Seeking Economic Justice in Agroecological Discourse: A Critical Inquiry

by

Kamila Janik

Capstone Research Synthesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate Program in Food Systems and Society

of the

Graduate Program in Human Nutrition

Oregon Health and Science University School of Medicine

In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Science in Food Systems and Society

[current date in this format: June 19, 2024]

Abstract

This Capstone concerns the social problem of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Economic injustice is prevalent throughout the food system, including problems of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. I want to better understand how these injustices are addressed in alternative agricultural spaces, such as agroecology. Agroecology is a dynamic concept that promotes transforming food systems to be more sustainable and socially equitable. Through a lens of social justice, I review agroecology discourse and investigate how it identifies, responds to, and challenges economic injustice. The Overall Research Question asks what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system? My constitutive research questions ask what general instances of economic injustice are identified in discourse, what are the causes of those instances identified, and what are the cures to economic injustice identified in agroecological discourse. My analytical criteria for these questions include instances of inadequate wages, improper working conditions, quality and health of well-being, corporate control, concentration of wealth, imbalance of power, and inequitable distribution of resources. I approach this research through an inductive thematic analysis where I discover patterns and themes that are discussed in the discourse. The most significant finding is that there quite a bit of discussion of the *potential* of agroecology, especially concerning a more equitable distribution of resources. Yet, while agroecological discourse does identify problems of economic injustice, as well as their causes and cures, there is a need for specificity on these topics. More specifically, agroecology does not clearly indicate how this goal would address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

Keywords: economic injustice, labor exploitation, concentration of ownership, corporate control, agroecology, social justice, food systems

Dedicated to the unrecognized and the marginalized labor of the food system.
You are the backbone of the economy and our society.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my professors, Sean Gillon and Patricia Allen. I am eternally grateful for the dedication, support, patience and grace that you have provided me throughout this whole process. I cannot express my deepest appreciation enough to you both. Thank you to my home team, for their endless support and words of encouragement. Finally, I want to acknowledge and give gratitude to all who work in the food system. I deeply recognize and see the hard work that you do, as well as the challenges you face every day just to provide food for your table and ours. That is why you were the inspiration for this research.

Table of Contents

Tables

Abbreviations

CRQ	Constitutive Research Question
ORQ	Overall Research Question
GR	The Green Revolution

One—Introduction

Food is central to our lives, our health, our identities, and our traditions. Food comes from far and distant places and is processed in facilities all over the globe. Over the centuries, food systems have become more globalized and industrialized. This process of globalization and industrialization has been accompanied by imbalances in terms of harms and benefits, particularly regarding labor and ownership. That is, workers are exploited and ownership and wealth are concentrated. I am interested in this topic because I have personally experienced labor exploitation in the food system and have witnessed the inequitable disparities caused by concentration of wealth and ownership.

The current food system is one that has been built by the labor of many, and one where only a few reap its significant economic benefits. The contemporary food system employs millions of people. To put it into perspective, the food system supports the livelihood of over 3.83 billion workers globally across all food chains (Schneider et al. 2023, 1092). Many of these workers experience exploitative and unsafe working conditions. Additionally, only a concentrated few own and control the food system, which means those who run and own it receive the most benefit. Problems of labor exploitation and concentration of wealth and ownership in the food system are problems of social and economic justice that I explore in this Capstone.

Historically, many social movements have addressed economic justice issues and agroecology is a relatively recent social movement in the food system. Agroecology is an ever-growing field that has the potential to challenge the economic injustices being faced in the contemporary industrialized food system. Originally, agroecology began as a holistic, traditional set of farming practices to help soil health and biodiversity. It has evolved and expanded into a

field of science and as a social movement that has responded to a variety of social injustices within food systems and society (HLPE 2019). In this research, I explore the specific ways in which agroecology discourse addresses the social problem of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. By discourse I mean the ways in which knowledge is exchanged through written language. The research problem that I chose to investigate is the ways in which agroecology discourse addresses economic injustice in the food system. I am motivated to better understand exactly if and how economic injustice is addressed in the field of agroecology. I am focusing on agroecology because it has been recognized as an alternative agricultural effort in the food system that claims to approach injustices related to economics, biodiversity, climate change, and society. Thus, I investigate how agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system, while specifically focusing on the injustice of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. The implication of this research is to better understand how economic justice is discussed and addressed in agroecological discourse. As such, this research examines how agroecological discourse identifies and responds to economic injustice in the contemporary food system.

In the forthcoming chapters, I conduct critical inquiry on economic injustice in agroecological discourse. In Chapter Two, the Background and Significance, I establish the purpose, focus, and relevance of this inquiry. I situate my Capstone within the domain of food systems and society, introduce social problems and social justice, and elaborate the focus of my research problem of how agroecological discourse responds to and identifies economic injustice. In Chapter Three, the Methods and Methodology, I foreground my research design and my research questions. I introduce an Overall Research Question (ORQ) that asks what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology address economic injustice in the contemporary food

system. This question is further specified with three Constitutive Research Questions (CRQs) that ask how agroecological discourse identifies economic injustice in general, the causes, and the cures to it. I also discuss further conceptual frameworks and research methods. In Chapter Four, Research Application and Contribution, I present the findings of my research and their significance. Lastly, in Chapter Five, I offer my conclusion on the findings and their applications in realizing social justice in food systems and society. In sum, this research addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system by asking about how agroecological discourse addresses economic injustice so that we can better understand agroecology's contributions to social justice in food systems and society.

Two—Background and Significance

In this chapter, I establish the purpose, focus, and relevance of my Capstone inquiry. I explain my research domain of food systems and society and explain why it is relevant to this Capstone. Then, I discuss the significance of social problems and how they relate to social justice. Next, I introduce my Capstone social problem and elaborate why I am particularly interested in the social problem of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Lastly, I establish research problem that responds to the social problem by asking how agroecology discourse identifies, explains, and responds to economic injustice in the food system.

Domain of Food Systems and Society

Food systems are complex and include many elements such as the economy, communities, and the environment. This is because our food is not just one thing; it requires a myriad of systems before we even get it onto our plate; therefore, it must be looked at from a systems perspective. Food systems encompass a collection of people, processes, institutions, and infrastructure that involves the production and consumption of food within a population of society on local, national, or global scales (Gladek et al. 2017, 17). Food systems are based on the interconnected practices and relationships of people cultivating and preparing food in order for it to be delivered to tables. Further, the food system involves public officials, organizations, educators, researchers, and local communities that all play a part in influencing it through policies, regulations, and/or programs (Gladek et al. 2017, 17). This collection of elements demonstrates how the food system is rooted and interwoven in society.

Food systems are deeply embedded in society, socially constructed, and are therefore determined by social decisions. The components of the food system that are relevant to this Capstone inquiry include land, materials, labor, economics, politics, culture, and environment of

food. I want to specifically bring attention to land, politics and economics, because these aspects pertain to those who work in the food system and are dependent on it for their livelihood. Sears (2017) notes that the food system is intertwined with economic systems since both are social structures that affect people's ability to have access to what they need. Rawe et al. (2015, 5) supports this when mentioning how economic inequality is what governs who eats first and who eats worst. Those in power are responsible for making society-level decisions about the social and economic aspects of food systems, which is consequential in terms of the presence of social problems and social justice.

Social Problems and Social Justice in Food Systems and Society

Given the social nature of food systems, they can both produce and reflect social problems within society. It is important, though, to make the distinction that social problems are different from personal problems. Alessio (2011, 3) describes a social problem as being a public issue that causes social consequences to one or more people that creates an undesirable outcome. In order for a social problem to be social, it must have social consequences in terms of harms and benefits, social causes, and therefore social cures (Alessio 2011, 8). There are conditions and circumstances that place people in negative predicaments, which individuals cannot be held responsible for because said predicaments are socially caused (Alessio 2011, 3). A personal problem is when a negative predicament happens to an individual that is caused by an individual. A social problem emerges when a social condition or behavior is caused by society and perceived collectively as undesirable and in need of a remedy. A response to a social problem results in a call for social change and thus actions of social justice ensue. There are many social

problems in the domain of food systems and society, though I will be focusing on social problems relevant to social justice.

A clear conceptualization of social justice helps us understand and address social problems. As mentioned, society and one's livelihood are dependent on food, making it absolutely foundational to have a food system that is socially just. Notably, the food system itself does not cause social injustice—people do. Social *in*justice is what creates social problems and places individuals, and the collective society, in negative predicaments without access to adequate resources and opportunities. Solving social problems via social justice begins by recognizing that problems are created by people and therefore solvable by people (Allen 2008, 158). Positive social change, then, is needed to develop social cures and social justice. In order to realize a more equitable society, one must define social justice.

I define social justice as both a process and a goal. The process for social justice involves inclusive participation that is democratic and affirms human diversity, capacity for agency, creativity, and collaboration (Sorrells 2015, 1). The process is therefore a collective and active one. The goal of social justice, then, is "envisioned as equitable access and distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights" (Sorrells 2015, 1), and to continue to develop and adapt to society's needs. Collectively, social justice involves meeting basic human needs, freedom from exploitation and oppression, and equitable access to opportunities and resources (Allen 2008, 157). This is the definition of social justice that this Capstone will adhere to. In this definition, equitable access to resources and opportunities are foundational for social justice. Determining a clear definition of social justice will aid in remedying any social injustice within food systems and society.

Criteria for defining social justice relevant to my Capstone centralizes around meeting basic human needs, freedom from exploitation, and consistent and collaborative action that permits equitable distribution to resources and opportunities. This refers to the collective definition of social justice. Placing emphasis on criteria of having equitable access to resources and economic opportunities is important because this, then, allows for both social justice and economic justice to flourish. Economic justice includes ensuring equitable social and economic opportunity, having equitable access to resources, and overall collective well-being. By well-being I mean for everyone in society to have the fundamental right for bettering their livelihoods, to not be exploited for their labor, and to have equitable access to resources and opportunities. In this way, concentration of ownership and wealth can begin to disappear. In a socially just society, economic justice is vital for one to thrive. This articulation for specific criteria to social justice provides additional clarity for achieving this goal. Next, I will introduce my Capstone social problem and illustrate how it relates to social justice.

Capstone Social Problem

My Capstone social problem focuses on economic injustice in the contemporary food system. The contemporary food system is riddled with economic injustice. Examples of economic injustice include, but are not limited to, inequitable working conditions, wages, wealth, ownership, and capital, as well as inequitable access to decision making and political influence. The forms of economic injustice I explore are labor exploitation, oppression of people through inequitable access to economic opportunities, poverty, and concentration of ownership. I specifically focus on labor exploitation and concentration of ownership since these injustices are

central to economic injustice. As such, I will begin exploring economic injustice by first understanding the economy.

In order to understand how economic injustice manifests in the food system, we must first understand how the economy functions as a system itself. The economy can be viewed as the management of the production, distribution, and consumption of materials, resources, good and services, and groups of people and thus can also be viewed as a way of exercising power (Mitchell 2008, 1116; University of Minnesota 2015). In the management of the economy, there are exchanges of things, people, and/or services that have attached value. In a market economy, for something, whether it be an object or person, to have value means to put a price on it, and the higher the price, the higher value of that thing or person. In other words, the economy is an organized social system that we as a society use in order to determine value and its circulation, which then determines wealth based on goods, services, and resources. Those who determine the economic value of something are those in power who devised the organization and structure of the economy – a system that can be calculated and measured by its fiscal practices, such as influencing policy to lower taxes or increasing government spending. Mitchel (2008 1117) explains this in describing how those who devised this economic system see it as an *object* of power and knowledge. In other words, the economy is an enterprise organized by people that creates, reflects, and destroys value based on power-laden social decisions. This is an example of how a market-based economy operates. Due to increased market power and ownership, workers are paid less, thus leading to economic injustice.

Those in charge of the management of a market-based economy are those who have the power in making decisions for how the economy operates. The priorities and values set by those in power are ones that fosters economic injustice. The components of the market-economy

involve the constant distribution of resources, such as land and raw materials, as well as the labor of workers (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013). In a market economy, resource allocation is determined by the accumulation of minor decisions being made by many economic actors, or those in power, who are behaving out of their own self-interests (Ross 2023). Thus, another way to look at the economy is as a reflection of the decisions made by the people in power about how to care for and shape common resources, what production needs to be prioritized, how others are treated and interact with one another in the workplace, and how to distribute wealth and future investments (Gibson-Graham et. Al. 2013, xvii). In short, the economy is a social system that governs how we live our lives.

Capitalism is an economic system that is motivated to make the most profit. Given that people are the backbone of the economy, ideally, if we want people to thrive, prosper, and grow, it would be in society's, and overall humanity's best interest to improve the survival and fortunes for all. However, the economy that society currently practices is one that prioritizes individual interests, primarily in the name of profit, under the approach to economic relations: capitalism (Holt-Gimenez 2017). Capitalism is the economic system where private owners control property and labor, as well as demand and influence freely set prices in the market to best serve private interests (Jahan & Mahmud 2015, 1). The pillars of capitalism include private property, self-interest, competition, a market mechanism, freedom to choose, and limited role of government (Jahan & Mahmud 2015, 1). Wood (2000, 36) notes how capitalism itself, by definition, depends on the nature of exploitation of wage labor. That is, in order for capitalism to survive it needs labor from working people. Capitalism fosters economic and competitive pressures to increase labor productivity and therefore cultivates such a 'productive' agricultural business. Thus, without such a 'productive' agricultural sector in the economy, the contemporary industrial

food system via capitalism would have been unlikely to emerge (Wood 2000, 38; Holt-Gimenez 2017, 23). In this particular way, a capitalistically driven economy is what fosters conditions for economic injustice to emerge.

Economic injustice and economic inequality are pervasive in contemporary society. Economic inequality refers to the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources in society, whereas economic injustice refers to the disparities that groups of individuals collectively face based on economic inequality (Fontinelle 2021). Income inequality and wealth inequality are examples of economic inequality. Income inequality refers to the extent to which income is unevenly distributed within society, which includes and is not restricted to, one's earnings from employment (The Equality Trust 2012). Wealth inequality refers to the uneven distribution of the net worth of people, including their material or financial assets and investments among a group of society (The Equality Trust 2012). Let us consider the economic inequality in the United States as an example. In the latter half of 2023, the bottom 50% of the population only owned 2.6% of the nation's wealth, whereas the top 10% of the population in the US owned 66.6% of the nation's wealth (Statista Research Department 2024). Significant poverty results from this economic inequality, thus cultivating a form of economic injustice. Along the same vein, Elmes (2016) asserts that a consequence of economic inequality is to produce short term profits for industrial producers, distributors, and processors that benefit from the concentration of the market at the expense of exploitation of labor and resources. That is, as a result of concentration of ownership and wealth, [agricultural] land owners produce whatever is the most profitable in the shortest amount of time with few consideration of long-term human, environmental, and social consequences (Elmes 2016, 1054).Given the rise of economic inequality in society, one might expect for economic injustice to be present in the food system.

Labor exploitation is a category of economic injustice that is experienced throughout the food system. At every level of the food chain there is a person who expends their time and labor. Over 22 million people are employed in the food system globally, where they receive low wages and lack worker's rights (WWF 2017, 107). According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, only 20% of the agricultural labor in 2010 had access to basic social protections, which did not include having access to a collective bargaining agreement; nor were the injustices that marginalized labor groups such as children, women, or migrants face acknowledged (WWF 2017, 107). This illustrates how those employed in the food system are not only disproportionately discriminated against based on their gender and race (Oxfam 2020; WWF 2017), but they also do not receive proper protection. Allen & Sachs (2007, 1) further assert how society normalizes the idea that a woman's role is to perform the majority of food-related work yet lack the agency and power to make decisions in the food industry and in food policy. Additionally, in some cases employees are required and expected to work longer hours, unpaid, in order to fulfill the needs of production (Oxfam 2020, 17). Fulfilling the demanding needs of the food system is no small feat, and unfortunately, it comes at the expense of exploiting labor.

We as a society economically depend on the exploitative labor to provide food for ourselves and the rest of the population. According to Holt-Gimenez (2017, 33), labor is supplied to the economy based on people's ability to work and is sold to employers as livelihood, thus attributing value to labor as a commodity. Labor exploitation, then, is the regular dispossession of time, use-value, and opportunity for capital gain (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 76). To be clear, use-value is determining the usefulness of something, or someone, in a form of measurement (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 60), and capital gain is profit that is in search of more profit (33). So, in other

words, labor exploitation is the constant and consistent deprival of one's time and serviceability, in order for the other to gain a profit. Young (1990, 61) describes exploitation as a form of oppression where the steady transfer of the results of labor of one social group is processed to benefit another. Exploitation is an injustice of not only class division, but of a structural relation between social groups (Young 1990, 61). This indicates that there are social rules when it comes to work. People in power are the ones who determine who should work for who, how that work is compensated, and the appropriation of the results of that work (Young 1990, 61). Under capitalistic production, the labor process begins with an employment agreement governing the social conditions of the sale of labor by the worker and its purchase by the employer (Braverman 1974, 52-53), an injustice where capitalists, or people in power, exercise control. This exercise of power and control reproduces a systemic practice of domination and subordination.

