consider how their research is situated and how their knowledge claims may affect the lives of their respondents.

As white, economically privileged men have historically dominated the academic profession (and beyond), the knowledge they have produced has excluded certain ways of

seeing the world. Particularly, non-white, low-income, and female knowledges have been excluded from the realm of what is considered important and valid information. Instead, the public spaces of production, regulation, and war -- traditionally the realm of male-oriented activities -- have been at the centre of scholarly pursuits. A major part of feminist research is to give voice to the knowledges of marginalized groups (hooks 1989; Reinharz 1992).

By emphasizing the community spaces in a study of the spatial dialectic of the food system, I attempt to include some of the voices of those groups marginalized by masculinist academic practices and the capitalist mode of food production: women, ethnic minorities, the landless, and low-income individuals. As author of this thesis, though, I ultimately frame the voices of my research respondents according to my subjective perspective. Therefore, as in any undertaking of field research, it is important to consider my subjectivity, the respondents' situatedness, and the power relations between us.

Reflexivity is a method used by feminists in an effort to reduce, or at least reveal honestly, unequal power relations in the academic research process and the partial knowledge that is subsequently produced. An example of the reflexive process is illustrated by the following entry from my research journal, written after my first two interviews. The first interview was with an older man on social assistance who is attending adult high school. The second respondent is a man within my own age group with an educational and socio-economic background similar to my own.

It seems that my second respondent was able to speak to me more in my language. My first respondent was a bit shy. I kept trying to "fit in" by identifying with poverty issues. But the truth is that I come from a very privileged place. Tying this to theory, I felt the "power" relation of the first interview was uncomfortably in my favour whereas with the

second interview it seemed that we were very much on equal footing and therefore more free to talk as ourselves.

This reflexion about power in the research process helps to raise my awareness of socio-economic differences. By attending to this reflexion when I interpret the research results, I am more capable of seeing the partiality of my situatedness. Moreover, I am alerted that I must question my assumptions about class difference and how that affects my research interpretations and conclusions.

In addition to the power involved in the intersubjective relations between researcher and respondent, several feminist theorists have spoken about the position of power that a researcher has in setting the agenda of the research, in choosing which questions to ask, in filtering the research data to include certain results and exclude others, and in presenting the final results in a theoretical frame of his/her own choosing (Reay 1996; Fine 1994).

Participatory research methods, that aim to include the members of the community under study in the formation of the research project, help to produce a more inclusive research agenda (Gibson-Graham 1994; Goebel 1998; Naples 1996). Nonetheless, there are unavoidable parameters that must be set by the researcher and they are inevitably set according to some subjective criteria that are defined by the researcher. Through a process of reflexive engagement with the research, the biases of the researcher become transparent. Following a brief outline of Pottier's (1991) biographical methods of field research, I will outline my specific methods of field research with an eye toward reflexivity.

The biographical approach

Johan Pottier, who is well known for his research on urban agriculture, has sought out methods that are appropriate for understanding social change (1991). The two key methods used by Pottier are semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews are an integral part of the biographical approach because they allow for the opportunity to explore the reasons for the words, actions, and decisions made by the respondent. In contrast to survey-type research, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher and respondent to enter a dialogue that is flexible enough to explore a breadth of topics not considered prior to the interview.

A researcher applying the biographical method starts an interview with a neutral but crucial question that does not presume a problem. Pottier has found that asking about social problems up front incites standard answers that seem programmed by public discourses surrounding the issues referred to rather than revealing new knowledge. Alternately, non-threatening, biographical questions lead to a dialogue that is more revealing of the respondent's personal experiences and perspectives.

Pottier also emphasizes the importance of having a long-term commitment to the research location. Participant observation is the second element of the biographical approach that is aimed at penetrating the complexity of the social context that is being researched. Pottier explains that it is through 'watching and living' that a researcher comes to understand and gain entry into a culture's discourse. Without this long-term knowledge of the vernacular Pottier warns that 'damage can result from flagrant misreadings of complex social lives' (Pottier 1991: 18).

When surveying the academic literature previous to my field season, the choice of Pottier's research as a model for my field research seemed somewhat self-evident, as he has done extensive research in urban agriculture. I was drawn to the biographical approach because it presented an interview method that placed the respondents' perspectives ahead of the priorities of the researcher. The aim of privileging the respondents' biographies through neutral questions was to gain a more accurate sense of the community gardeners' genuine experiences, as opposed to boxing them into a predetermined theoretical framework. By using the biographical approach, I aimed to investigate what was actually there in the field instead of simply looking for evidence that pertained to my theoretical inquiry. Had I gone into the field seeking out evidence specific to an issue (e.g. a theoretical question) I may have overlooked some important evidence and misrepresented the totality of the Community Garden Network. With Pottier's biographical approach, I hoped to produce a more accurate reflection of the community gardens. Indeed, the combination of semi-structured interviews and long-term participant observation provided me with an extensive depth of knowledge about the CGN and the broader community gardens movement.

However, the neutrality of the biographical approach proved to be a difficult practice for my research, in which I was attempting to engage some of the political aspects of community gardening. Moreover, the neutral approach in interviews posed particular inconsistencies when applied in tandem with feminist methodologies. Recognizing the subjective relations involved in the research process, it is difficult to maintain neutrality in the strictest sense. As I detail the interview process in the

following section of this chapter, I will expand on this tension between subjectivity and neutrality.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are an interpretive research method practiced by many feminist researchers and other social scientists as a way of probing deeply into social attitudes and behaviours (Reinharz 1992). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to clarify responses and follow-up on a line of thought that may not have been anticipated in designing the question guide. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview method often leads to a more accurate reflection of the respondents' perspectives. However, the diversity of responses sought through semi-structured interviews limits the extent to which a researcher can generalize results. Rather than predicting trends, as positivist research often attempts to do, interpretive research explores a range of social perspectives.

For my research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen community gardeners in the fall of 1999. The selection of respondents was based primarily on relationships that I had already established with people through four months of participant observation at Community Garden Network meetings. I had met the majority of my respondents at these meetings. A small number of my respondents did not attend the CGN meetings but were introduced to me by someone who did attend.

It is important to note that all of the respondents had some form of organizational responsibility with their community gardens and/or the Community Garden Network. Therefore, the data I collected represents the leadership of the community gardens of

Ottawa more than it represents community gardeners in general. There are many community gardeners who tend to their plots without becoming involved with the CGN or the various committees of their own garden; I did not reach this population of community gardeners.

Although this limits the range of information that I gathered on community gardens in general, the focus on the leadership is appropriate in regards to my research question. The political force of the community gardens movement is the primary concern of my study. The CGN organizers and leaders that I interviewed represent the part of the community gardens movement that is more likely to be politically engaged, whether that be because of their convictions or the time that they have available to them. They are the most “political” members of the community garden movement since they are the ones who deal with funders, politicians, land owners, community associations, and so on. Since I am researching the efficacy of the community gardens movement in its resistance to the food insecurities of the dominant food system, it is appropriate to focus my research on those members of the movement who are most politically engaged.

Moreover, the group of people that I interviewed is not outside of the community gardens movement, although they may take on some different roles and attitudes relative to those who limit their involvement to gardening only. The community gardener perspective is not necessarily lost by my selection of respondents because the majority of them participate as community gardeners in addition to taking on other responsibilities. Their time in the garden allows them to know for themselves and communicate with other gardeners about the everyday concerns of those who are strictly gardening.

I began each interview with small talk and by explicitly encouraging a conversational approach to the interview, thereby setting the tone for a comfortable dialogue. The interviews were carried out in different places -- including my home, the respondent's home, community centres, and coffee shops -- depending on the particular arrangements made by the respondent and myself. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, excepting two wherein the respondents expressed a wish to not be recorded. The process of transcribing was valuable as it allowed me to revisit each interview. By doing so, I could reflect further upon each dialogue and become aware of details that I had originally missed.

A question guide was developed based on a set of theme topics to be covered in the interview (see Appendix A). Additionally, a basic demographic survey was administered at the end of each interview, either orally or written (see Appendix B). Following Johan Pottier's biographical approach (1991), I started every interview with a neutral question: "How did you first get involved in community gardening?" Subsequent to that introductory question, I did not follow the guide strictly but attempted to maintain a comfortable style of conversation. This semi-structured interview technique allowed me to build rapport with my respondents, encourage an expressive dialogue, and avoid the social barriers created by strict survey-style questioning. The question guide was used as a flexible tool for prompting and directing the conversation. In some cases, the observations I made prior to the interview period through participant observation allowed me to design interview questions specific to the respondents' position in the community gardens movement in Ottawa. This allowed me to probe further into the respondents'

biography, rather than use up interview time with introductory-type conversation and questions.

Because I had already developed a certain level of rapport with the majority of my respondents, in most cases there were few barriers to open and honest dialogue. The participant observation that preceded the interviews allowed me to establish trusting relationships with my respondents, thereby encouraging the respondents to share their experiences openly with me without limiting themselves to “polite discourses” (Pottier 1991; Cotterill 1992). This rapport was demonstrated by the confidences that several respondents shared with me in interviews, indicated by comments such as, “I wouldn’t want this in the report but...” As such, it is relatively safe to assume that most of the data that was gathered through the semi-structured interviews is a fairly accurate reflection of the respondents’ perspectives.

There were, however, exceptions to my “insiderness” in three of the interviews in particular.⁸ In all three cases, I had observed the respondents interacting with other community gardeners (myself included) previous to the interviews. While in the accustomed setting of their community gardens, the participants expressed their points of view in a relaxed and open manner. Yet in their interviews with me, they were more “polite” and reserved.

While varying combinations of difference based on race, class, age, gender, ethnicity, and language were involved in the three interviews to which I now refer, there was no systematic evidence indicating that those factors played a part in the limitations of these interviews. Other interviews were characterized by such differences as well, yet they did not have the same barriers to communication. I considered that the barriers

could simply be due to the introverted personalities of my respondents and myself. However, as Naples has argued (1996), insiderness and outsidership is a reflection of the relations of power. Although these power relations are difficult to determine with certainty, I believe that my difficulties with these three interviews exemplify some of the power relations that inhibit good academic research with marginalized groups.

I believe that my position as a member of the university community led the three “polite” respondents to view me as an outsider with greater social power. Outside of the interview context, one respondent incidentally made comments that indicated the esteem he held for university graduates. All three respondents have less than high-school education. Excepting two others, the remainder of my respondents have undergraduate or graduate degrees. The interviews with these respondents seemed to be characterized by more equal social relations. In a society that invests a great deal of social power in education, the interview context, which was set by the parameters of a graduate-level research project, may have been oppressive to the three “polite” respondents. If so, this unchangeable element of graduate research as an academic practice restricted the interviews in these three cases.

Outside of the interview dynamic and in the context of the community gardens, though, the three “polite” respondents were in leadership positions and thereby empowered to express themselves with relative freedom. Because I applied several different methods in the field I was able to discover the limitations of the interview. Participant observation was particularly useful in offsetting these limitations.

Focus group discussion

In the one-on-one interviews with community gardeners, I attempted to maintain a neutral approach to data collection in order to allow respondents the opportunity to express their personal experiences and perspectives. With the title of the focus group discussion being “Environmental Justice and Community Gardens,” I drew in participants predisposed to concerns about justice and the environment. This allowed me to target the political questions of my research directly. The group discussion, held in late October of 1999, was also an opportunity to explore the boundaries of public discourse within the CGN. By interrogating members of the CGN as a group, some of the norms and power relations of the group were revealed.

Four community gardeners participated in the group discussion, including the CGN coordinator who facilitated the discussion. I was the fifth person present, although my contribution to the discussion was minimal. The participants were all women, although the discussion group was open to all members of the public. The discussion took shape by using a variety of exercises developed by the discussion group’s facilitator and myself.

The first exercise was to envision the perfect community garden with all the barriers to creating such a garden removed. Next an industrial food cycles exercise was introduced. Before beginning the exercise, relevant terms were defined by the group to ensure that everyone was working according to the same understanding of the industrial food system, environmental justice, and gender. Then each of the four participants were asked to trace the life cycle of a particular food product from the stage of production through to consumption. The first participant focused on environmental issues arising

during the life cycle of a head of lettuce. The second focused on class issues in organic sugar production, manufacturing, distribution, and consumption. The third looked at gender issues related to coffee. The last participant examined issues of race tied to the life cycle of a banana. After allowing some time to think through these issues, each of the participants presented and discussed their thoughts on industrial food cycles with the group. An open discussion on how these issues relate to community gardens followed the industrial life cycles presentations. To finish the focus group discussion, a second visioning of the perfect community garden was done to find out if the participants' perspectives had changed after explicitly articulating the connections between the industrial food system and community gardens.

