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A Holistic Approach to Animal Farming: Integrating Bioregionalism and Socialist Ecofeminism Within the Context of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

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A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ANIMAL FARMING: INTEGRATING BIOREGIONALISM AND SOCIALIST ECOFEMINISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the harmful effects of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) within animal farming systems, including poor animal welfare, environmental damage, and environmental injustice. I argue that bioregionalism and socialist ecofeminism can help inform a holistic approach to mitigating these harms and evoke ethical and sustainable animal farming systems. Bioregionalism emphasizes local resource use, community engagement, and ecological knowledge within a specific region, while socialist ecofeminism critiques oppressive systems and seeks to uplift the viewpoints of all beings, including animals, nature, and humans of various identities. Through a scaffolded hypothetical case study informed by the CAFOs-practicing hog farms in the coastal plain of North Carolina, I examine the potential benefits and limitations of a solely bioregional animal farming system followed by the potential benefits and limitations of a solely socialist ecofeminist animal farming system. I then combine the two theories to explore how they complement one another. I conclude that an ecologically informed structure advocated by bioregionalism functioning together with the moral values of socialist ecofeminism creates the possibility for ethical and sustainable animal farming systems.

DEDICATIONS

To my family.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), often practiced in industrial animal farms, are an inhumane, environmentally damaging, and unsustainable method of animal farming. This practice is unethical because it allows animals to be held in highly confined and overcrowded areas, causing them tremendous and unnecessary suffering and increasing their susceptibility to diseases (Anomaly 246). Additionally, the physical and mental health of families living near animal farms practicing CAFOs are negatively affected as the practice creates "an enormous amount of manure" that spreads an awful smell into their households and leaves them "exposed to . . . hydrogen sulfide, particulate matter, endotoxins, [and] nitrogenous compounds" (Nicole 186). CAFOs are unsustainable in that they require a significantly high consumption of land and water, which puts all human beings at risk of an eventual "competition for natural resources" among production systems (Thornton 2853). Concentrated animal feeding operations often consist of "poorly regulated waste management" ("Environmental Impacts of Extreme Animal Confinement"), making the practice a significant contributor to environmental damage, with the livestock sector "contributing to 14.5% of the global anthropogenic GHG emissions" (Cheng et al. 13). Large-scale industrial producers of animal products in the United States practice CAFOs even in the twelve states where they are against the law because it results in an extremely high production rate. Higher production rates benefit them in their pursuit of money and their goal of meeting the constantly increasing consumer demand for animal products ("Environmental Impacts of Extreme Animal Confinement"). The large number of factory farms in the nation allows for such morally corrupt practices to go on, as there are too many farms to keep in check. Additionally, consumers continue to support these practices due to an alienation

from the product, stemming from either a lack of awareness or a sense of detachment from the production process, along with the convenience that comes with opting for a quick and easy-to-access food source.

For the future of humans and nonhumans alike, we must form a new approach to animal farming methods that have proven to be unethical, environmentally damaging, and unsustainable in the long term. In this thesis, I will argue that a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach to animal farming systems can produce practical changes to create an ethical, long-lasting, and environmentally friendly production method. I will begin by providing an overview of the current literature on animal ethics, food ethics, and agriculture ethics, examining their strengths but also their weaknesses: they fail to suggest feasible changes to the systems in place and address the intersections of oppression against humans, animals, and nature. Then, I will define bioregionalism, arguing that the theory has the potential to inspire a method of animal farming with strengthened communities and sustainable practices. I will illustrate what a bioregional animal farming system might look like to examine its potential benefits and limitations. I will then introduce socialist ecofeminism as the best framework to assess any changes to animal farming practices, as it will maintain a solid ethical foundation that prioritizes animal welfare, environmental protection, and environmental justice for human beings. Here, I will illustrate what a socialist ecofeminist animal farming system might look like. Finally, I will describe the synergy between bioregionalism and socialist ecofeminism using a hypothetical case study, detailing how the two theories complement one another and may produce the most ethical, sustainable, and just animal agriculture system for humans and nonhumans.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Animal Ethics, Food Ethics, and Agriculture Ethics