At multiple levels of the food system whether it be in the fields, or the factories, farm and food workers face hard and dangerous working conditions. In fact, the food system is considered to be one of the three most hazardous sectors to work in in terms of fatalities, injuries, and health (WWF 2017, 107). For example, according to Food Print (2018), those who work out in the fields are working in the hot sun with barely any shade, have infrequent breaks, and typically do not have enough water. Another example includes those who work in meatpacking factories; they face the most dangerous and poorly compensated work, where they are consistently exposed to respiratory problems, skin infections, and falls caused by slippery floors (Foot Print 2018), thereby imposing long-term negative health consequences. This example demonstrates the vulnerable and harmful working conditions that food systems workers are exposed to, further revealing a socially unjust food system.

In the food system, socially unjust practices such as paying marginalized groups of workers unfairly to work in poor conditions has become normalized. Wages are commonly established *below* the federal minimum wage, particularly for migrants, women, and other minority groups (Fanzo et al. 2021, 7), demographic groups that appear to be specifically targeted. For example, US agricultural employers rely on immigrant labor because they are considered to be "cheap" labor, and they implement policies that support the exploitation of these employees (Ayazi & Elsheikh 2020, 30; Liu 2012, 14). Further, Allen (2016, 1) points out that conditions of employment are socially produced via public policy, public funding, and racism. Correspondingly, due to circumstances such as a language barrier, lack of education, desperation, and/or fear, immigrant workers lack the proper tools, entitlements, [social] protections, and resources to advocate for themselves. Even though there are policies such as the National Labor Relations Act that allows for farm workers and other food system employers to adhere to basic labor laws such as a minimum wage and the right to organize a union (Liu 2012, 14), immigrants and other marginalized groups are curiously excluded from such policies and programs. It seems as though specific forms of agricultural labor are exempt from social protections, which makes these individuals particularly vulnerable. For instance, the US's agricultural production is not only highly dependent on the work of racialized populations, but it also takes advantage of the politically created labor shortages and policies made for a temporary work agreement (Sbicca et al. 2016 266; Allen 2016, 2). This directly violates social justice criterion since it excludes groups from policies that would economically and socially benefit them, perpetuating conditions for income and wealth inequality.

Labor exploitation leads to inequitable access to economic opportunities and resources and maintains impoverishment of food system workers. The food system is known to limit

economic opportunity for individuals and maintain poverty traps (Fanzo et al. 2021, 3). The poverty trap is a self-reinforcing cycle that restricts opportunities, exposes vulnerabilities, and excludes people from access to resources (Fanzo et al. 2021, 3; WWF 2017, 127, 137). Even though the food system supports the livelihoods of millions of people, the income earned in the food system is often insecure and insufficient in terms of standard of living (Fanzo et al. 2021, 7). Furthermore, employment in the food system does not guarantee social protections such as access to healthcare, pensions, or other forms of retirement benefits (Fanzo et al. 2021, 7). It is a fact that labor is necessary and needed in the food system, yet it does not provide equitable economic opportunities. Recall how the US agricultural sector is notoriously reliant on underpaid immigrant labor that are on the predisposed assumption that these laborers will do any work just to get any type of pay, even if it is just barely enough. Labor exploitation is not only harmful in and of itself, but also creates a sort of underclass of workers who have no other option than to continue to be exploited, thus, demonstrating how there are structural systems of oppression that keep people in poverty traps and exploit them for their labor within food systems and society.

In order to address the structural challenges in the food system that place people in poverty, we must then consider who operates, or funds, the food system itself. Concentration of ownership is another category of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. As explained above, the economy that supports the contemporary food system functions under capitalistic markets. The capitalistic markets are not regulated and therefore allow for concentrated ownership to grow (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 85). Consolidation of ownership tremendously influences how the economy of the food system operates, resulting in specific growing practices that dominate markets and create unequal and forced competition (WWF 2017, 77; Fanzo et al. 2021, 3). For example, larger corporations that produce and process goods

have the power to sell goods at prices that are inconsistent with production inputs, negatively impacting small-scale farmers who cannot compete with such large industrialized markets (WWF 2017, 77). To control market prices in this way results in a decrease of local food prices, which creates a volatile local economy and damages the profits of local businesses (WWF 2017, 77), cultivating a dependence on larger markets and resources. As such, the ones who influence the market economy of food are the ones who reap the benefits and enjoy the [financial] profits, whereas smaller-scale food system workers cannot sustain a living and are vulnerable to price fluctuations and struggle for market access (Ayazi & Elsheikh 2015, 13; WWF 2017, 131). Capitalistically driven markets foster conditions for the economic injustice of concentration of ownership.

There are only a few corporations that dominate global agriculture production and distribution, influencing a majority of the decisions made for the operation and functionality of the food system. Currently, only four agribusinesses own and control 90% of the global grain trade, the biggest agricultural company Monsanto owns 90% of the soy industry, and Cargill is the biggest global agricultural company in the world, based in the US, where it made 114.69 billion dollars in the year 2022 (WWF 2017, 77; Levin 2023). This concentration of ownership generates a concentration of power and capital, which is a result of corporate control. The mechanisms of corporate control infiltrate the food system and manifests at different levels – from farm fields to national distribution and production to global agricultural markets (Clapp 2023, 2). That is, corporate control influences the governance and management of the food system. Corporate control guides the oversight of political and economic systems that impact trade [regulations], tax rates, and wealth distribution that ultimately produces environments that favor further corporate control and consolidations (Ayazi & Elsheikh 2015). Corporations wield

great influence in how the economy functions within the food system and reap the benefits, negatively impacting society.

Corporate control negatively impacts economic stability and thus exposing further vulnerabilities of the food system. To be too dependent on one supplier, or a concentrated few, reveals the volatile nature of the food system. It also uncovers the centralization of power in the food system as a cause for such rigidity. For instance, if something were to happen where one or more staple grain suppliers is taken out of the equation, then the whole system falls apart (Clapp 2023, 2), and the most vulnerable [people] are going to pay the price. Corporate control also results in a series of unfortunate consequences such as an increased dependence on external resources, harmful impacts to the environment and human health by increasing food insecurity, hunger, and malnutrition (Clapp 2023, 2). All of this reveals how corporations reinforce structural barriers and inhibit opportunities and resources for basic human needs, clearly illustrating social and economic injustice.

The evidence of economic injustice in the food system presented thus far demonstrates a violation of the criteria I provided earlier for social justice: the exploitation of labor and concentration of ownership and wealth. This evidence further demonstrates how this is a relevant social problem for this research. To recall, social justice is consistent action that permits equitable access and distribution of resources, opportunities, and fundamental rights and involves inclusive participation that is democratic and affirms human diversity, capacity for agency, creativity, and collaboration (Sorrells 2015, 1). Social justice criteria involve meeting basic human needs, freedom from exploitation, and consistent and collaborative action that permits equitable distribution to resources and opportunities. That is not the case when we look at economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Economic injustice in the food system

includes labor exploitation and concentration of wealth and ownership. Those who work in the food system experience exploitation related to poor livelihood, insufficient pay, and unsafe working conditions. This lack of financial security and safety leads to a lack of economic opportunity, where people cannot better their livelihood and future for themselves or their families, thus, resulting in the perpetuation of poverty. When tracing back the root of what curates this poverty, one must look at the concentration of ownership, power, and influence dominating the current contemporary food system. Corporations greatly influence and control global agricultural production, distribution, and the financial markets. This concentration of ownership contributes to maintaining a socially and economically unjust food system. In the next section, I will propose my Capstone research problem and introduce how alternative agri-food movements approach economic injustice.

Capstone Research Problem

Social movements are one form of response to economic injustice. A social movement is an organized collective of individuals, who are not part of formal institutions such as political parties, but who band together to protest, fight for, advocate and mobilize significant social change for a duration long enough to pressures authorities to listen and respond to demands of justice that ultimately benefit society (Staggenborg 2016, 2; Gupta 2017, 8, 10). Based on this smovements include, but are not limited to, protesting for basic human rights, labor rights, changing cultural norms to be more inclusive, racial and ethnic equity, protecting the environment, ceasing wars, and promoting economic interests for political change (Staggenborg 2016, 2; Gupta 2017, 8, 10). As such, social movements are a great method for addressing economic injustice. Social movements, such as agroecology, prove to be important for seeking positive social change and economic justice within the food system.

In its development, agroecology has been used in communities in tandem with the social movement of food sovereignty as a blueprint to advocate for their economic right to food in their own local food systems. As a result, agroecology emerged as a response to the negative environmental, social, and economic externalities from the industrialized, contemporary food system that instead advocated for the right to food and food sovereignty (Fernandez 2013, 116; HLPE 2019, 38). As such, agroecology has been proposed as a transformative practice and movement that is transdisciplinary, participatory, and action-oriented that includes critiquing the political economic structures that shape our current food system (Mendéz 2013, 8; Holt-Gimenez 2017; FAO 2023). The concept of food sovereignty was first introduced during international discussions in the World Food Summit of 1996 by La Via Campensina, which is an organized, international movement of peasants (HLPE 2019, 38; Rosset & Martinez-Torres 2013, 1). Food sovereignty is the "right of peoples healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define their own food and agricultural systems" (Nyeleni 2017 via HLPE 2019, 38). That is, food sovereignty is advocating for local communities to hold the power in making decisions about their local food systems.

Agroecology is positioned as an alternative agri-food movement. Agroecology is a social movement for peasants, family farmers, indigenous people, rural workers, rural women, and others to formally organize to contest the taking away of common land and denounce the corporate, industrial agribusiness model that encompasses the contemporary food system and instead promote food sovereignty and food justice (McCune, Reardon, & Rosset 2014, 32; Rosset & Martinez-Torres 2012, 1). Agroecology is also a component of food sovereignty. Peasant communities viewed the social movement aspect of agroecology as a political tool that requires a collective people to challenge and transform the structures of power in order to

generate community, local knowledge, promote social justice, nurture culture and identity, and strengthen economic growth in rural areas (HLPE 2019, 38).Thus, agroecology as an aspect of food sovereignty allows for agroecology to take on a more transformative approach in politics, economics, and practice (Anderson, Maughan & Pimbert 2019, 533). Further agroecology as a component of food sovereignty emphasizes the democratization of food systems, policies, practices, and knowledge, and prioritizes fundamental rights and autonomy of food producers (Wezel et al. 2019, 532). This aligns with my criteria for social and economic justice within the food system by meeting basic human needs, freedom from exploitation and oppression, and equitable access to opportunities and resources. Some even argue that the main objective of agroecology as a social movement is to express resistance to the industrial food system and the Green Revolution, and to achieve food sovereignty (Valdivia-Díaz & Le Coq 2022, 1; Acevedo-Osorio & Chohan 2020, 332). Therefore, agro-systems cannot be separated from the human communities that drive them, including the external factors of social and political dynamics (HLPE 2019, 38). In this way, the social movement of agroecology addresses issues of social justice in the food system.

As mentioned, agroecology has evolved over time from theory and practice to constituting a social movement. Agroecology first started out as a practice and scientific discipline that primarily addressed environmental and ecological problems in agriculture. From a general outlook, agroecology is a holistic practice that is rooted in humans creating ecosystems that benefit local communities and involves integrating ecological and social principles to design and manage sustainable agricultural food systems (FAO 2023). Agroecology was recognized as an academic discipline in the 1930's; however, starting from the 2010's and beyond is when the political economic, social, and cultural aspects were introduced to agroecological discourse

(HLPE 2019, 35). The shifts that occurred from practice to discipline in discourse studies were conducted on the pest management strategies of agroecology and evaluated the economic impact of pest damage (Wezel 2009, 505). As a discipline, agroecology is viewed as an integrative science and "dynamic concept" that encompasses studies of agriculture and political discourse (HLPE 2019, 31-32). Siegner et al. (2020, 4) argues that agroecology in its most expansive form combines social, ecological, and political elements of growing food in a way that directly confronts the industrial food system paradigm and explicitly seeks to address the root problems and causes. That is, agroecology is simultaneously a set of ecological principles and a method of inquiry that addresses the root causes of problems (Siegner et al. 2020, 4). Wezel et al. (2020, 2) explain how within social movements, agroecology is viewed as a way to transform local food systems to strengthen the economic viability, particularly in rural areas, and to build fair and safe food production. Agroecology is multifaceted in nature, and thus transcends disciplinary boundaries in discourse.

Discourse is fundamental in social movement formation and action. Discourse is the cognitive praxis that gives shape and identity to social movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991 as cited in Allen 2004, 6). Discourse has become one of the preliminary tools social movements use in order to further galvanize steps toward social change. This is because discourse has the power to shape and reflect the reality of society. For example, Allen (2004, 6) writes, "the discursive construction of reality is a crucial realm of power for social movements that do not control major economic resources of the formal political process." In other words, given that those in power ultimately shape economic and political decisions as well as control resources, it is up to the general public to define which situations in society influence courses of action. Those who look at discourse are motivated by a desire to understand the efforts of social movements, or

those without resources and decision-making power. If social movements want to enact social change that is aligned with social justice, how that social movement engages in discourse wields the power and space to reform, shape, and transform social institutions. It is through discourse that society can begin to challenge social problems in order to establish new ideas and relationships.

Now established as a social movement, agroecology is viewed as a multidisciplinary approach to address social injustice in the food system. Discourse suggests the viewpoint that agroecological practice has been said to improves the economic existence of farmers, transforms the food system toward a more sustainable and socially equitable one, improves the livelihoods of people working in the food system, increases wages, re-embeds local food systems, and shifts the market back toward local economies (FAO 2024; Food Print 2024; HLPE 2019, 45). Agroecology has been used as a conceptual framework in discourse by researchers, policymakers, and activists to implement socio-economic equity principles (Bottazzi & Boillat 2021, 2; Wezel et al. 2009, 505). One such activist proceeds to argue in discourse that it is critically important to situate agroecology as a method for healing the destruction done to Earth on local and national scales to shed light on social struggle and to fundamentally challenge the imbalance of power in the food system (Snipstal 2016). In this way, the social movement of agroecology focuses its attention on the economic dimension of agriculture. This suggests the political nature of agroecology and how it is a vital approach to consider when challenging structures of power within society (Nyeleni 2015, via Siegner et al. 2020, 4). Agroecology's positionality in discourse as an alternative method, or approach, to combat social injustice in the contemporary food system also situates it to address economic injustice in the food system.

Given the claims in agroecological discourse about addressing food-system injustices, this research focuses on the extent to which agroecological discourse addresses the social problem of economic injustice within the contemporary food system. Specifically, I investigate how the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership and wealth are identified, explained, and addressed in agroecological discourse.

—

To summarize, in this chapter I establish how food systems are deeply embedded within our society, reflect social decisions, and can therefore produce social problems. Economic injustice in the contemporary food system is a social problem that violates social justice criteria of meeting basic human needs, freedom from exploitation and oppression, and equitable access to opportunities and resources. Among social justice problems, I am focusing on the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership and wealth. I employ the critical lens of social and economic justice that will be applied throughout the research and analysis of this social problem. Social movements are one way to respond to economic injustice. Agroecology positions itself as a social movement that challenges social, environmental, and economic structures. Discourse is foundational to the formation and action of social movements. Thus, my inquiry centers on how agroecological discourse responds to economic injustices such as labor exploitation and concentration of wealth and ownership. This research addresses the social problem of economic injustice in the contemporary food system by asking how it is addressed in agroecological discourse so we can better understand agroecology's contributions to social justice in food systems and society. In the next chapter, I explain the methods and methodology of my analysis.

Three—Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the rationale of my Capstone inquiry and to explain the relationship between my social problem, research problem, research paradigm, and research questions. It also explains how I conceptualize and answer the questions posed in this Capstone about economic injustice in the contemporary food system. First, I explain the methodology used to do this by providing an overview of research paradigms. I invoke critical inquiry as the most significant and relevant to this research and offer my positionality. This provides context for how I analyze and justify my investigative process. Next, I introduce the overall research question that guides this research, as well as constitutive research questions, which are further posed by the researcher that aid in answering the overall research question. The constitutive questions are grounded in methodological and conceptual frameworks that structure and guide my research and analysis for each CRQ. Finally, I outline the research design used in this research with specific parameters for each constitutive research question. Overall, this chapter is about explaining the methods used to gather information for this social problem and research questions.

Capstone Research Paradigm

In this section, I explain what research is in broad terms and what research paradigms are. I explain what critical inquiry is and how it is applicable for this research. Then I offer my positionality, where I elaborate on why I chose this topic for research.

Overview of Research Paradigms

Research, in the broadest terms, is the search for knowledge. There are a variety of ways to approach research, which is what constitutes a research paradigm. There are many research

paradigms to use for different analyses and different research problems. Research paradigms are a way for researchers and practitioners of a specific discipline to share a collective way of working and developing concepts to convey what it is they are studying (Lazar 2004, 10). That is, research paradigms are the constellation of beliefs, values, theories, and techniques of given researchers that exemplify how to solve a [scientific] problem (Lazar 2004, 10). Thus, research paradigms give shape to what can be learned, and how, guided through different ontological and epistemological orientations.

