

**Voices and Arms: Women's Movements and Food Sovereignty**

by

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

AyA	Acueductos y Alcantarillados (Aquifer and Sewers)
CIDH	Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights)
DG-SANCO	Misión General de Inocuidad de Alimentos y Protección al Consumidor (General Mission for Food Safety and Consumers)
EU	European Union
FRENASAP	Frente Nacional de los Sectores Afectados por la Expansión Piñera (National Movement of Communities Affected by the Pineapple Expansion)
IRET	Instituto Regional de Estudios de Sustancias Tóxicas (Regional Institute of Studies of Toxic Substances)
MINAE	Ministerio de Energía y Ambiente (Ministry of Energy and Environment)
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
UNED	Universidad Estatal a Distancia (Distance Learning State University)
RESSAK	Red de Economía y Solidaridad de Pueblo Cayambe y Pichincha (Economy and Solidary Network of the Regions of Cayambe and Pichincha)

In memory of my father, Fernando Contreras Solís, whose own life-long passion for scholarship always inspired my own.



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### **Abstract**

Women and children are the most vulnerable to persistent food system inequality. Women, however, are developing strategies such as creating movements and networks, not only to overcome their struggles, but also to find positions of equity in food systems. This research studies women's food movements to learn how they address gender disparities in the food system. This research also asks how food sovereignty discourse addresses gender so that it can be more visible and effectively addressed in food sovereignty discourse and programming in order to support to emerging women's food movements. Through a critical discourse analysis, this research found that the majority of farmers in developing countries are women who, due to cultural beliefs, do not own the land they work, have no credit for loans, very limited access to education, and lower wages. This analysis shows that while women's movements are making progress, women's achievements and struggles are not reflected in the way food sovereignty discourse and movement are addressing gender issues. Food sovereignty discourse and movement efforts could expand to address women's inequitable roles and women's unequal positions, participation, and decision-making in the food system.

Keywords: gender, food sovereignty, equity, women's movements, class, race, land ownership.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The contribution of women in food systems is fundamental. At all levels, from the humblest campesina, to factory employees, to corporate entrepreneurs, women enhance the process and progress of food systems; Yet, they still are dealing with gender disparities such as unpaid or underpaid jobs, lack of resources such as access to loans and education, unequal opportunities for participation and decision-making, and unrecognized positions of disadvantage. This research studies women's food movements and their approach to addressing gender disparities and how food sovereignty discourse addresses gender.

Women's food movements and organizations are important to analyze and to understand as alternatives to inequitable food systems. They have been used as powerful and effective strategies to teach and empower others and to work for social justice. Women's movements and organizations have been part of social and political changes at all times in history. In Latin America, for example, it is well documented that women from ethnic groups including Indigenous, Black, Mestizas and Criollas; contributed to women's movements to defend their ethnic heritage, to fight against slavery, and to protect other women from different types of abuse and violence (Carosio, 2010, p.2). From the time of Spanish colonization to present, women's voices, actions and courage have contributed to significant changes in Latin American history. These actions to achieve equity and social justice are often filed, forgotten and unrecognized, but every day around the world, women keep joining forces to engage in efforts to fight gender disparities and positions of disadvantage, crafting new opportunities for them and for future generations.

This research studies women's food movements because I want to learn how they address gender disparities in areas such as class, race, access to land and family, that relate to food systems and

how food sovereignty discourse addresses those gender disparities so they can be more visible and more effectively addressed in food sovereignty discourse and programming in order to provide input to emerging groups.

This research does not only look to discuss where or when women are encountering constraints; it also seeks to acknowledge what women accomplish in the face of those constraints. Women's movements are worth analyzing because they tell us what people are doing in their own communities to create their own livelihoods, and what they need to defend and why, for example when they fight for natural resources. Many times, the voice of these movements becomes the base of new policies and new avenues of negotiation with local governments; grassroots movements, in particular, make visible the real needs of the most vulnerable.

The main focus of this research is gender equity, where it is present and absent in discourse, and how women's movements work to achieve equity within the communities they represent. In order to investigate these topics, my research questions ask:

1. How is gender equity addressed in food sovereignty discourse?
2. How are women's food movements addressing gender inequities in food systems?
3. How can global food movements addressing gender inequity and women's movements to improve food system equity in Siquirres, Costa Rica inform each other?

To address research question one, and to understand how gender equity is addressed within food sovereignty discourse, this research analyzes food sovereignty movements' approach to different forms of food system inequality still present in different areas, such as land, labor, race, class and family. Research question two, is addressed by acknowledging how women are creating alternatives through social movements, this research offers analysis of four different women's movements in Latin America, and how they are addressing environmental and social problems that aggravate gender disparities within food systems. The work that women are doing in their

organized movements is of enormous importance and should be documented and considered as a vehicle to create social justice and social change in the food system.

To address the third research question, I investigated a small grassroots women's movement in the Caribbean Zone of Costa Rica. This case study describes a small group of campesinas and their fights against transnational corporations such as "Dole" and "Del Monte", and some Costa Rican pineapple producers. The pineapple industry, for a few people, has translated into more work opportunities, and meant more production, more land and more money. For others it means contamination, environmental destruction, violence, family displacement, land grabbing, and an endless list of social and gender disparities.

This thesis is developed in several chapters. Chapter 2, Background and Significance, justifies each research question and details why these questions are important to ask and explore. I provide information that demonstrates different ways and environments in which women are still discriminated, such as in labor and family dynamics. The background for research question number two, includes a description of four different women's movements from Latin America, their importance, and a brief explanation of what they do. To background question number three, I include a historical review to place the readers of this research in the reality of the Caribbean Zone of Costa Rica, in which the case study of this research is based. Chapter 3, Methodology and Methods, explains how each research question was addressed to form the analysis presented in Chapter 4 Results, Analysis and Contribution. Based on the findings of this research, gender equity needs to be addressed and studied in more detail and with much more determination to resolve the issues. Chapter 4, Results, Analysis and Contribution, describes the findings of this work, and it describes how this work amplifies and contributes to food systems and society scholarship. Making structures of power becomes more visible and detectable, and with the study of the women's

movements presented in this work, it acknowledges the efforts and tenacity of so many women who work to achieve equity and justice in food systems. The case study in this thesis exposes social and environmental abuses by big corporations, and the efforts of a small grassroots women's movement to defend the water in Siquirres, Costa Rica. Chapter 5, Conclusion, elaborates my personal insights on the necessity to address gender in discourse in a more effective way, responding to the constraints that women encounter every day. The study of women's movements and the case study in this thesis, strengthen my belief that social justice and social change relies on united communities of hard working and brave people.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Background and Significance**

The expansion of new forms of agricultural economies such as monocrops and GMO's, and the politics that sustain these new structures, reinforce positions of disadvantage for women within food systems, aggravating discrimination of all types, and at all levels. Gender divisions and gender roles within food system become significant and important to investigate because inequities are pervasive, embedded and maintained in the social and cultural structures such that the disparities, over time, have come to a point of not even being apparent. When I talk about social and cultural structures, I refer to subtle patterns and roles that are delineated and divided as suitable for women or for men. As Patel (2009) explains, the food system, as a representative extension of capitalism, has "coded female tasks," which have placed men in positions of power and subordinated women. Current food systems models make it more difficult for women to find equity in aspects such as access to and control over land, access to education, decision-making, and human rights. These challenges make women the most vulnerable, despite of representing more than a half of the food system's workforce. I discuss each of these challenges in the remainder of the subsection.