The CGN coordinator facilitated the discussion so that I could maintain my position as a neutral observer. She had suggested the food cycles exercise as a good way of getting people to think about food systems from the moment of production to consumption and waste management. I determined the categories of race, gender, class, and environment as a focus for the food cycles exercise. These categories are pillars of the critical social theory that I had been drawing upon for my research (hooks 1989; Plumwood 1993). As well, issues of race, class and environment are referred to frequently within community garden discourse. Interestingly, I had not often heard any discussion of gender issues at CGN meetings or events although the CGN has a greater representation of women than men. The feminist theory that informed my academic training prompted me to include gender issues in the focus group discussion as an important category to explore.

The focused direction of the group discussion produced an excellent source of data to draw upon. By directly asking the participants to demonstrate their critical knowledge about justice and the dominant food system, and how that connects with community gardens, the participants were able to articulate their understanding of the space-place dialectic.

Participatory research

Participatory Research attempts to allow those who are being studied to define the research such that it will be of use to them. Feminist academics have expressed concern about the ethics of 'extractive' research that uses its subjects for academic purposes without reciprocating with benefits to those being studied (Gibson-Graham 1994). By involving members of the researched community in the design of the research, it is thought that some of the community's needs can be addressed. With that in mind, I attempted to include members of the Community Garden Network in the design of the research at the earliest stages of my research with the CGN.

At the first two Community Garden Network meetings that I attended, I introduced myself as a graduate student interested in studying community gardens. Without going into more details, I left the definition of the research question open. I then stated that I would like my research to be of use to the CGN and asked CGN members to make suggestions as to what the focus of my research should be. A woman who suggested that an investigation of activism within the CGN was needed approached me at the end of the first meeting. Happily, this suggestion coincided with my interests in the politics of social change.

The next stage at which I invited community gardeners to participate in the research design was in the formation of the question guide for the interviews. I drew up a draft of questions, which was revised by three of the most prominent players in the CGN. Each of them gave feedback, which was incorporated into the question guide. I also collaborated with the coordinator of the CGN to design the focus group discussion described in the preceding section. In preparing for the focus group discussion, the coordinator had suggested exercises that had been used in previous workshops on food politics. The visioning of a perfect community garden was included as a means of defining some goals for the CGN.

Overall, I believe that the participatory research process was successful in that it fostered a relationship wherein reciprocal involvement and trust was encouraged between the leaders of the CGN and myself. The interaction with CGN participants proved to be vital encouragement for me to continue with the research, as it validated the potential usefulness of my work for the community gardens movement. The extent to which my research will be able to fulfill the needs of the CGN, however, is still unknown. Beyond the unknown effects of the actual thesis research, though, my involvement with the CGN as a participant observer has been an effective venue for reciprocating their participation in my research project as I have contributed substantially in lobbying the local government for support, establishing a new community garden, and in managing the composters at another garden.

Participant observation

The aim of participant observation is to gain in-depth knowledge of the group through observations of their everyday cultural or, in this case, organizational context. By participating in the activities of the group, researchers can sometimes gain entry into the group, thereby accessing “insider” knowledge, although as Naples’ (1996) argues, insidership is not cut and dry. Rather it is negotiated on a continual basis throughout the research process with each respondent, in each context, and with respect to different issues. In basic terms though, as an insider the researcher can more readily gain access to the perspectives of her/his respondents because there is the opportunity to build a relationship of trust between them.

Participant observation can also produce a more accurate interpretation of data that is collected through other methods such as interviews. By drawing comparisons between the everyday context of the group and their individual responses in interviews, researchers can determine how the power relations of the group and the research process affect people’s behaviours and responses (Mosse 1994). Participant observation also allows for a more subtle understanding of the research context. Johan Pottier notes that there is often a, “discrepancy between what informants say they do or think, and what they actually do or think” (1991: 1; emphasis in original). He continues to express concern about the limitations of

one-off, semi-structured interviews that attempt to capture ‘real’ life worlds in the context of local-level agricultural change... It is [Pottier’s] honest belief that there are no shortcut ways for entering into the discourse of a given culture. Only through mastering the vernacular language, and by becoming relatively unobtrusive as a physical presence, can researchers hope to begin to build up any understanding of that discourse, its subtleties, sensitive areas, and the nuances of everyday life (Pottier 1991: 3)... ‘If the interviewer wants to learn a little, he or she had better stay around -- watching and living’ (Mitchell and Slim in Pottier 1991: 21).

Because my research was done in my own language, culture, and hometown, and because I had a strong affinity with the politics of many of the community gardeners, I found it relatively easy to gain “insider” status within the CGN. I did not find many discrepancies between what I observed with the CGN and what people told me in interviews, excepting the three cases described in the section above. My continued involvement in participant observation over the course of a full year has given me assurances that the data gathered in interviews corresponds with my observations of community gardeners. By cross-tabulating the results of interviews and participant observation, the reliability of my data has been verified.

I began my participant observation in the early summer of 1999 by attending a monthly meeting of the Community Garden Network. I continue to attend these meetings each month a year later. The purpose of the CGN meetings is to share knowledge and resources among the different community gardens in the city. This activity ranges from sharing gardening tips to distributing gardening tools procured by the CGN. The CGN also plans events such as workshops on gardening-skills, food preservation, and conflict resolution at these meetings. As well, the collective goals of the community gardens are defined at their monthly meetings.

I also participated in a community garden during the spring, summer, and fall of 1999. Although I could not access a garden plot, I offered to manage the composters of a small community garden. This allowed me to be in the community garden once a week and gain familiarity with one of the tasks of a community garden. I attended a CGN workshop on composting which was hosted at another community garden in order to learn more about the task. While doing the composting each week, I generally observed

the plants more than the people from the garden -- with only half a dozen or so gardeners in this particular community garden, I was unlikely to run into one of them during my short stays. Nonetheless, it was instructive to observe the changing form of the garden from spring to fall. I was able to share gardeners' excitement about watching seedlings grow and bear fruit. It was also satisfying to produce a large pile of compost by the end of the season, not only because I had helped to turn waste into something useful, but also because it was a way of reciprocating gardeners' involvement with my research project. The one time I did meet a gardener while composting, I was offered some basil from their plot: an illustration of the generosity common to community gardens.

My participant observation in the spring and summer of the year 2000 was marked by my involvement in planning the development of a new community garden. This phase of research was characterized by learning in detail what is involved in starting and running a community garden. Much of this knowledge has been gained by attending the CGN meetings and workshops, speaking with community gardeners, and also by researching community garden resources on the internet and in print. More than learning about it though, actually *doing* the activities involved in starting a community garden offered me an authentic "insider" perspective in that I experienced a range of activities similar to other community gardeners' experiences, albeit from my own situated position.

Myself, another woman, three men, and a group of developmentally disabled youth were involved in starting the community garden in downtown Ottawa. The work required property and planning negotiations with the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, which owns the land.⁹ We also worked together to acquire all the necessary funds and tools, to determine the garden policy, and to arrange the construction of the

garden beds. After promoting the garden in the community and including twenty new garden members, we constructed the shed and composter, and began cultivation.

Overall, participant observation was the method through which I learned most about the Community Garden Network. Participant observation was extremely useful in terms of gaining a broad yet subtle understanding of community gardening in Canada. There is very little academic literature on the subject. In fact the only academic source I have that is focused specifically on community gardens is David Crouch (1989) who studied allotment gardens in Britain. Through participant observation, I have learned that the Canadian community gardening context is much different from that in Britain.¹⁰ Without a substantial period of participant observation in Ottawa, my conceptualization of community gardens may have been extremely distorted, thereby affecting my formulation of the research questions, interview guide, and conclusions drawn.

While the interviews gave me data that I could quote directly as evidence for my thesis, the knowledge I gained through participant observation also felt more reliable to me because it captured what people actually did, not just what they said they did. There are severe limits to the information that one can gather during a one-hour interview. Without the contextual knowledge that participant observation provided, the one-time, one-hour interviews I conducted would not have given such a complete picture of the CGN's activities nor of Canadian community gardening in general.

Conclusion

In sum, feminist theories and methodologies point to the significance of researching both macro structures and micro processes for a more complete

understanding of social change. While David Harvey is in accordance with this theoretical standpoint, his narrow focus on the moment of production as the site of transformative social powers has minimized his engagement with detailed analysis at the micro-scale.

Feminists have also played a major role in pulling researchers away from positivist methods, methodologies, and epistemologies. They have shown that objective knowledge, defined as universal truth, is a fallacy. Instead, the producers of knowledge represent a situatedness that reflects only a partial view of the world. As people situated in a world that is characterized by inequitable power relations between the sexes, “races”, classes, and so on, feminists encourage academics to engage with the politics of the world that they study. With a reflexive approach to the power relations of the research process itself, academics produce knowledge that is more transparent and contestable.

The biographical approach describes in detail some useful research methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Approaching interview respondents with non-threatening biographical questions leads to dialogue that reflect the respondents’ personal perspectives rather than predetermined public transcripts. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to probe into the meanings that underpin people’s responses to interview questions. As well, it allows the interview dialogue to follow avenues that had not been considered in the design of the question guide. Subsequently, the respondents have the ability, to some extent, to set the priority topics for discussion in their interviews.

Interviews allow for one-on-one discussions in which community gardeners can express their personal ideas in confidence. The public transcript of a given community

can sometimes exclude perspectives that differ from the community norms or from dominant members of the group (Scott 1990; Young 1990). Given that there is good rapport between the interviewer and the respondent, confidential interviews can allow for the expression of private ideas that may conflict with the public transcript of the community.

As a method used to gain rapport or “insider” knowledge, participant observation is very effective. Participant observation also allows the researcher to distinguish between respondents’ talk and action. This can reveal both the power relations of the group and the interview process, as well as the accuracy of the data collected in interviews. Through long-term observations as a participant observer, I gained an in-depth understanding of the Community Garden Network.

Adding to my knowledge was the information I gained through a focus group discussion. While conducting interviews and during the initial stages of my participant observation I attempted to maintain a neutral standpoint. The focus group discussion allowed me to target the specific political questions of my research project. It also made evident the extent to which environmental and social justice is a part of the Community Garden Network’s public discourse.

The political nature of the Community Garden Network was also made evident through the participatory research process. At a very early stage of designing the research, a member of the CGN helped to identify the issue of activism within the CGN as an important avenue to explore. I used a participatory approach to the research design in forming a general research question, designing the interview question guide, and developing exercises for the focus group discussion. These efforts were aimed at

avoiding an extractive and intrusive approach to research by including the CGN in the research design. As such, the hope is that the results of the research would be of some use to the CGN, thereby reciprocating the time and energy that they spent with my research project.

With all frankness, my involvement in establishing a new community garden in the second growing season of my field research with the CGN was more of a personal endeavour than in pursuit of academics. While I continued to engage with the academy, I enjoyed the palpable effects of becoming involved with a proactive movement for social and environmental justice. Audrey Kobayashi, a Canadian geographer, describes a somewhat similar transition in her career as an academic and an activist:

Over the past decade, my lives as a scholar and as a political activist have become increasingly intertwined. I began an academic career as a scholar of Japanese Canadians; I now define myself as a Japanese-Canadian scholar. The semantic difference may seem slight, but reflects a major shift not only in my own life and work, but in feminist and anti-racist scholarship and the ability of such scholarship to effect social outcomes. Redefining scholarly endeavors, [is] a means not only of interpreting, but also of effecting, social change... Feminists are unabashedly forward in using their work to engage the political, by challenging academic norms and by helping to bring about social transformation... Anti-racist scholars, many of whom work within their own visible minority communities, see the struggle to overcome racism as a transformation of themselves as much as it is a transformation of the social norms and practices through which racism occurs. For feminist women of color, the realization of this power to effect change has transformed their ability and their will to act (Kobayashi 1994: 73).

Likewise, through observing the effectiveness of the Community Garden Network in building a local movement that counteracts some of the social and environmental problems of the dominant food system, I view my participation in the community gardens movement as an integral part of my political commitment to social and environmental justice. This commitment is inherently tied to my activities as a graduate student, an indication of the inevitable entanglement of politics and research.

Therefore, this form of participation furthers the feminist challenge to objective research. It exemplifies the position that researchers are not removed from the context in which they conduct their work but, instead, are people within the relations of power that define the injustices of our society. To shield ourselves in neutrality and objectivity is to ignore the part that we play in sustaining or transforming the social relations of production.

However, applying the principles of subjective and critical research is challenging. At the beginning of the participant observation phase of research, I limited my participation somewhat and focused more on observations. I did not originally wish to expose too many of my own biases. The efforts I made to conceal my biases, despite my conceptual agreement with subjective feminist methodologies, reflects the persistent image of the “objective” researcher. It was not until after my interviews were completed in the fall of 1999 that I felt more free to participate as a full-fledged member of the organization, taking on a share of CGN responsibilities and providing input for CGN decisions. As I have gone through this transition, from neutral observer to full participant, my participation has continued to expand my understanding and analysis of the community gardens movement.