Research contains ontological, epistemological, and methodological orientations in each area of study. Ontology is the conceptualization of reality and what is possible to know or study. In other words, ontology is the starting point of all research and are assumptions of what we believe constitutes social reality (Grix 2002, 177). Epistemology, on the other hand, is more concerned with the theory of knowledge (Grix 2002, 177). Epistemology relates to methods, validation, and the process of gathering data, knowledge and facts – acknowledging that epistemology is not static and is forever changing (Grix 2002, 177). In short, ontology is the foundational assumptions about what exists in our natural, social world that can be described, and epistemology is the process of gathering this information about what exists, which can be done from different perspectives.

Ontology and epistemology are foundational to research paradigms, as are assumptions about objectivity. Objectivity is the quality, or value, of being unbiased. For someone to be objective, or share information objectively, they need to be observant and speak the truth about all information shared while remaining neutral (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2018, 135). Opposite of this is subjectivity, where one's personal experiences determine their perspective (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2018, 140). Then there is positionality, where one situates their standpoint in

their research; however, it is not always explicitly stated (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2018, 142). That is, the researcher candidly offers where their voice is coming from. Positionality is not always required or acted upon, but is a given whether people say so or not. Positionality statements are an opportunity for the researcher to reflect on their intention, motivation, worldviews, beliefs, morals, and values – all of which are embodied components of the research process (Secules et al. 2021, 20). These factors are always present, whether it is stated or silent. Research paradigms reflect different ontological and epistemological positions. Research paradigms also use forms of qualitative and quantitative data. The positivist paradigm is based on the ontological assumption that some objective truth exists separate from what we believe, which can be ascertained through direct observation and experience (Spencer, Pryce, Walsh 2014, 83). That is, the positivist paradigm rests on the perspective that the attainment of knowledge, and our confidence in it, can be verified via systematic procedures through which claims of truth can be valid (Spencer, Pryce, Walsh 2014, 83). This essentially means that what we believe to be true can either be verified as fact or proven to be untrue by being tested.

Different research paradigms serve different purposes. Objective perspective of positivism contrasts with constructivism. Constructivism is a paradigm based on the idea that knowledge and understanding is socially constructed, and as a society we create our reality through interactions, relationships, and experiences (Spencer, Pryce, Walsh 2014, 85). If our reality is individually constructed, then our knowledge and the meaning associated with our knowledge is socially constructed as well (Spencer, Pryce, Walsh 2014, 85). For example, data does not have significance until someone in a certain context utilizes and interprets the data to reveal their meaning (Spencer, Pryce, Walsh 2014, 85). Thus, it can be said that subjectivity drives constructivism paradigms. Subjective perspectives offer value when determining and

galvanizing [social] action in research. The participatory paradigm is one where action-based research is developed. In the participatory paradigm, researchers conceptualize and implement action within the community in which the research is carried out (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2018, 111). That is, the participatory paradigm is one that recognizes an important issue within a community that needs more awareness and attention, so researchers take on a more active approach (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba 2018, 111-112), demonstrating a more action-oriented paradigm. Critical inquiry is a paradigm with a similar approach, yet remains different in comparison to the participatory paradigm. The last paradigm of critical inquiry will be further explained in the next section given that it is my research paradigm.

Critical Inquiry and Positionality

Critical inquiry is the paradigm most useful to use in this Capstone because its purpose to is understand, interpret, and explain social phenomena related to social justice. Critical inquiry is the "process of gathering and evaluating information, ideas, and assumptions from multiple perspectives to produce a well-reasoned analysis and understanding [which] leads to new ideas, applications and questions" (McGahee 2019). Critical inquiry and critical research are instrumental in revealing oppressive social structures and challenging the status quo (Kress 2011, 267; Denzin 2015, 31). That is, critical inquiry is guided by ethically responsible activist research that transcends oppression and is committed to social justice (Denzin 2015, 32-33). Subjects of critical inquiry are boundless. Some examples include social movements, historical development of social conditions or power relations, current social structures, and ideologies that shape social structures and conditions. Social justice is central to critical inquiry. Critical inquiry is a paradigm that fosters collaboration and action (Denzin 2015, 45). Critical inquiry is the most appropriate paradigm for this research given its focus on social justice. As such, critical inquiry

is a paradigm that critiques injustice and thus adheres to a goal to ultimately move society toward justice. Using critical inquiry, I want to know how economic injustice is addressed through the social movement of agroecology.

Positionality is important for critical inquiry and is significant to acknowledge within this paradigm. I now want to offer my positionality, for it will give context and reason for this area of research. I am a lower-class, white female and a first generation American. My parents immigrated here from Poland for a better life, and they only brought the knowledge that they had with them and $2 in their pocket. Being a first generation American has influenced me to be interested in alternative ways of living and how to manage with the little you have. My upbringing consisted of gardening and growing our own food, being self-sustainable, cooking, and never wasting anything. This foundational upbringing aligns with the practices and purpose of agroecology. My upbringing as well as working in low-wage jobs also aligns with the struggles of being of a lower socioeconomic class and of being an immigrated family. These experiences have shaped my interest in economic justice. In the next section, I introduce the research questions and conceptual frameworks that guide my analysis of economic justice in agroecology discourse.

Capstone Research Questions and Conceptual Frameworks

Research Problem and Research Questions

In this section, I pose an overall research question that guides my research inquiry and responds to my social problem. I elaborate on additional conceptual frameworks such as agroecological discourse to aid in understanding and answering my overall research question (ORQ) and the constitutive questions (CRQs) in the following section. The ORQ serves as a

general question that guides this research. The CRQs are more specific question posed to elaborate on the details of the ORQ.

To review, my social problem is economic injustice in the contemporary food system, focusing on labor exploitation and concentration of ownership and wealth. In the previous chapter, I provided evidence for the existence of this social problem. My research problem is the ways in which agroecology discourse identifies and responds to these specific forms of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Thus, my Overall Research Question (ORQ) asks, what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system? As explained in the previous chapter, claims made about the social movement of agroecology suggest that it addresses economic injustice in its contemporary form. In my inquiry, I want to learn specifically how it approaches economic injustice. I want to discover the ways in which agroecology discourse identifies the social problem of economic justice and addresses the causes of and cures for economic injustice, focusing on labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

In order to address my ORQ, I ask three Constitutive Research Questions (CRQs):

CRQ 1: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies problems of economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

CRQ 2: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies the causes of economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

CRQ 3: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies cures for economic injustice in the food system?

I have previously explained economic injustice in the contemporary food system; I will use additional conceptual frameworks to help guide me in asking and answering my research

questions. Bordage (2009, 313) frames conceptual frameworks as representations of the line of thinking about a certain problem. Each framework highlights and emphasizes different aspects of a [social] problem and its research questions (Bordage 2009, 313). In the previous chapter, I established the conceptual frameworks of food systems and society, social justice, social problems, labor exploitation, concentration of ownership, agroecology, and social movements. These frameworks were relevant in foregrounding for the significance as to why I am centralizing on this specific social problem and why my research question is relevant. In this section, I will further elaborate on the conceptual frameworks of agroecological discourse to establish relevance for my CRQs.

Agroecological Discourse

Discourse, in general, refers to the ways we think and communicate, giving structure and order to the organization of society in the context of language and thought. In other words, discourse is a form of casual or formal communication and dialogue. Given that context is important, discourse can be analytically and academically engaging, or it can have a more personal, and casual tone that constitutes narratives that society is currently engaging in. With respect to research, discourse offers routes into the study of meanings as a way of investigating dialogues that constitute social action (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001, 1). That is, discourse is a way for researchers to analyze ever-changing conceptualizations of language use and function, communication and culture, and the relationship between representation and reality (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates 2001, 1). In this way, discourse goes beyond what language is in individual words and looks at the overall meanings that are conveyed within a given context. Moreover, discourse, knowledge, and power are intimately connected (Anderson et al. 2019, 15). That

connection is substantial for addressing, or being silent on, economic injustice because how a topic is viewed in dominant ideology significantly impacts how (future) actions will be taken. This relates to my research given that I want to know how agroecology is framed, spoken, and thought about with regard to economic justice in the food system. As note in Chapter 2, there are many facets to agroecology and thus agroecological discourse. In my research, I will be focusing on the subset of agroecological discourse that addresses sociopolitical concerns. The sociopolitical aspect of agroecological discourse includes topics such as land tenure, community spaces, access to credit, local markets, and knowledge sharing (Kerr et al. 2022, 2). I am curious about the sociopolitical dimension in this way since it relates to economic justice.

Constitutive Research Questions

In the first CRQ I ask, what are the ways in which agroecology discourse identifies problems of economic injustice in the contemporary food system? This question focuses on how agroecology discourse identifies the existence of the social problem of economic injustice, specifically on the exploitation of labor and concentration of ownership. Examples of labor exploitation may include unsafe working conditions and inequitable wages. Examples of concentration of ownership may include corporate control, land ownership, and concentration of wealth and power. This contributes to my ORQ by providing an initial inquiry as to how economic injustice is even talked about in agroecology discourse.

The second CRQ focuses on how agroecology discourse identifies the causes of the social problem of economic injustice. In other words, I am going to see how agroecology discourse explains the causes of the instances of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Examples of what is considered to be causes of economic injustice in agroecological discourse will be discovered inductively. This contributes to answering my ORQ by building on

the investigation from CRQ1 and focusing on the causes of economic injustice. I want to know how discourse identifies causes of economic injustice because identifying causes is important for developing solutions. Thus, this will involve using the conceptual framework of agroecological discourse and economic injustice.

The third and final CRQ asks what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies cures for economic injustice in the food system? This question is asking what remedies, solutions, or cures for economic injustice are identified in agroecological discourse. This CRQ contributes to my ORQ by exploring the possible solutions and remedies to economic injustice.

Together, these CRQs will work in concert with one another to provide a lens that I will use to answer my ORQ, which is: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

Capstone Research Design

In this section, I explain my research design. Thus far I have established the purpose, significance, and research approach for this Capstone. Now, I will systematically explain the methods that I will employ in order to address each of my CRQs. Those methods include research frameworks and elements of inquiry. Research frameworks help guide my overall research process. Elements of inquiry are a foundational component that determine how questions are answered. I will now go into detail on both these concepts to build on the relevance, logic, and flow of research conducted for this Capstone.

Research Frameworks

Research frameworks are a type of conceptual framework that is used as an overall guide for the research process. There are a variety of research frameworks useful for conducting this research. Examples of research frameworks include literature analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis. Different forms of research frameworks are used depending on the purpose of the research.

The research framework most pertinent for this research is thematic analysis. Utilizing this framework will allow me to examine the discourse of agroecology represented in academic literature, as well as other sources. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis used to uncover themes or patterns within a set of data (Alhojailan 2012, 40; Braun & Clarke 2013). It is most appropriate to use when studying anything where the researcher wants to determine relationships between concepts (Alhojailan 2012, 40). In other words, thematic analysis is a method that uncovers and makes sense of the commonalities in research. To recall, my ORQ is what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system? Thematic analysis is the best approach for my research given that I will be performing research inductively. I will be using thematic analysis for each CRQ.

There is a step-by-step process to approaching thematic analysis. According to Braun & Clarke (2013), there are six steps in the process of thematic analysis, though the sixth step is not relevant for this research, so I will leave it out. First, is familiarizing yourself with the ‘data’ or relevant texts. Second, is the element of coding. Coding is the process of reading the data, or the information that you are gathering and identifying themes or patterns in it (Braun & Clarke 2013). Coding can be accomplished inductively or deductively. Inductive reasoning, or coding, is when you develop a theory, or a set of themes based on your findings. An inductive approach is

when the themes identified may not necessarily be aligned with the specific questions that were asked in the research (Braun & Clarke 2013). That is, the patterns discovered through research may not align with your research question. Therefore, the inductive approach is a process of coding the data *without* making it try to fit into the pre-existing analytical perceptions (Braun & Clarke 2006, 12). Deductive reasoning, or coding, is when there's already a theory, or code, proposed and you see if it makes sense based on what you find out. This approach typically provides a more general description of the data overall, and instead a more detailed analysis of some aspect of the data (Braun & Clarke 2006, 12). This is when the research and analysis are driven by the researcher's interests. Thus, you can either code for a specific research question (deductive) or expand your research by an evolving coding process (inductive). How you approach your research will determine how the proceeding steps unfold.

The third step of thematic analysis is searching for themes, or patterns, in text. If your coding is done inductively, you notice themes as you conduct research. If coding is done deductively, you search for your specific theme while conducting research. Fourth, the researcher reviews those themes to see if there is a relationship between themes. Fifth, one must define and name themes, or patterns observed. This is when you explicitly name the theme identified in research. An example may include providing a subheading in your findings section.

For this Capstone, I am investigating the sociopolitical aspect of agroecology discourse to learn the ways in which it addresses economic injustice, specifically labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. The coding process I will use is inductive. This allows themes to evolve as a I conduct my research and it does not pose restrictions to what I find. Now, I will go into what the elements of inquiry are for this research.

Elements of Inquiry

The elements of inquiry are the foundational components of research. These components help justify and explain the ways in which research is conducted. Further defined, elements of inquiry are specific concepts and conceptual frameworks that help in elaborating and applying research methods in order to answer research questions (Allen & Gillon 2023). The elements of inquiry include the unit of analysis, the unit of observation, the research framework, the data scope, the data sources, the data sample, and the analytical criteria used for each CRQ. I will go into each element of inquiry for each CRQ.

CRQ 1 asks what are the ways in which agroecology discourse identifies problems of economic justice in the contemporary food system? The **unit of analysis** here is economic justice problems identified in agroecological discourse. I want to know how agroecology discourse addresses economic injustice and how the field identifies its problems. The **unit of observation** here is instances of engagement with economic injustice in agroecological discourse, specifically labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. The **scope of data** is 2010-2024. This is because, as noted in Chapter 2, although agroecology was recognized as an academic discipline in the 1930's, it was not until 2010 that the political economic, social, and cultural aspects were introduced to agroecological discourse (HLPE 2019, 35). **Data** sources for agroecological discourse focused on sociopolitical aspects include scientific articles, NGO reports, UN reports, and grey literature such as blogs, organizational sites, interviews, and speeches. To locate this discourse, I searched using the keywords: agroecology, labor exploitation, working conditions, inequitable wages, income, livelihood, concentration of ownership, corporate control, concentration of wealth, imbalance of power, and inequitable distribution of resources. My **data sample** primarily focuses on peer reviewed and scientific articles of agroecological discourse

and secondarily centralize on NGO's, blogs, interviews, and articles from well-known pioneers of agroecology. For example, authors such as M. Altieri, E. Holt-Gimenéz, and P. M. Rosset have written extensively regarding agroecology and its social elements. I will likely find much more when researching that I could possibly study, and as such I will decide on which articles to study based on criteria of discourse produced by the pioneers of agroecology and perhaps that which includes a combination of keywords of my search terms. To identify instances of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership in this sample, I use **analytical criteria.** For labor exploitation, analytical criteria include phrases such as unsafe and improper working conditions, the quality of health and well-being of food system workings, and inadequate wages. For concentration of ownership analytical criteria include phrases such as corporate control, concentration of wealth, imbalance of power, and inequitable distribution of resources.

CRQ 2 asks what are the ways in which agroecological discourse identifies the causes of economic injustice in the contemporary food system? Most of the elements of inquiry for this question remain the same as identified in CRQ1. Though, the **unit of observation** here will include what the instances that agroecological discourse identifies as the *causes* of economic injustice. The **analytical criteria** for this question will focus on causes and will be coded inductively. I am looking for things that agroecology discourse specifically names as causes of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership, such as policies and practices.

CRQ 3 asks what are the ways in which agroecology discourse identifies cures for economic injustice in the contemporary food system? As in the previous question, the elements of inquiry for this CRQ, for the majority, mirror that of CRQ1. However, the **unit of observation** for this question will be instances in which agroecological discourse identifies *cures* for economic injustice. The **analytical criteria** here will focus on cures for labor exploitation

and concentration of ownership. Cures are coded inductively; they may include changes to policy and practices that address these forms of economic injustice.

—

In this chapter, I describe how I am investigating my research problem. I begin with discussing research paradigms, critical inquiry, and offer my positionality. I review my social problem, economic injustice of the contemporary food system, and my overall research question that is guiding this research. I introduce additional conceptual frameworks that will be helpful for navigating my research. Then, I form CRQs, that serve the purpose of further developing, supporting, and answering my ORQ. Finally, I state the overall design my of research that will be necessary to address all these research questions. In the next chapter, Chapter Four, I analyze my findings and discuss my contributions.

Four—Research Applications and Contribution

In this chapter, I communicate the findings of the research I conducted to answer my Overall Research Question (ORQ), my Constitutive Research Questions (CRQs), and discuss future contributions to research. I begin by presenting relevant findings and share the data I have collected in order to answer CRQs asked, while applying relevant conceptual frameworks and analytical criteria. Then, based on my findings and analysis for each CRQ, I explain how they address my ORQ and research problem. Then, I restate my social problem and how my ORQ and CRQs relate to addressing economic injustice in the food system. This relays the purpose of this research. Finally, I assess how these findings contribute to addressing my social problem and pose potential recommendations for future research.