Lack of access to and control over land is one of the most important issues to discuss in terms of women's rights; because it can directly address or cause women and children's poverty. According to the United Nations (2013), the challenge for women having equal access to land resides in "legal standards, ineffective policies and cultural beliefs". In some countries around the world, there are laws that prevent women from inheriting land, despite a husband's death, fathers will pass on land to their sons, not daughters. In case of divorce, men get to keep the land (p. 2-7). In this study, the UN (2013) explains that inequality in land access and ownership involves other disparities, such as in education, decision-making and the self-confidence that women need to enhance their livelihoods. Only 1% of the world's women own land, and according to this

information, land ownership ameliorates living standards for women because it is necessarily linked to better health, less family violence, and social inclusion (p. 2-13). The right to land and land ownership is one of the pillars for gender equity.

A second key component of gender inequity in the food system lies in patriarchal family structure. When analyzing patriarchal structures, family cannot be excluded. The transformation of food systems has affected the way women are expected to perform family chores, and many other jobs related to food. Goodman and Redclift (1991) explain that changes within food systems have shaped women's roles within the family, also changing the way in which food is produced and consumed. When men occupy the place of head of the family, which is usual in the model of rural families, and some urban families as well, this place of privilege gives them control in the way the family is organized and understood; Women on the other hand, occupy the place of the home, focusing work on food and as child keepers; these duties in the home, however, do not exclude them from being required to do a multitude of other activities. Allen (2004) points out that the position of the man as head of the family intervenes in how and when food is prepared, and a great deal of domestic violence is due to meal preparation and expectations. For example, the concept of gender roles in the rural families, reinforced by the displacement of women in aspects of labor, increases power and gender divisions. Raj Patel in an interview conducted by Erica Houskeeper (2015), explains that the new politics in the food systems and the patriarchal politics guided by the World Bank are reflected in the household's dynamics. But in general, not only rural women, as part of their identities, are in charge of food preparation and the work that is related to food. As Allen & Sachs (2007) explain, the role of women as household keepers implies "subordination" and therefore the empowerment of other members of the family.



Within food systems, structures of racism label and delineate where and how women work. People of color and certain ethnic groups such as Latinos receive lower wages than white people, and women of color receive lower wages than men in those groups. A document written by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2010) based on 150 interviews, describes the precarious situation of the immigrant workers who sustain American's food system. Coming from Mexico and Latin America, the majority are women who harvest and help to produce the food that is daily consumed. In the fields, immigrant women of all ages face sexual assaults, violence, under payment, without any current laws that give them the right to speak up. In other spheres, as it is explained by Allen & Sachs (2007), immigrants and women of color work as housekeepers, taking the place of the white women who have the opportunity to work outside of the home. These authors explain different categories in which women, according to their race, are chosen in their jobs. For example, white women are often more visible and available to customers than women of color. This means that according to standards of race and class, women are "selected" for specific jobs.

In the following three subsections, I explain and provide background on each of the three research questions of this thesis and their significance.

### **Gender and Discourse**

The first research question asks, how is gender equity addressed in food sovereignty discourse?

In academic and theoretical research about food sovereignty, the link between gender and food sovereignty is reflected as being evident. It is the interest of this research to know how different forms in which women suffer positions of disadvantage already mentioned in the Background and Significance section of this research, are being addressed by the food sovereignty

discourse; If women's reality is reflected in that discourse, or if there is a misalignment between what this discourse suggests and what is found in it in a closer analysis. According to Crossman (2014), social and family dynamics reproduce patriarchal behaviors in which women do not benefit as men do. How food sovereignty discourse addresses these dynamics, for example, to improve gender equity is very important. When flaws and gaps in discourse are found, we change, and we can create different approaches in which gender can become more visible and effectively addressed.

In order to understand how the food sovereignty discourse addresses gender, I focus my analysis on the discourse of *La Via Campesina* and the food sovereignty movements. *La Via Campesina* is the international movement that embraces and shapes the principles of food sovereignty, it emerged in the 1990's as the voice of peasants and indigenous people. As Turniawan (2013) explains, this movement has framed new rights, new models and new answers to the neoliberal forms of economy that have changed global agriculture and have contributed to current food crises. Food sovereignty movements along with *La Via Campesina*, aim to establish policies that allow people and nations to choose and produce their own food, according to their cultural needs and preferences.

As Holt-Giménez et al. (2009) explain:

In 1996 *Via Campesina*, a world-wide peasant, pastoralist, and fishers federation, launched a global call for *food sovereignty*- the human right of all people to healthy, culturally appropriate, sustainably grown food, and the right of communities to determine their own food systems. The call both echoed and amplified the voices of social movements everywhere that are struggling for land reform, control over local resources, fair markets, neighborhood food systems and sustainable agriculture. (p. 2)

A food sovereignty framework is used to answer this question because it describes the parameters in which the food sovereignty movement and discourse are based, validating the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own food. It is important to ask, acknowledging the multiple constraints that women face, how the food sovereignty discourse addresses gender disparities, carefully analyzing if women are part of those “peoples”. Feminist analyses about social and cultural aspects are also part of my study of the food sovereignty discourse as it pertains to gender divisions and equity.

### **Women’s Movements and Gender Equity**

The second research question asks, how are women’s food movements addressing gender inequities in food system?

Women’s organizations and women’s movements have historically been a response to social and cultural situations in which women have been marginalized. In this thesis, four women’s movements from Latin America are analyzed to better understand how women are finding strategies to address gender inequities present in the food system. This analysis focuses on Latin America because this area of the Global South has been deeply affected by the policies of the current food regime. As McMichael (2008) explains, privatization of common goods, new forms of agriculture such as monocultures, and the constant alteration and mistreatment of endemic cultures have caused a “de-peasantization in the Global South”, affecting and including women. It is my interest to find out how Latin American women’s movements are responding to these circumstances.

Puleo's articulation of "Enlightened Eco-Feminism" informs this analysis of four women's movements. This perspective is one in which women's equality and autonomy come with acknowledgment of their contribution. Puleo (2008) bases this new paradigm on characteristics such as "Critical thinking, assertion of women's equity and autonomy, prudent acceptance of the benefits of science and technology, reinforcing the universal values of ethics towards human beings and nature from the concepts of evolution and compassion" (p. 42). This perspective is also combined with the traditional eco-feminist principles, that according to Dobscha (1993), involve a close connection between women and nature, analyzing how both have been exploited and abused. They also connect ecology and gender, defending preservation and conservation of natural resources and endemic knowledge. Puleo's perspective combines these principles with a strong recognition of women's capability.

The investigation about of women's movements must be done from an angle, in which women's achievements, critical thinking and power of analysis in the face of their constraints can be acknowledged. What women do in those groups is an act of resistance to food systems that are distant and not apparent in their reality. Talking about women's movements means talking about food sovereignty, food justice, gender equity, women's active participation and many other aspects that are the base of gender equity.

In what follows I illustrate the background and significance of this question by describing each women's movement analyzed in this thesis. These four groups are explained in two categories, formal and informal. The first two groups described are formal, because they work at international and national levels with more than one center of operation. Both of them have technological assets, professional staff and their own web page. The other two groups are designated as informal because they are smaller, their members are from local communities with

enormous knowledge, and they have limited or no technological assets. One has a Facebook page, the other one does not, but does have a short video that shows how this group is organized and the projects they do. By studying these four groups I hope to better understand the contribution of independent women's movements, (by independent I mean those that are not part of La Vía Campesina). Finding what these groups are doing and how they are addressing gender disparities, I want to find out what is taking place on a subversive level, as an alternative to a food system that is not designed to serve those most in need. In what follows, I briefly provide background on each of these groups.