However, Diane Reay warns about the ‘dangers of proximity’ in social research (1996: 62): when the subject matter is close to the researcher’s own life experiences, the interpretation of findings may more accurately reflect the researcher’s point of view than the perspectives of the respondents. As an example, Reay asks some difficult but crucial questions of her own research: she speaks of an informant who expressed an ideological position that differed from Reay’s own social agenda. Initially, Reay had excluded the

words of this respondent from her results because '[the respondent's] version [did] not allow [Reay] to say what [she] want[ed] to say' (1996: 69). Reay subjected herself and her research to critical reflexion and came to results that more accurately reflected the perspectives of her informants. Nonetheless, Reay warns that, 'interpretation remains an imperfect and incomplete process' (1996: 70). She advises, 'never to assume superior knowledge' (1996: 68).

CHAPTER THREE

THE GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEM AND FOOD SECURITY:

A CALL FOR CHANGE

Introduction

As discussed in chapter one, this thesis is an attempt to apply David Harvey's (1996) call for militant particularisms that examine the relationships between global and local processes of domination and resistance. While Harvey concentrates on class-based resistance to capitalism within the moment of production, I would like to look at community-based resistance to the global food system. As indicated by feminist researchers and actor-network theory, micro-processes must be examined carefully in order to develop more complete analysis of social structures and transformations. In reference to my research of the Community Garden Network, these micro-processes will be detailed in chapter four. First, however, I look at the macro-structures of the dominant food system and the conditions that give rise to movements like the community gardens movement. In particular, the concept of food security, which is also examined in this chapter, draws attention to a grim contradiction of the dominant global food system: hunger in a world of plenty.

To begin this chapter I summarize Harriet Friedmann's (1993) analysis of international food regimes, which is useful for understanding the macro-economics of the global food system. In keeping with the tradition of the regulationist school of political economy, Friedmann points to the power that states have, particularly the US, in integrating the global economy of food.¹¹ Furthermore, she describes the ways in which

the industrial mode of food production used by the US has been replicated throughout the world. However this mode of production is characterized by internal contradictions such as protectionist import and export regulations despite trade liberalization, as well as food insecurity despite global food surpluses. These contradictions have led to global economic and political instabilities, which challenge the capitalist movement toward economic globalization.

Friedmann's (1993) research is reviewed in the first section of this chapter in order to set the context of the dominant food system at the macro-scale. This will establish one part of the dialectic between the global food system and the community gardens movement. The issue of food security is another significant factor in the dialectic between the Community Garden Network and the dominant food system. A broad discussion on food security is given in this chapter in order to draw attention to some critical contradictions of the global food system. Once the macro-scale is described in this chapter, I turn to the local resistance of community gardens in chapter four. There, I will apply the concepts of dialectics, feminism, and actor-network theory to draw out the connections between the macro and micro agents of the community garden-global food system dialectic.

Macroeconomics of the global food system

Friedmann (1993) outlines some of the key characteristics and internal contradictions of global food regimes evolving after the Second World War into the late twentieth century. In her analysis, states are given priority status as dominant powers in the politics of food since they control the movement of food through import and export

regulations. While other economic sectors have been moving toward economic globalization, the post-war food regime has presented a consistent barrier to trade liberalization.

The impasse in international economic relations is centred on agriculture because in the agro-food sector there exists the largest gap between national regulation and transnational economic organization... The rules defining the food regime gave priority to national regulation, and authorized both import controls and export subsidies necessary to manage national farm programmes (Friedmann 1993: 30-31).

The United States of America, as a dominant power in particular, has established a distinctive context of trade relations in the food sector. Through its attempts to protect its domestic agriculturalists, while trying to increase its dominance in international markets through trade liberalization, contradictions and instability have emerged in the global food system and for economic globalization on the whole. In post-war GATT negotiations aimed at global trade liberalization, the US insisted that agriculture be excluded from bans on import controls and export subsidies. During the more recent Uruguay round of GATT negotiations, agriculture was the most contentious issue on the table.

The tensions of the global food system are related to a particular history of technological, political, and economic factors. After World War II, technological developments in the agro-food sector allowed for mass production and value-added food manufacturing. Thereby, the scale of production was increased and agro-food corporations began to overtake small-scale farms. In efforts to support farmers, the US government established policies to increase farm incomes by purchasing domestic food commodities and maintaining minimum prices while placing limits on imported food commodities.

Subsequent to the technological developments and farm subsidy programs, the productivity of US agriculture increased such that chronic surpluses became a key characteristic of the food system. Friedmann names the period between 1947 and 1972 the Surplus Regime. The increasing over-supply of agro-food products in the US was costly to the government given its farm income support programs. Moreover, the surplus stocks purchased by the government interfered with the market by putting a downward pressure on food commodity prices. The US averted the surplus problem by disposing of surpluses through domestic programs such as food stamps and school lunches, and internationally through food aid.

Foreign aid was central to developing the economic integration of donor and recipient states. It also encouraged other states to replicate American structures of food production and consumption, for example, by promoting intensive livestock production through feed stock supplies and thereby encouraging meat intensive diets. Foreign aid was also used strategically by the U.S. for political leverage in the world economy. Agricultural aid began in the post-war reconstruction of Europe and shifted to the South in 1954, establishing an imbalance of power that continues to plague international trade negotiations.

Third world markets were cultivated, despite lack of foreign exchange, through the use of food aid... Consistent imports made many third world countries dependent on cheap world wheat supplies. Wheat was both a change from most traditional dietary staples and an efficiently produced, often subsidized alternative to the marketed crops of domestic farmers. Despite the Green Revolution, which *replicated* in the third world the hybrid maize revolution of US agriculture, and *integrated* national agriculture into world markets for equipment and chemical inputs, the third world as a whole became the main source of import demand on world wheat markets. Import policies created food dependence within two decades in countries which had been mostly self-sufficient in food at the end of the second world war (Friedmann 1993: 37-38, emphasis in original).

As US food production was replicated in other states, global food surpluses increased. This led to competitive dumping and the threat of trade wars, particularly between Europe and the US. The competition to dump surpluses between the US and Europe made it difficult for smaller producers such as Canada to subsidize surpluses and exports.

However, between 1973 and 1974 a food crisis created a sudden scarcity in international food supplies. The crisis occurred because the US, formerly excluding trade with eastern bloc countries, entered into grain deals with the USSR as part of its foreign policy initiative, Detente.

The Soviet American grain deals of 1972 and 1973 permanently broke the dam separating capitalist and socialist blocs. Despite leakages, this dam had been a wall containing the surpluses which were the pivot of the food regime. In the 1972-1973 crop year, the Soviet Union bought 30 million metric tons of grain, which amounted to three quarters of all the commercially traded grain in the world. The scale of that transaction created a sudden, unprecedented shortage and sky-rocketing prices. Even though surpluses returned in a few years because the agricultural commodity programmes which generated them remained in place, the tensions did not disappear, but were intensified by farm debt and state debt, international competition, and the changing balance of power among states (Friedmann 1993: 40).

In response to the food crisis, US agricultural policy led to increased subsidies and encouraged farmers to increase production. Farmers reacted by taking out loans, expanding their operations, and re-establishing the tenuous pattern of food surpluses, with three times the debt load that they carried before the crisis. Again, because of the dominant position of the US in global markets, other countries such as Canada replicated these relations of production.

Another significant reaction to the food crisis came from Japan, who lost confidence in the US as a supplier. Before the crisis, Japan depended upon the US for nearly all of its soy imports. However, it diversified its agro-food supply after the food

crisis by finding alternative sources of soy supply, especially from exporters in the South. This move challenged the dependency patterns of the international food regime established by the US after World War Two. As a result of the destabilizing patterns of trade in food commodities, Southern states began to develop stronger export markets -- Brazil, India, Chile, and China in particular.

Currently competition between exporters is increasing. This poses a challenge to the dominance of the US and brings food importers into a position of advantage rather than dependency. Friedmann speculates that, "the US could find itself in a new game, in which the rules convert export surpluses from a source of power into a source of dependency" (1993: 47). However, while the power relations of the food system are evidently changing, a new food regime is undefined as yet. Friedmann sees two emergent alternatives to the surplus food regime:

One is the project of corporate freedom contained in the new GATT rules. The other is less formed: a potential project or projects emerging from the politics of environment, diet, livelihood, and democratic control over economic life... Will it be mainly private and corporate, or public and democratic? What international rules would promote each alternative? The answers depend on the ways that emerging agrofood policies are linked either to accumulation imperatives or to demands raised by popular social movements (Friedmann 1993: 51-52).

These questions and observations are significant to my contemplation of the role of community movements in resisting globalization. I revisit them in the next chapter as I consider the dialectical relationship between the community gardens movement and the global food system. Before moving on to chapter four though, more detail is given regarding food security issues within the global food system.

Defining food security and the insecurities of the dominant food system

Looking at the food system in flux, a further contradiction becomes evident.

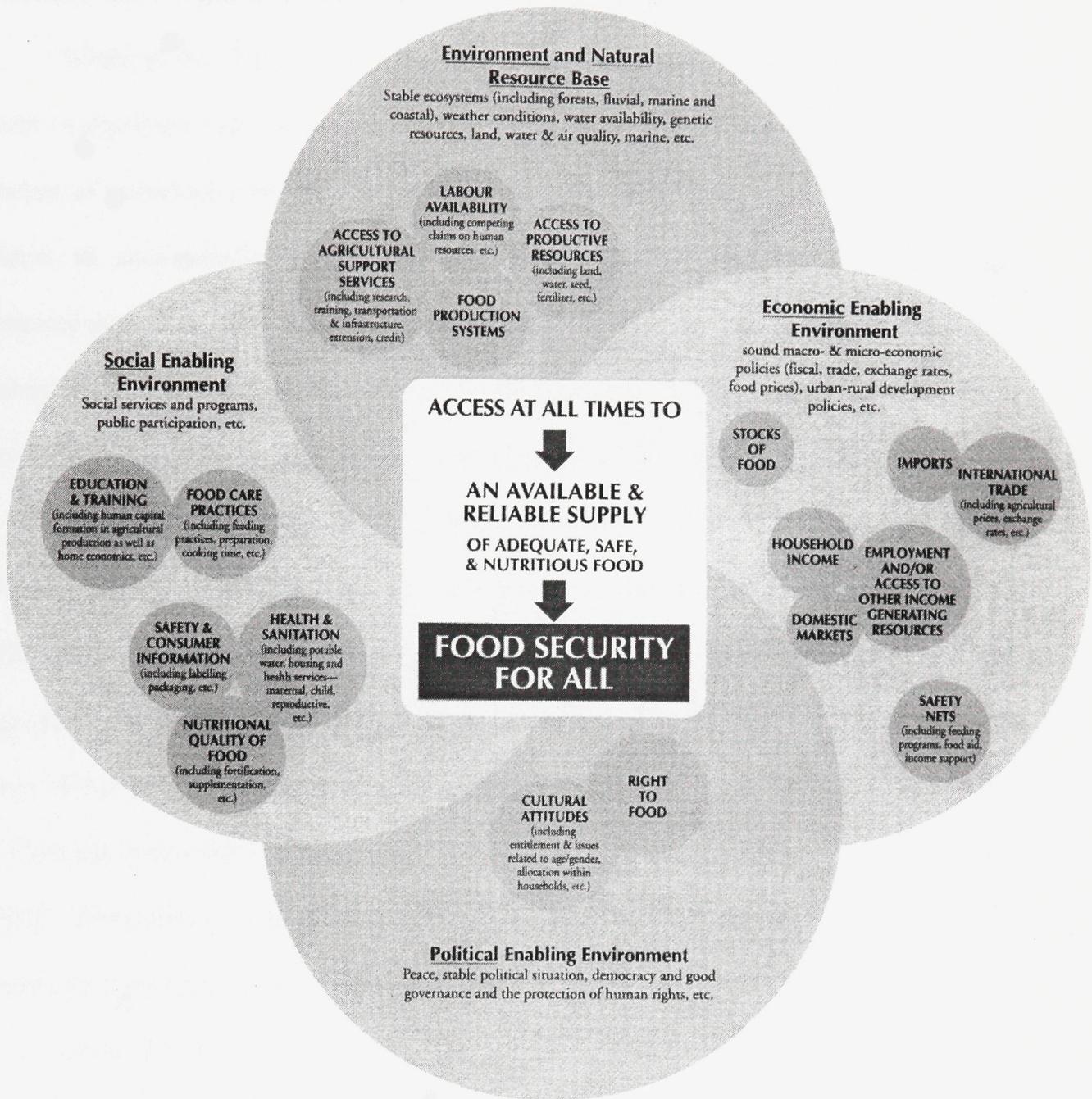
Friedmann has observed that the changing relations of the food system have

shifted to urban issues, that is, to *food* rather than *agriculture*. Consumers in the food regime have been constructed by agrofood corporations to desire first standard foods, and then exotic foods from the entire globe. Yet contradictions have emerged in the sphere of consumption. Poverty limits access to food and demand for the products of the agrofood economy. In the poorest parts of the world, and the poorest populations of rich countries, many are forced to withdraw from commodity relations into self-provisioning and informal networks (1993: 54-55, emphasis in original).