Research Findings and Analysis

My keyword search yielded more than 100 data sources. Of those 100, I selected 24 for the reason that these sources most relate to how agroecological discourse identifies and addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Table 1 identifies these 24, organized alphabetically by author and the reasons why I selected each to include in my research.

Table 1. Agroecological Discourse Used to Answer Research Questions.

Citation	Why I selected the article
Van der Ploeg, J. D (2020). "The political economy of agroecology". In *Journal of Peasant Studies.*	One of the first to discuss the political economy of agroecology
Siegner, A. Acey, C. Sowerwine, J. (2020). "Producing Urban Agroecology in the East Bay: From Soil Health to Community Empowerment". In *Journal of Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.*	Case study that explored 35 urban farms in SF Bay Area that investigates production, labor, financing, land tenure, and educational programming
Weiler, A.M. Otero, G. Wittman, H. (2016). "Rock Stars and Bad Apples: Moral Economies of Alternative Networks in Precarious Farm Work Regimes". In *Antipode*.	One of the first to allude to labor exploitation in agroecological discourse
Kerr et al. (2022). "Human and social values in agroecology: A review". In *Elem Sci Anth.*	Comprehensively reviews social aspects to agroecology
Duval, J. Cournut, S. Hostiou, N. (2021). "Livestock farmers' working conditions in agroecological farming systems. A review". In *Agronomy for Sustainable Development.*	One of first to recognize a lack of discussion of labor exploitation in discourse
Klassen et al. (2023). "Pathways for advancing food work in food systems: Reflecting on the international Good Work for Good Food Forum". In *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*	One of the few that directly call out labor exploitation as an economic injustice
Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017). *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of what we Eat.*	Comprehensively identifies social and economic injustice in agroecological discourse
Anderson et al. (2019). "From Transition to Domains Transformation: Getting Sustainable and Just Food Systems through Agroecology". In *Sustainability.*	One of the main author(s) that calls out economic injustice in agroecology and is highly cited
Lappé, F.M. (2016). "Farming for a Small Planet: Agroecology Now". In *Great Transition Initiative.*	Identifies economic injustice in discourse; cited by a few
Amissah, L. Aflakpui, G.K.S. (2020). "Achieving Food and Nutrition Security: The Role of Agroecology". In *Zero Hunger*	One of the first to identify economic injustice agroecology
Wittman, H. James, D. (2022). "Land governance in agroecology". In *Elem Sci Anth.*	One of the first to identify land dispossession/ concentration of land ownership as economic injustice
HLPE. (2019). "Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition". A report by the High Level of Panel Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome.	Highly cited article, and is a high-level panel of experts in agroecology
Sylvester, O. Little, M. E. (2020). "'I come all this way to receive training, am I really going to be taught by a woman?' Factors that support and hinder women's participation in agroecology in Costa Rica". In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.*	One of the few articles that recognizes the intersection of gender and economic injustice; overlapping oppression
Altieri, M. Holt-Gimenez, E. (2016). "Can agroecology survive without being coopted in the Global North?". In ResearchGate.	Main authors well cited in agroecological discourse; directly name causes to economic injustice

Gliessman, S. Friedmann, H. Howard, P. H. (2019). “Agroecology and Food Sovereignty”. *The Political Economy of Food.*	Moderately cited; mentions economic injustice in agroecological discourse
Kroll, F. (2021). “Agroecology and the metropolitan biopolitics of food in Cape Town and Johannesburg”. In *Urban Agriculture & Regional Food Systems.*	Cited by a few; one of the authors that identifies poor policy as economic injustice
Greenberg et al. (2019). “From Local Initiatives to Coalitions for an Effective Agroecology Strategy: Lessons from South Africa”. In *Sustainability.*	Moderately cited; mentions economic injustice in agroecological discourse
Haack, R. (2021). “Agroecology and the Repeasantization of Global and Local Food Systems”. Department of Economics, Sarah Lawrence College.	Outlines how the Green Revolution causes economic injustice in agroecological discourse
Nair, P.K.R. (2014). “Grand challenges in agroecology and land use systems”. In *Frontiers in Environmental Science.*	Moderately cited; calls direct attention to a cause of economic injustice in agroecology
Levidow, L. Sansolo, D. Schiavinatto, M. (2021). “Agroecological innovation constructing socionatural order social transformation: two case studies in Brazil”. In *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology, and Society.*	Directly calls out the Green Revolution as economic injustice
Thiemann, L. Roman-Alcala, A. (2019). “Fast Food Sovereignty: Contradiction in Terms of Logical Next Step?”. In *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics.*	One of the first to explain how food sovereignty can be a cure to labor exploitation
Glennie, C Alkon, A.H. (2018). “Food justice: cultivating the field”. In *Environmental Research Letters.*	Highly sourced article regarding food justice
Altieri, M. Funes-Monzote, F.R. Petersen, P. (2011). “Agroecologically efficient agricultural systems for smallholder farmers: contributions to food sovereignty”. In *Agron. Sustain. Dev.*	Extensively write about food sovereignty coupled with agroecology as a cure to economic injustice
Altieri, M. (2012). “The scaling up of agroecology: spreading the hope for food sovereignty and resiliency”. In *SOCLA*	Writes extensively about the benefits to agroecology being scaled-up; highly cited
Tittonell et al. (2022). “Regenerative agriculture—agroecology without politics?”. In *Sustainable Food Systems.*	Well cited and writes a lot about the political economy of agroecology

CRQ 1: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies problems of economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

With this question, I am documenting the instances in which agroecological discourse identifies issues of economic injustice in relation to labor exploitation and concentration of ownership; however, I would like to preface that the findings for CRQ1 are minimal, disordered, and latent, meaning that they exist as potential and not as apparent, which is considered a finding itself. In my scope of agroecological discourse, there is not much directly said about labor exploitation and concentration of ownership according to my specific analytical criteria. It is as if there are nuances of economic injustice that are scattered throughout agroecological discourse, yet there is no direct correlation to either labor exploitation or concentration of ownership; however, there are some aspects of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership that are indeed being discussed. Now, I will illustrate what I found in each category of economic injustice.

Table 2. Economic Justice Problems Identified in Agroecology Discourse

	Labor Exploitation			Concentration of Ownership		
Criteria	Inadequate wages	Unsafe/ Improper working conditions	Quality of health and well-being	Corporate control	Imbalance of power/concentration of wealth	Inequitable distribution of resources
Instances (CRQ1)	- Van der Ploeg (2020) claims that (unskilled) workers in agroecology receive decreased wages (276); agroecology *can* maximize income/wages (280) - Siegner et al (2020, 12) claims that agroecology faces challenges in grant funding and thus is not able to pay a livable wage for labor	- Duval et al. (2021) asserts that there is very little published about the working conditions in agroecology (8). - Kerr et al. (2022, 11) says that evidence is scarce regarding quality of health and working conditions in agroecology; yet what is published says that agroecological spaces	- Duval et al. (2021) also asserts that of the literature that is published, rarely is quality of health and well-being discussed in agroecological discourse (8).	- Holt-Gimenez (2017) six monopolies control 51% of the seed and 72% of the pesticides in international market (199). Corporate control over agriculture leads to concentration of ownership (46).	- Holt-Gimenez (2017) deregulation, privatization, and concentration of wealth and corporate power engulf the food system (55, 108). - Lappé (2016) central goal of industrial food system: secure the highest amount of wealth and profit, which supports even greater concentration of control	- Holt-Gimenez (2017) loss of common land as a tragedy (108) - Wittman & James (2022) questions who gets to control over access to land? (1) land inequality stems from colonization (5). Land dispossession directly connects to poor health and

	- Weiler et al (2016) argues that it is normal for labor in agroecological spaces to receive no wages or social protections given that it is majority volunteer based (1142). - Amissah & Afakpui (2020) there is not much literature that demonstrates how agroecology can increase income. Foster greater financial autonomy, increase people's livelihood, and increase self-provisioning (1).	have greater satisfaction with quality of work and value social equity in workers - Klassen et al. (2023) discourse regarding labor regime often disregards working conditions (2).			of the market in the food system (2). - HLPE (2019) recognizes the imbalance of power in the food system as an economic injustice (9).	well-being, especially to indigenous people (8). -Amissah & Aflakpui (2020) lack of or inadequate access to natural resources can also inhibit implementation of agroecology, discouraging farmers from adopting such practices (6). - HLPE (2019) recognizes the injustice of inequitable distribution of resources (9).

The first category of economic injustice that I explored in agroecological discourse is that of labor exploitation. Recall that my analytical criteria included instances of exploitation such as unsafe and improper working conditions, the quality of health and well-being of food system workers, and inadequate wages. Van der Ploeg (2020) discusses how labor in agriculture, specifically in agroecology, has suffered from an increase in unskilled workers, which has resulted in those workers receiving decreased wages (276). This proves to be one instance of congruence to my analytical criteria for labor exploitation. Yet, the same author also argues that in some cases agroecological production generates better incomes than conventional farming (280). This author is indicating that those employed in agroecology receive better pay than those employed in conventional agricultural spaces, while simultaneously saying that those employed in agroecology have also experienced a decrease in wages due to their unskilled nature. This portrays contradictory information here regarding the status of wages received in agroecology and so does not directly address the economic injustice of labor exploitation, nor does it align with my analytical criteria. Further evidence demonstrates that urban agroecology farms rely heavily on labor that is majority volunteer based, in order to produce, operate, and function

(Siegner et al. 2020, 12). In the modern economy, agroecological farms, a majority of which are non-profits, sustain themselves by the support of national, state, or local funding. With a non-profit, the annual revenues can be less $1,500/year (Siegner et al. 2020, 12), making it challenging to receive a significant amount of funding that would cover expenses, labor included, to run an agroecological farm to its highest potential and efficiency. Due to the nature of volunteer-based labor in agroecological spaces, agroecology experiences significant challenges when it comes to applying for grant funding that would be able provide sufficient funds for the cost of labor to pay a livable wage to employees (Siegner et al. 2020, 12; Weiler et al. 2016, 1142). So, a vicious cycle ensues, of not receiving enough funding to sustain farming practices, not being able to properly pay for labor to do the necessary work, resulting in agroecology not being a space where one receives a livable, sustainable wage. From a general standpoint, this example could align with my analytical criteria as an instance of labor exploitation; however, since people are voluntarily contributing their labor to these spaces, it would *not* be considered labor exploitation given that they were never on payroll in the first place, therefore not being exploited. What this example does tell me is that agroecology does not receive adequate funding for these spaces to offer positions that would pay people for their labor, and thus is a different finding in and of itself.

To continue exploring the category of labor exploitation, contradictory information and lack of information seems to persist. That being said, not much is directly discussed with respect to working conditions, nor with the quality of health and well-being being. For example, small-scale organic and urban farms that typically practice agroecology, are assumed to have adequate working conditions. Yet, with heavy reliance on volunteered labor, it begs the question of if this can be approached as socially unjust, even if it is perceived as a space that normally offers ‘low-

wage', undervalued, and poorly protected farm labor (Weiler et al. 2016, 1142). This example runs parallels to the example above, given that people are volunteering their time and labor; they are the ones who are willing to go into these spaces where there are no social protections that establish what proper or adequate working conditions are or would be. Kerr et al. (2022, 11) echo this sentiment when discussing how there is no "codified labor standards," meaning there are no set standards for labor practices or conditions in agroecology; therefore, the type of labor preformed in each agroecological space will vary significantly. In essence, Kerr et al. (2022) explains how the work conditions and task diversity for each agroecological farm is unique, so evidence on this is scarce. This exemplifies how there hasn't been much attention paid to issues of labor exploitation in agroecological discourse.

There have also been critiques within agroecological discourse that do not address labor issues. Duval et al. (2021, 5) mentions how in agricultural literature, very few studies exist in general to examine working conditions. Klassen et al. (2023, 2) supports this in saying that while social movements propose food system transformation via agroecology, advocates of labor in food regimes propose a need to place emphasis and focus on fair working conditions since it is often disregarded. These authors call attention to the gap of knowledge in research regarding labor conditions in agroecology. Though, in the discourse that does exist on working conditions when compared to conventional farming, agroecological farming systems show that working and employment conditions are *not* necessarily better in agroecological spaces per se (Duval et al. 2021, 8). Dumont & Baret (2017, 62) also make the point that depending on the size of the agroecological farm, the working conditions and stress levels of workers vary – some experience higher stress on smaller or larger agroecological farms, depending on work load and goals. As such, working conditions in agroecological spaces are worse than expected regarding worker

security, intrinsic benefits of work, and discomfort experienced while working (Dumont & Baret 2017, 62). This is yet another example that demonstrates contradictive and convoluted narratives in agroecological discourse. These examples highlight that the instances of economic injustice regarding labor exploitation with respect to wages and working conditions in agroecological discourse are not being considered, and do not explicitly mention that this is a form of labor exploitation. The scope of agroecological discourse that I researched also does not address how quality of health and well-being is being identified, nor how it is being addressed. What this scattered data shows is that the agroecological discourse I analyzed does not clearly identify labor exploitation as a problem, leaving one to wonder if labor exploitation is truly being discussed, clearly identified, or being responded to in agroecological discourse I did not include in my sample.

The next instance of economic injustice that I explored in agroecological discourse according to my analytical criteria is that of concentration of ownership, beginning with the aspect of land and its resources. I call attention to the aspect of land and its resources given that land is a main resource for agroecological production. As already explained, there are not many instances of labor exploitation in agroecological discourse, whereas there are a variety of instances that identify concentration of ownership. Recall that my analytical criteria regarding concentration of ownership includes examples of, but not limited to, corporate control, concentration of wealth, imbalance of power, and inequitable distribution of resources. HLPE (2019, 9) notes how there are rising concerns around the political dimensions and power imbalances of food systems, from which issues of inequitable access to resources transpire. This example displays how concentration of ownership is indeed acknowledged and recognized in agroecological discourse. Amissah & Aflakpui (2020, 6) describe how the lack of inequitable

access to natural resources, such as land, inhibits the possibility of implanting agroecology, thus discouraging farmers from practicing it. Holt-Gimenez (2017, 104) also identifies the loss of common, public land as a tragedy because land, even though viewed as marketable commodity, is nevertheless a social space where economic and community decisions are made, and thus is considered an economic injustice. Capitalists sought to privatize public land in order to exploit it for profit and market expansion (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 108). In this instance, Holt-Gimenez is determining that public land belongs to the community and thus governing decisions should be made by the interests of the community, not by corporations. Here, the instance of concentration of ownership connects to the dispossession of land and shows how governance is intimately tied to power and control over access to land, which relates to one of the ways agroecological discourse identifies problems of economic injustice according to my analytical criteria. Holt-Gimenez (2017, 46) also mentions how agricultural land has been captured by large corporations, who supply the seeds, machinery, and fertilizer to famers, which ultimately results in corporate concentration in the food system. Holt-Gimenez (2017) clearly identifies this as the corporate food regime, a cause of corporate concentration, and something to be further explored in CRQ2.

Along a different vein, gender discrimination is identified as a consequence of concentration of ownership. Sylvester & Little (2020, 1) assert that women face the most barriers in agroecology by not having access to leadership positions, government support, capital, land, and by experiencing microaggressions. These authors identify the intersection of gender inequity and economic injustice. This example demonstrates inequitable distribution of resources, specifically towards women, which does in fact align with my analytical criteria for concentration of ownership. Discrimination such as women experiencing inequity is just one of

the many consequences of concentration of ownership of land. There is much more discourse in general that covers this intersection of gender and economic injustice with respect to the dispossession of land. Though, I will not be delving deep into that considering it is not the topic of this Capstone, yet it is relevant to mention because women do indeed play a significant role in agroecological spaces (Sylvester & Little 2020). Overall, there are a few instances displayed in agroecological discourse regarding concentration of ownership with respect to land.

The next aspect of concentration of ownership I explore is with respect to concentration of wealth and concentration of power. Concentration of wealth and power is recognized throughout agroecological discourse when referring to the industrial food system. For example, Lappé (2016, 2) argues that the current industrial food system follows the economic model that secures the highest profit returns. The industrial food system model centralizes on one goal: To secure the highest immediate return from existing wealth, which inevitably leads to higher concentrations of wealth and into an even greater concentration of control over the market of the food system (Lappé 2016, 2), a clear example of an economic injustice. Also, HLPE (2019) notes that there are rising concerns about the power imbalances in the food system and those imbalances would need to be addressed if one were to implement agroecology. That is, there is limited focus on the economic implications of agroecological approaches. Governmental factors, such as compartmentalized political systems, contribute to the lack of democracy in food systems which reinforce power imbalances in agroecology (HLPE 2019). These examples do demonstrate instances of concentration of ownership that align with my analytical criteria for economic injustice of imbalance of power and concentration of wealth.