### *Entrepueblos*

Entrepueblos is an international organization that works in Latin American countries including Nicaragua, Guatemala, Cuba, Perú, and El Salvador. It also has small agencies in Spain and Morocco. This group supports sustainability and food sovereignty, with a strong emphasis on gender equity, women's empowerment and education. This group networks with communities in need, building and teaching the ideals of social justice, gender equity, and political and social commitments. One example of the many projects of this organization takes place in the Andean region of Cotachi, Ecuador, combining principles of agro-ecology, reinforcement of informal economy, and a social commitment to help indigenous and peasant women to complete their formal education.

### *Agua y Vida: Mujeres, Derechos y Ambiente.*

This women's movement from Chiapas, Mexico, works to improve women's living conditions, to empower decision-making, acknowledge "the right to water as an independent

right”, and to transform rights into effective policies. One of this organization’s projects takes place in the region of Cuenca. It aims to improve women’s political participation and decision-making in environmental issues. The project involves a detailed diagnosis of the women’s situation in this particular area, including economic, social and environmental rights, political orientation, and indigenous women’s rights. This project has created safe spaces for forums, workshops and open dialogues between the local government and members of this community.

#### *Komonil Tezulutlan*

This indigenous women’s group from Guatemala, works to preserve culture and ancestral legacy. Working with sustainable and agroecological practices, they promote organic local produce. Through a local market (*Mercado Solidario*) they sell and exchange endemic seeds, local produce and celebrate with typical dances and food. This group also works to improve the economy by selling artisan textiles made by women

#### *Red de Economía y Solidaridad del Pueblo Cayambe and Pichincha (RESSAK)*

This group from Bolivia is the smallest of the four movements analyzed in this research. It works under the principles and practices of agroecology. Women from seven different communities form this group. Organizing communal and small gardens on their properties, they have challenged their own husbands by working the land and strengthening their autonomy by selling and distributing 22 different products.

### **Case Study: Women, Water, and the Pineapple Expansion in Siquirres, Costa Rica.**

The third research question asks, how can global food movements addressing

gender inequity and a women's movement to improve food system equity in Siquirres, Costa Rica inform each other?

Specifically, this research investigates the actions taken by a grassroots women's group that fight to defend their right to potable water, and to denounce the ecological and social consequences of the pineapple monoculture expansion in Siquirres, Costa Rica.

Examining this case study within the historical context is necessary to fully comprehend what the pineapple expansion means to the Caribbean Zone of Costa Rica. The pineapple phenomenon that is taking place in this particular area of Costa Rica, can be framed in a whole context of suffering, racism, gender inequity, cultural colonialism and ecological exploitation.

The history of exploitation and pillage in this part of Costa Rica dates back to 1492, when Christopher Columbus first arrived. There are many stories about why Columbus named it "Costa Rica," but most certainly, it is because he thought that those coasts were abundant in gold. It could be said then, that it was the first moment in which a "white eye" set its sights on exploiting the territories. With colonization, and in hands of the Spanish, came cacao growth in this area. The abuse of the land, and the overproduction of this product, provoked a fungal infestation that eradicated five of the seven types of endemic cacao varieties. In 1871, Minor Keith, an American businessman, built the first railroad. With the United Fruit Company's arrival (the first transnational that came to produce bananas massively), exports were expanded not only through the Caribbean Zone of Costa Rica, but to the rest of Central America and some countries in South America. As Molina & Palmer (2007) point out, "The presence of the United Fruit Company and the banana trade was "catastrophic for the Bribrí natives of Talamanca and Sixaola." These historical events and what is happening today regarding the pineapple production have changed the history, the culture, and the landscape of the Caribbean forever.

Understanding the history and the social context of this area of Costa Rica as described above is important to the analysis of this case study. This case study presented in Chapter 4 describes the current situation of six rural communities in which the indiscriminate use of toxic substances has caused irreparable harm to the watersheds, leaving thousands people without potable water. A group of campesinas, named National Movement of Communities Affected by Pineapple Expansion (*FRENASAP*), has taken actions against the transnational corporations, Del Monte and Dole and a few national pineapple producers. After ten years of constant effort, their claims have been heard by international entities such as the European Union and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Their efforts, their strategies and their constraints are detailed in this research in order to demonstrate how women's movements are impacting and crafting changes.

The analysis of the actions and strategies of this grassroots movement, compared with the previous four groups of study, may identify ways for them to inform each other, to improve food system equity.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology and Methods**

This chapter reviews the methodologies and methods used to address these research questions. It also explains my positionality as a Latin American woman and my epistemological orientation, which aims to find new avenues and vehicles to create gender equity, social justice and social change. Methodologies and methods such as critical discourse and interpretative analysis of food sovereignty discourse, and feminist perspectives on class, gender and family, Ministerio de Energía y Ambiente (Ministry of Energy and Environment) are explained in this section, as well as frameworks such as food sovereignty and enlightened eco-feminism.

#### **Positionality**

Through the years of my scholarship in the Food Systems and Society program, we have analyzed the multiple areas in the food system in which women are marginalized. Aspects such as class, race and culture put women in vulnerable positions of abuse and oppression. As a woman, my interest in studying women's food movements and the position of gender in discourse comes from the fact that despite the visible efforts from the food sovereignty movement to achieve gender equity, there are still power relations that favor gender inequity escaping those good intentions. The analysis of cultural differences as a definer of power relations was one of the aspects that inspired me the most to conduct this research. As a Latina and through the elaboration of this research, I understand that gender disparities are embedded in my own culture and in different ambits, from the family structure to the corporate world.

The Food Systems and Society program has taught me how to develop a critical eye to analyze food systems as a whole. The present situation of the pineapple industry in Costa Rica, for

example, carries within it a number of social and environmental problems that personally affect me, as a Costa Rican, and as a student of the Food System and Society program. The abuses of natural resources and new forms of agriculture such as monocultures, have affected the livelihood of entire communities and the ecosystems of vast areas of land. Transnational corporations have come to take control over our land, our water, and our economy, and women and children are the most affected by those indiscriminate actions.

After these two years of scholarship it is possible for me to be critical and constructively analytical. Latin American women face different forms of oppression as active members of food systems every day; in rural and urban spheres, power relations and aspects of patriarchy and sexism make it more difficult for women to achieve equity.

My perspective for this research aims to value and to acknowledge women's work, presenting the image of women as strong warriors and workers, not as defenseless victims of the system. I consider this a fundamental contribution of this thesis because I believe that the first step to changing the popular perspective embedded in a society in which women are often framed as weak, is to address gender issues, acknowledging the ways in which women are crafting their place in food systems, and the way they are creating support for each other and of their communities, achieving social justice and social change for generations to come.

## **Epistemology**

The food system, as we know it, is an endless net of fields and players that are not necessarily on equal levels or in equitable positions for all, setting boundaries and differences because of aspects of race, gender and class. In the course of the last century, changes in the world's economy have modified the core of food systems. The new food system and food business

reinforces patriarchal structures that place women in positions of disadvantage. Women have been relegated to some of the most marginal positions in the food system and with that, their voices, their cultural legacy, and their knowledge have been diminished and often silenced.