The contradiction that Friedmann is pointing to here is food insecurity in a world of surplus food production. At the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, 186 states officially recognized that, despite the increasing amount of food produced by industrial agriculture, food insecurity is a pre-eminent problem both globally and within each state.

Food security, according to the FAO, "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998). In essence, food security is about access to food, which principally involves access to an adequate income to pay for quality food commodities and/or access to land and other natural resources for viable food production. However, it should be noted that the food system involves an incredible complex of environmental and social processes and structures that cannot all be addressed here. *Figure One*, on the following page, captures some of the complex factors that produce food security. These include -- but are not limited to -- health and food safety, education, income and employment,

FIGURE ONE: SOME FACTORS INFLUENCING FOOD SECURITY



(source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998: 7)

social safety nets, agricultural support services, sustainable environmental resources, stable economic and political environments, democratic participation, and the protection of human rights (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998).¹²

While global food sources produce sufficient amounts of food to feed the entire world (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998), many people cannot access an adequate amount of nutritious food on a consistent basis. The main barriers to food security are related to socio-economic, political, and environmental conditions. “Despite the technical modernization of food production and distribution, hunger and malnutrition still undermine the health and well-being of millions of people and actually seem to be worsening, particularly among low-income urban residents” (Koc et al. 1999).

Each day, approximately 35,000 people in the world die of hunger (Koc et al. 1999). Almost twenty per cent of the population, globally and within Canada, has difficulty meeting their basic nutritional requirements (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998; Toronto Food Policy Council 1994). In 1981 the first food bank since the times of the Great Depression was opened in Canada. Since then, the use of food banks in Canadian cities has spread to more than 500 communities across the country (Power 1999). Three million Canadians now use food banks each month (Power 1999). In the Ottawa area two dozen food banks now serve 30,000 clients in a month.¹³

Over the past two decades of the twentieth century social services funding has been cut by the federal and provincial governments of Canada (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994). The political priority has been on macro-economic ambitions such as deficit reduction and the creation of a welcoming corporate environment for economic globalization. Meanwhile, the minimum wage in Ontario has stayed at \$6.85 an hour,

more workers are forced into part-time and temporary employment, while the cost of living continues to rise, and social housing -- with five to seven year waiting lists in the Ottawa area -- is far from meeting demand.

In this context, food insecurity is a pervasive and persistent threat for many low-income individuals and families. It is also important to note that this group includes a disproportionate number of women, racial minorities, and disabled people who are often excluded from moderate to high income earning opportunities (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998; Koc et al. 1999). Inequitable social relations in the dominant food system are key to food security problems at all scales. "The question of access... revolves around issues of poverty and social justice. It is the poorest and most vulnerable members of society -- the people with no voice -- who are the most likely to be food insecure" (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998: 6).

The definition of food security takes us beyond meeting the needs of a hungry population though. Also at play within the food system and food security concerns is our relationship to the environment. Consideration of future generations' ability to meet their nutritional requirements points to the need to maintain a highly productive yet sustainable form of agriculture. Moreover, some members of the current generation of food consumers are worried about the risks to our health and environment posed by the dominant mode of food production.

The dominant food system is characterized by industrial and capitalist modes of production that are, at best, questionable in terms of their sustainability and health implications. In the effort to maximize production and profit, the dominant mode of food production applies six basic techniques of industrial agriculture: intensive tillage,

monoculture, chemical pest control, irrigation, application of inorganic fertilizer, and genetic engineering (Gliessman 1998). For a detailed examination of the environmental risks involved with these practices see Gliessman's text on agroecology (1998). Here, as examples, I briefly describe the environmental problems associated with monoculture cropping and pesticide use.

Monoculture is a term used to describe the production of a single crop on a large scale. It is key to industrial agriculture as it allows for the use of machinery to cultivate, sow seeds, control weeds, and harvest crops. However, a monoculture is highly susceptible to the spread of pests and disease. Potato blight is a disease that targets potatoes only. In a whole field of potatoes, the blight can spread throughout and devastate the crop. However, if several different crops are inter-planted, with some of the crops being resistant to the blight, the disease is less likely to spread.

Because monocultures are highly vulnerable to pests and disease, chemical pest control is widely used. Pesticides -- which include fungicides, herbicides, and insecticides -- were developed during World War II as a weapon of chemical warfare. After the war, they were adapted to be used in industrial agriculture as a pest control. In the short term, chemical pesticides are effective in killing pests. However, the chemicals also kill pests' natural predators, which reduces the natural checks and balances of the ecosystem. Pests reproduce in greater numbers without their natural predators and can also develop a resistance to chemical pesticides. Despite the increasing use of chemical pesticides, the percentage of crops lost to pests has remained constant (Gliessman 1998: 5). Moreover, pesticides are persistent pollutants that have contaminated surface water

and groundwater supplies. Many are considered to be toxic as well, thereby threatening human health.

While the dominant food system has been extremely successful at meeting the food requirements of a large population (Warnock 1987; Koc et al. 1999), some of its less savoury effects include susceptibility to the spread of pests and disease, soil degradation, air and water pollution, loss of genetic diversity, and the use of toxic chemicals on our food (Gliessman 1998).

Those critical of the social inequities and environmental degradation that characterize the dominant food system call for local, democratic, and environmentally sound food production and distribution systems (Friedmann 1993; Kneen 1993; Toronto Food Policy Council 1994; Kamloops Food Policy Council 2000; Gliessman 1998). Yet, despite the social and environmental contradictions apparent in the dominant food system, it continues to be the strongest power in the relations of food production.

Conclusion

As described in this chapter, the global food system involves complex relations between states. To a large extent, the US has determined the dominant mode of food production and patterns of global trade through the Surplus Regime. However, the food crisis of 1972-1973, largely caused by the internal contradictions of the Surplus Regime, destabilized the post-war relations of the global food system. The flux of the current food system, Friedmann (1993) speculates, is open to either corporate dominance or the democratic control of food policies by social movements.

One of the contradictions of the food system that affects communities in a profound way is food insecurity. Despite the surplus production of food commodities, inequitable access to food has sustained high levels of hunger among the poor around the world. Moreover, the health and environmental stresses caused by the dominant mode of food production is a potential threat to the food security of all regardless of our relations to capital. While global corporations increase the scale of commodification and industrial modes of food production, social movements concerned with food access and safety respond and resist. The community gardens movement is included among those concerned with the food insecurities of the dominant food system. This movement, as it is manifest in Ottawa, will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
COMMUNITY GARDENS AND THE
NETWORKS OF GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY

Introduction

One of the Community Garden Network's strongest advocates for changing the dominant food system has quite a sophisticated understanding of the internalized, dialectical relations between the dominant food system and resistance. She considers the socio-economic barriers to fair trade and organic food production:

Beth: That's where the whole power structure of the system comes in and that's where I feel helpless... It's such a luxury to be able to buy organic food... The sales coming from it are not an indication of people's awareness, because not everybody can afford these things. And I think that's definitely where I see the system being in place as being a huge power over ethics. People want to make ethical choices but they're forced not to because of money. And that's where it becomes very overwhelming for me, this whole issue. Because it's a whole system that's working: it's corporations, it's government, it's us.

Beth recognizes the part that we all play in sustaining the dominant food system as a manifestation of the dominant position that capital takes in the dialectic between the global food system and resistance. The community gardeners are not complacent consumers in the dominant food system, but rather they contest it by producing partial alternatives. Beth sees community gardens as a way of getting around some of the barriers of the dominant system. For example, "*community gardens are a way to outreach to people that might not have the economic means to get organically grown food.*" In more general terms, nine out of the fourteen interview respondents to this study made an explicit connection between community gardens and social change. Furthermore, the four participants of the focus group formed an engaging two-hour

discussion about the dominant food system and the alternative spaces of community gardens.

Some of the community garden actions that were identified by the discussion group participants as important alternatives to the patterns of the dominant food system include: providing land access for gardeners who do not own land, sharing food, changing stereotypes of different ethnic groups, connecting people with their food and the soil, giving city people a connection to nature, eating more fresh produce, growing food locally and reducing the pollution related to long-distance food transport, noticing the changing climate connected with global warming, and community garden organizing as a building block for democratic participation. Clearly, community gardeners have indicated that political motivations to change the social and environmental relations of food production are included in their conceptualization of community gardening.

According to Harvey's theoretical explanation of dialectics (1996: 46-68), all social entities are agents of change through the processes of internalized relations. Therefore, community gardeners do have agency by virtue of their engagement (and disengagement) with the dominant food system. Feminist political ecologists have drawn links between community activists and broader structural changes in the economy and environment, as well as political structures. Furthermore, as actor-network theory indicates, local mediators in the global food system can either act to lengthen or shorten the reach of the dominant mode of food production as (Busch and Juska 1997; Whatmore and Thorne 1997). Likewise, alternative food spaces can be lengthened through the generation of networks of resistance.

In this chapter, I explore the details of the dialectic between the CGN and the dominant food system, through which changes to the food system can be brought about. I begin with a brief history and general description of the organization and activities of the CGN. Also included is a profile of the respondents to my research. Then, I address the specific forms of resistance that take place within the community gardens and their associated food security networks.

While the material practices of community gardens alone may not seem comparable with the scale of production that takes place within the dominant food system, the resistance that takes place within community gardens is also supported by symbolic struggles over social justice and environmental issues. Drawing on the work of Gramsci, political ecologist Donald Moore points to the important relationship between material and symbolic practices.

For Gramsci, “‘popular beliefs’ are... themselves material forces and ideologies... organize human masses, and create the terrain on which men [*sic*] move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.”... By emphasizing the mutual interdependence of culture and politics, Gramsci underscored how symbolic struggles effect material transformation. Values and beliefs mobilize action, shape social identities, and condition understandings of collective interests. In this sense, cultural meanings are *constitutive* forces, that is shapers of history, and are not simply reflections of a material base (1996: 127).

In essence, Moore is referring to the central role of culture and discursive practices in the transformation of the material structures of society. In the community gardens movement, there is a discourse that sustains a critical view of the unsustainable and inequitable effects of the dominant food system. This discourse, detailed below, is informed both by the possibilities represented by the material practices of community gardens, as well as the contradictions of the dominant food system. Moreover, the

critical discourse of the community gardens movement helps to generate sustained resistance.

Still, the ideologies and material practices of community gardens may not seem to correspond to the scale of power of the dominant food system. It is not until we examine the networks of resistance that the CGN is involved with, that its part in a more consequential movement becomes clear. The latter portion of this chapter details these networks, related to food security initiatives, that reach throughout the city and beyond to national and international scales. It is in the dialectic between the networks of food security and the dominant food system that the greatest potential for community gardeners to effect social change in the food system is apparent.

The Community Garden Network

Urban agriculture and community gardening has a long and diverse history throughout the world. In some parts of the South it is estimated that up to sixteen per cent of urban households supplement their diets and incomes by cultivating urban lands (Mougeot 1999). In Britain, allotment gardens were originated by mining companies who offered garden plots to miners as a supplement to their low incomes (Crouch 1989). In Canada, urban agriculture was encouraged by the federal government during the two world wars in order to increase national food supplies (Fairholm 1999: 10). Over the years, the popularity of urban agriculture has waxed and waned, but has always existed in some form or another.¹⁴

Currently in Canada, the community gardens movement is more grassroots, as it is community members who often initiate the creation of community gardens. Within the

past few years, several community gardening organizations across Canada have been encouraging their municipal governments to adopt community garden policies and programs within the political structures of their respective cities. Montreal has been leading the way in this respect with over a hundred organic community gardens administered by their Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Development (Cosgrove 1994).

The Community Garden Network of Ottawa is largely an informal organization composed of representatives from community gardens in the region. It began four years ago when three young university graduates initiated the creation of three new community gardens in the Ottawa area. Linking up with several community health centres who were involved or interested in community gardening, the small network began to share knowledge and resources. Previous to that time community gardens in the area had functioned largely as individual entities. In 1999, the network received a grant from the Social Services department of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC) to hire a coordinator for the summer.¹⁵ With a paid coordinator, the CGN was able to expand its networks among community gardens in the area, hold regular meetings, organize skill-share workshops, produce information booklets, and lobby for more support from the municipality. Following this work, five new community gardens were established, in addition to the ten or so that were already established and participating in the Network.

Currently, the CGN is sponsored by a community health centre in the downtown core,¹⁶ but the CGN itself does not have official status as a non-profit organization. Meetings are held each month from February to December and are attended by

representatives from each of the member community gardens. The central aims of the CGN are to enhance food security for the Ottawa population through community gardening, to secure access to land for community gardens, and to promote healthy communities and environmental sustainability (Community Garden Network 2000).