Analysis

From what I have discovered in the sample I reviewed, agroecological discourse is not clear in how it identifies labor exploitation. That is not to say that labor exploitation is not mentioned in literature, it is, but it is a bit convoluted and minimal. The unskilled labor receiving lower wages doesn't directly correlate to labor exploitation, nor were specifics mentioned as to how this was assessed. Additionally, although the labor provided in agroecological spaces is majority volunteer based, I do not categorize this as a form of exploitation. Even though, as reflected in Table 2, the discourse reflects inadequate wages received in agroecological spaces as labor exploitation. Moreover, there is literature that points out that there is not enough research done on working conditions and proper wages in agroecology. Still, there is a theme in agroecological discourse about labor, wages, and working conditions as being generally better in agroecological spaces, compared to conventional farming, even though the available research is minimal. The agroecological discourse regarding labor exploitation, in this way, is ambiguous at best, or nonexistent at best.

The primary instance of economic injustice that agroecology discourse identifies is that of concentration of ownership. Agroecological discourse centralizes on themes of concentration of land and resources and the concentration of wealth and power. With respect to land, a majority of agricultural land is concentrated and therefore limits access to land and its resources. The concentration of power and wealth is well evidenced throughout agroecological literature and is mostly identified as economic, social, and political injustice. The majority of the literature focuses on the inequitable distribution of resources in correlation to concentration of ownership, seen in Table 2. These findings contribute to answering my ORQ by establishing instances and examples of economic injustice as problems in agroecology discourse.

CRQ 2: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies the causes of economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

With this question, I am looking for what agroecological discourse identifies as the cause of economic injustice. Agroecology discourse identifies three main causes of economic injustice for both problems of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership: The Green Revolution (GR), food policy, and the corporate food regime. These themes either allude to or directly correlate to causes of economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Yet, there is a generality to the discourse. By that I mean that these themes are indeed discussed throughout the literature, yet they lack clarity. In the following, I go through each cause identified and connect it to how it violates criteria for economic injustice.

Table 3. Economic Justice Causes Identified in Agroecology Discourse

	Labor Exploitation			Concentration of Ownership		
Criteria	Inadequate wages	Unsafe/ improper working conditions	Quality of health and well-being	Corporate control	Imbalance of power/concentration of wealth	Inequitable distribution of resources
Causes (CRQ2)	- Amissah & Afakpui (2020) No special loan/specific funding allocated to help farmers pay for initial labor and other inputs needed to implement/apply agroecological practices (7).	- Holt-Gimenez (2017) discusses how the corporate food regime was a part of the cause that displaced millions of people, forcing them to find work in dangerous places in order to support themselves (54)		- Holt-Gimenez (2017) the **corporate food regime** controls the food system (51). Corporate privatization, which is part of the larger capitalist system, controls the global food system (55). **Corporate food** regime caused the cultivation of industrial food complex (54). The corporations controlling the food system understand that exploiting land and production of food in the name of corporate profits (80). Corporate control and the "dominant food	- Anderson et al. (2019) concentration of wealth via the market allows for large corporations to make significant profits while also controlling what farmers can grow, provoking a cycle of debt, consolidation, and industrialization (11). - Greenberg et al. (2023) calls attention to power imbalance when saying national **policies** overpower goals for local polices to transition toward more sustainable practices (4).	- Nair (2014) the **Green Revolution** has led to dependence of agrochemicals and high levels of exploitation of natural resources that aid in food production (1). - Kroll (2021) local **food policy** generally holds their mandates and maintains accountability, but national policy trumps local policy → national policy makes allocation of budgets and

				narrative" of a capitalistic system contribute to millions of food workers being underemployed, mistreated, and underpaid. - Anderson et al. (2019) corporate control, privatization, and dispossession of land from local communities all block the possibilities for agroecology to flourish (8). The **corporate food regime** is a cause of many injustices in the food system (5). - Lappé (2016) corporations cause rapid depletion of the resources needed to grow food (4). - Kroll (2021) economic **policies** promote corporate food systems (12). - Gliessman et al. (2019) corporate domination of the market contributes to the continuous dispossession of land, environmental degradation, and loss of knowledge sharing in communities (97). Corporations are responsible for funding public sector in governance, and thus are responsible for what practices get funded, and which don't (like agroecology. (98). It is also no accident that corporations continue to maintain power and dominance in food system to push their agendas to sabotage and inhibit pushes for alternative, sustainable approaches to the food system, like agroecology (100). - Altieri & Holt-Gimenez (2016) also pinpoint the Green Revolution as being a cause for corporate control in the food system (2).	- Gliessman et al. (2019) accumulation of power is obtained through strategic sabotage by undermining autonomy in the economic market and by reducing innovative initiatives like agroecology; resulting in fewer subsidies, no funding to support such practices → vicious cycle (101). - Haack (2021) directly calls out the **Green Revolution** as being a cause of concentration of wealth (4).	resources challenging (9). - Amissah & Afakpui (2020) lack of access to resources is influenced by physical, social, and **policy** environments (6). - Levidow et al. (2021) directly link the **Green Revolution** as a cause of exploiting natural resources, labor, and the dispossession of land (3). - Altieri & Holt-Gimenez (2016) – directly link the Green Revolution as a cause to inequitable distribution of resources, dispossession of land, and exploitation (1). Anderson et al. (2019) – policies aligned with corporate interests inhibit progression/funding for alternative approaches to agriculture and other sustainable methods (9).

The first cause of economic injustice that agroecological discourse identifies is the Green Revolution. According to the discourse, the GR has caused people to have limited access to resources and opportunities and to be exploited for their labor, a clear indication of economic injustice. For example, the GR instilled intensified agricultural practices that fostered not only dependence on agrochemicals, but also the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, exploitation of labor, and dispossession (Nair 2014, 1; Levidow et al. 2021, 3). As a result, the GR has caused detrimental resource plunder and serious degradation of ecosystem services (Nair 2014, 1; Levidow et al. 2021, 3). These authors do clearly identify the GR as a cause to economic injustice, however they do not say what they mean by labor exploitation or dispossession of land. That is, they make assertions rather than explanations of causality. Similarly, Holt-Gimenez (2017, 48) explains how the technological centerpiece of the GR were farmers who were dependent on buying fertilizers and seeds every year from companies, since they privatized it, and in turn these companies were also dependent on the labor of the farmers. As such, a "functional dualism" was cultivated, and in order for companies to make the most profit they depended on cheap labor (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 48), illustrating an instance where the GR is identified as a cause of labor exploitation, though it is slightly vague. Haack (2021, 4) discusses how the GR was disguised as a social justice initiative utilized to combat food insecurity, yet in actuality it exacerbated wealth inequalities. That is, the discourse does not go into much detail of how the GR causes labor exploitation but does acknowledge the injustice. This correlates most directly to the instance of concentration of ownership identified in CRQ1, and merely mentions the economic injustice of labor exploitation.

According to agroecological discourse, the GR fosters practices that are detrimental to the livelihood of people and of the ecosystem. Harmful consequences of the GR include ecosystem destruction, malnutrition, [gender] inequalities, socio-economic injustice, global pandemics, and above all, land grabbing (Levidow et al. 2021, 3; Holt-Gimenez 2017; Altieri & Holt-Gimenez 2016), otherwise known as the dispossession of land. This illustrates that agroecology discourse claims that the GR causes poor practices that are not only bad for our environment but also detrimental to the livelihood of those working within the food system. Holt-Gimenez & Altieri (2016) also point to the GR as being responsible for putting the power in a concentrated few as a result of concentrated production, a clear correlation to my analytical criteria for economic injustice by preventing people from having equitable access to economic opportunities and resources.

The next cause of economic injustice that agroecological discourse identifies is that of inadequate food policy. The ways in which agroecological discourse identifies food policy as a cause of economic injustice is by simply mentioning how policy, on multiple levels, contributes to the harmful, negative consequences in the food system. It does *not*, however, pinpoint specific policies that causes to the harmful economic injustices that it claims. Yet, though the discourse on poor policy is clearly identified as a cause for economic injustice that aligns with my criteria regarding inequitable access resources, poverty, and concentration of ownership, it is not specific. Additionally, there not much is said about labor exploitation in my sample of agroecological discourse. This is identified on different scales that range from local, municipal policy, to structural, systemic policy that overlap with the corporate food regime, a topic that will be expanded on later. I will now present findings that point out how agroecological discourse

identifies policy, in general, as a cause for economic injustice for labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

Based on my scope of research, I found minimal, to no, research relating to inadequate local food policy that causes labor exploitation. Instead, I found more information relating to concentration of ownership. One example I found that relates to concentration of ownership is that of excluding people, like small-scale farmers, from the market. For instance, with people being unable to participate in society economically, Amissah & Aflakpui (2020, 7) highlight how the lack of policy development in agriculture leads to inadequate investment from the government in agroecological research, thus omitting small-scale farms from having access to the market. Given that 84% of the world's farms are small and contribute to the world's food production and that small-scale farmers are dependent on that use of the market for their livelihood (5), then it can be said that the lack of policy development and inhibition to market access would generally affect one's livelihood and thus one's income. In this way, this finding does align with my criteria for labor exploitation; however, it is too general. Instead, it aligns more with my analytical criteria for concentration of ownership because the lack of access to the market leads to lack of access to resources. As such, the discourse does not address labor exploitation, illustrating a vagueness in the discourse and therefore a gap in the research.

Agroecological discourse identifies inadequate food policy as cause of concentration of ownership. For example, higher levels of authority are notorious for aligning their interests with neoliberal, capitalistic practices, and policies of industrial agriculture (Greenberg et al. 2023; Kroll 2021), all of which do not consider the livelihoods of [poorer] people. National policies naturally overpower municipal (local) policy goals to transition toward more sustainable practices in agriculture (i.e., agroecology) (Kroll 2021, 4). Generally, local policy holds food-

related mandates accountable; however, national policy does not provide explicit mandates for urban food governance, making allocation of budgets and resources challenging (Kroll 2021, 9), an indication that the current policy that is in place is open to interpretation for larger players. As previously mentioned, corporations hold a majority of the power and are considered the larger players that influence their agendas in the name of profit. To have policies in place that fit into corporate agendas is an indication of a power imbalance and therefore an example of concentration of ownership. Gliessman et al. (2019, 100) recognize that this is no accident that power is beholden to a few corporations, who actively oppose, disparage, and sabotage initiatives, programs, and polices that advocate for agroecology and food sovereignty. In other words, the food policy that's currently in place supports concentration of ownership. This clearly demonstrates a violation of economic justice by not allowing equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, which aligns with my analytical criteria for concentration of ownership.

Policies can also direct funding for research. Anderson et al. (2019, 9) discuss how policies that relate to science are generally tailored for growth and competition and thus in the public sector agricultural research has been significantly placed on the back burner. This leaves future innovations left in the hands of multinational corporations. Corporations, then, have great influence in policymaking and are also in control of what takes precedence in dominant discourse and therefore of the market as well. The mainstream markets generally favor larger volumes of production and standardization, which are reinforced by policies that align with the concentration and consolidation of the agricultural market and corporate interests. This allows corporations to make the most profit and thus marginalizes small-scale farmers from having the ability to participate in the market (Anderson et al. 2019, 9). For example, investment in science-related policies relating to agroecology represents less than 1% of all institutional agricultural

research and development, specifically in the United States (Anderson et al. 2019, 9). Thus, due to lack of policy, farmers are unlikely to have equitable opportunity or the chance to participate in the market. This directly violates criteria for economic justice and aligns with my analytical criteria of the lack of equitable access to economic opportunities and resources and concentration of ownership.

Agroecological discourse also identifies the corporate food regime as a cause of concentration of ownership. A food regime is where all institutions, treaties, and regulations shape and govern the food system on a global scale (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 32). The corporate food regime is reflected by the rise of global corporations owning and controlling the food system (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 51). Anderson et al. (2019, 5) showcases how regimes, such as corporate food regimes, are resistant to change and have the tendency to reproduce patterns, even if they are unequitable, maintaining the status quo of industrial agriculture. The dominant, corporate food regime is sustained by powerful capitalists with neoliberal agendas that limit and inhibit the implementation of alternatives, such as agroecology (Anderson et al. 2019, 5; Gliessman et al. 2019). This inhibition of alternatives is an action that is considered to maintain the status quo of industrial agriculture and also showcases an imbalance of power. This affirms the notion that broader systems of oppression perpetuate concentration of ownership and as a result do *not* allow for economic justice to be present. This relates to my analytical criteria for concentration of ownership regarding imbalance of power and corporate control. Holt-Gimenez (2017, 54) discusses the corporate food regime expansively as the rise of global corporations controlling the food system, and how corporations dominate control over rules of trade, labor, property, and technology. The increased concentration of ownership of corporations resulted in millions of people being displaced and forcing them to find work in dangerous places in order to

support their livelihood (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 54). This demonstrates how the decisions made under the corporate food regimes hold great power in shaping how the food system operates and is considered a cause of concentration of ownership and labor exploitation. Further, Holt-Gimenez (2017, 54) goes on to determine that the corporate food regime has cultivated the agri-food industrial complex that consists of corporate monopolies such as Monsanto, Syngenta, and Bayer that control market power and dominate governments that determine how labor, property, and technology are enforced. Specifically, public institutions like the World Bank, the World Food Program, the USDA, the World Trade Organization, and private fortunes such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, all fund and determine how labor, property and technology are enforced (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 54). This illustrates how the corporate food regime is a clear example of a cause to economic injustice in the contemporary food system, violating criteria for economic justice and maintaining the economic injustice criteria of concentration of ownership. In sum, much of agroecological discourse identified the majority of the causes of economic injustice as relating to concentration of ownership being faced in the contemporary food system, as seen in Table 3. Very minimal, if any, were identified to cause the economic injustice of labor exploitation.

Analysis

As identified in my findings, the Green Revolution has been directly correlated to causing concentration of wealth in the food system. The discourse provides historical context as to why this is the case, providing an outline of how this is a clear economic injustice. I also found that inadequate food policy contributes to broader systems of oppression, such as neoliberalism and capitalism, that systemically hinder people from participating in society, therefore indirectly

implying that inadequate food policy is a cause for economic injustice. However, the literature since does not mention what policy change needs to occur in order for agroecology to address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Also, agroecological discourse does clearly identify the corporate food regime as a cause of economic injustice in the literature, though it glosses over the economic impact that the corporate food regime has on agroecology. Furthermore, there is very little literature that identifies causes of labor exploitation, as seen in Table 3. This contributes to answering my ORQ by identifying the causes of economic injustice in agroecological discourse and also contributes to evolving literature in how agroecology addresses this injustice in the contemporary food system.

CRQ 3: What are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology identifies cures for economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

While agroecology discourse poses concepts as cures for the industrial food system in general, they do not provide or suggest specific cures for labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. The cures for economic injustice that agroecological discourse has identified are food sovereignty, scaling-up agroecology, solidarity economy, and food systems transformation. The analytical criteria that is relevant for this question is based on my definition of economic injustice and therefore I am looking for how these cures respond to labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. From my discovery, the discourse of agroecology primarily focuses on the food movement of food sovereignty as a response to, or remedy for, economic injustice. In the following, I explain what the social movement of food sovereignty is and why it is relevant in addressing cures for components of economic injustice that are labor exploitation and

concentration of ownership. I also present findings in agroecology in conjunction with scaling-up agroecology, solidarity economy, and food system transformation and how these relate to my analytical criteria for economic injustice. My analytical criteria for economic injustice includes examples of inadequate wages, improper working conditions, inequitable access to resources, imbalance of power, and corporate control.

Table 4. Economic Justice Cures Identified in Agroecology Discourse

	Labor Exploitation			Concentration of Ownership		
Criteria	Inadequate wages	Unsafe/ Improper Working Conditions	Quality of health and well-being	Corporate Control	Imbalance of power/Concentration of wealth	Inequitable distribution of resources
Cures (CRQ3)	- Kerr et al. (2022) some research shows that agroecology has the *potential* to increase income; suggesting that agroecology can improve employment opportunities, improve local economies by implementing a **solidarity economic model** - Holt-Gimenez (2017) calls for a reassessment of the relationship of use- and exchange-value of workers in food system, which could result in workers receiving higher income (70).	- Klassen et al. (2023) offers the Good Work for Good Food Forum as a pathway and outline to address poor working conditions and labor exploitation in the food system, especially of agroecology (3)	- Glennie & Alkon (2018) highlight how the field of **food justice** is just emerging and expanding into discourse about food worker health, policy analysis, and critical assessments of practices (8). - Mugwanya (2019)—offers a countering perspective and critiques agroecological academics saying discourse is making claims without providing tangible evidence (114).	- Holt-Gimenez (2017) mentions how **food sovereignty** directly responds to corporate monopolies (220). suggests future research to pose and answer questions such as what strategies affect the relations of power in the food system? Do approaches such as agroecology mitigate externalities of corporate food regime, or transcend the regime itself? (214) - Gonzalez (2015) highlights how **food sovereignty** aims to dismantle corporate controlled policies that affects [rural] people's livelihoods (5). Also calls for dismantling of corporate food regime to achieve **food justice** (49).	- Siegner et al. (2020, 4) agroecology is a tool that challenges structures of power in society by calling for **transformation of food system** with "bottom-up strategies" such as democratic policies and **solidary economies** - Anderson et al. (2019) reassessing governance can directly address power imbalances in the food system if **food system transformation** were to happen (6, 20). - Nair (2014) address imbalances of power in governance of food system in order to promote agroecological transitions and establish instruments for agroecological production for **food system transformation** (2).	- Greenberg et al. (2023) says redistribution of land and ownership [toward black ownership] could be a step forward for **food system transformation** by having a structure that is better suited for social inclusion; and also calls for restricting to ensure greater opportunities for small-scale farmers to respond to consumer demand (11). - Gliessman et al. (2019) call for **public policy** change to promote smaller farmers to control their own seeds and markets (resources & opportunities) → which challenges the current capitalistic monopolies, overproduction, and exploitative labor practices (97). - Altieri (2011) explains how the

					- Gliessman et al. (2019) concentration of power in food system is a barrier to implementing agroecology **transformation** (91). Also brings attention to the need change policy and laws in order to dismantle corporate concentrated markets (103).	movement of **food sovereignty** can aid agroecology in responding to inequitable distribution of resources (12). - Altieri (2012) explains how if agroecology were to be **scaled-up**, then it would have positive effects to sustaining society, which possibly suggests a potential cure to economic injustice (17). - Tittonell (2021) writes how if agroecology were to be **scaled up**, then it would actually return a profit (15).