In order to analyze and recognize new avenues towards gender equity, my research analyzes how women respond to the inequitable situations they encounter and how they fight, they teach, they create change, and against the odds and against the system, they build alternative avenues in which their voices and arms open new paths. My research denounces specific situations of injustice that are taking place, but beyond that, it looks to value and acknowledge the actions taken by women to overcome these situations, and the outcomes of their actions to achieve gender equity and natural resources optimization.

## **Methodologies**

This research is based on a feminist perspective and uses a critical discourse analysis and interpretative analysis of food sovereignty discourse. These approaches helped me identify new possibilities for social justice and social change, going beyond common perceptions of women as weak and inadequate. Each of these methodologies is explained under the relevant question below.

### *Research Question 1: How is gender equity addressed in food sovereignty discourse?*

To analyze and respond to the first question of this research, I used the food sovereignty framework as a guide and base for a critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis seems to be best suited to find structures in discourse that still support elements of gender and power domination, as Van Dijk (1993) explains. This examination allows for the discovery of the ideology that exists within what is written. Critical discourse analysis opens the discourse to

various possible readings in which it is possible to unveil what is fully meant. Applying this methodology to my inquiry, I analyzed what women encounter every day in their communities, what feminist perspectives say, and what food sovereignty framework addresses. I found answers by working intensively in interweaving these three analyses to understand when and how food sovereignty discourses seem vague or even contradictory in the way it addresses gender.

Feminist perspectives of gender were fundamental to locate places in discourse in which gender issues need to be addressed from different angles, to create new perspectives where inclusion, participation, decision-making and autonomy can become a reality for women. Crossman (2014) presents a number of feminist theories illustrating the reasons why the readings of the world are different for men and women. This author explains that gender theory sustains that, due to patriarchal models, women have been secluded and delimited to perform in domestic duties, preventing them from showing their capacity, especially in the “division of labor” (p. 2). This argument is the base of an extensive part of the analysis of gender in this thesis.

*Research Question 2: How are women’s food movements addressing gender inequities in food system?*

To analyze and to respond to the second and the third questions of this research, I used an eco-feminist framework. Instead of looking for a spiritual theory that places women and nature in a relationship that shares domination and motherhood, this perspective comes from an enlightened eco-feminism approach, explained by Puleo (2008). This analysis focused my research on a perspective in which women’s fundamental work in food systems is asserted and acknowledged as a means for equity and emancipation. For this question I used interpretative analysis, which builds a pattern to the study of four different women’s groups, identifying a social phenomenon

(the given experience, problem or cause) and its intangible and concrete meanings (their interpretation and the actions taken towards these experiences), Thorne (2010). Literature review as it is explained by Jesson et al. (2011), was also used to “examining, evaluating and comparing” these groups of study.

*Research Question 3: How can global food movements addressing gender inequity and a women’s movements to improve food system equity in Siquirres, Costa Rica inform each other?*

This question is a case study that analyzes a grassroots movement from Costa Rica, their actions, outcomes and their socio-political functions as an organized group against the pineapple transnational corporations. As indicated above under question two, interpretive analysis was used to elaborate the environmental problem of the pineapple expansion and the social outcome of this situation. An enlightened eco-feminist framework was used to analyze the grassroots women’s movement from a perspective of equity and emancipation.

## **Methods**

*Research Question 1*

The data to answer this question were collected from academic articles and journals found in databases such as EBSCOhost. My unit of analysis for this question was the food sovereignty movement. The Declaration of Women, which is part of the food sovereignty movement’s guidelines, served as a reference for gender analysis because it lists areas in which women from many different countries and movements consider important to straighten in order to achieve equity. Comparing what the food sovereignty framework pointed out as important for gender equity, to what women asked for themselves when they created this Declaration was relevant to

may question to understand equity in discourse. Evaluating what the food sovereignty framework considers as rights and what women in the Declaration of Women recognize as rights for themselves. The data were organized into categories of analysis suggested by feminist scholarship such as gender's intersection with race, family, land and the food sovereignty framework, among others.

Using critical discourse analysis, I worked to identify gender disparities in social structures that are overlooked in discourse, and gender disparities in discourse that are reflected in social structures such as family. My intention for this analysis was to compare and create "conversation" between the food sovereignty discourse and different authors who have different perspectives on how gender issues must be addressed.

For each article that I used and read to answer the three questions of this research, I used literature review and annotations, using the same format:

1. Complete citation
2. Argument
3. Points of interest
4. Questions to the author
5. Personal conclusion

Following this simple format, and understanding the points of interest in which gender divisions are represented, (access to land, race, labor, family), I was able to categorize my data in an efficient way. I interpreted both documents' social constructions that perpetuate gender disparities and structures of power in discourse.

### *Research Question 2*

For this question, I chose to analyze four women's movements from Latin America, all of them working in one or more areas of the food system and all of them also working for gender

equity. Data collected to address this question were collected from the web pages and Facebook pages of the groups which include their mission, social function, action plans, political orientation and projects of each group chosen for this research.

To analyze the data collected from these groups, I used interpretive analysis. Smith & Osborn (2007) explain this type of analysis in connection with a social phenomenon that generates a meaning and subsequently it generates an outcome. For example, each of the movements chosen work to address a specific phenomenon or need; this need creates a reaction in people and this reaction will generate a response or an outcome, which are the actions and strategies these women take. Thus, I used the following format for each movement analyzed:

1. What is the phenomenon?
2. How people make sense of it?
3. What is the intangible meaning of it?
4. What is the outcome of this phenomenon?

### *Research Question 3*

This research question was addressed with a case study of a women's movement called *Frente Nacional de los Sectores Afectados por la Expansión Piñera* (FRENASAP), translated as *National Movement of Communities Affected by Pineapple Expansion*. The data to answer this question were collected from local newspapers, visual material made by the Distance Learning State University (UNED) and other independent ecological groups, academic articles and one local magazine. My unit of analysis was this group of campesinas. All the collected information was analyzed with the same methods and criteria explained for research question two.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results, Analysis, and Contribution**

Gender inequity is a social issue that affects many areas within food systems. Using complementary research methods, this research addresses the problem of gender inequity in food systems by interweaving analysis of what women must face in their daily lives and with what scholars say about it. This analysis creates the possibility of pointing out old struggles that have been overlooked by the food sovereignty movement, as well as new ones that have emerged in recent times. Thus, this chapter describes and analyzes the ways in which discourse addresses gender and the way in which women's food movements address gender equity. Three research questions engage this problem.

The first question of this research asks "how is gender equity addressed within the food sovereignty discourse"? Understanding discourse, in the words of Allen (2004), as the "ensemble" of multiple structures and languages that sustain or challenge the social order, gender equity must be a paramount consideration. Food sovereignty discourse, which sustains a whole movement, must be carefully analyzed in order to identify possible structures of power that might be sustaining or overlooking patterns of gender-based domination. With the analysis of many different authors, this research found necessary to address gender equity in a more effective way. I address this research question in the next subsection of this chapter.

The second question of this research asks, how are women's food movements addressing gender inequities in the food systems? This question, addressed in the subsection that follows, combines two elements that are important to study: women and social movements. In a food system that has not been created based on principles of equity, there are certain constraints that only women will suffer. That is why acknowledging the facts and the strategies that women have created to develop alternative pathways to the system becomes important; social movements are one of



these alternatives. The achievements and strategies of these groups show how women's movements are becoming a real vehicle to achieve gender equity in food systems.