Approximately fifteen community gardens belong to the CGN.¹⁷ The majority of the gardens are in downtown Ottawa, although there are four community gardens in the west end, one in Vanier, and one new garden in the suburbs south-east of Ottawa. They range in size and spatial arrangement from four small raised beds to 150 ten by ten foot garden plots. The gardens generally occupy vacant lands that are owned by the municipal government, churches, universities, or non-profit housing cooperatives. They are characterized as community gardens because sharing resources, such as tools, maintenance responsibilities, knowledge, and community festivities, is key to the success of the gardens.¹⁸

Activities in community gardens are, of course, focused on gardening. Most of the community gardeners tend to individual plots and harvest their produce primarily for personal consumption. However, several community gardens also have spaces for volunteers who grow food for the Food Bank, as well as alternative local food distributors. Workshops are also a central activity of the community gardens as skills are shared on organic gardening, composting, herbology, seed saving, canning vegetables for the winter, community organizing and cooperation. These workshops are free and open to anyone, not solely members of the CGN. Many gardens also host social events such as open garden days, Halloween parties, and end of season barbeques.

Profile of research respondents

Of the fourteen community gardeners that I interviewed, ten are women, six live alone, four are visible minorities, and four have a disability. The average age of the respondents is forty-one years old with a range between twenty-four and fifty-five. Four respondents did not have high school diplomas, one did have a high school diploma, and nine of the fourteen respondents have at least an undergraduate university degree. Despite the high level of education of the majority of my respondents, their average income falls between ten and fifteen thousand dollars a year. The low average incomes may in part be explained by the disabilities that a number of the respondents have. Regardless, the majority of this group of community gardeners face the social and economic disadvantages of being low-income earners in urban Canada.

Clearly then, the respondents fit within a category of people at risk of being food insecure, in that they may not be able to afford adequate amounts of good quality food for a productive and healthy life (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998). One of my respondents, a single father, mentioned that he has had to go to the food bank in the past in order to provide for his family. Additionally, two respondents who are recent immigrants to Canada noted that the community gardens allow them to grow foods that they were accustomed to eating in their country of origin but are too expensive to buy in specialty food shops here. Two respondents mentioned that they have environmental sensitivities which include sensitivities to non-organic foods. Because organic foods are two to four times more expensive than foods treated with pesticides, having the community garden available for producing their own organic food is particularly beneficial to those with environmental sensitivities. Environmental sensitivities aside,

nine respondents in total indicated that they enjoy the quality of organic food that they are able to access through community gardens, and ten of the fourteen respondents value the food bill savings that community gardens afford them. The Community Garden Network therefore provides spaces of resistance to the food insecurities of the dominant food system in terms of community gardeners' socio-economic situations, cultural preferences, and environmental relations.

In the following sections, I describe the dialectical challenge that is presented by the Community Garden Network of Ottawa in terms of food security within the global food system. This is done in two parts. First, I look at the material and ideological challenges to the dominant food system that take place within community gardens. This resistance is tied dialectically to some of the key contradictions of the food system related to food security. Additionally, some of these challenges represent alternative modes of food production that may offer greater food security than the dominant mode of production in terms of sustainability and self-reliance. Second, I look at the food security networks of which the CGN is a part. These networks indicate that the contestations that the CGN is engaged in extend beyond the gardens to scales that could reach global levels of resistance.

In the community garden

There are several ways in which resistance to the dominant food system is expressed within the spaces of the community gardens. Through critical discourse, community gardeners sustain a call for changing the dominant food system to increase food security. Through the material practices of small-scale, local, organic food

production, community gardeners demonstrate a partial alternative to the dominant mode of food production. Through sharing resources and produce, community gardeners sustain a non-profit oriented mode of exchange. This is in contrast to the dominant food system's mode of exchange, which is structured towards mass consumption and increased commodification. Through a concerted focus on food access for low-income urban populations, community gardens challenge the dominant food system that favours privileged members of society. Finally, by occupying and transforming the spaces of the city into community gardens, the CGN is creating and sustaining material and symbolic spaces that are counterhegemonic to the dominant food system. These forms of resistance are looked at in the following pages.

Among my respondents, there is a substantial critical discourse of the food insecurities perpetuated by the dominant food system. Respondents particularly expressed concerns about the detrimental environmental and health impacts of industrial food production, the lack of equitable food access, as well as concentrated corporate ownership. Although not all community gardeners have the same level of awareness, the critical discourse is connected to many of my respondents' participation in the resistance of the community gardens movement and the way that their participation takes shape. Correspondingly, the community gardens movement provides the spaces through which these concerns can be expressed both ideologically and materially.

Allison articulates the fears associated with concentrated corporate ownership within the dominant food system. For her, food production at a local scale offers a more secure form of food production. The community gardens allow for some local food

production, thereby increasing people's food security and the viability of community self-reliance.

Allison: [Community gardening] puts some control in an individual's life for one thing. You know, you're more, I guess when you rely on a huge [company] then that organization can dictate type it can dictate quality or standards of food. It can dictate supply and demand, or excuse me, supply or not supply. And that's a scary thing when you're talking about one of life's essentials, food. I think it's important for people to be able to have the control over keeping themselves alive. Rather than handing that control over to some monolithic organization that has no -- I mean these are global now these companies -- they have no allegiance or loyalty to any nation even. That's scary, I just find that scary. So if you have communities that are strong on a smaller scale, even if one community fails, the others can help it. But if you have one huge company that decides that this whole area of communities is not feasible or is not a good source of revenue, then where does that leave the people who live in those communities?

Signalling a critique of the distancing in the dominant food system wherein people are alienated from the means of production (Kneen 1993), more than half of the community gardeners I interviewed mentioned the importance of raising awareness about food production and the land. The community gardens are seen as an educational space where people can gain direct access to alternative modes of food production. Inez reiterates Allison's call to increase local self-sufficiency. She sees the instability of economic globalization and challenges the status-quo food practices of our culture by pointing to the significant meaning of producing food locally.

Inez: Culturally we're so used to... convenience food... But it is nice also to grow it yourself... These things in themselves have meaning... It's good to have the knowledge out there in the community... It's nice to have the knowledge in people that they can look after themselves, that they can grow their own food. You never know what's going to happen down the road. People think the economy is going to go on trucking forever and growth, growth, growth forever. But the fact is it's not... So it's good to have those skills out there in the community.

Self-sufficiency is a possible world that community gardeners draw upon as part of their resistance. However, they do not see community gardens as entities that are separate from the global economy, but rather they recognize their movement as a partial

alternative. Molly, quoted in chapter one, indicated just such a dialectical understanding of community gardens and the global food system when she said, “*I’m not about to survive without grocery stores.*” Other respondents expressed a non-idealistic judgment of community gardens’ place in the global food system as well.

Paula: I don’t know that folks can get what they need nutritionally from a little garden plot. I think it’s the icing on the cake. And I think it serves other functions, like being aware of where your food comes from and how you have to take care of the soil and the earth.

Symbolic resources are drawn upon to sustain this critical perspective of the dominant food system, whether it is the possible world of self-sufficient communities or the symbol of a farmer’s story about corporate control. As Beth told a group of community gardeners,

One of the things I remember reading in [the Supermarket Tour]¹⁹ goes back to food being a commodity and whether or not the farmers respect it. McCains, which is a huge food corporation and has a lot of control over the market, they do these package deals with the farmers where they provide them with the seed, and the chemicals, and everything to put in their farm. And in turn they’ll buy the potatoes back from the farmers. And a farmer in New Brunswick who’s growing for McCains said that he -- yes he’s a farmer, he grows his potatoes, and he takes care of his potatoes the way that McCains wants him to -- but at the end of the day he said that he’d rather eat potatoes from his neighbour’s farm rather than the ones he was farming because his neighbour wasn’t under the control that he was under.

This story raises questions about the food produced under contract by large food corporations when those directly involved with its production do not trust the quality enough to eat it themselves.

The contradictions of the dominant food system become more apparent as knowledge about the detrimental health and environmental impacts of industrial agriculture increases. Eight of the interview respondents, plus all of the focus group

participants, related their involvement with community gardens to an awareness and respect for sustainable relations with the environment.

Inez: I don't think it's good to be dumping pesticides into the environment. I look at it more in a global sense... We don't want to have it out in the air for all of us to breathe and get our allergies and our asthmas and our cancers and all that stuff. So it's definitely from an environmental perspective [that I participate in community gardening]... I think in terms of security, there's so much more security that way because you're not monoculturing everything. You have just a few things here and there... And when you've got such tiny amounts of plants in one area disease can't wipe out the whole thing and disease can't spread as easily.

Also recognized is the connection between environmental relations and distanced modes of production and exchange. The spatial distance between producers and consumers is seen as a factor in unsustainable environmental relations.

Beth: The distance of people from the land, or the fact that people don't see where [food] is coming from and they feel that it's just a commodity, I find that's an environmental issue because people are just becoming further and further detached and then of course find it easier to pollute the land.

Community gardeners' concerns with the health and environmental impacts of the industrial system are pronounced. However, community gardeners are generally low-income. Four respondents brought attention to the fact that they could not access organic produce because of its expensive market value. This reflects the fact that access to food security is not only an issue of quantity, but also of the quality of food choices.

Fiona: If your budget is limited, I mean, either you're going to have to make a sacrifice to buy organic if that's really important to you, or you're not going to buy organic. And either there's going to be some sacrifices to your health from the non-organic produce that you buy... or you could wish that you could buy organic and feel terrible that you're destroying your body because you can't... You have such a limited income.

One of the most basic issues of food security is access to an adequate amount of food. The fact that hunger persists in every state, despite the global surplus of food

produced, is one of the clearest contradictions of the dominant food system that incites resistance.

David: The advantages [of the industrial food system] are that it can produce a great deal of food that can feed people. Of course there's lots of food in the world, but there's an income shortage. And if you don't have the income you can't partake in the system. And the community agriculture and community gardening is a way around that. An alternative way where people's needs can be met. And they aren't met with the other system perfectly. For a lot of people fine, no trouble, but um, a lot of people just fall through the cracks in the system.

Overall, the critical discourse fostered within community garden spaces draws upon the environmental hazards, as well as the economic contradictions of the dominant food system. It sustains resistance to the global food system, which then takes shape in the material practices of the community gardens. These material practices are characterized by relations of production that do not involve the application of pesticides or chemical fertilizers, nor money exchange or profit. Therefore, in a material sense, community gardeners are practicing relations of production that are counterhegemonic to the dominant food system.

One of the greatest attractions of the community gardens is the increased access to fresh food for low-income individuals and families. While there were three respondents who did not engage with a critical discourse of the dominant food system in their interviews with me, these three plus seven more respondents did express the value of saving money through community gardening. Marianne -- a former teacher who is on the reduced budget of a disability pension because of her failing eyesight -- is overjoyed that she has access to a community garden: *"We just go down and pick it out of the garden... Doesn't cost you anything. You get free groceries. Free food!"*

In contrast to the dominant food system, wherein access is determined by ability to pay, the community gardens function on a principle of sharing. Tools are shared, knowledge is shared, produce is shared, and often work is also shared. This helps to increase access to food for low-income people, within and outside of the community garden.

Karen: I share with whomever needs it. Because I'm alone I never get to eat all that. I preserve. But it was all gifts. I gave it away because I had made sure I had plenty of tomatoes. It's all gone now, I gave it away.

However, there are considerable barriers to meeting food security through community gardens. The lack of access to land and land tenure is the primary limitation to community gardening. Two of the gardeners mentioned that their gardening spaces might be lost at any time if the landowners decide to use the land for other purposes. Conflicts over land use have taken shape in the form of class conflict. One community gardener expressed the difficulties she had in establishing a community garden in a public park because of the class stereotypes held by nearby homeowners:

Sophie: [The homeowners] already decided that community gardening was awful... They wanted nothing to do with it... Some of the comments that came out were... "what kind of people are these [community gardeners] going to be anyway?"... It was very clear that it was poor bashing... Um, "why don't they do it in their backyard anyway?" There's not an understanding of different levels of ownership and that a lot of people don't have land... It was pictured that these [community gardeners] would be undesirables.

Another tension noted upon by a couple of respondents was that between non-profit housing and community gardens. On one level they support each other as both serve low-income communities. In fact, one local non-profit housing corporation has been involved in the creation of two community gardens for their tenants. However, conflicts

may arise as both community gardens and non-profit housing require access to a scarce supply of vacant lands in the downtown core.

Two of the community gardeners I spoke with accepted, without dissent, that their community gardens could be lost due to their lack of secure land tenure. This position reflects the persistence of the dominant view of land tenure and private ownership, which is a barrier to low-income groups in particular. However, in defiance of the dominance of private land tenure arrangements, four other respondents remarked that once community gardeners occupy and change the spaces of urban lands they have the physical structures that can sustain their presence. In effect, these community gardeners are exercising a form of urban territoriality by asserting their rights to use the land in common for the benefit of community food security.

Beth: One way of doing that is almost to change our perception or improve it to make ourselves stronger and more substantial... Taking community gardens more seriously in terms of land tenure and saying, "we have a place in this society, we're not going to give it up." We do realize that we have to work in partnership to acquire the land and the resources that we need. So take a look at how important these things are and work with us to continue them.

Here, Beth is creating a discourse that expresses a claim to urban lands in order to sustain the physical and social-spatial relations of community gardens. Additionally, she recognizes the need to form partnerships within the community in order to sustain that power. This form of networking will be elaborated on in the following section of the chapter.