Food Sovereignty

Agroecology is a social movement that is closely intertwined with food sovereignty, which responds to economic injustice in the food system. Food sovereignty has principles that call for the right for everyone to have access to safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Agroecology uses food sovereignty as a strategy to redesign and optimize small-scale farming systems so it can adequately respond to external forces from an ever-changing world, society, and food system (Altieri et al. 2011, 12). Part of the work that food sovereignty does in response to social problems is through framing issues that mobilize people and have a chance to make social change. Recall how corporations own, control, and thus influence a majority of the food system. These corporate interests align with neoliberal economic policies that support increased privatization of land ownership, land-grabbing, and have essentially commandeered spaces that have natural resources (Rosset & Martinez-Torres 2012, 1), a consequence of capitalism. As a response to this, the movement of food sovereignty recognizes that in order to address and respond to corporate control over production and consumption, it is essential and necessary to

dismantle the industrial agri-food complex by implementing agroecological initiatives (Altieri 2011, 12). Here, the discourse discusses how food sovereignty suggests a path to a remedy for economic injustice in the food system in general and does *not* identify how food sovereignty provides cures to labor exploitation or concentration of ownership. Gliessman et al. (2019, 103) says that in order to achieve the dismantling of concentrations of power and ownership, food sovereignty can provide specific strategies and actions to be taken to ensure that there are equitable markets and sustainable practices of growing good food as a standard. This would require a shift in laws and policies that stray away from industrial agriculture, a necessary step to dismember corporate control. Here, the discourse clearly identifies the economic injustice of concentration of ownership and provides a response to it by encouraging a push for equitable markets through food sovereignty. Remember that food sovereignty advocates for the right of people to have access to healthy and culturally appropriate food through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, as well as their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. As such, food sovereignty puts those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of the food system and policies, instead of being dependent on the demands of the market and corporations (Gliessman et al. 2019, 96). In this way, food sovereignty offers general blanket statement strategies to place the power back into the people, local economies, and local markets, instead of feeding into corporate interests and agendas. Agroecological discourse frames food sovereignty as a potential cure that responds to the general economic injustice of the industrial food system; however, it does not specifically say how food sovereignty provides, or suggests, cures for labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

Agroecological discourse suggests a few other ways that food sovereignty is identified as a potential cure for economic injustice with respect to concentration of ownership, yet not so

much for labor exploitation. For instance, Holt-Gimenez (2017, 220) mentions how food sovereignty directly responds to corporate monopolies in the food system by addressing the structural issues and calling for a democratization of food, identifying it as a 'radical' movement. However, as Holt-Gimenez (2017, 220) puts it himself, how food sovereignty can directly respond to concentration of ownership is blurry. Gonzalez (2015, 5) highlights how food sovereignty seeks to dismantle corporate-dominated free trade policies that negatively affect rural livelihoods, promote the redistribution of land rights of small-scale farmers, and advocate for people to define their own food policies. Though Gonzalez (2015, 5) relates to my criteria for concentration of ownership regarding equitable distribution of resources, the author does not go into further specifics as to how food sovereignty achieves this, other than demanding for a structural transformation of the food system. Food sovereignty also calls attention to the injustice of division of labor in the food system (Thiemann & Roman-Alcala 2019, 819). Food sovereignty values worker justice with more ecologically sound and sustainable production, which means smaller teams, and with smaller teams, workers are more involved with the decision-making process; that is, workers have a more impactful say in what work gets done and how it gets done, resulting in workers having a greater sense of place, craft, and skill (Thiemann & Roman-Alcala 2019. 826). Here, the authors are claiming that food sovereignty can be a response to labor exploitation in that it gives workers a voice and a say in the quality of their working conditions, and in turn better quality of health and well-being. In this way, food sovereignty offers a cure to one aspect of labor exploitation. Though, this may be a bit of a stretch since it is an implied assumption, and no clear connection is made. Along these lines, Kerr et al. (2022, 8) argues how only a few studies truly show how food sovereignty and agroecological practices have reduced the vulnerability and volatility of local farms and that

there is still much research needed to fully assess the impacts agroecology has on rural incomes, employment, and livelihoods across different social contexts. Here, the discourse displays that there is still a gap of knowledge in the literature. There is evidence that suggests food sovereignty could be a viable response to the economic injustice of labor exploitation, but there just is not enough information out there to concretely say that food sovereignty does in fact respond to labor exploitation. Ultimately, food sovereignty is identified in agroecology discourse as a vehicle to address the causes of concentration of ownership but says less about how food sovereignty responds to the economic injustice of labor exploitation in our food systems and society.

Scaling-Up Agroecology

For the global south particularly, much of the agroecological discourse discusses the potential concept of scaling-up agroecology as a response to the economic injustice of the contemporary food system; however, scaling-up agroecology as a potential approach and cure for economic injustice does not address how it can remedy the specific economic injustices of labor exploitation or concentration of ownership, nor does it address how scaling agroecology up would compensate for better working conditions, provide a livable wage, or corporate control. For example, Altieri (2012, 17) provides astounding evidence on the expansively positive impact that agroecology has on the global south, so that if agroecological production were to be scaled-up to mimic the size of the contemporary food system in the US for example, it would have the potential to produce enough food per capita to sustain the current, and larger, human population. Tittonell et al. (2020, 15) echoes this when they discuss that if agroecology *were* to be practiced on large-scale farms that were actually subsidized by the government it would return a ‘profit’ in

four capitals: social capital (creating jobs, increasing education, and business), natural capital (restoring biodiversity, helping soil and water quality, and sequestering carbon), financial capital by investing in long-term profit, and inspirational capital by instilling hope and fostering a sense of purpose. Though agroecological discourse relays the scaling-up of agroecology as having an economic benefit if implemented, it does not address the specific economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. The reality of agroecology being practiced on a larger scale does not seem to be a probability in the near future, for there is still much more research and transformation needed in order for it to be a reality. Ultimately, this discourse on scaling-up agroecology does *not* address or respond to the economic injustices of labor exploitation or concentration of ownership.

Solidarity Economy

Agroecological discourse discusses the framework of solidarity economy as a possible response to economic injustice, though there's a lack of acknowledgement of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. According to the FAO (2023), in the 10 elements of agroecology, a circular or solidarity economy is one element intended to reconnect the consumers with the producers and collaborate in creating innovative solutions that ensure an inclusive and sustainable development in agriculture. This notion implies economic justice, though it lacks the foundation of how it addresses my analytical criteria. Levidow et al. (2023, 7) describes solidarity economy as a social movement that practices democratic self-management, community aid, inclusion of all socioeconomic classes, respect for the environment, and friendship. It reiterates how the economic model for a solidarity economy is

reflective of economic justice, yet does not directly explain how it would address the economic injustice of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

While agroecology discourse does not specify how a solidarity economy approach provides solutions for labor exploitation or concentration of ownership, it does suggest ways in which a solidary economy could benefit humankind. For example, Fernandes & Gotuzzo (2012, 2) use an example of an organization in Brazil that uses the framework of a solidarity economy while engaging in agroecological practices and found that it allows farmers to have an economically viable way to participate in the market, ensure a workable livelihood and benefit society. Further, organizations that use a solidarity economy model are able to negotiate access to more assets and resources, a healthier life, a more central role in the management of farm practices and a sense of citizenship, and a more economically viable and socially fair life (Fernandes & Gotuzzo 2012, 18). This is an example of an economic model that is based on reciprocity, and of practices and programs that also align with food sovereignty. Ultimately, a transition from a market-based economy to a solidarity economy would benefit vulnerable communities that experience economic disparities, as well as our food systems and society in general (Leviodow et al. 2023; Altieri 2012; Fernandes & Gotuzzo 2023). Even though this circular economic model does not address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership, it does showcase how it could be economically beneficial.

Food System Transformation

Food system transformation has been identified as a potential cure to respond to economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership in agroecological discourse, though it lacks specificity. According to the USDA, food systems transformation

involves building a more resilient food supply chain, creating a fairer food system, making nutritious food more accessible, and emphasizing equity (USDA 2024). In other words, food system transformation is food system change that is socially just on all level—from production, to distribution, and consumption. Throughout a majority of the discourse, agroecology itself is proposed as a general method for food system transformation that can addresses economic injustice from a more sustainable and general lens. Even though the large agri-business companies play a dominant role in the economy, agroecology is said to offer a potentially economically viable way to improve income and fulfilling livelihoods (Kerr et al. 2022, 15). Here, the discourse calls out the oppressive nature that the current food system upholds caused by the corporate food regime and suggests that agroecology in and of itself can respond to the regime by potentially improving the income of food system workers. How this is done, though, is unclear.

Food systems transformation has the capacity to address labor exploitation with suggesting an increase in pay rate, yet it is still a little vague in nature. For example, Holt-Gimenez (2017, 70) suggests that in order to have a more equitable, sustainable, and transformative food system that reduces the exploitation of workers, it would be essential to readdress the relationship between use and exchange value and change the terms for socially necessary labor time; that is, to only put in time and labor that is needed and not to overexert oneself. Use value refers to the usefulness of a thing, or commodity, such as food, time and labor, and exchange value of a commodity is approximately equal to the cost of its production plus profit through the medium of money (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 60). The concept of socially necessary labor time refers to the time needed for production of a commodity. Labor as a commodity is a bit abstract, thus the societal value of labor as a commodity is based on the

average levels of worker production in a given society (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 61), such as the time needed to produce food. Small-scale farmers tend to self-exploit by working long hours that do not equate to that of minimum wage (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 70). So, if there were to be a way to raise the value (the wage income) of socially necessary labor, then this would indirectly raise the value of the farmer's own labor value (Holt-Gimenez 2017, 71). Said differently, the author is saying that if farmers, or food system workers, were to be paid an adequate, livable wage, then employees would not have to overwork themselves, which *could* address the economic injustice of labor exploitation. Klassen et al. (2023, 11) also suggest food system transformation and clearly outline nine principles of the Good Work for Good Food Forum that responds to the economic injustice. The nine principles are: being recognized as valuable and skilled, being fairly paid, being available regardless of immigration status, having a safe and healthy work environment, useful and efficient technology that assists workers do their job, including opportunities for career progression, providing workers with social security support, have conditions and terms determined by the workers, and enabling workers with the ability to engage in collective action. Here, the discourse is directly providing a cure to labor exploitation.

Agroecological discourse does not directly say food system transformation addresses the economic injustice of concentration of ownership. This is recognized in the discourse where researchers of agroecology acknowledge that there is limited, but growing, research on exactly how agroecology can effectively address economic injustice, such as unequal divisions of labor and the corporate food regime (Kerr et al. 2023, 4; HLPE 2019; Schuller 2021). This is not to say that agroecological discourse does not mention the economic injustice of concentration of ownership, it does; however, it does not directly say how. There is still much research and work needed to properly, and collectively address the call for food system transformation to address

social and economic injustice within our food system. Food system transformation is a very positive, forward-thinking approach, yet it still lacks in its capacity to directly address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

Analysis

This question centralizes on findings regarding statements relevant to cures for economic injustice; therefore, I am analyzing whether cures were indicated in response to labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. A key theme, and finding, is that a majority of agroecological discourse mentions concepts coupled with a *potential* remedy to addressing economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Comprehensively, the concepts of food sovereignty, scaling-up agroecology, solidarity economy, and food system transformation are all revered as potential cures to economic injustice in general, though they do not specify how they address labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Let us dive into how each of these themes, or concepts, serve as potential cures to economic injustice in agroecological discourse.

First, agroecological discourse overwhelmingly uses the social movement of food sovereignty in parallel with agroecology as a pathway to benefit the economy, food systems, and society. It is mentioned throughout my sample of agroecological discourse how food sovereignty and agroecology have the significant potential to address the economic injustice of concentration of ownership and push for more equitable access to economic opportunities and resources. This aligns with my analytical criteria, though, it is important to mention that much of the discourse calls for a need for further research assessment as to how exactly to address labor exploitation.

Second, the theme of expanding agroecology into a larger scaled operation has been mentioned throughout agroecological discourse as a potential remedy to economic injustice.

There is much evidence throughout the literature in the global south that describes the positive impact it would have on the economy and food systems in general. Yet, the agroecological discourse explicitly neglects to mention how scaling-up agroecology would address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. It only speaks to the potential, nothing that is tangible.

Third, the theme of evoking a solidarity economy as a possible response to economic injustice in the food system was also evident in agroecological discourse, though it lacks specificity as to how it addresses labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Solidarity economy is suggested as an alternative model to the current market economy. The discourse promotes solidarity economy in agroecology as benefiting local communities and as an economy of reciprocity. It calls for a more plural, diverse, collaborative economy that prioritizes the community's best interest and livelihood, which aligns with my analytical criteria for economic justice. The example I provided in my findings with organizations in Brazil successfully using a solidarity economic model was one of the only ones. That being said, we can mirror the analysis presented in the previous paragraph with scaling-up agroecology: Agroecology won't necessarily be a 'one size fits all' approach. Agroecology is a very locally driven approach, and as such it has to be seen as of value to whatever economy it operates in. In other words, if a solidarity economy model were to be used in whatever geographical context agroecology was being practiced, then it would be economically and socially beneficial to that specific location. Yet again, the way agroecological discourse discusses solidarity economy now does not explicitly discuss economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. It merely alludes to the potential and lacks any specificity.

Lastly, agroecological discourse as a response to economic injustice is a call for a complete food systems transformation through agroecology; however, it is lacking in details of how it addresses labor exploitation and concentration of ownership specifically. In almost all the agroecological discourse, the theme of food systems transformation is complementary to the other themes I mentioned: Food sovereignty, scaling-up agroecology, and solidarity economy. The agroecological discourse of food transformation aligns with my analytical criteria for economic justice in that it would promote more equitable economic and social opportunities for society but lacks clarity as to how food systems transformation addresses the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Notice how I used the words *potentially, can,* and *possibility* with the last few themes I mentioned. This is because the literature also overwhelmingly discusses how agroecology has the *potential* for collectively and economically benefiting food systems and society, though it does not provide any specifics. This has been a common theme in regard to answering questions to how agroecology can provide cures to the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. This highlights a gap of knowledge in the literature, which is also acknowledged in the discourse. It is also acknowledged that further research is required, and necessary, in order to provide a sufficient roadmap as to how agroecology can provide specific cures to economic injustice.

From a different perspective, there are spaces in discourse where agroecology is not viewed as a proper tool for economic injustice. Mugwanya (2019) demonstrates that implementing an approach such as agroecology depends on the type of economic model a country uses. For example, in Africa, agroecology is too restrictive for the current economic model there and would actually trap farmers in poverty (113). Additionally, continuing to raise the issue that labor productivity is rarely addressed in agroecological discourse, Mugwanya

(2019) actually critiques Altieri (1999), who is considered to be one of the founders of modern agroecology, as making claims about the demands of labor being lower in agroecology without providing any actual evidence (114). Moreover, the advocacy of an agroecology revolution is quite vocal for placing farmers and labor at the center of the food system, but silent in its practicality of how to address poverty (115). This is telling that the success of implementing an approach such as agroecology is dependent on what type of economic model a country uses, that the context is critical, and that there is lot more being said than is actually done. Overall, my findings indicate that there is minimal discussion about labor exploitation in agroecological discourse and that concentration of ownership is well evidenced in literature.