The third question of this research asks, how can global food movements addressing gender inequity and women's movement to improve food system equity in Siquirres, Costa Rica inform each other? In the subsequent subsection, I analyze the impact that this small group from Costa Rica has had. Knowing that this is a small group of campesinas that are fighting big corporations, such as Dole and other private pineapple producers, we could think that this is a lost battle from the beginning. Nevertheless, this research suggests that this little group has achieved some success. Tracing their trajectory and acknowledging their efforts there is a lot that can be learned and can be taught from this group of women.

This chapter closes with a Contribution subsection, which explains how I see this work as applicable and helpful to social justice and social change in food systems and to food systems and society scholarship.

*Research Question 1: Women and food sovereignty.*

How is gender equity addressed in food sovereignty discourse?

Even with the multiple efforts made by the food sovereignty movement to incorporate gender equity in its agenda, some scholars believe that it has not yet entirely achieved it. La Via Campesina, known as the movement that represents the principles of food sovereignty, has framed a series of rights that aim to protect women from issues of disparity, extreme poverty and disadvantages that make them vulnerable victims of the food system. The efforts to create rights and to address gender disparities have been pursued by La Vía Campesina for more than twenty years. As Claeys (2014) explains, some of these rights are: the right of peoples to food sovereignty

which grants each nation the opportunity to produce their local food, the right of peasants, women and men, the right to fair agricultural prices which seek to protect small producers from subsidies and prices from large-scale food producers, and the right to land, among others. These rights were presented to the United Nations, and taken as a guide to other alternative groups that have proliferated during this time. The food sovereignty movement also included gender equity in its agenda, in a wider scope in 2007 during the Nyélény Forum in its Women's Declaration of Food Sovereignty. Women from all over the world made visible the numerous constraints women face as 80% of food producers and as victims of discriminatory practices within food systems; making visible a number of demands such as the right to land, water and seeds, protection against transnational's limited resources, and poverty. La Via Campesina has also made important alliances with feminist movements such as The World March of Women, Women Farmers, Rural Youth and other groups from different parts of the world that have brought women's reality to the table.

All of the above evidence efforts made to include gender issues in food sovereignty discourse and practice. On the other hand, there is not a common agreement among experts on whether these efforts are enough to expose gender inequity in the food system. As a starting point, La Via Campesina (2007) defines food sovereignty "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems". Patel (2009) argues, "Food sovereignty is, if anything, over defined"; let us then question; who are those peoples, who are those peasants that have those rights and in which circumstances? Are women included realistically in this absolute? Focusing my inquiry in the foundation of this movement and on its principles of "produce",

“safeguard”, “choose” and “decide”, let us also ask if women within circumstances of oppression can exercise these words.

The food sovereignty movement contemplates the expansion of food systems and how it directly affects women and children, “exacerbating” inequities of all kinds. In November 2015, La Via Campesina initiated efforts to stop violence against women, through multiple initiatives, but in very general terms using social mobilization and campaigns for awareness. Violence should be addressed specifically and clearly, with action plans that will support any given initiative. The lack of access to land, unpaid or underpaid labor and some of the pre-established women’s roles that are present in the core of the family structure, are other forms of violence that are not been addressed in this Declaration. This manifesto certainly contributes to violence awareness, but as it has been explained, “all peoples” does not necessarily include women in certain environments and cultures. The rights that are professed by this movement are not achievable for “all women”, because in many countries cultural barriers get in the way, as it was explained before regarding land ownership.

With the expansion of food systems, and food business, the number of women working in agriculture has increased in most parts of the world; Agarwal (2014) explains this as “a feminization of agriculture.” However, rights for women have not changed in equal proportions for peasant women and immigrants that work the land. Most women working on land own none of it, and are disadvantaged in access to tools, information and other agricultural inputs that could improve their yields (p.1254). This analysis also points out changes in the family structure in rural areas. If there is a “feminization of agriculture” as it is, the position of women in the family has also changed, and the food sovereignty movement is not addressing these changes. The same Nyélény Declaration defends the rural family and the position of women within the traditional

family structure, but according to Agarwal's analysis, this structure may no longer exist, and even if it does, it places women in roles that are idealized, overlooking the real constraints that they carry. In the agricultural context, according to how the food sovereignty movement describes it, peasant women are responsible for family care and domestic obligations; men, on the other hand, are traditionally in charge of business, selling, pricing and exchanging of goods. From a feminist perspective, until these roles are no longer delineated in such a prejudicial fashion, women's position in the food system will remain at a disadvantage. Mi Young Park et al. (2013) explain that this description disregards the fact that many women are nowadays heads of family, changing that traditional perception.

If for example, we carefully analyze the Women's Declaration of Food Sovereignty, women's roles are enumerated and predetermined: "seed keepers, creators of knowledge and guardians of biodiversity" (in Women's Declaration of Food Sovereignty 2007), framing women in traditional labor functions without offering any consideration or contemplation of a wider spectrum of possibilities beyond the antiquated patriarchal system. If women are predestined for specific jobs, there will not be real shifts to eliminate inequity from gender relations in food systems.

The food sovereignty movement calls to reinforce the principles of fundamental rights, and it seems a comprehensive evaluation of the very basic structures of society is needed in order to make those rights achievable for women. Caro (2013) offers a critical analysis that suggests the necessity of changing gender relations in rural families and within the movement itself. This author emphasizes and urges us to see beyond what has become obvious, to take the challenge to use new lenses in the analysis of women, their individuality and their needs (p. 2). To this let me add that geographical and cultural differences of each region should be contemplated. What serves women

in North America, is not necessarily the same in Africa or in Latin America; cultural aspects need to be incorporated into any analysis.

The right to land ownership is a good example of a cultural barrier. Agarwal (2014) explains that the majority of farmers in developing countries are women, who despite their vast majority, do not own the land they work, have no credit for loans and limited access to agricultural input such as technology or information. According to this author, land ownership, participation, access to education and many other rights are limited for women because of cultural and gender differences.

Inequity in job positions, lower wages or unpaid labor are also constraints that affect women. According to Vivas (2009), in some countries in Latin America, some parts of Asia and Africa, non-traditional agricultural jobs have become opened to women, allowing them to have better salaries and positions with active participation and decision-making. On the surface, this renaissance of opportunities is a positive and promising advance, but it is necessary to analyze the reasons why these advances have come about. Holt-Gimenez et al. (2009) explain that free trade agreements such as NAFTA, have change the traditional models of agriculture in the Global South, and the new policies dictated by these trade agreements; make some countries eligible to produce what is called “dessert goods or commodities” (p. 25). Producing these non-traditional goods, new workforces are needed for packaging and food selection; positions that are often given to women as paid jobs. But one of the biggest outcomes of these new models in agriculture is the migration of men to urban areas to find other types of jobs. This migratory process leaves women in charge of their families, of their new jobs, and of what is left of their family land – a situation that will mean the doubling of their work-load (Vivas 2009, p. 2). This is a good example of how gender

roles contribute to gender disparities reflected in society, and are not necessarily addressed by the food sovereignty discourse and movement.

Continuing the analysis of food sovereignty discourse, if the role of women is recognized as fundamental, the end result of this recognition would ideally be the fortifying of women's equal position and participation at all levels. As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, and in the above explanation, gender inequity still is very present in aspects such as labor, race, control of the land, decision-making, among others.