In this section, I will provide an overview of the existing literature on animal ethics, food ethics, and agriculture ethics and highlight that these fields have made significant progress in targeting the ethical implications caused by concentrated animal feeding operations but still fail to address the underlying systems, the industry's scale, and the totality of beings who are being harmed by the practice. There has been a great deal of philosophical work regarding animal agriculture conditions within the realm of animal ethics. Peter Singer ignited the animal rights discussion in 1975 with his book *Animal Liberation,* in which he argued that animals have the right to have their interests considered equally (2) because they have "the capacity for suffering and enjoyment" (8). Singer proposed a viable "plan of action" for his audience: a slowly integrated diet change at a "pace with which [the reader] can feel comfortable" (176). He noted that dieticians approve of vegetarian diets because the flesh of animals is not a vital part of the human diet (Singer 180), but that vegans must be cautious with what they eat and ensure that they take vitamin B12 supplements (Singer 182).

Tom Regan went one step further with the claim for animal rights in his 1983 book *The Case for Animal Rights*, arguing that animals "have inherent value" and, according to the respect principle, "we are to treat those individuals who have inherent value in ways that respect their inherent value" (Regan 248). Thus, Regan argues, animals have the right to "never be treated merely as means" (Regan 249). Among other animal ethicists, Tom Regan and Peter Singer popularized the idea that animals have the right to be liberated from all human uses and

advanced a field of scholarship and activism around animal rights and welfare over subsequent decades.

Contemporary thinkers on this topic, including feminist scholars Lori Gruen and Martha Nussbaum, have built upon these ideas about the rights of animals. Lori Gruen's *Ethics and Animals*, written in 2011, approaches animal ethics in a similar way as Singer's *Animal Liberation* but utilizes "descriptions and topics that are more current" (Rudy 126). She provides several "sound [and] ethical" arguments for the way in which our current treatment of animals is unjust (Rudy 126). For example, Gruen critiques the idea of "human exceptionalism," in which it is believed that "humans are unique . . . [and] superior" (Gruen, *Ethics and Animals* 4) in comparison to "other animals," allowing for "the view that we do not have ethical responsibilities to [them]" (Gruen, *Ethics and Animals* 2).

Martha Nussbaum, in her 2023 book *Justice for Animals*, argues for "a constitution for each species" (Burnham 68) in order to "grant [each] species . . . additional rights" and prevent unjust treatment (Burnham 65). Nussbaum asserts that animals have the same right "to use the planet to survive and flourish" as human beings do, as both animals and humans have simply "found [themselves] here" on Earth (Nussbaum 2). She admires Peter Singer's philosophy yet criticizes a few of his claims, such as his idea that animals without "sentience, or conscious awareness . . . are not proper objects of ethical concern" (Nussbaum 51). Nussbaum's suggested approach, titled the Capabilities Approach, attempts to guarantee each type of living thing a catalog of their "central capabilities, defined as . . . opportunities for choice and action in areas of life that people have reason to value" (Nussbaum 80). She notes that her strategy to employ this

approach requires "legal mechanisms," as we "have a collective duty to create" laws that are the most ethical for every being (Nussbaum 279).

All human and nonhuman animals deserve to live well, but we still must consider the human need for nutrition. As Singer pointed out, a primarily plant-based diet is not harmful and, if done correctly, beneficial. Studies show that a proper "plant-based diet can be an effective treatment for obesity, diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and heart disease" (Tuso et al. 62). Still, at this point in time, it does not seem realistic to abolish all practices involving the use or consumption of animals for their nutritional benefits and make the complete shift to a vegan diet. As a response, scholars have proposed humane animal husbandry, the practice of "raising animals humanely and killing them painlessly" (McMahan 75), as a way for humans to utilize animals for their nutritional value while still prioritizing ethical treatment. Paul Thompson suggests that "husbandry ethics," involving the treatment and "care of animals in livestock production" systems, is largely unaccounted for in the philosophical discussion of animal issues (Thompson 204). He brings agriculture ethics into the picture by considering current large-scale "food systems" (Brister 30) in a broader sense, like how they cause environmental damage and other "major moral problems" in addition to animal welfare (Anthony 61). As a solution, Paul Thompson suggests "local food systems . . . [and] sustainable agriculture," as it has the potential to tackle these moral problems at their foundations (Anthony 61).