Besides land tenure, several other barriers to the community gardens movement were indicated by a small number of respondents. Included in these barriers are neighbours' concerns about the aesthetics of community gardens, a lack of public access to water, a lack of human resources, and a lack of funding. Four of the respondents also

expressed that they had difficulties in getting people involved. Each of these four community garden organizers reflected that this problem was, in part, due to a top-down approach to creating community gardens.

David: The community garden has to be a community garden. The community garden has to run it, not some health centre. That's where we went off the track last year. Definitely.

In addition to these barriers, it is important to recognize that not all community gardeners want to engage in the politics of food production. Some community gardeners participate for the sheer enjoyment of gardening, or for the benefits of exercise and fresh air. One of my respondents noted that he was “*political in [his] opinions, but not [his] actions*”. Others are sceptical of the potential to shift the priorities of politicians in order to fund and pursue creative approaches to food security -- a scepticism that can act to sustain the dominant relations of production.

Frank, whose attempts to generate community gardening in his neighbourhood failed, is critical of the level of idealism within the community gardens movement.

Frank: There is sort of the need to restrain that idealism and learn to meet people where they are instead of -- um, how do I express that -- it's sort of like there's the ideal world where everybody eats organic foods and nobody eats anything with pesticides... But then on the other side you've got a group of people who probably would benefit from some of that stuff. They almost have to change their religion in order to fit with [the ideal]. People are not likely to do that. It's a matter of tempering the idealism and meeting people where they are, and helping them where they are, and moving them to that [ideal] point. Rather than setting an ideal that they can't possibly live up to. And feeling like those people are too self-righteous, or whatever, to get involved with. I think that they kind of create some barriers that need to be broken.

Significantly, as he reflects upon the difficulties he has faced in the community gardens movement, Frank articulates the essence of Harvey's dialectics. Frank's lack of success with community gardening reflects the criticism that Harvey makes of communitarians (1996: 424-426). The barriers that he faced were related to a duality between an idealist

approach to community gardens and a more conventional approach to agriculture. Through his lack of success, Frank came to the realization that bridges between those poles needed to be made -- in other words the dialectic of internalized relations needed to be addressed -- in order to make progress.

However, the majority of respondents seem to have an understanding of the dialectic between the structures of the dominant food system and the spaces of community gardens. Overall, the counterhegemonic relations of food production -- along with the critical discourse regarding environmental degradation, limited access to safe and sufficient food, and corporate control in the dominant food system -- exemplify the possibilities for change within the dialectic between the dominant relations of food production and community gardens. The critical discourse points to the contradictions of a global food system that produces food surpluses but does not offer food security. Resistance to the dominant food system is created as people feel less food secure. Community garden spaces are a venue for such resistance as they provide alternative relations of production. Dialectically, the priorities of the community gardens are shaped to some extent by the inadequacies of the dominant food system. By sustaining alternative relations of food production through ideological and material practices, the community gardens sustain momentum for changing the global food system.

Food security networks

Sophie: I think that the Community Garden Network, and things like the Good Food Box, and things like the Task Force on Poverty... really point out food security as an issue. A number of places... are pointing to the need for an overall food security strategy. And what is interesting is I think that there is the awareness that the inability of a city to feed it's own people is high risk... And so on a very small scale I guess, community gardens

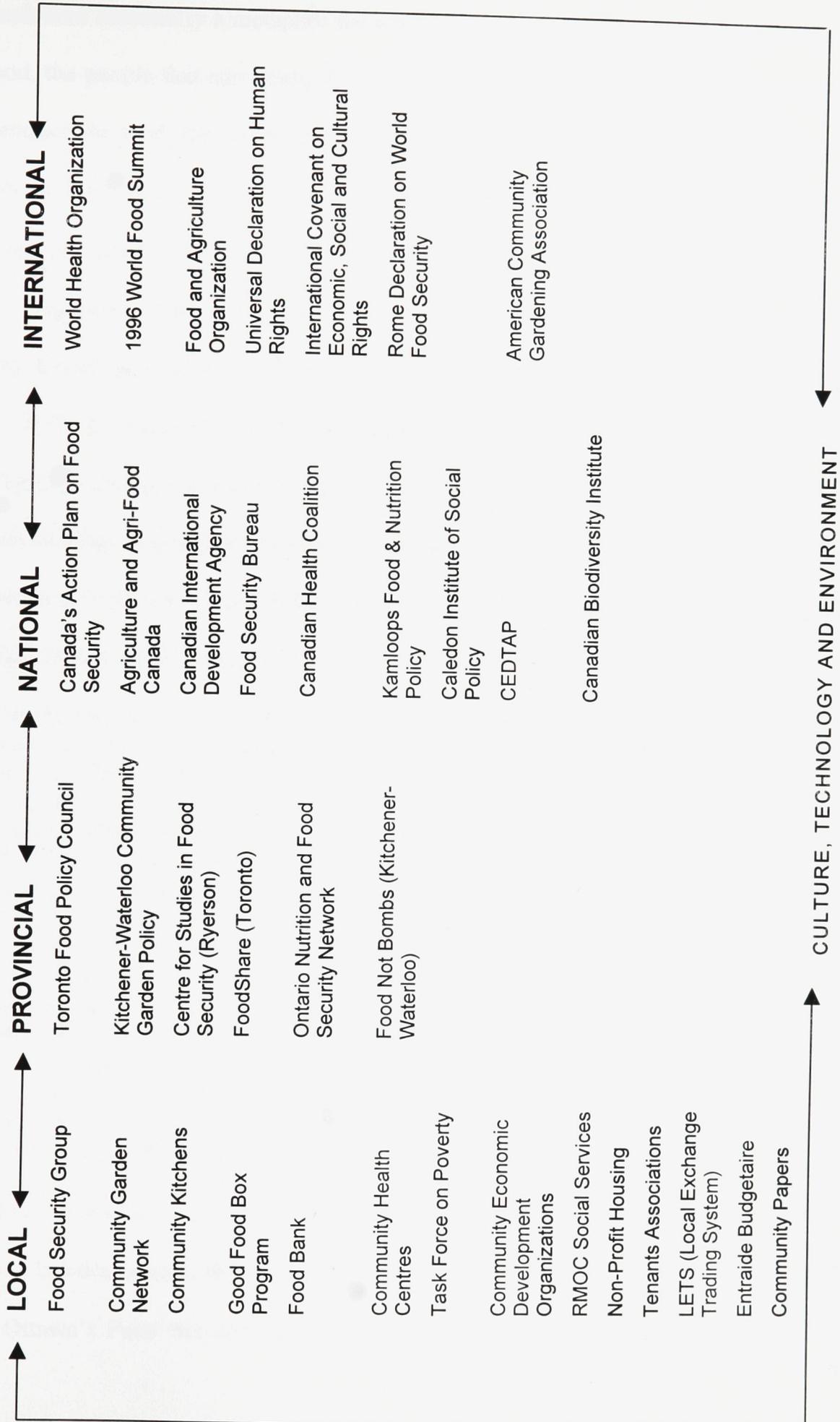
are leading the way with other groups to point to this need to have the skills to be able to do that ourselves.

With the small number of community gardens in Ottawa, it may seem implausible to claim that Ottawa's community gardens have any power within the dominant food system. The claims of community gardeners, as quoted above, are quite modest. However, looking at the food security networks, within which the Community Garden Network plays a central part, it becomes more obvious that the efforts of community gardeners in Ottawa are a fundamental piece of the larger food system puzzle.

The participants in this research project identified a long list of mediators that are connected with the CGN in a network based on food security issues. *Figure Two* is a rough illustration of this network that includes direct links with the following local actors: community kitchens, West End Community Ventures, Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS), community health centres, Entraide Budgetaire, non-profit housing corporations, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, community newspapers, tenants associations, the Task Force on Poverty, the Peace and Environment Resource Centre, the Good Food Box, the Food Bank, and the Food Security Group. Non-local actors that community gardeners identified relationships with include the American Community Gardening Association, Food not Bombs, the Canadian Health Coalition, the Canadian Biodiversity Institute, the Caledon Institute of Social Policy, and the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP).

It is important to note that each of these mediators includes a subset of actors within them. For instance, the Good Food Box program is an alternative form of food distribution that links low-income people to wholesale food. The "Good Food Box" can

FIGURE TWO: THE FOOD SECURITY NETWORKS OF THE CGN



be considered essentially a metaphor for a set of relations that includes the consumers of the food, the people that administer the program, the food that is distributed, the farmers that produce the food, the environment in which the food is produced, the distributors of the food and the warehouses that store the food, the trucks that transport the food and the highways that link the centres of production and consumption, and so on and so forth.

The locus of the food security network that the CGN is part of is the Food Security Group of Ottawa. The Food Security Group has been meeting since July of 1999. With the regional government providing an institutional structure for Ottawa's Food Security Group, various community organizations and individual stakeholders have been developing a strategy for achieving food security in the city of Ottawa. Community gardens have been central to the Food Security Group since its inception, as this quote from the minutes of the Group's first exploratory meeting show:

Considering that there is a strong locally-based commitment to community gardens, and that there are many converging pieces that interact with the concept of community gardens: e.g. Task Force on Poverty, Task Force on Homelessness, Task Force on Employment, The Go Green Environmental Initiatives, The Emergency Measures development related to the ice storm and the Y2K potential difficulties, and, given that the [RMOC] is a leader with the responsibility for the planning and implementation of these areas in partnership and cooperation with the community it serves, and in partnership and collaboration with other key Corporate, Community, and Government leaders and service providers... then perhaps the time is now to promote a vision of the Capital of Canada leading as an example in the world, of a city that has committed to sustainability through addressing the threat of food scarcity of its city, and of its citizens, especially in its downtown inner core, through the broad development of community gardens... There is an opportunity to put Ottawa on the global map as a leading edge city with a focus on the environment, sustainability, poverty, employment, and emergency measures with one single act of commitment to enhancing our green space through the development of gardens for food.²⁰

Since that first meeting, the Food Security Group has evolved to encompass several other initiatives besides community gardens, though members of the CGN still play a central role in Ottawa's Food Security Group. Other mediators include people from the Food

Bank, the municipal government, community economic development agencies, the Task Force on Poverty, community kitchens, West End Community Ventures, and the Good Food Box program.²¹ As well, it is important to note that, while the regional government has taken some initiative to facilitate the coordination of the various groups involved with food security issues, non-governmental organizations have emphasized the importance of placing the community in command of the Food Security Group's program. The dynamics of power within the Food Security Group are rather interesting as they express a sensitivity to the tendency for bureaucratic institutions to lose sight of the particular knowledge of community members who actually experience food insecurity. Throughout the process of developing local food security networks – or, to an extent, generalizing the particular movement into a more universal militant particularism -- community groups have persistently defended their right to maintain community control.

The goals of the Food Security Group are twofold: one, to implement local food security program initiatives and, two, to develop a municipal food security policy. The Food Security Group in Ottawa made significant moves forward after networking with the Task Force on Poverty. The Task Force, as it is commonly referred to, was a group assembled by the regional government with the mandate to develop a series of recommendations aimed at reducing poverty in the Ottawa area. For one year, the Task Force met, bringing anti-poverty advocates, social policy analysts, community organizations, and low-income people together to produce a report for the RMOC. In one of its recommendations, the Task Force identified food security as a priority for low-income families and the working poor. These recommendations were adopted by the RMOC in February of the year 2000. At that time, the regional government pledged to

support food security initiatives such as community gardens, as well as local agricultural production and distribution, environmentally sustainable food production, and local employment initiatives.

Through the Task Force, the Food Security Group was able to access the Community Services Committee of the RMOC. In meetings with RMOC councillors, and at the Task Force's presentation to the RMOC in February 2000, the Food Security Group successfully lobbied for assistance from the regional government for food security initiatives such as community gardens. There was tremendous support for community gardens among regional councillors as the RMOC passed a motion to provide \$20,000 in start-up funds for new community gardens throughout the city. The RMOC also pledged to support the development of a community-driven food security policy for the city.

Initiatives and policies at the municipal level are key in the social service sector, as federal and provincial governments download the administration of social programs to local levels of government. However, as I will go on to explore in the following paragraphs, federal (as well as provincial) governments hold a great deal of power regarding resource distribution and policy decisions that may affect food security. Nonetheless, the food security networks sustained by the RMOC, in cooperation with community organizations, are an important public sector resource. The CGN and Food Security Group's success at the municipal level indicates that the movement for food security and community gardens is of interest to decision makers at this scale.

However, as indicated by Friedmann's (1993) analysis of food regimes, the federal government is also a key stakeholder in food security networks, both nationally and internationally. Canada does have a mandate to increase food security at both

national and international levels (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998). It is here that the CGN and the Food Security Group have the opportunity to extend their network to reach powerful global players, such as the state, so that the processes that give rise to food insecurity can be addressed. By accessing the state, international bodies (i.e. the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization) can be reached as well.