The discourse collectively agrees, though, that agroecology does indeed have the capacity to be a transformative and sustainable pathway that alleviates economic challenges, or injustices, that society faces; however, there is no clear approach as to how this is addresses labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Instead, the agroecological discourse in my sample includes broad, general statements as to how agroecology identifies instances and causes of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership and how it can aid in food system transformation. What is noticed throughout the discourse is that agroecology is still in its preliminary stages in research that is just beginning to consider the weight of the economic and political dimension of obtaining a socially just food system. Recall how agroecology was recognized solely as an academic discipline, up until recently, starting from the 2010's and beyond, is when the political economic, social, and cultural aspects were introduced to agroecological discourse (HLPE 2019, 35). Given this, agroecology is still relatively new in researching economic injustices, such as labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Additionally, much of the discourse calls for the need for additional academic and active-participatory research to be done in order to better

understand the totality of the sociopolitical dimension of agroecology. Specifically, there is a call for additional research needed to identify, address, and provide tangible cures to economic injustices such as labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. There is much knowledge and information on the probable benefits of the agroecology, especially with using food sovereignty as a pathway forward, though as already noted, little data is shown as to how exactly it enforces economic justice. Overall, this section presented my research findings and analysis in both a written and illustrative manner of all three CRQs. In the following section, I will delve into how this research contributes to understanding the ways in which agroecological discourse addresses economic justice.

Contribution

In this section, I dive into answering the "so what?" of my research. The overall purpose of this Capstone is to address a social problem in food systems and society, using the lens of critical inquiry in order to increase social justice. I conclude with potential recommendations for future research. To recall, this research addresses economic injustices in the contemporary food system by asking how agroecological discourse responds to economic injustice in order to better understand its contributions to social justice in food systems and society. My ORQ was what are the ways in which the discourse of agroecology addresses economic injustice in the contemporary food system?

Overall, based on my sample of agroecological discourse, the common theme is that agroecological discourse does not directly address how it identifies or responds to causes, or provides cures to the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership, only that it serves as a potential to respond to it (see Table 5). There were mere generalities that

were noted in identifying instances of economic injustice regarding labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Yet, there are clear themes identified in the discourse as causes of economic injustice, though, again, in a generic manner. There is a clear indication of a gap in the literature regarding policy in that it does not mention exactly what or how policies need to address these issues in order to respond to economic injustice. Additionally, there needs to be further active-participatory assessment to determine how agroecology can be economically viable as a true alternative to the industrialized, contemporary food system and in turn how it can respond to the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Collectively, the results from my analysis address my ORQ by pointing out that agroecology has a massive potential to economically benefit our food systems and society, though there is still a need for further research as to how exactly it addresses the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

The social problem of this Capstone is economic injustice in the contemporary food system. Recall how Alessio (2011, 3) describes a social problem as a public issue that causes harm to one or more people that creates an undesirable outcome, which can be socially remedied. The goal, or outcome, of promoting social justice is ensuring equitable distributions of resources and opportunities. Social justice is therefore critical for allowing economic justice to flourish. Economic justice means that everyone in society has the fundamental right for bettering themselves and their livelihood so they can actively participate in society that is free from [economic] struggle. It is well documented in literature that economic injustice is prevalent throughout food systems and society. Agroecological discourse responds unevenly to this social problem. That is, the themes of food sovereignty, scaling-up agroecology, solidarity economy, and food system transformations identified earlier all highlight the potential that agroecology has

to offer regarding economic justice. What is not well known are the specifics as to how agroecology can approach these economic injustices. While some agroecology is concerned with social and economic justice, it does not address my criteria for economic injustice of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. Focusing on these issues directly will be essential for agroecology discourse to address economic injustice in order to truly achieve economic justice. In my sample, I did not find my analytical criteria discussed regarding labor exploitation and concentration of ownership in agroecological discourse. Overall, this Capstone research addresses my social problem of economic injustice in the contemporary food system by calling attention to the need for further research needed in assessment of how agroecology specifically targets economic injustice in discourse.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are themes in agroecological discourse that discuss how agroecology has the capability of being economically viable if coupled with using frameworks such as food sovereignty, scaling-up agroecology, implementing a solidarity economy, and food system transformation. However, these concepts and frameworks do not talk about how they directly enforce economic justice or directly address economic *in*justice. There is a generalization of how agroecology has the *potential* to develop economic justice in the discourse, though there is a clear lack of specificity. I think what is necessary for future contributions in research is determining exactly how agroecology can directly address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. As of now, there is a lack of clarity and specificity as to how agroecology addresses and responds to economic injustice. It is important to acknowledge that specific course(s) of action will vary depending on what and economy; for example, if agroecology were to be scaled-up, how it would address economic injustice. Yet,

considering agroecology is still in its early days of encompassing social justice, I believe that it is an approach that may be too future forward; that is, agroecology is in its preliminary stages in terms of the potential of it, and therefore too broad and unclear in the steps of how to get there right now. What I propose for future research is a for more attainable, specific, and measurable ways that agroecology can respond to economic injustices, specifically highlighting the injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. I pose the following questions: What specific policy change must occur in order to address such injustices? What measurable methods can research use in order to determine if agroecology indeed identifies, responds to, and provides remedies for economic injustice in the food system? Additionally, agroecology discourse should more specifically address the social problem of economic injustice. More research is needed to fill the gaps.

Table 5. Summary of How Agroecological Discourse Addresses Labor Exploitation and Concentration of Ownership

Summary	Labor Exploitation	Concentration of Ownership
CRQ 1: Instances	Some forms of labor exploitation are present in agroecological discourse, though it is ambiguous and unclear though.	Concentration of wealth, power, and ownership are identified in agroecological discourse.
CRQ 2: Causes	Significant lack of knowledge in literature that identifies causes to labor exploitation in discourse.	The Green Revolution, inadequate food policy, and corporate food regime are all identified as causes to concentration of wealth and ownership.
CRQ 3: Cures	There is not much discussed in agroecological discourse regarding labor exploitation. In the literature that does exist on cures for economic injustice, not much discusses how it can directly address labor exploitation specifically.	Majority of agroecological discourse brings attention to potential remedies for economic injustice in the food system, but lacks specificity as to how it addresses that of concentration of ownership.

—

This chapter serves as a presentation of my findings to answering my ORQ: In what ways does agroecological discourse address economic injustice in the contemporary food system? I provided an analysis based on those findings. Then, I elaborate on how these finding contribute to answering my ORQ and offer recommendations for future research. In the final chapter I review and reflect on my research on social justice.

Five—Conclusion

This chapter serves as a reflection on what I have learned about social justice, social problems, and the role of critical inquiry in addressing social justice problems in food systems and society through my Capstone research. To briefly review, my social problem is economic injustice in the contemporary food system, specifically that of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. My research problem asks how agroecological discourse addresses economic injustices in the food system. My research revealed that even though agroecological discourse acknowledges economic injustice is present in the food system, it does not directly address labor exploitation and concentration of ownership.

The majority of the agroecological discourse I studied referred to social problems within our food system and made broad claims about their causes and possible solutions. In making broad claims, agroecological discourse does not provide sufficient information on how it can address economic injustice. Agroecology as a social movement focuses on being an alternative remedy to the industrial food system. Seeking economic justice in the industrial food system may overlap with injustices addressed in agroecology, but still these two approaches still have different emphases. That is why it is important to clearly define terms and specify goals so one doesn't make unfounded assumptions about what a movement or practice is actually about.

What I have discovered through this research is that social justice is a timeless and universal process that will always move toward equity. By that I mean that social justice will always be a goal and a process to address injustices within society. I have also learned that social change and social movements are long processes that will force and test societies' patience and understanding of how the political process works, which may be a deterrent for those of us that tend to lean on the impatient side. That is, it may take a long time to see results for social change,

but that does not mean that we should stop advocating or fighting for it. Take my Capstone as an example: Agroecology is a field that has only just begun expanding into the socio-economic realm of our food systems. So, I don't find it surprising that there isn't as much insight on the specifics of how agroecology discourse identifies and responds to causes and poses cures to economic injustice in the industrialized food system. It is simply not known yet how it specifically addresses the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership, but that doesn't mean that it can't. The point is to keep pushing and advocating for social justice so that we can continue to move toward social change to social problems. Through my research, I have also discovered that social decisions made for society should not be privileged in the hands of a few. Power is an interesting thing; once someone has it, it can be consuming and thus lead to decisions that introduce methods and practices that allow for more injustice to grow.

What is important about this research is that through critical inquiry, I began a conversation. I pose questions relating to agroecology's response to economic injustice, like that of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership, and analyze if agroecological discourse supports its claims about agroecology being economically just. Through my research, I discovered that agroecology discourse is beginning to discuss economic justice, but only in vague and general ways. Now, economic injustice can be more clearly identified, along with its causes and cures. It is not enough to just say something can be socially and economically equitable, it is imperative to *show* that it is. In this way, I use critical inquiry as an instrument in the advocacy of both social justice and economic justice. I see that as something that is significant within research when addressing social justice, especially within our food systems and society, because in order for there to be social justice there must also be economic justice.

Additionally, addressing social problems through critical inquiry places the researcher in the perspective that considers a systematic and holistic lens. As in my research, I had to consider how our economy came to be and the interconnected nature of our food system, in order to understand how it fostered social and economic injustices. I also had to consider agroecology as a whole in order to for it to be relevant to this research, because it does not represent just one thing. Through the conceptual framework of critical inquiry, I find it fundamental in initiating discourse through research about social problems, social justice, and social change.

In sum, it's going to take a lot of time and work to see the positive changes of economic justice that we want within our society. Though, that doesn't mean to not do the work; in fact, it means the opposite. In order to see positive social change for social and economic justice in our food systems and society, it's imperative for one to continuously pursue social justice even through moments of frustration, impatience, and challenge. This sentiment can be reflected in agroecological practice as well. Even though there is already a significant amount of work done through the social movement and discourse of agroecology that positively contributes to our food systems and society, there is still a lot more work done in order for it to completely address the economic injustices of labor exploitation and concentration of ownership. An encouraging reminder, though, is through persistence, discipline, and passion where one who wishes to, can be the change they wish to see in society and the world.

References

Acevedo-Osario, A. Chohan, J. K. 2020. “Agroecology as a Social Movement and Practice in Cabrera’s Peasant Reserve Zone, Colombia”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.* Vol. 33. No. 4. 331-351. Taylor & Francis Group.

Alessio, J. C. 2011. "The Systematic Study of Social Problems." In *Social Problems and Inequality: Social Responsibility through Progressive Sociology*, 1-17. Farnham: Taylor & Francis Group.

Alhojailan, M.I. 2012. “Thematic Analysis: A Critical Review of its Process and Evaluation”. In *West East Journal of Social Sciences.* 1(1): 39-47. The West East Institute.

Alkon, A.H. 2013. “Food Justice, Food Sovereignty, and the Challenge of Neoliberalism”. In *Journal of Peasant Studies.* Conference Paper #38. 1-1-26. Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue: Yale University.

Allen, P. 2004. *Together at the Table: Sustainability and Sustenance in the American Agrifood System*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Allen, P. 2008. “Mining for Justice in the Food System: Perceptions, Practices, and Possibilities”. In *Agricultural Human Values*. 25: 157-161. Springer.

Allen, P. 2010. “Realizing Justice in Local Food Systems”. In *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society.* Vol. 3. 295-308. Oxford University Press.

Allen, P. 2016. “Labor in the Food System, From Farm to Table”. In *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development.* 6(2). 1-4. http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2016.062.022

Allen, P., and S. Gillon. 2023. *Capstone Guide*. Food Systems and Society Graduate Program. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Health & Science University.

Allen, P. Sachs, C. 2007. “Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food”. In *International Journal of Sociology of Food and Agriculture.* Vol. 15(1). 1-23.

Altieri, M. 2012. “The Scaling Up of Agroecology: Spreading the Hope for Food Sovereignty and Resiliency”. In *Scientific Society of Agroecology*. 1-20. SOCLA’s Rio+20 position paper.

Altieri, M. Funes-Monzote, F.R. Petersen, P. 2011. “Agroecologically Efficient Agricultural Systems for Smallholder Farmers: Contributions to Food Sovereignty”. In *Agronomic Sustainable Development.* 32:1-13. Springer.

Altieri, M.A. Nicholls, C.I. 2020. “Agroecology: Challenges and Opportunities from Farming in the Anthropocene”. In *International Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources.* 47(3): 204-215. University of California, Berkley.

Altieri, M. Holt-Gimenez, E. 2016. “Can Agroecology Survive Without Being Coopted in the Global North?”. 1-5. ResearchGate.

Amissah, L. Aflakpui, G.K.S. 2020. “Achieving Food and Nutrition Security: The Role of Agroecology”. 1-10. Springer.

Anderson et al. 2019. “From Transition to Domains of Transformation: Getting to Sustainable and Just Food Systems through Agroecology”. In *Sustainability.* 1-28. MDPI. doi:10.3390/su11195272.

Anderson, C. et al. 2021. “Origins, Benefits, and the Political Basis of Agroecology”. In *Agroecology Now!* Chapter 2. 11-28. Springer.

Anderson, Maughan & Pimbert. 2019. “Transformative Agroecology Learning in Europe: Building Consciousness, Skills and Collective Capacity for Food Sovereignty”. In *Agriculture and Human Values.* 36:531-547. Springer.

Ayazi, H. E. Elsheikh. “The US Farm Bill: Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the United States Food System”. In *Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society.* University of California, Berkley. http://diversity.berkeley.edu/farmbillreport.

Bordage, G. 2009. “Conceptual Frameworks to Illuminate and Magnify”. In *Medical Education.* 43:312-319. Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.

Bottazzi, P. Boillat, S. 2021. “Political Agroeoclogy in Senegal: Historicity and Repertoires of Collective Actions of an Emerging Social Movement”. In *Sustainability.* 1-20. MDPI.

Braun, J. B. et al. 2021. “Food Systems Concepts and Definitions for Science and Political Action”. In *Nature Food.* 748-750. https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-021-00361-2.

Braun, V. Clarke, V. 2006. “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology”. In *Qualitative Research in Psychology.* 3 (2). 77-101.

Braun, V. Clarke, V. 2013. “Teaching Thematic Analysis: Overcoming Challenges and Developing Strategies for Effective Learning”. https://uawe-repository.worktribe.com/preview/937606/Teaching.

Braverman. 1974. “Chapter 1: Labor and Labor Power”. *Labor and Monopoly Capital.* 45-58.

Clapp, J. 2019. “Mega-Mergers on the Menu: Corporate Concentration and the Politics of Sustainability in the Global Food System”. In *Global Environmental Politics.* 18:2. 1-22. Massachusetts Institute for Technology.

Clapp, J. 2023. “Concentration and Crises: Exploring the Deep Roots of Vulnerability in the Global Industrial Food System”. In *Journal of Peasant Studies*. Vol. 50. No. 1. 1-25. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Crosley, J. 2021. “What (Exactly) is Discourse Analysis?”. https://gradcoach.com/discourse-analysis-101/

Dacheux, E. Goujon, D. 2012. “The Solidarity Economy: An Alternative Development Strategy?”. 205-215. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Dalgaard, T. Hutchings, N. J. Porter, J. R. 2003. “Agroecology, Scaling and Interdisciplinary”. In *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment.* 100 (1): 39-51. Elsevier.

Denzin, N.K. 2015. “What is Critical Qualitative Inquiry?” In *Critical Qualitative Inquiry: Foundations and Futures.* 31-50. Taylor & Francis Group.

Dumont, A. Baret, P. 2017. “Why Working Conditions Are a Key Issue of Sustainability in Agriculture? A Comparison between Agroecological, Organic and Conventional Vegetable Systems”. In *Journal of Rural Studies.* Vol. 57. 53-64.

Duval, J. Cournut, S. Hostiou, H. 2021. “Livestock Farmers’ Working Conditions in Agroecological Farming Systems. A Review”. In *Agronomy for Sustainable Development.* 41:22. 1-10. Springer.

Elmes, M.B. 2018. “Economic Inequality, Food Insecurity, and the Erosion of Equality of Capabilities in the United States”. In *Business & Society*. Vol. 57(6) 1045-1074. SAGE Publications.

FAO. 2023. “Agroecology Knowledge Hub”. *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*.

FAO. 2024. “Overview: What is Agroecology”. In *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.* https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/en/.

Fanzo, J. et al. 2021. “Viewpoint: Rigorous Monitoring is Necessary to Guide Food System Transformation in the Countdown to the 2030 Goals”. In *Food Policy*. 104:1-20. ScienceDirect.

Ferguson, R. 2019. “Why We Can’t Separate Justice and Sustainability in the Food System”. In *The Equation. https://blog.ucsusa.org/rafter-ferguson/why-we-cant-separate-justice-and-sustainability-in-the-food-system/* .

Fernandes, L.A. Gotuzzo, G. 2012. “Agroecology and Solidarity Economies: A Sustainable Symbiosis”. *Presentation at the ISEE (International Society for Ecological Economics).* Vol 20. 1-22.

Fernandez, M. et al. 2013. “Agroecology and Alternative Agri-Food Movements in the United States: Toward a Sustainable Agri-Food System”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.* 37: 115-126. Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

Fontinelle, A. 2021. “What is Economic Inequality? Definitions, Causes, and Key Statistics”. *Investopedia.* https://www.investopedia.com/economic-inequality-4845459

Food Print. 2018. “Labor and Workers in the Food System”. https://foodprint.org/issues/labor-workers-in-the-food-system/.

Food Print. 2024. “Sustainable Agriculture vs. Industrial Agriculture”. In *Food Print Issue.* https://foodprint.org/issues/sustainable-agriculture-vs-industrial-agriculture/.