Gaps in the Literature

While the scholars I have outlined have made significant contributions to the field of animal welfare and agricultural ethics, there seem to be two specific aspects that are missing

from our approaches to the harms of concentrated animal feeding operations: (i) changes to the scale of animal agriculture systems, coupled with (ii) an ethical consideration of the social, economic, and environmental impacts.

Most animal welfare scholars have rightly targeted the ethical implications of animal agriculture methods like CAFOs but have focused too heavily on critiquing the individual persons who contribute to these methods. While individuals certainly make up the whole, we must also suggest changes to the animal agriculture system to approach such a complex and structural problem. More specifically, these changes should minimize the scale of animal production industries. The systems are too large, and there are too many animals within them to make practical yet efficient changes to minimize the unethical and environmentally damaging effects. Scholars focused on the ethics of agriculture, like Paul Thompson, move toward solving this problem but seem to lack theories to guide the moral values of the proposed changes. Our approach must be practical and consider the intersection of harms against the environment and animal welfare, the role of alienation, and the impact any changes may have on diverse socio-economic groups.

To fill these gaps in the literature, I propose a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach to animal farming practices. I first argue that bioregionalism will provide an outline of how to minimize the scale of animal farming systems through a more focused and relational view of food production. By organizing animal farming systems according to ecological regions with an emphasis on human/nature and human/resource relationships, bioregionalism will help inform a system of humane animal farming. Relationships between humans, nature, and their resources are important because alienation allows the harmful practices within systems to persist.

Later, I argue that socialist ecofeminism will allow us to address the social, economic, and environmental concerns of the system in place and emphasize an ethic of care for all individuals involved. Socialist ecofeminism's view and critique of the relationship between society and nature (Barca) can be transferred to agriculture systems for the purpose of strengthening the ethics within their methods and operations.

CHAPTER THREE: BIOREGIONALISM

Setting the Stage for Analysis

Bioregionalism's interest in sustainability, social justice, and community well-being has the potential to inform a system of animal farming that can reduce environmental damage, promote responsible resource use, and solve the detachment between the process of animal farming and the consumers of their products. Defined as "both a philosophy of life and a social movement in society" (Carr 70), bioregionalism strives to promote "ecological sustainability, social justice, and human well-being" by taking into consideration the role that the "interrelationships between individual, social, and environmental concerns" have on a specific region (Evanoff, *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics* 33). Peter Berg, an early leading contributor to bioregionalism, defined the term bioregion as a "unique life place" (Berg et al. 2) that has its "own soils and climate, native plants and animals, and many other distinct natural characteristics" (Aberley 15). With 'bio' meaning life and 'region' meaning place, the theory attempts to reconnect humans to their local resources and environment by organizing systems harmoniously with a specific region's unique ecological characteristics (Thayer 3).

Key Concepts

In this section, I will define a few key concepts of bioregionalism, including the process of "bioregioning" (Wearne et al. 2125) and Peter Berg's three goals for bioregionalism. I will explore each one to understand the theory further, then introduce my proposed application of bioregionalism to animal farming practices.

Bioregionalism and its terms have never been stagnant (Wearne et al. 2125), as it has undergone several "shifts in emphasis" since its birth in the 1960s (Aberley 14). In its early days, bioregionalism had "an 'ontological tendency,'" meaning that the term bioregion was accepted to be "a naturally defined unit" (Wearne et al. 2125). More recently, however, bioregionalists have drawn more attention to "the process, rather than the ends," of shifting toward a bioregional system or society by creating the verb bioregioning (Wearne et al. 2125). Essentially, the process of bioregioning involves determining the boundaries of a bioregion by taking the ecological features of a specific area into deep consideration with the culture of the local people (Kuperus 84). This specific area should have a similar ecology throughout (Wearne 2128).