The federal government's position on food security is focused on macro-economic development (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998). Their logic is that a healthy state economy will alleviate poverty and, by extension, food insecurity will also be eliminated. Not only does this approach neglect the environmental contradictions of capitalist modes of food production, but it also paves over socio-economic inequalities within Canadian society.

However, Canada's official response to the 1996 World Food Summit recognized that, despite recent years of deficit reduction and economic recovery, poverty rates have increased from 13.6% in 1989 to 17.6% in 1998 (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998: 11). The state's response to the contradiction between the macro-economic priorities of the federal government, its commitment to food security, and the statistics on poverty and food insecurity is to call on civil society and non-governmental organizations to reform Canada's social programs.

Civil society plays an important role in social, political and economic reform, through public education, advocacy and participation in public policy formulation. The efforts of civil society, together with information and awareness-raising programs by all levels of government, are essential in ensuring public engagement on issues related to food security (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998: 10).

Significantly, *Canada's Action Plan on Food Security* (1998: 13) identifies community gardens as part of the food security network of civil society. This welcome sign -- a line

extending the network of food security -- to civil society players such as the CGN, in combination with the contradictions of food insecurity in the dominant food system, indicates a point at which the CGN can exercise leverage in their dialectical relationship with the federal government.

At the national scale, the food security actions of the CGN are paralleled in several other municipalities. Cathleen Kneen, who is studying food security networks across Canada, has identified community gardens as a key element of all urban-scale food security strategies.²² Kneen has observed that, in each city, food security programs are in the initial stages of development. Once these programs have developed further, it is likely that national-scale food security networks will also expand.

As civil society groups such as the CGN help to define a federal strategy toward food security, Canada can move towards meeting its obligations at an international level. Canada has endorsed several international agreements which recognize the right to food as a basic human right. These agreements extend the networks of food security further into global scales. They include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Rome Declaration on World Food Security; and the World Food Summit Plan of Action (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998).

Within this local-global network, the community gardens movement can define some of the particulars of food security as it engages with the material and discursive initiatives of alternative modes of food production. At another scale in this dialectic, international agreements help to sustain a discursive space through which the food insecurities of the dominant food system can be called into question. Simply put,

people's right to food is being forsaken by the inequitable distribution of income and industrial modes of production in the capitalist economy. Community gardeners do call on a rights discourse to sustain their movement, but I have not found evidence of their awareness that this discourse is sustained at international levels as well.

Karen: Mobilizing people to reclaim their responsibility [is important], but also their right to have that control, to have that access to food. It should be -- maybe this is very idealistic, but it's a non-negotiable in a sense -- it's a right to eat.

Although local food security networks have not yet fully engaged with these local-global connections, international food security agreements can be included in a mobilization of resistance to the dominant food system (Riches 1999). Community gardens can call upon the international discourse that sustains food security as a basic human right as they generate resistance to the dominant food system.

However, at this early stage of developing food security networks in Ottawa, the extension of the network lines to the federal and international level are at best embryonic. There are many questions regarding the potential of the CGN to generate and sustain a network that will be a significant challenge to the powerful actors that Friedmann (1993) speaks of. The dominant food system involves a complex set of production relations, including powerful corporate and state actors. There is considerable pressure from corporate interests in particular towards the expansion of capitalist food production.

However, as corporate power looms larger, resistance responds in a dialectical fashion. Evidence of this has been demonstrated recently by the massive protests facing forums of international trade bodies such as the World Trade Organization in Seattle, as well as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. As

global trade stakeholders try to legitimize their actions, they are compelled to respond to the issues of social and environmental justice for which they have been criticized.

Democratic states are significant mediators in this dialectic, whereby their connections with private interests and state resources come into conflict with their accountability to the public (Poulantzas 1978). This is one point at which the CGN -- through critical discourses and alternative material practices, as well as food security networks that stretch between local and global scales -- can take part in the call for social and environmental justice in the face of economic globalization.

However, it is important to examine the mediators within food security networks in relation to the actors within the networks of economic globalization. For instance, where does the federal government's Food Security Bureau stand in relation to Canada's Export Development Corporation in terms of national priorities? How much power does the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization have in relation to the World Trade Organization? By considering these questions, the CGN and other actors in the food security network can develop their networks strategically such that their resistance is directed toward key mediators of the dominant food system. These mediators may stand outside of the obvious actors of food security networks, but are integral to the dialectics of social and environmental change.

Conclusion

Through the strength of community and municipal food security networks, and the germinating food security networks at the national and international levels, a reasonable claim can be made that community gardeners are indeed significant agents of

social change within the dialectics of the global food system. Despite community gardeners' resistance to the dominant food system though, it is essential to recognize that there is not a dichotomous division between the culture of food production in community gardens and the capitalist mode of food production. As reflected in the principles of dialectics, the two interact in an endless complexity of relations and are thereby sustained and challenged by each other at different places and moments.

Food security networks are defined in part by counterhegemonic, community-oriented movements such as the community gardens movement. In the vocabulary of actor-network theory, the networks of food security are lengthened by community, municipal, state, and international mediators. The length of food security networks increases the power of local-global actors engaged with the goal to increase food security. The lengthening of food security networks is a challenge to the dominant food system as it exposes the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of an insecure food system and as it sustains alternative modes of production.

Simultaneous to the lengthening of food security networks, the activities taking place within community gardens shorten the networks of the dominant food system, thereby reducing its power. As people engage with the alternative mode of food production offered in community garden spaces, they begin to withdraw partially from the dominant food system. By sustaining alternative relations of food production, both ideologically and materially, the Community Garden Network diminishes the power of the dominant food system.

The scale at which these simultaneous movements of shortening the dominant food system and lengthening food security networks occur is both local and global.

Although community gardeners are primarily active within the community, they are connected with municipal, federal, and international food security networks. Community gardeners are significant actors within global and local food systems. As food consumers, community gardeners are also in a dialectical relationship with the global food system. Through internalized relations with the dominant food system, community gardeners have agency and are directing it toward an alternative mode of production that is more environmentally and socially just.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In its resistance to the dominant food system, the Community Garden Network is focused on environmental sustainability, community development, and food security. These issues, which weave through and beyond a strict sense of class concerns, correspond with more general concerns that society has regarding the injustices and contradictions of economic globalization. The CGN's interactions within networks related to food security initiatives and policies move between the place-based context of community gardens and the broader spatial relations of the global food system.

The global food system is dominated by capitalist modes of production, and is supported by powerful actors within the state and corporations. However, as actor-network theory explains, these powerful actors are vulnerable to local mediators along the networks of the global food system. For example, community gardeners can shorten the networks of the dominant food system through their dialectical relations with the state and food industries by engaging counterhegemonic discursive and material practices. Included in this practices is raising consciousness about the corporate control, environmental degradation, and food insecurity within the global food system. In material terms, community gardeners practice small-scale, local, organic food production as a partial alternative to capitalist modes of food production. These practices help to transform the spaces of the city whereby access to land and the means of production is increased, especially for low-income people who are particularly vulnerable to the food insecurities of the dominant food system.

A key element to strategies of resistance is the concept of militant particularism. This refers to the process by which particular, place-based movements make an appeal to more universal interests in order to mobilize a powerful resistance. Applying this concept to the Community Garden Network, we see it is essential that the community gardens movement have an awareness of the systemic forces that are part of the dominant food system. This general understanding can enable the movement to universalize the particular practices of the CGN into a broader movement. Furthermore, it is important to consider the particular processes that generate resistance to the general injustices of society. By doing so, we learn about the social relations through which resistance emerges. Generative forms of resistance often become apparent at the micro-scale where people feel the injustices of the dominant relations of production. Through a micro-scale investigation of the community gardens movement in Ottawa, and a dialectical analysis of the CGN's relationship to the dominant food system, I have found that the CGN is indeed bridging some of the gaps between place and space.

My research has shown that the CGN is a fundamental part of local-global networks based on food security issues. In Ottawa, the community gardens movement has expanded as individuals and community organizations express an interest in reducing the cost of food, increasing access to organic produce, becoming more aware of food production and the environment, and increasing self-reliance. The municipal government has supported these interests by funding some of the start-up costs for new community gardens, by connecting the CGN to other community groups through the Food Security Group initiative, and by committing to the creation of a community-driven food policy.

The federal government also has a commitment to food security, and has recognized that community gardeners are a part of the civil society that will help to transform the food system into something more equitable and sustainable. Internationally, the World Health Organization has been instrumental in getting 189 states to commit to the principles of food security by signing the Rome Declaration on World Food Security. This Declaration, along with other international agreements, recognizes food access as a universal human right. A key factor in sustaining the resistance of the community gardens movement will be the ways in which local actors maintain connections with federal and international mediators.

At national and international scales, there are forces within the global food system that contradict and continue to threaten food security objectives. Trade liberalization seems to have attained priority over food security issues among many powerful state and corporate actors. Canada, although committed to the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, also continues to encourage further commodification within the food system. Simultaneously, the federal government is decreasing its spending on social support services, which contradicts its food security commitments. High levels of hunger persist in Canada with three million people depending on food banks each month to meet their basic food needs. Additionally, in spite of our awareness of the health and environmental risks of industrial agricultural production, it continues to be the dominant mode of production in Canada.

Fortunately, the discursive and material practices of the CGN generate and sustain an alternative approach to that of the dominant food system. The spaces of the CGN encourage organic modes of food production, the free exchange of labour and produce,

the sharing of resources such as knowledge and tools, as well as a critical discourse concerning the environmental and social injustices of the dominant food system. At a local-scale, community gardeners are resisting the food insecurities of the dominant food system to an extent that accords with their means.

I was able to examine these micro-relations of the community gardens movement by applying feminist methodologies in the field and the biographical approach to urban agriculture research. The biographical approach outlines useful research techniques such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation. I also applied participatory research practices and organized a focus group discussion in my field research. Feminists often use these methods as well, in addition to being reflexive about the power relations of the research process. Since all research is a subjective pursuit, feminists argue that knowledge is contestable. As such, this thesis is in part a reflection of my own situatedness in the complexity of the food system and society in general.

With my situated perspective, I chose to focus on certain aspects of the dialectical relationship between the Community Garden Network and the dominant food system, which I will discuss shortly. However, there are significant issues that lie beyond the boundaries of this thesis and point to areas for further research. Specifically, in using Friedmann's (1993) analysis of the global food system which is focused on the central role of the state in the Surplus Regime, I have not fully explained the emergence of transnational corporate powers. These are indeed significant forces within local-global food networks. To what extent can corporations transcend state policies and international agreements based on the objective of food security? Which processes of corporate activity sustain and intensify food insecurities? How do food corporations respond to

critical assessments of the injustices of the dominant mode of food production? How are corporate organizations capable of legitimizing their actions, and sustaining support from governments and consumers, despite food insecurities? At what points are food corporations vulnerable to local resistance? Can corporations transform their practices substantially to reduce the food insecurities caused by its current mode of production? Movements such as that of the CGN would benefit from a dialectical analysis of transnational food corporations and local resistance. Many other mediators in the global food system could be explored in more detail as well. For instance, agricultural associations and technologies, consumer agencies, scientific research organizations, and the like. To what extent do these mediators sustain or challenge the dominant food system?

Another possible approach to this type of research project could stem from a greater focus on particular issues such as the food security of disabled people, the multicultural spaces of community gardens, and gender relations within the Community Garden Network. Analyses with such concentrations might point more specifically to particular justice issues within the food system, such as discrimination against -- and the liberation of -- disabled people, minorities, and women.

The food system is especially interesting to look at in terms of nature-culture relations, as agriculture is a mode of production wherein both the transformation of "nature" and our dependence upon "nature" is most evident. How do community gardens challenge the externalization of nature that characterizes the dominant relations of production? What implication does the transformation of nature-culture relations have for political economy and the environment? It is also important to consider the

relationship between urban militant particularisms, such as the community gardens movement, and rural transitions. How does the focus on urban food security strategies affect rural producers, consumers, and environments?

What I have been able to include in this thesis is the important argument that Harvey (1996) makes regarding the dialectics of space and place, namely, that the uncertain and deleterious effects of economic globalization have often incited community-based movements of resistance. Yet, it is critical that local movements of resistance grasp the global processes that lead to the creation and perpetuation of their movements.

In modern mass-urban society, the multiple-mediated relations which constitute that society across time and space are just as important and as “authentic” as unmediated face-to-face relations. It is just as important for a politically responsible person to know about and respond politically to all those people who daily put breakfast upon our table, even though market exchange hides from us the conditions of life of the producers. When we eat chicken, we relate to workers we never see of the sort that died in Hamlet, North Carolina. Relationships between individuals get mediated through market functions and state powers. And we have to define conceptions of justice capable of operating across and through these multiple mediations. But this is the realm of politics which postmodernism and communitarianism typically avoids (Harvey 1996: 349).

By attending to the space-place dialectic, local-movements can generate a resistance that transcends the boundaries of place and mobilizes action at a more general scale.