Forster, T. Mattheisen, E. 2016. “Territorial Food Systems: Protecting the Rural and Localizing Human Rights Accountability”. *Right to Food Watch*. Chapter 4. 38-44.

Francis, C. et al. 2003. “Agroecology: The Ecology of Food Systems”. In *Journal of Sustainable Agriculture.* 22(3): 99-118. The Hawthron Press, Inc.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. et al. 2013. “Take Back Work: Surviving Well”. In In *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide to Transforming Our Communities.* Chapter 2. 17-48. University of Minnesota Press.

Gladek, E. et al. 2017. “The Global Food System: An Analysis”. In *Metabolic*. 1-180. WWF Netherlands.

Glennie, C. Alkon, A.H. 2018. “Food Justice: Cultivating the Field”. In *Environmental Research Letters.* 1-13. IOP Publishing.

Gliessman, S. Friedmann, H. Howard, P. 2019. “Agroecology and Food Sovereignty”. In *IDS Bulletin.* Vol. 50. No. 2. 91-109. Institute of Development Studies. https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/3038/Online%20article

Global Climate Pledge. 2023. “Agroecology: A Social Movement”. https://www.globalclimatepledge.com/agroecology-a-social-movement/

Gonzalez, C.G. 2015. “Food Justice: An Environmental Justice Critique of the Global Food System”. *International Environmental Law and the Global South.* 1-51. Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, J.B. Park, T.K. 1994. “Political Ecology”. In *Journal of Political Ecology.* Vol. 1. 1-12.

Grix, J. 2002. “Introducing Students to the Generic Terminology of Research”. In *Politics.* 22(3):175-186. Blackwell Publishers.

Greenberg, S. 2023. “From Local Initiatives to Coalitions for an Effective Agroecology Strategy: Lessons from South Africa”. In *Sustainability.* 15, 15521. 1-15. MDPI. https://doi.org/10.3390/su152115521

Gupta, D. 2017. “The Protest of Politics”. In *Protest Politics Today*. Chapter 1. 1-31.

Haack, R. 2021. “Agroecology and the Repeasantization of Global and Local Food Systems”. 1-15. Sarah Lawrence College, Department of Economics.

Henderson, K. Loreau, M. 2021. “Unequal Access to Resources Undermines Global Sustainability”. In *Science of Total Environment*. 1-10. Elsevier.

HLPE. 2019. “Agroecological and Other Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems that Enhance Food Security and Nutrition”. *High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition.* HLPE Report 14. 1-163.

Holder, S. 2023. “MedCaravan I: Economic Dimensions of Agroecology: Developing a New Economy Based on Solidarity and Common Good”. In *Agroecology, Food Systems, Social Solidarity Economy, Solidarity.* Urgenci. https://urgenci.net/economic-dimension-of-agroecology-developing-a-new-economy-based-on-solidarity-and-common-good/.

Holt-Gimenez, E. 2010. “Food Security, Food Justice, and Food Sovereignty?”. In *Institute for Food and Development Policy.* 16 (4): 1-4. Food First.

Holt-Gimenez, E. Altieri, M. 2013. “Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, and the Green Revolution”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*. 37:90-102. Taylor & Francis Group.

Holt-Gimenez, E. Altieri, M. 2016. “Agroecology ‘Lite:’ Cooptation and Resistance in the Global North”. Food First. 38.141: 1–3. https://archive.foodfirst.org/agroecology-lite-cooptation-and-resistance-in-the-global-north/.

Holt-Gimenez, E. 2017. *A Foodie’s Guide to Capitalism.* Monthly Review Press.

Hunter, D. 2020. “Don’t Believe the Lie that Voting is All You Can Do: Stop Minimizing the Work of Movements”. In *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/opinion/voting-2020-election-blm-movement.html

Jahan, S. Mahmud, A.S. 2015. “What is Capitalism?”. In *Finance and Development*. 1-2.

James, D. Wolff, R. Wittman, H. 2023. “Agroecology as a Philosophy of Life”. In *Agriculture and Human Values.* 1-14. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10455-1.

Kerr, R.B et al. 2022. “Human and Social Values in Agroecology: A Review”. In *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene.*10:1. 1-24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/.

Kerr, R.B. et al. 2023. “Agroecology as a Transformative Approach to Tackle Climate, Food, and Ecosystem Crisis”. In *Environmental Stability*. 62:101275. 1-8. Elsevier.

Klassen, S. et al. 2023. “Pathways for Advancing Good Work in Food Systems: Reflecting on the International Good Work for Good Food Forum”. In *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development.* 1-17. Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems. https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2023.122.004.

Kress, T.M. 2011. “Stepping Out of the Academic Brew: Using Critical Research to Break Down the Hierarchies of Knowledge”. In *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* 24 (3): 267- 283.

Kroll, F. 2021. “Agroecology and the Metropolitan Biopolitics of Food in Cape Town and Johannesburg”. In *Urban Agriculture and Regional Food Systems.* 1-17. Wiley Periodicals LLC.

Lappé, F.M. 2016. “Farming for a Small Planet: Agroecology Now”. In *Great Transition Initiative.* 1-15.

Lazar, D. 2004. “Selected Issues in the Philosophy of Social Science”. In *Researching Society and Culture*. 2nd Edition. 7-20. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Levidow, L. Sansolo, D. Schiavinatto, M. 2021. “Agroecological Innovation Construction Socionatural Order for Social Transformation: Two Case Studies in Brazil”. In *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology, and Science.* 1-29. Vol. 4. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Levidow, L. Sansolo, D. Schiavinatto, M. 2023. “Territorialising Local Food Systems for Agroecological Transition in Latin America”. In *Land.* 12, 1577. 1-25. MDPI.

Levin, N. 2023. “8 Largest Agricultural Companies in the World”. Largest.org. https://largest.org/technology/largest-agricultural-companies-in-the-world/#:~:text=Cargill%20is%20the%20largest%20agricultural,production%2C%20processing%2C%20and%20distribution.

Lincoln, Y.S. Lynham, S. A. Guba, E.G. 2018. “Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited”. In *Paradigms and Perspectives in Contention.* Chapter 5. 108-150.

Liu, Y. Y. 2012. “Good Food and Good Jobs for All: Challenges and Opportunities to Advance Racial and Economic Equity in the Food System”. In *Applied Research Centre.* Racial Justice Through Media, Research and Activism. 1-36. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2594421.

Machetti, L. et al. 2020. “Beyond Sustainability in Food Systems: Perspectives from Agroecology and Social Innovation”. In *Sustainability.* 1-24. MDPI.

McAllister, G.E. 2018. “Cultivating Social-Ecological Relationships at the Margins: Agroecology as a Tool for Everyday Peace Formation in Fragile Environments”. 1-336. Centre for Research Capability and Development. Coventry University.

McCune, N. Reardon, J. Rosset, P. 2014. “Agroecological Formación in Rural Social Movements”. In *Radical Teacher.* No. 98. 31-37.

McGahee, T. 2019. “Critical Inquiry (AFCI 101)”. University of South Carolina. https://www.usca.edu/academic-affairs/general-education-requirements/critical-inquiry-afci-101#:~:text=Critical%20inquiry%20is%20the%20process,new%20ideas%2C%20applications%20and%20questions.

Mendéz, V.E. Bacon, C. M. Cohen, R. 2013. “Agroecology as a Transdisciplinary, Participatory, and Action-Oriented Approach”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.* 37(1): 1-18. Taylor & Francis.

Miller, E. 2009. “Solidarity Economy: Key Concepts and Issues”. *Solidarity Economy I: Building Alternatives for People and Planet*.

Mitchell, T. 2008. “Rethinking Economy”. In *Geoforum*. (39)1116-1121. Elsevier.

Montenegro de Wit, M. et al. 2021. “Editorial: Resetting the Power in Global Food Governance: The UN Food Systems Summit”. In *Development*. 64:153-161. Society for International Development.

Mugwayna, N. 2019. “Why Agroecology is Dead in Africa”. In *Outlook in Agriculture*. Vol. 48(2). 113-116. SAGE Publications.

Nair, P.K. 2014. “Grand Challenges in Agroecology and Land Use Systems”. In *Frontiers in Environmental Science.* Vol. 2. 1-4. University of Florida, Gainesville.

Nardi, J. 2016. “Solidarity Economy in Europe: An Emerging Movement with a Common Vision”. *European Summer School Prague, Czech Republic.*

Oxfam. 2020. “Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis”. In *Oxfam International.* 1-64.

Parot, J. et al. 2023. “Food Justice in Community Supported Agriculture – Differentiating Charitable and Emancipatory Social Support Actions”. In *Agriculture and Human Values.* 1-15. Springer.

Peters, M.D. et al. 2015. “Guidance for Conducting Systematic Scoping Reviews”. In *International Journal of Evidence-Based Healthcare*. 13:141-146. The Joanna Briggs Institute.

Pimbert, M. 2017. “Towards a Transformative Urban Agroecology”. Paper presented at AESOP Sustainable Food Planning Conference 2017, Coventry, United Kingdom, 14/11/17 - 15/11/17. 15-17. RUAF, http://www.ruaf.org/towards-transformative-urban-agroecology

Power, E.M. 1999. “Combining Social Justice and Sustainability for Food Security”. In *For Hunger-proof Cities: Sustainable Urban Food Systems.* 30-37. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Qureshi, Z. 2023. “Rising Inequality: A Major Issue of Our Time”. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rising-inequality-a-major-issue-of-our-time/#:~:text=In%20regions%20such%20as%20Latin,the%20highest%20in%20the%20world.

Rawe et al. 2015. “Cultivating Equity: Delivering Just and Sustainable Food Systems in a Changing Climate”. Care USE & Food Tank. 1-32.

Roberts, J. 2020. “Political Ecology”. In *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. 1-17. http://doi.org/10.29164/20polieco.

Ross, S. 2023. “Market Economy: Brief History, Features, How it Works”. Investopedia. https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/020615/what-history-market-economy.asp

Rosset, P. M. Martinez-Torres, M. 2012. “Rural Social Movements and Agroecology: Context, Theory, and Process”. In *Ecology and Society*. 17(3): 1-17. Center for the Study of Rural Change in Mexico.

Rosset, P.M. Martinez-Torres, M. 2013. “La Via Campesina and Agroecology”. *La Via Campesina’s Open Book: Celebrating 20 years of Struggle and Hope.* 1-22.

Sbicca, J. 2016. “Food Sovereignty or Bust: Transforming the Agrifood System is a Must”. *Emergent Possibilities of Global Sustainability.* Ch. 44. 316-328.

Schneider, K. et al. 2023. “The State of the Food Systems Worldwide in the Countdown to 2030”. In *Nature Food*. Vol. 4. 1090-1110. https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-023-00885-9.

Sears, L. 2017. “The Public Voice and Sustainable Food Systems: Community Engagement in Food Action Plans”. *Urban Planning, Geography, and Atmospheric Sciences.* University of Kansas.

Secules, S. et al. 2021. “Positionality Practices and Dimensions of Impact on Equity Research: A Collaborative Inquiry and Call to the Community”. In *Journal of Engineering Education.* 110: 19-43. Wiley Periodicals, LLC.

Siegner, A.B. Acey, C. Sowerwine, J. 2020. “Producing Urban Agroecology in the East Bay: From Soil Health to Community Empowerment”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*. 44(5). 1-25. DOI: 10.1080/21683565.2019.1690615

Silva, A.A. 2022. “Agroecology as an Example of Contentious Policies in the Context of the Green New Deal”. 1-33.

Snipstal, B. 2016. “Towards a ‘Peoples’ Agroecology”. WhyHunger. why. https://whyhunger.org/towards-a-peoples-agroecology/blog/

Sorrells, K. 2015. “Social Justice”. In *Center For Intercultural Dialogue: Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue.* No. 68. http://centerforinterculturaldialogue.org

Spencer, R. Pryce, J. Walsh, J. 2014. “Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research”. In *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods.* 81-98. Oxford University Press.

Staggenborg, S. 2016. “Theories of Social Movements and Collective Action”. In *Social Movements, Second Edition.* Chapter 1. 1-15. Chapter 2. 16-30. Oxford University Press. New York. Oxford.

Statista Research Department. 2024. “Wealth Distribution in the United States in the Third Quarter of 2023”. https://www.statista.com/statistics/203961/wealth-distribution-for-the-us/.

Statton, A.E. Wittman, H. Blesh, J. 2021. “Diversification Supports Farm Income and Improved Working Conditions During Agroecological Transitions in Brazil”. In *Agronomy for Sustainable Development.* 41: 35. 1-22. Springer.

Sylvester, O. Little, M. 2020. “’*I Came All This Way to Receive Training, am I Really Going to be Taught by a Woman?’* Factors that Support and Hinder Women’s Participation in Agroecology in Costa Rica”. In *Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems*. 1-24. Taylor & Francis Group. https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2020.1811830.

Tansey, G. Worsley, A. 2014. *The Food System.* Taylor & Francis Group.

Teal, N. Moss, D. 2023. “Exploring the Connections between Agroecology and Regenerative Agriculture”. *OneEarth.* https://www.oneearth.org/exploring-the-connections-between-agroecology-and-regenerative-agriculture/.

The Equality Trust. 2012. “How is Economic Inequality Defined?”. England & Wales. https://equalitytrust.org.uk/how-economic-inequality-defined

Tittonell, P. et al. 2020. “Agroecology in Large Scale Farming—A Research Agenda”. In *Hypothesis and Theory*. Vol. 4. Article 584605. 1-18. Frontiers.

Tornaghi, C. Dehaene, M. 2019. “The Prefigurative Power of Urban Political Agroecology: Rethinking the Urbanisms of Agroecological Transitions for Food System Transformation”. In *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.* 594-610. Taylor & Francis.

USDA. 2023. “Food Systems”. *Definitions: Sustainability and Food Systems.* https://www.usda.gov/oce/sustainability/definitions#:~:text=Food%20systems%20are%20instead%2C%20complex,depending%20on%20location%20specific%20conditions.

USDA. 2024. “Transforming the U.S. Food System: Making it Better for Farmers and Families”. https://usda.exposure.co/transforming-the-us-food-system.

United Nations. 2020. “What are the Sustainable Development Goals?”. https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals

United Nations. 2023. “What is Agroecology?”. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. https://www.fao.org/agroecology/overview/en/#:~:text=Agroecology%20helps%20to%20protect%2C%20restore,change%20mitigation%20and%20adaptation%20solutions.

Union of International Associations. 2023. “Inequitable Access to Natural Resources”. In *The Encyclopedia of World Problems & Human Potential.* http://encyclopedia.uia.org/en/problem/inequitable-access-natural-resources#:~:text=Inequities%20in%20access%20to%20resources,the%20uneven%20development%20of%20resources.

University of Minnesota. 2015. “12.1 Overview of the Economy”. Minnesota Libraries: Social Problems. https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/12-1-overview-of-the-economy/.

Valdivia-Díaz, M. Le Coq, F.M. 2022. “Roadmap for the Scaling Up of Agroecology in Peru: An Analysis of Existing Policies, Programs and Limiting Factors”. In *Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security.* 1-9. Info Note.

Valenzuela, H. 2015. “Agroecology: A Global Paradigm to Challenge Mainstream Industrial Agriculture”. In *Horticulturae.* 1-11. University of Hawaii at Manoa. MDPI.

Van der Ploeg, J.D. van der. 2020. “The Political Economy of Agroecology”. In *The Journal of Peasant Studies.* Vol. 48. No. 2. 274-297. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

Wach~~, E. 2017. “Why Access to Land is Vital for Sustainable, Healthy and Fair Food Systems: Strategies for Increasing Access to Land for Agroecological Farming”. In *Institute of Development Studies.* 1-7.~~

Weiler, A.M. Otero, G. Whittman, H. 2016. “Rock Stars and Bad Apples: Moral Economies of Alternative Food Networks and Precarious Food Regimes”. In *Antipode.* Vol. 48. No 4. 1140-1162. Antipode Foundation Ltd.

Wetherell, M. Taylor, S. Yates, S. 2001. *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis.* SAGE Publications Ltd.

Wezel, A. et al. 2009. “Agroecology as a Science, a Movement and a Practice. A Review”. In *Agronomy for Sustainable Development.* 29 (4). 503-515. HAL Open Science.

Wezel, A. et al. 2019. “Transformative Agroecology Learning in Europe: Building Consciousness, Skills and Collective Capacity for Food Sovereignty”. In *Agriculture and Human Values.* 36:531-547. Springer.

Wezel, A. et al. 2020. “Agroecological Principles and Elements and Their Implications for Transitions to Sustainable Food Systems. A Review”. In *Agronomy for Sustainable Development.* 40: 40. 1-13. Springer. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s13593-020-00646-z.

Wittman, H. James, D. 2022. “Land Governance for Agroecology”. In *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene.* 10:1-19. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1525/.

Wood, E. M. 2000. "The Agrarian Origins of Capitalism." In *Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment*, edited by F. Magdoff, J. B. Foster and F. H. Buttel, 23-41. New York: Monthly Review Press.

WWF. 2017. “The Global Food System: An Analysis”. WWF Netherlands & Metabolic Lab.

Young, I.M. 1990. “Five Faces of Oppression”. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. 55-71.