Peter Berg has described three goals within the theory, which we can use here to target its key concepts: (i) "restoring and maintaining natural systems" through "ecological restoration projects," (ii) constructing methods for the people within a bioregion "to meet [their] basic human needs sustainably, relying as much as possible on local materials and resources," and (iii) creating systems of "support for individuals engaged in the work of sustainability" (Berg et al. 3). To restore and maintain ecosystems is one of the most predominant goals and concepts of bioregionalism (Berg et al. 3). Gary Snyder, another early scholar that has contributed significantly to the conceptualization of bioregionalism, has described the desired world of bioregionalists as one in "which the human population lives harmoniously and dynamically" through the application of changes toward "a world environment which is 'left natural'" (Aberley 16). But what is the importance of the natural environment? What is the significance of regional and ecological knowledge? Michael Vincent McGinnis points out how "human culture is a result of primordial connections with others (both plants and animals, living and nonliving)"

(McGinnis 2). Thus, we have survived and continue to survive because of our relationships with the natural environment in a specific place at a specific time.

I propose that an animal agriculture system inspired by bioregionalism would consist of sustainable, local, and small-scale farms organized by bioregion in greatly reduced numbers. The characteristics to consider within a bioregion that would shape farming responses may include "flora, fauna, water, climate, soils and landforms" (Evanoff, *Interview with Richard Evanoff* 1). In its development, a bioregional animal farm would prioritize a healthy or non-harmful impact on the natural processes and habitat of the region in which it is placed. It would avoid disruption of these natural characteristics and instead seek to utilize its resources in ways that uplift them and allow them to last years into the future. In order to achieve such a result, the number of animal farms would have to decrease significantly. According to the climate-reduction-focused organization One Earth, there are about 22 bioregions in North America ("Northern America"). There are about 25,000 factory farms in the United States ("Factory Farm Nation: 2020 Edition"). Reducing the number of livestock farms to two or three per bioregion — an adjustable number — could significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The animal farms that persist should be of small-scale so as not to overuse and harm the environment surrounding them or the resources they need, such as land, water, and feed for the animals. The small number of farms will help reduce corruption within animal farming, such as instances where CAFOs operate in violation of the state's law. Additionally, bioregional animal farms would call on local community members to participate in the animal farming process. Such community work would strengthen animal product consumers' relationships with their life-sustaining resources by deepening their understanding of the process that brought their food to their table.

Envisioning a Bioregional Animal Farm

I will now present a hypothetical case study of a bioregional animal farm and examine its potential benefits and limitations. I will mirror an actualized case study of bioregionalism as it has been applied to a water resource management system in England. This actualized case study was written by Hadrian Cook, David Benson, and Laurence Couldrick and focuses on Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT), one of the few production systems that have applied bioregional principles in practice. While this system is specific to water management, its key ideas and practices can easily be applied to animal farming systems.

The Actualized Case

The Westcountry Rivers Trust founding members seem to have found success in their project by beginning with four objectives: (i) identifying the problems within their local area that called for a bioregional approach (Cook et al. 3), (ii) clearly and immediately defining the goals of their bioregional approach, (iii) creating personalized methods to reduce environmental damage within the specific area (Cook et al. 4), and (iv) hiring individuals who together hold the necessary qualifications in a variety of fields in order to for the operations to run smoothly (Cook et al. 5). First, according to the case study, WRT found a variety of issues within "the ecological condition of rivers in the Tamar area" (Cook et al. 3). Polluted water caused by "high levels of animal stocking" and "the region's historical legacy of mining" had taken up and affected the rivers within this area (Cook et al. 3). This ecological damage was one of many harms toward water resources which stood out to the founders of the WRT as a need for a bioregional approach (Cook et al. 3). It seems that pinpointing the harms of the existing non-bioregional system is a significant first step for shifting toward a bioregional system. Second, the founders of the WRT

immediately defined the goals of the project, which included "improving the quality of local rivers" and, simultaneously, "helping to increase biodiversity and protect natural habitats" (Cook et al. 4). It is important to create specific goals for the success of any resource and production management system so that there is clear direction. Third, as bioregionalism's driving idea is to exist and work with the resources of a specific ecological area (Aberley 17), the Westcountry Rivers Trust organization created "programs of best management practices for every farm" with each one personalized to the ecology of its region (Cook et al. 4). Fourth, WRT's team consists of individuals from a variety of fields, including "freshwater [and] marine . . . conservation," "spatial data, mapping and modeling," "catchment modeling and risk assessment," and "agricultural, land, and environmental management" (Cook et al. 5). Additionally, the employees of WRT are made up of long-term workers as well as volunteers (Cook et al. 5). The variety of skills and positions of employment at WRT allow the organization to cover all grounds necessary and ensure the water management system runs smoothly and effectively by taking into consideration the perspectives of individuals from different fields, while also prioritizing the time and needs of their employees (Cook et al. 5). Finally, the WRT also has created a "nonhierarchical" structure that "promote[s] consensual decision making" between each participant or collaborator, which consists of both "farmers and industry" (Cook et al. 5).