The principles of dialectics help to explain the processes according to which this type of resistance occurs. One element of dialectics is the internalization of social relations. Social agents are continually transforming to include the other agents to which they relate. As I have attempted to show in this thesis, community gardens are entities internalized within other mediators in the global food system. This is most evident at the municipal level, although the emergence of internalized relations at larger scales is

becoming more evident as federal and international institutions recognize food security issues and the place of community gardens within efforts to achieve food security.

As the complexity of social systems builds, contradictions become apparent due to the diversity of agents that are internalized in the system. When contradictions arise, the tensions created by them initiate a process of transformation. The contradiction between food security objectives and the insecurities of the dominant mode of food production is a point at which movements such as the community gardens movement can gain leverage for a process of dialectical change.

Although social systems are always in flux, at times they appear to have permanence. This permanence is sustained by particular relations of power and domination over the material and ideological resources of society. Material, ideological, and imaginative resources can be used to challenge the dominant social order. Community gardeners sustain a critical ideological interpretation of the dominant food system. They also invoke a possible world of a socially just and environmentally sustainable food system by practicing a counterhegemonic mode of food production. However, what remains to be seen is the extent to which community garden alternatives challenge the dominant discourses and practices of food production, which sustain the permanence of industrial modes of food production.

Although Harvey focuses on the moment of production and labour-capital relations in his study of the dialectics of space and place, feminists have indicated that household and community relations are also important to the processes of social transformation. Anne Bellows (1996), a feminist political ecologist, has illustrated this process with an example of women whose concerns for the health of their families and

communities are filtered into their work as engineers. These women founders of the Tested Food For Silesia program in Poland developed awareness about food security and alternative modes of food production in their community. They also had a significant impact on the development of organic food markets across Poland. This example demonstrates the linkages between place and space, local and global, particular and universal.

Another method of analysis that bridges the local-global divide is actor-network theory. Whatmore and Thorne's (1997) research of fair trade coffee networks shows that social agents can be both local and global actors. Moreover, components of the environment and technology are also agents within the networks of global food production. Local people, environments, and objects mediate the flows of power across time and space. As such, global economics is vulnerable to the actions of local mediators. As alternative approaches to food production are lengthened across local-global networks, the dominant economic forces of globalization are contested to a greater extent.

My research of the Community Garden Network and the global food system adds to the local-global research of Harvey (1996), Bellows (1996), and Whatmore and Thorne (1997). I have found that in the spaces of community gardens and through food security networks, the CGN is able to address some of the social and environmental injustices of the global food system. The Community Garden Network by no means brings a halt to economic globalization. Rather, the CGN enables community gardeners to increase their food security in a material sense by increasing access to land and other resources necessary for the production of fresh and inexpensive organic produce. It is a place-

based example of a movement toward social and environmental justice. Moreover, the community gardens movement provides symbolic spaces that encourage resistance to the inequities of the capitalist food system. Community gardeners also take part in networks that extend resistance to the insecurities of the global food system into the spaces of federal and global politics. These spaces and networks are integral to producing and sustaining counterhegemonic power. What is more, community gardens invoke possible worlds that could conceivably be, in the poetic words of Deleuze and Guattari, “seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or the majority” (in Featherstone 1998: 24).

ENDNOTES

¹ In order to maintain the confidentiality of my research respondents, I have given them fictional names.

² For a detailed critique of Cartesian dualities see Plumwood (1993) and Merrifield (1993).

³ The definition of food security adopted at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome by the Food and Agriculture Organization and member states is as follows: “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 1998). Sustainable agriculture is integral to this notion of food security such that future generations’ ability to meet their food needs is not jeopardized by current food production practices that degrade the environment. The issues surrounding food security will be presented in more detail in chapter three.

⁴ See Goodman and Redclift (1991) and Mackenzie (1992) for analyses of the central role of women in agro-food production.

⁵ Women’s roles as mothers and provisioners for the everyday care, health and well being of the family often connect food security issues to women’s political mobilization. This statement reflects a gendered division of labour that is often questioned, rightly so I think, and is in a state of transition in the Canadian context, but is nonetheless part of our social history. The connection between food security and women’s mobilization may explain the greater number of women involved with the Community Garden Network. However, further research would be required to verify this conjecture.

⁶ Sandra Harding (1987) distinguishes between methods, the techniques for gathering evidence; methodologies, the theories and analyses of how research should proceed; and epistemological issues, the issues regarding what constitutes adequate explanation and claims to knowledge. By clarifying the distinction between methods, methodologies, and epistemology, Harding responds to critics of feminist approaches to research who argue that there is nothing original about feminist research. The term “methods” is often used

in reference to methods, methodologies, and epistemologies. As such, it is easy to claim that feminist methods cannot be distinguished from other methods of social research. Feminists use methods (research techniques) that are commonly used by other social scientists. Yet the unique contribution of feminism to research is in its methodological and epistemological approach, as this chapter explains.

⁷ Claims to “universal” knowledge here is not to be confused with Harvey’s notion of “universal” justice. Harvey uses the term “universal notions of justice” in reference to a dialectical process whereby ethics are debated, contested, agreed upon, and then debated some more. Quite differently though, the enlightenment notion of “universal” knowledge refers to an epistemological viewpoint that makes claims to uncontestable facts and truths.

⁸ In order to ensure the confidentiality of my respondents, I must be vague about the interview situations.

⁹ The Region has a mandate to support community gardens in the city, which is a recent manifestation of the lobbying efforts of the CGN and other local groups working on food security and poverty issues. For more details see chapter four.

¹⁰ For instance, Crouch’s description of British community gardens portrays them as landscapes of exclusion that are dominated by men. “Whilst there is a feeling of aggressive masculinity in this boarded-up landscape [of fenced-in garden plots], the structures protect the intense activity of cultivation and preparation. There is an intimacy in being *allowed in* to the plot, to explore and to share the view of the proudly laid out crops... In the male oriented culture of the traditional mining villages, the allotment meant the escape from the Sunday morning events of the home” (Crouch 1989: 263; emphasis in original). In Ottawa, though, it is mostly women who participate in the Community Garden Network. Inclusivity is highly valued by Ottawa’s community gardeners and is expressed through the sharing of agricultural knowledge, work, and produce that takes place across the boundaries of culture, gender, class, and (dis)abilities.

¹¹ Other political economic accounts of the global food system focus more on the technological innovations of industrial agriculture, the commodification of farm inputs,

and class relations rather than the food sector regulations imposed by states. For example, see Kloppenburg (1988).

¹² Other important factors to consider in the dynamics of food security and the food system include gender relations (Van Esterik 1999; Barndt 1999; Krug 1999; Mackenzie 1992), international relations (Friedmann 1993; Goodman and Redclift 1991; Bernstein et al. 1990), economic globalization (Friedmann 1993; Kneen 1993), and science and technology (Kloppenburg 1988; Goodman et al. 1987; Warnock 1987).

¹³ Personal communication with the Director of Ottawa's Food Bank (2000).

¹⁴ More research would be required to establish some of the reasons for the trends in rising and falling rates of urban agricultural production. It appears that community gardens become more prominent in times of economic hardship. The recent growth of the community gardens movement in Ottawa may be a reflection of greater threats to people's food security within the current political environment of cuts to social spending. However, concerns about community and environmental deterioration in urban centres have also motivated community gardening (Fairholm 1999: 10).

¹⁵ The Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton (RMOC) is a level of municipal government in the Ottawa Carleton area. However, the RMOC will soon cease to exist as it is being amalgamated into the new City of Ottawa along with the municipal governments of Ottawa, Nepean, Gloucester, Kanata, and other townships in the Ottawa area. The implications of amalgamation on community garden and food security initiatives has yet to be known.

¹⁶ The community health centres in Ottawa combine health care services and health promotion work that is centred on the principles of a preventative approach to personal and social health problems. There are four community health centres in the Ottawa area that are directly involved with community gardens. One houses the CGN, a second provides land for a community garden, a third provides administrative support to a community garden, and a fourth facilitated the creation of a new community garden.

¹⁷ There are several more community gardens and allotment gardens in the Ottawa area, including the Outaouais, that do not regularly participate in the CGN. These have not been included in this research project.

¹⁸ Community gardens are distinguished from allotment gardens due to the characteristics of location, size, work, and culture. Allotment gardens tend to be larger than community gardens, and are located outside of the urban core. The location of allotment gardens is particularly significant as it limits the accessibility of the garden to those who do not own cars. Allotment gardens also require each gardener to provide their own tools and any other necessary resources. The work in allotment gardens is concentrated on an individual's plot, without the communal responsibilities and events that are characteristic of community gardens.

¹⁹ *The Supermarket Tour* is a booklet produced by the Ontario Public Research Interest Group (OPIRG). It is used as an activist tool to raise awareness about the dominant food system.

²⁰ This quote is from the minutes of the first meeting of the Food Security Group of Ottawa, then called the Green City initiative. Copies can be obtained by contacting Cathy Martin at the Social Services Department of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton: martinca@rmoc.on.ca

²¹ See Fairholm (1999) for more information on some of these food security initiatives.

²² The source of this information is a presentation given to the Food Security Group of Ottawa by Cathleen Kneen in the spring of 2000. Cathleen Kneen is co-editor of *The Ram's Horn*, a food systems newsletter based in B.C. and can be reached at ramshorn@ramshorn.bc.ca.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTION GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

(NOTE: Key informants may have questions tailored to their specific roles in the CGN. These additional questions will be based on preliminary data gathered through participant observation.)

General Questions re: involvement with community gardens (biographical)

- How did you get involved in community gardening?
 - Was there a specific event that you can recall that prompted your involvement?
 - Where did you hear about community gardening?
 - What were your personal reasons for participating in community gardening?
- Why do you continue to participate in community gardening?
 - What does it mean to you to be part of a community garden? What value does it add to your life?
- What aspects of community gardening, do you think, are the most difficult to deal with?
- Do you consider yourself to be a politically-minded person?
 - Have you been involved with politics...
 - as the leader of a group such as a community garden ?
 - as a volunteer for a political party?
 - as a volunteer for other things like the food bank for example?
 - as a concerned citizen?
 - by writing letters to decision makers like MPs, Ministers, and such?
 - as a political candidate?
 - as a participant in a demonstration, protest, or rally?
 - as part of a community organization?
 - as an activist?
 - as a voter?
 - In your daily life are there things you do that you see as being part of a political choice?
 - Would you like to be more involved in politics and decision making?

Questions re: micro-level effects of community gardening

- Do you share the work of the garden with other people?
- Do you share the food that you grow with other people?
- How does your garden affect you in terms of your health?
- How would you evaluate your food security?
 - Do you feel secure when it comes to meeting your nutritional needs and wants?
 - How often do you have to resist buying some type of food because you can't afford it?

- Are there certain health foods that you feel are too expensive for you?
- How does your gardening affect your economic situation?
 - Is it costly?
 - Does it reduce your food bill? If yes, by how much?
- What would you like to see happening to your garden in the future?

Questions re: macro-level effects of community gardening

- How do your garden crops compare to the food you buy in the grocery store?
- Are there advantages to store-bought food?
- Do you see any problems with the food you buy in the grocery store?
- In your opinion, what aspects of community gardening contribute positively to...
 - the community?
 - the city?
 - society in general?

Questions re: CGN structure/politics

- Do you know about the Community Garden Network?
- How did you find out about the CGN?
- What have your experiences been with the CGN?
- What role do you think the CGN should play for community gardens?
- What do you think the guiding principles of the CGN should be?
- Do you think the CGN has met with those types of objectives?

APPENDIX B

SUPPLEMENTARY SURVEY OF COMMUNITY GARDEN DEMOGRAPHICS

Respondent # _____

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Please answer the following question by circling, checking, or explaining your answers in the spaces provided. If there is not enough space for your answers, you can write in the margins.

a) **Your sex:** M F

b) **Your age:** _____

c) **Your marital status:**

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| single | divorced |
| common law | widowed |
| married | |

a) **The composition of your household** (including yourself):

total number of people in your household _____

example

their sexes:

their ages:

F										
35										

(Please line up the sexes and ages of the people in your household so that they correspond to each other in the chart above. The example in the first column indicates that the household is made up of one female who is 35 years old.)

e) **Your educational background:**

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| no high school diploma | graduate degree |
| high school diploma | postgraduate degree |
| undergraduate degree | college diploma or certification |
| non-formal education (e.g. workshops, travel, hobbies, etc.; please explain) | |
-
-

a) **Your occupation** (if you are unemployed please state your former occupation and that you are currently unemployed): _____

b) **Your income:**

under \$10,000

\$10,000 - \$14,999

\$15,000 - \$19,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 or more

c) **The total income of your household:**

under \$10,000

\$10,000 - \$14,999

\$15,000 - \$19,999

\$20,000 - \$29,999

\$30,000 or more

d) **Your ethnic background:** _____

e) **Your country of origin:** _____

f) **Are you a visible minority?**

Yes

No

l) **Do you have a disability?**

Yes

No