Sachs (2013) proposes a feminist approach to food sovereignty that contemplates gender relationships within different structures such as families, corporations and political agencies; by acknowledging women's rights, women's participation and women's work with food without overlooking "conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class and nation related to food inequalities" (p.8). This model appears feasible to me because it delineates that food sovereignty principles and practices cannot be studied, addressed or exercised if gender inequalities are so piece-meal that even the most well intentioned participants find them to be useless vehicles for discourse.

There are many feminist scholars who have noted a lack of clarity in how gender is being addressed by the food sovereignty movement and discourse. Pamela Elisa Caro (2012), for example, studies gender relations within rural families explaining that the rights to "decide," and "choose," must come first from the core of the family, in which women need to occupy empowered positions. This aspect was essential to be analyzed because it entails preconceived roles for women that have been accepted and assumed in discourse. Clara Mi Young Park et al. (2013) contribute with an analysis of gender relations in aspects such as unpaid laborers, both in the setting of the family and the corporate entity, as providers and as head of the family (p. 5). In each of these articles, these authors question the ways in which food sovereignty discourse addresses gender,

calling for a thorough study of common structures. Meaning that until the core structures of society are not questioned and revised by discourse, gender equity is not being fully and realistically addressed. They also make a valuable contribution, asserting women as individuals whose suffer patriarchal constraints embedded in gender relations at small and wide scales.

The food sovereignty discourse needs to be reviewed constantly to identify the “black holes” in which elements of dominance are still present. If socio-cultural conditions of discrimination are not contemplated, neither will patriarchy nor stigmatized roles for women. Lack of access to land, race, decision-making and underpaid labor are issues that need to be specifically addressed by the food sovereignty movement when it talks about non-violence to women. According to the authors that have been cited; the accuracy in which gender issues are being addressed in discourse is often idealized and not effective enough, injustice and gender inequities are perpetuated by discourse if kept overlooked.

### *Research Question 2 Women of the Global South*

My second research question asks, how are women’s food movements addressing gender inequities in food system?

To answer this question, I used a eco-feminism framework, avoiding the spiritual theory of women and nature in a close relationship of spirituality and motherhood, and finally, both as objects of domination, as Tollefsen (2011) explains. These concepts were avoided because in my own analysis, they reinforce images of “helpless creatures” that women are really not. Instead, my research seeks to validate women’s capability and strength, in the face of the inequities and challenges that a broken food system currently has to offer.

As a consequence of the new food system paradigm, with massive production and commercialization of food and natural resources, the situation of women, as I see it, has developed an interesting dichotomy: women have become the most vulnerable, but also the most active in and re-active to the structures of power and domination. As is explained by McGregor (2006), women have found the ways to respond to their imposed conditions:

Women of the South have born [sic] the brunt of environment crisis resulting from colonial marginalization and ecological unsustainable development projects. As subsistence farmers, urban workers, or middle-class professionals, their ability to provide their basic subsistence and healthy living-conditions is threatened. Women in the Third World, however, have not remained powerless in the face of these threats. They have organized movements, institutes and businesses to transform maldevelopment into sustainable development. They are often at the forefront of change to protect their own lives, those of their children, and the life of the planet. (p. 41)

Through analysis of women's movements in Latin America, this research acknowledges different strategies that are being used to create awareness in areas of food systems where women need to become visible, respected and valued. Social mobilization has been a powerful vehicle for global and grass-root movements to create and validate women's rights and gender equity. Miriam Nobre in Food Movements United (2011) explains, "the path to achieve food sovereignty and gender equity is solidarity among women with different experiences and demands..." (p. 293) This is important to underscore because global women's movements and grass-root movements offer two complementary perspectives to be appreciated and respected in order to achieve equity as one common goal.



Working with the principles of food sovereignty and what Alicia Puleo (2008) calls “an Enlightened Eco-Feminism,” women’s empowerment in decision-making comes to be the transformative element to achieve gender equity and environmental justice.

According to her own definition and my translation of her words, this framework is:

An ethical-political insight into the relationship between human and nature, oriented towards the concepts of eco-justice and sustainability. Enlightened eco-feminism is characterized for its criticism to social prejudice, and its defense for the principles of equity and autonomy, the nominal conceptualization of gender, intercultural dialog, a prudent embracing of science and technology and universal virtues of care applied to humans and nature, and a moral compassion towards the world. (Translated from: Puleo, 2008 p.39)

Basing my perspective on what women’s movements in Latin America are doing, women are crafting alternatives and new models in which they are no longer passive victims of the food system, suffering from multiple constraints and social disadvantages, but are instead, empowered people who empower others to create social change. Using strategies such as networking, movements with wider economic and professional assets such as technology and professional staff, these groups create new alternatives in developing countries and in communities in need. They also support grass-root movements within those communities, consolidating and promoting community work. The two formal movements analyzed here, Entrepueblos and Agua y Vida: Mujeres Derechos y Ambiente, work to create safe spaces to empower women to not only exercise their rights but also to inform and instruct women as to their rights. Such organizations also work on social projects that involve education for women at an academic level, political orientation, and forums to address environmental and social issues. Another interest that characterizes these groups

is policy advocacy that aims to achieve changes and dialogs between governments and community members.

Two informal movements, or grassroots movements, that work to strengthen women's autonomy and cultural values are also analyzed here. The grass-roots movements focus their efforts on cultural strengthening, protecting their ancestral traditions, products and seeds. These movements have created local community markets to commercialize their fruits and vegetables. These “mercados solidarios” (solidarity markets) contribute to provide monetary income that at the same time will reinforce women's independence and autonomy.<sup>1</sup>

Using the principles and practices of agroecology, indigenous and rural women from the two informal movements analyzed, Komonil Telzulutlan and Red de Economía y Solidaridad del Pueblo Cayambe and Pichincha, defend their cultural patrimony and their agricultural and ancestral knowledge. In these two grass-root movements, the former from Guatemala and the latter from Bolivia, an intricate relationship with nature is evident, but it doesn't come from isolated aspects of the female imaginary; they come from practice, the soil, and the knowledge of thousands indigenous women with ancestral knowledge that have been planting and harvesting the land.

Table 1 describes the most prominent activities and projects that these four groups have developed in their communities or in the different countries where they work. The purpose of this

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<sup>1</sup> See video: Agroecología y revitalización cultural, Cayambé, Pichincha [video].

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERmKAdRFjbU&feature=youtu.be>

table is to make the multiple areas and projects in which these groups work more visible; all of them empowering women through economical growth, education, information and networking.

Table 1 Actions and Strategies of women's movements

Type of project or working area	Entrepueblos International Network Formal group	Agua y Vida: Mujeres y Ambiente. Mexico Formal Group	Komonil Tezulutlan Guatemala Informal Group	Ressak Bolivia Informal Group
Education	-Women's empowerment through sexual education, and environmental and conflict resolution. -Strengthening of principles of democracy based on education and well-being.	-Education for women in different areas to defend and support the human right to water. - Different projects to work towards environmental education such as campaigns for community work for food sovereignty and agroecology. -Education and support in areas such as: Gender and environment, women and common goods, women and climate change, Decision-making and social participation, the right to water and human rights. -Strengthening of women's decision-making and participation on environmental policies and politics.	-Agroecological projects and education for women to preserve and protect endemic produce and seeds.	-Agroecological education of organic farming techniques for women. This project helps indigenous women to produce and sell their products, strengthening their economical means and ensuring healthy food for their families
Outreach	-Strengthening of women's regional networks and organizations, and feminist movement. - Online short films made by women from different communities		-Campaigns through their Facebook page to defend and support natural recourses.	- Social Networking. Women from 7 small are the members of this group. -Women's meetings for conflict resolution and planning.
Economy	-Collective projects for popular economy for women's organizations and small groups in different countries in Latin America.		-Solidarity Markets -Community projects for women's small-economies using native traditions such as loom-tissues ( <i>telares</i> ), typical food.	-22 different products are collected and distributed in stores and markets.
Environment	-Protection of indigenous communities and nature	-Campaigns of protection of common goods (seeds, land, water, forest).		
Social Services	-Projects for urban rehab for women in vulnerable communities in Managua, Nicaragua	- Constant elaboration of socio-environmental and socio-political diagnosis through interviews and analysis of vulnerable communities in order inform government entities that can help eradicating poverty, exclusion and vulnerability of indigenous women.	-Strengthening of cultural and ancestral values through community activities and projects.	