I will use these four objectives, the element of a nonhierarchical structure, and bioregionalism's key concepts noted earlier in this section to guide my hypothetical case study. Some of the key concepts blend well into the four objectives, as I will note later on. My case study will be informed by actual data found in the two articles, "CAFOs and Environmental Justice: The Case of North Carolina" by Wendee Nicole and "Environmental Injustice in North

Carolina's Hog Industry" by Steve Wing, Dana Cole, and Gary Grant, alongside hypothetical details to paint a comprehensive picture of a bioregional animal farm.

The Hypothetical Case

A group of people within the coastal plain region of North Carolina work for a hog farm that practices concentrated animal feeding operations. Some individuals within this group work on the administrative level of the farm, aiding in the design and coordination of the production system, while others work directly within the day-to-day operations of the farm itself (as farmers, essentially).

This group realizes that the CAFOs practiced by the hog farm have brought about environmental damage to their local region and a sense of powerlessness and disconnection felt by the local communities, who are often also consumers buying the hog products. The communities are faced with dangerous chemical substances in the air and water as a result of the substantial amount of waste produced by the nearby hog farm, and the scent of the hog waste often seeps into their households. The environmental damage and the negative effects on the local people go hand-in-hand.

These are the problems that drive a few individuals within this group to begin a bioregional approach to hog farming. They begin an organization by calling on fellow workers within the hog farm, in addition to any local experts on the bioregion of the coastal plain. Together, the group — now members of the bioregional hog farming organization — define the goals of their project: to prevent harm to ecosystems and nearby communities, bring about more diverse life forms, and decrease hog production and waste.

The naturally arising ecological characteristics of the coastal plain of North Carolina, including those of wetland plants, animals, and various types of soils (Moorhead and Brinson 262), should be some of the considerations of the bioregional organization to create the personalized plans for the farm and the bioregion. There is potential for sustainably utilizing the coastal plain region's unique environmental features for waste management practices. The wetlands of the area may be used to treat "wastewaters before they leave the farm as surface runoff or groundwater infiltration, or before they are reused on the farm for irrigation or other activities" (Knight et al. 42). Through certain catchment modeling practices within the wetlands, in addition to the smaller amount of waste being produced, the hog waste may be naturally filtered through with little ecological damage. This would allow for the holistic hog farm to practice environmental responses that are in alignment with the coastal plain region's natural features and processes.

The relevant knowledge of the bioregional animal farming members should be within fields pertaining to resource use, specifically within the coastal plain of North Carolina, such as land and water. Additionally, there should be experts in organizational development, social psychology, and philosophy to guarantee that the system is built in a holistic, nonhierarchical, and cooperative manner.

The members of our organization form the boundaries of their bioregion through the process of bioregioning. They bring the community together to consider the ecological characteristics of the specific area, as well as how different human cultures are laid out within the region. They democratically come to an agreement about where the bioregion should start and end. Additionally, they decide how many farms should be within the bioregion, keeping in mind

the advice of experts to ensure that the number is small enough to maintain the ability to protect the natural environment.

Five to ten years down the line, the hog farm formed around the ecological characteristics of North Carolina's coastal plain bioregion would have improved atmospheric conditions, with the horrible scent of manure removed and little to no chemicals released by hog waste within the air, water, or soil of the bioregion. Practices such as wetland catchment modeling would allow the bioregion's ecological characteristics to thrive, with ample clean water and more ranges of healthy land not being used by animal farms. Compared to neighboring farms – perhaps an animal farm in western North Carolina – the bioregional hog farm utilizes more of the wetland features, does not overuse the resources, and manages their waste properly because there are fewer farms and fewer hogs. The environment surrounding the bioregional hog farm thrives, and its ecosystem continues to grow. Individuals living near the animal farm feel more connected to one another and their food, strengthening the ethical practices within the farm. The community finally feels grateful to live in their hometown without the smell of hog waste or chemical substances disrupting their lives.