The result of my analysis of these four groups, shows five different areas in which these groups work: Education, outreach, economy, environment and social services. Education, in its different areas, seems to be the most prominent area of effort among in the four groups. The formal groups share interests for the conservation of natural resources. One formal and two informal groups have projects that involved economy and social services, and only one informal group works for cultural and ancestral values and conservation.

Through this information it can be seen that women's movements are focusing efforts to achieve equity through mutual support, women's empowerment through education, economy and environmental protection. With strategies and programs as described above, women's movements are creating solutions to their constraints becoming active in decision-making, participation and exercising their rights. These four groups are just a reflection of what women are doing in small cells around Latin America. Even the poorest and the smallest groups add concrete steps to feed the world, contributing with the balance and the knowledge and the conservation of endemic seeds and produce. The real value of women's groups is still invisible to the eye of the system, what they have done for centuries is not considered valuable in patriarchal structures and in a globalized world of transnational companies, that understand economy in big-scale but not in small contexts of cultural conservation.

*Research Question 3: A grassroots women's movement in Costa Rica*

My third research question asks, how can global food movements addressing gender inequity and women's movements to improve food systems equity in Siquirres, Costa Rica inform each other?

To answer this question, in this section I analyze the case of the Caribbean Zone of Costa Rica and the ecological and social impact of the pineapple production in this zone. My analysis focuses on a small women's grassroots movement that is fighting for to defend the watersheds of this area, their claims and their accomplishments. In response to the inexhaustible expansion of the pineapple monocultures in Costa Rica, and their social and ecological consequences, a group of campesinas formed a social movement named "Frente Nacional de los Sectores Afectados por la Expansión Piñera" (FRENASAP); translated as: National Movement of Communities Affected by the Pineapple Expansion) to denounce the contamination of the watersheds in five different communities in Siquirres, Costa Rica.

In the 1970's, a transnational corporation, PINDECO (DOLE), initiated the industrialization and massive production of pineapple in Costa Rica. According to the newspaper, *El Financiero* (2014), Costa Rica is now the largest producer of pineapple type "MD2" or "Golden," and between 2012 and 2013 exports grew by 7%, which represents monetary earnings of \$834.4 million. According to the same article, the exports of this product represent 1.7% of the Costa Rican GDP.

The communities surrounding these plantations, however, have been seriously affected in many different ways. Nicolas Boeglin, Attorney at Law and in Environmental Law (2015) explains, "some of the main concerns of these communities are the extensive use of chemicals that have polluted the watersheds of the area, a plague of the *Stomoxys Calcitrans* fly, displacement of farmers and the violation of food sovereignty principles, disrespect of labor rights, and possible health consequences due to agrochemical exposure" (p.7). It has now been eight years since the neighbors of the communities of El Cairo, Guácimo, Francia, Luisiana, and Milano have been

without potable water and suffering from social, moral and ecological disasters of these plantations.

In 2003, the *Instituto Regional de Estudios de Sustancias Tóxicas* (IRET), translated as Regional Institute of Toxic Substances, confirmed that the watersheds in those areas were toxic and contaminated with Bromacil. This high-toxicity herbicide is used for large-scale pineapple production because of its high resistance to weather variations which makes it effective for longer periods as well as efficient. It also has the capacity to easily infiltrate the soil and aquifers. According to Boeglin's (2015) investigation, this herbicide has been banned in many European countries by the European Union but in countries such as Costa Rica, large-scale pineapple producers are still using this product, as well as "many other different pesticides and toxic substances" (p. 9-10). According to Llaguno et al. (2014, p. 90), *Acueductos & Alcantarillados* (Costa Rica's public water supply agency) delivers water to the Caribbean communities once a week; yet, it hasn't provided new aqueducts, or any other means to purify the water in spite of recognizing the toxicity of the water in Siquirres. This was also corroborated by the local newspaper *La Nación* (2010). Additionally, the government of Costa Rica seems to be postponing any serious response to these matters, or taking any action to make the pineapple companies involved take responsibility for the environmental and social impact of their pineapple production in this area.

Given the outcomes already mentioned, and absent support from government agencies, women from the affected areas in Siquirres, consolidated *FRENASAP*. This group of campesinas has dedicated its efforts to fighting for the right to potable water and to defending and protecting natural resources. Erlinda Quesada (2008), an activist and an active member of this group explains that many of these companies such as "Tico Verde," do not respect any of the requirements that

are needed to protect the environment, and that they even start operating without any legal permissions or proper investigations from MINAE (*Ministry of Energy and Environment*) (p.17). The main demand and objective of the members of FRENASAP is to make the transnational companies and the national pineapple producers comply with the Costa Rican riparian right and law, in order to protect people and natural resources. The riparian law, in its articles N° 2642 and 3441, regulates and protects the water resources of Costa Rica and guarantees their protection from toxic substances that could be a threat for human and environmental health. This law is dictated according to the Environmental Canon (*Canon Ambiental por Vertidos*), MINAE (nd) which protects and defends Costa Rican water. It is clear then, that the main barrier that this group faces is the lack of support from the government of Costa Rica, and the refusal the companies involved to honor existing laws.

The multiple constraints that these women face have become the motivation to create their own discourse, based on their own reality and experience. In a recent video made in memory of Mayra Eugenia Umaña, one of the first community leaders and members of FRENASAP<sup>2</sup>, the violence, threats and the challenges that community leaders of this group have had to bravely overcome is graphically shown. This video presents the fight of this small grassroots women's movement to defend the water of this zone of Costa Rica, as well as the environmental consequences of the pineapple large-scale production, such as lack of potable water, infestations and soil degradation.

The difficult situation of the communities in Siquirres is a vivid example of social and economic consequences of the current food regime that maximizes profits and centralizes power;

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<sup>2</sup> To watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pnt3UUJ3uA>

As Chomsky (2002) explains, “The interest of the general population is to preserve human life; the interest of corporations is to make profits” (p.61). As is cited in a case study conducted by *Consumers International* and financed by the European Union (2010), transnational corporations such as *Del Monte*, *Dole*, *Agricola Agromonte*, *Grupo Acon* and *Banacol*, control the biggest percentages of the pineapple production, the land and the economy of entire communities. This research was conducted to denounce gender inequity, low wages, long working hours, health impacts and poor working conditions (p.2-8) that take place in the pineapple fields of Costa Rica.

As Llaguno et al. (2014) explain, due to the tenacity of the members of this small group lead by campesinas, along with other community members such as ranchers and farmers, transnational companies have been forced to stop their territorial expansion, and government entities have been forced to take action. Their voices have reached the General Mission for Food Safety and Consumers (*Protección Misión General de Inoquidad de Alimentos y Protección al Consumidor*) (DG-SANCO), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH) and the European Union (p.93). This proves that, the much under-valued power of the female voice, has begun to be acknowledged and respected, and this acknowledgment will continue.