Benefits and Limitations of a Bioregional Animal Farm

In a gradual switch to a bioregional animal farming system, we may achieve (i) environmental justice for the previously affected people living in the bioregion, (ii) support for the individuals working within/toward the practice, (iii) long-term success in the farming system's goals through expert regional planning, and (iv) environmental resiliency/sustainability. By ridding the bioregion of so much hog waste and taking care of its natural ecosystems, we may provide a clean and healthy environment for the people living in the coastal plain of North

Carolina. Such an environment would provide a strategy to increase the flourishing of both humans and nonhumans, thereby increasing the possibilities for a growing "natural and cultural diversity" within the area (Evanoff, *Bioregionalism and Global Ethics* 11). Providing support for the individuals working within/toward the bioregional practice seems like an unachievable goal when considering such an intense shift in farming systems, but it is very much possible when put into the context of a "collaborative, nonhierarchical, and institutionally self-organizing organization" such as the one proposed (Cook et al. 5). Finally, implementing regional planning informed by experts in every relevant field (i.e., agriculture management, spatial modeling, etc.) would result in the long-term success of the bioregional farming system's goals to create environmental resiliency.

Although switching to a bioregional animal farming system would result in significant benefits, there are also some limitations, specifically regarding our goal stated earlier in the thesis: to create the most *ethical* and sustainable animal farming system. Animal welfare would only slightly improve in small-scale, local, and sustainable animal farms. The animals would no longer be forced into concentrated animal feeding operations and would live on farms that prioritize the flourishing of their community and the environment. However, there is still the potential for the farm to prioritize maximizing the production of animals within the allowed limits, with no regard for their well-being. We also want to extend our protection and support to the people who are not working within the bioregional animal farming system but are living within the bioregion. They will be affected, whether that be through the probable increase in meat prices or otherwise. To create the most ethical and sustainable animal farming system, we must create an approach that is not only sustainable, ecologically healthy, and encourages strengthened cultural communities but also has the necessary moral values to prioritize the

welfare of every living being involved in the process. In the following section, I will argue that socialist ecofeminism offers the conceptual and ethical tools necessary to create the moral values essential to an animal farming system, which bioregionalism seems to be lacking.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIALIST ECOFEMINISM

Background and Context

To create the most ethical animal farming system, we must integrate socialist ecofeminism with bioregionalism. In this chapter of my thesis, I will provide a brief summary of socialist ecofeminism's key concepts and explore how the theory is comprised of socialist, environmentalist, and feminist elements. Then, I will focus on the ideas of contemporary socialist ecofeminist scholars to argue that socialist ecofeminism can help restructure animal farming systems by maintaining ethical values for every living being involved, no matter their class, species, race, or gender. I will end this chapter by building on my prior hypothetical case study of a socialist ecofeminist animal farming system and outline the potential benefits and limitations.

Socialist ecofeminism has been described as "a social movement and form of theoretical inquiry" that pinpoints and "resists formations of domination" (Carlassare 89). The theory calls attention to "the entanglement of alienation, hierarchy, and domination" (Gaard, *Critical Ecofeminism* xxii) within Western modernity and, as a response, aims to "construct a politics for planetary survival and social egalitarianism" (Carlassare 89). Socialist ecofeminism does not subscribe to only one set of values or theory; rather, it is largely thought of as "an open, flexible political and ethical alliance" (Carlassare 90).

Many socialist ecofeminists, like Greta Gaard, suggest adopting "perspectives at the local, national, and global levels" in their methods to combat oppressive systems (Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change" 21). By bringing together "gender equality, cultural

diversity, and ecological sustainability," socialist ecofeminists strive to create a society that is devoid of hierarchy, protects the natural world, and benefits all (Salleh 449). This has a significant relevance to our task at hand, which is to restructure animal farming practices in an ethical and sustainable manner, as I outline in the following section.

Conceptual Framework

In the following paragraphs, I will examine the key concepts that make up socialist ecofeminism, including socialism, environmentalism, and feminism. The binding aim between various socialist ecofeminists is to bring about liberation for "women, working-class people, and nature" through "an ecological, economic, and social revolution," which can only be done by combining the following three elements (Merchant 257).

Carolyn Merchant has contributed heavily to the theory of socialist ecofeminism by connecting concerns between the relationship between humans and nature (252) and our "capitalist patriarchy" (256). Merchant defines capitalist patriarchy as the system that puts "the responsibility [of] labor in the marketplace" on men primarily (256). Socialist ecofeminists reject the effect that the consequential "economic and social hierarchies" have on human societies and highlight the way in which the capitalist states – historically led by masculine bias – subordinate nature, whether purposefully or not (Merchant 256). Scholar Stefania Barca has pointed out the way in which systems and industries under our capitalist system view our planet and its living creatures, landscapes, and ecosystems "as necessary resources, to be appropriated and maintained as cheaply and as efficiently as possible" (Barca). What has been and continues to be important to these industries is maximizing production to maximize profit, so whatever damages to the environment, harms to the local people, or unethical treatment of the animals that come

with the practices are largely disregarded. Socialist ecofeminists associate the alienation between worker and product with the alienation between male and female, as well as between humanity and nature (Salleh 443). In the same way that our system allows for an estrangement between worker and product, it allows "people [to] become alienated from the material ground that sustains their bodies and forms their sensibilities," the material ground being nature and its resources that we exploit (Salleh 443). Socialist ecofeminism pinpoints the ways in which "systems of domination," including capitalism and patriarchy, cause damage to the natural world (Carlassare 92).

The environmentalist element of socialist ecofeminism began from the branch of feminism, ecofeminism. Ecofeminism arose in the 1970s in different areas around the world after women examined the way in which "their labor and sexuality are 'resourced' by men" in a similar manner as the "instrumental exploitation of 'nature'" (Salleh and O'Connor 132). In the following decades, branches of ecofeminism like socialist ecofeminism, all with the essential analysis of deep-rooted connections found to be present in "militarism, sexism, classism, racism, and environmental destruction" (Lorentzen and Eaton 1). Greta Gaard points out how various ecofeminists have found connections between harms of "environmental health, public health, and social justice" through "studies of agricultural chemicals, environmental health, children's health, and human health" (Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change" 26). There are clear links between the damaged environment and human states. Socialist ecofeminists prioritize the well-being of the natural world, humans, and nonhumans as an interconnected system of being and thus criticize structures that aid in the oppression and destruction of all. That being said, socialist ecofeminism aims to find a way to utilize natural resources that are necessary for survival and human flourishing without exploiting them.

Socialist ecofeminists correlate the oppression of women with the oppression of nature as well as class. Val Plumwood describes the ways in which "both [women and nature] have been valued entirely or mainly in terms of their usefulness to others" (120). Women's production — "production of life" (Mies 47) — has no economic value and is thus worth essentially nothing in our society (Mies 48). In a similar way, the production of animals is unappreciated and exploited.

Envisioning a Socialist Ecofeminist Animal Farm

To visualize a complete restructuring of animal farming within a socialist ecofeminist framework, I identify problems of alienation, domination, and hierarchy, approaches as the feminist ethics of care, entangled empathy, and nondomination, and solutions found through Charlotte Bunch's model for a feminist approach.

The feminist ethics of care is "central to much of North American ecofeminist theory" and calls attention to "contexts, relationships, and felt sense of need and responsibility" (Russel and Bell 172). Its foundation is found in the fact that "every human being has been cared for as a child," and because of this, care should be thought of as a worldwide experience (Held 3). In this context, care is considered to be "both [a] value and practice" that can aid in "human progress and flourishing" by advancing moral responsibility to others who need it (Held 10).

Lori Gruen's idea of entangled empathy seems to be a form of ethics of care that extends out from humans to nonhumans. Gruen defines entangled empathy as "a type of caring perception focused on attending to another's experience of wellbeing . . . in which we recognize we are in relationships with others and are called upon to be responsive and responsible in these relationships by attending to another's needs, interests, desires, vulnerabilities, hopes, and sensitivities" (Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* 13). In our recognition of other beings' needs, we may

experience more incentive to eradicate unnecessary suffering (Gaard, “Ecofeminism and Climate Change” 26).