Returning to the central research question, I find that there are multiple ways in which global food movements and women’s movements can inform each other. Based on the information collected from the four groups of study and from the Costa Rican group, in what follows I explain the ways in which these groups might inform each other. First, these movements can work together to create new realities.

Explained by Fairclogh (2001, as cited in Allen 2004, p.107), “Social practice does not merely “reflect” a reality which is independent of it; social practice is an active relationship to reality, and it changes reality.” This is precisely the way in which global food movements and



women's movements can inform each other; to create gender equity and social change. Gender equity and equity in the current food system cannot be delegated to governments or government entities; it must be crafted by educating and changing the reality of the system itself.

The five women's movements that this thesis addresses have different purposes and they all focus in different areas. Having studied all of them, I believe a second area of constructive engagement among these movements is that FRENASAP could benefit from finding support in larger groups that work at international level. Larger groups might be beneficial creating networks with other groups that face similar problems around the world. The actions and deployment caused by transnational companies are present in many communities around the world; it can be an effective way to make these issues visible to the public. As it was explained, groups such as Entrepueblos offer economical support to smaller groups. FRENASAP could use a support as such, for funds for wider outreach and diffusion, inside and outside Costa Rica.

A third way that FRENASAP could benefit; is by seeking professional help in terms of policy advocacy. In developing countries such as Costa Rica, small communities need protection from the transnational menace. Costa Rica urgently needs people who want to work on policy that will bring legal resources to protect human rights, not when the damage is already done, but before these damages occur.

Fourth, Education in leadership is another area in which larger groups can contribute to this small group. As it was shown on table 1, the two formal groups work helping women in small communities with educational projects on conflict resolution, decision-making, and women's rights. Women from FRENASAP can learn from these practices, strengthening and improving their strategies, and teaching other women from their communities.

Fifth Small groups can inform larger groups by making visible social or environmental situations and necessities that occur in communities. This is important to point out because in the hands of small groups and in the heart of humble communities is where amazing changes are taking place.

Even though the information that has been provided in this research describes many accomplishments of this grassroots group, it should be clarified that the situation of these communities and many others around the country is far from being over. According to the local newspaper, *Semanario Universidad* (2016), the accusations against pineapple enterprises are still at the environmental court waiting to be resolved. The majority of these allegations are related to environmental damages to the soil, contamination of watersheds, and violation of protected zones. There is so much to say about the pineapple industry in Costa Rica, and much of this explains the reason why. Even with all the evidence, there are forty-four cold cases that involve many communities and natural resources issues around Costa Rica; the case of Siquirres, is just one of many in the Costa Rican territory.

In food systems that support big corporations to the detriment of life, movements of all kinds, global and grassroots can succeed by creating a space for women to exercise their right to choose, their right to decide and their right to teach generations to come. The actions of these groups, global or grassroots groups, make women visible, demystifying the female image of helpless and passive victims. These groups demonstrate women to be capable people that can take action, against enormous enemies, informing each other with their own community and environmental values.

## **Contribution**

The study of gender equity in discourse and practice elaborated in this thesis; aimed to be constructive. Being more aware of structures of power that are still present in discourse, it is possible to make substantial corrections and it will become easier to locate intangible concepts that interfere with the rights and the visibility of women's participation in food systems. For example, by acknowledging patriarchal structures and cultural differences, we can work on women's rights in a more accurate way. Recognizing that there are many women that are heads of their families, we demystify the traditional family structure, opening doors for a "feminization of agriculture" that come alone and advocates for equality.

This research provides a new outlook in the study of gender equity, using enlightened eco-feminism, which illustrates that the study of gender in food systems can be addressed from the acknowledgment of women's efforts. This is important because the recognition of women in food systems' discourse must start from the way women are perceived, and this way must be from the respect and the validation of their work, not from the victimization.

This research shows that women are achieving equity through mutual support and empowering each other through different areas of education. Women's movements in Latin America represent a strong and peaceful tool to defend ancestral knowledge, natural resources and most importantly, to create webs of solidarity and autonomy among women. Knowing about the actions and projects being done by grassroots groups and organizations can represent a great resource for food systems and society scholarship and its studies in gender issues. The analysis of what women are doing in small groups in different parts in Latin America, contributes to build a wider perspective of what it takes to build an alternative food system in which gender disparities are addressed and visible.

Another important contribution of this research, is to create a visible and a tangible connection between food systems' scholarship and the social and environmental results of the pineapple expansion in the communities of Siquirres, Costa Rica. The actions of the transnational corporations involved in the massive production of pineapple need to be known and denounced. International entities can help countries in the Global South if actions such as this one are exposed to the public. People from Europe and America need to know the social and ecological price of the Costa Rican pineapples and from where and under what circumstances they have this "dessert product" available all year.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research is to make gender inequity more visible; by pointing out areas in discourse in which it is necessary to keep working, and acknowledging the work that is being done by women's movements. Through the elaboration of this research, and having done a critical discourse analysis, it has been very interesting to observe that patriarchal structures and power relations are hard to erase from any discourse. These structures are so embedded that, over time, it has become difficult to see how ingrained and overlooked they are, which and how they exclude the rights of women. Through this research, I have found that if not within the theory, but through daily experiences and concrete achievements, women in the Global South understand and make their own their vital position as creators of new alternatives in food systems.

Through the development of this research, it has become clear that the understanding and the studying of food systems is no longer an option, but a priority. It has also become a priority to expand gender studies through new approaches that constantly validate women's struggles and achievements. Having investigated five different women's groups in Latin America, this research calls to address gender equity from the acknowledgement of what women do, as active and reactive members of food systems.

I came across a phrase by Miriam Nobre, cited in Food Movements United (2011), that made me realize those social conventions embedded in the language about women we speak and read. Concepts and images that are within discourse, institutions, governments and cultures;

creating gender divisions that delineate how women are perceived, and therefore marginalized in their capability for labor, family and social performance. Miriam Nobre said: “Welfare of others is considered a women’s task, and more than that, a part of their identities.” If this is true, the actions of women’s groups that have emerged from the humblest environments to the most sophisticated, should be recognized and acknowledged as an extension of their voices.

From the analysis of the case study and pineapple expansion in Costa Rica, I conclude that as a result of globalization and a capitalist regime, the demands for “dessert” products in Europe and in North America, have changed the traditional agri-cultures in the Global South. Due to the politics and demands, Costa Rica has become the largest exporter of pineapple in the world, which has been detrimental for the people and the ecosystems in this part of the country.

The actions and determination of FRENASAP are admirable efforts to defend their natural resources and the human right to potable water. From the study of this and the other women’s movements, it is clear the change that is needed is not in hands of governments that do not respect common goods; the opportunity to change the current food systems lies in the hands of communities. Women are changing food systems because they are most affected by this system. Maybe their efforts are unacknowledged by many; maybe what they do seems insignificant because their struggles are too massive; But, the truth is that little by little, in small or in larger groups, women are transforming and are changing food systems.

For further investigations about the situation of the Atlantic Zone of Costa Rica and the pineapple production, it would be important to know if, once the Costa Rican Government answers to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, what the process to amend the harms already done will be? Are these transnational companies willing to abide the social and ecological law they should be honoring, or are they going to respond with threats or disregard?

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