Resisting domination is a prominent feature of socialist ecofeminism (Carlassare 89). Carolyn Merchant points out that “a society recast in the ‘feminine’ . . . would not mean power in the hands of women, but no power at all,” hinting at the nonhierarchical, diverse, and consensual structures that socialist ecofeminists aim to achieve (251).

I will use Charlotte Bunch’s model of four steps, including “description, analysis, vision, and strategy,” for an analysis that aims to fully assess a problem and produce clear steps to move forward within a feminist theory framework (Bunch 244). Bunch’s steps include “describing what exists . . . analyzing why that reality exists . . . determining what should exist . . . [and] hypothesizing how to change what is to what should be” (Bunch 244-245). Additionally, I will use the feminist ethics of care, Gruen’s idea of entangled empathy, and the intersectional critique of systems that dominate sects of class, gender, and species to guide my hypothetical case study of a socialist ecofeminist animal farming system. Finally, I will emphasize humane animal husbandry: "raising and killing animals with positive welfare” and providing the animals with care and a life without suffering (Delon 1). By taking these ideas into account, an animal farming system can ensure that sustainability and ethical production practices have been prioritized.

To maintain consistency and avoid confusion, I will use the same details as the hypothetical case study I laid out above: the CAFOs-practicing hog farms located in the coastal plain of North Carolina. I will source my information regarding the location, the species of the animals within the farms, and the environmental damage caused by the farms from the same two articles, “CAFOs and Environmental Justice: The Case of North Carolina” by Wendee Nicole and “Environmental Injustice in North Carolina’s Hog Industry” by Steve Wing, Dana Cole, and

Gary Grant. I will save how I envision integrating socialist ecofeminism and bioregionalism into one animal farming system for Chapter Five of my thesis.

A group of activists living in the coastal plain region of North Carolina recognize that the concentrated animal feeding operations practiced by the nearby hog farm are causing a pressing problem. This group includes animal rights activists, environmentalists, environmental justice leaders, and social justice activists. One individual encourages the group to come together and create an organization led by socialist ecofeminist values. The group begins their endeavor by using Charlotte Bunch's model for a feminist analysis to understand the issue and create their next steps.

The first step of Charlotte Bunch's model is to detail the problem at hand (Bunch 244). The problem, our socialist ecofeminist group thinks, is multifaceted. There is the horrible mistreatment of the hogs living within concentrated animal feeding operations. Hog farms that practice CAFOs generally consist of gestation crates that confine pregnant pigs in a space "so small they cannot turn around" and include "just slatted flooring for waste disposal" (Environmental Impacts of Extreme Animal Confinement). Additionally, the CAFOs practiced by the hog farm create environmental damage by producing a significant amount of manure that is largely left unmanaged. This farm directs the waste "into pits or lagoons, where it is stored untreated until it is applied to land" (Nicole 186). The hog farm also creates environmental injustices for the local communities. These communities primarily consist of "people of color and the poor" who do not have access to the profits of the nearby hog farm and yet suffer "the adverse socio-economic, environmental, or health-related effects of swine waste" (Nicole 183). The local community members face the disgusting scent of manure in their day-to-day lives, affecting their mental and physical health. There are reported to be "nine times more hog CAFOs

in areas" with "more poverty and higher percentages of nonwhite people," signaling that this is an issue regarding class and even race (Nicole 185). Finally, there is a large degree of alienation between the consumer of the animal product — e.g., hog meat or pork — and the animal product itself. The everyday consumer of this hog farm is likely not thinking of the bacon they eat as coming from an actual animal, nor are they thinking of buying bacon as giving money to a hog farm that essentially tortures animals, creates environmental damage, and physical and mental health problems for nearby communities. Generally, the consumer is just looking for a cheap and easy way to get food on the table.

The second step of Charlotte Bunch's model is to identify the problem's origins (Bunch 244). The members of our group, inspired by socialist ecofeminist values, pinpoint the way in which the hog farm uses its power to dominate, exploit, and mistreat the nearby poor communities, the environment, and the hogs — including the female hogs, who are necessary for the reproduction of the species and are thus "forcibly inseminated" and kept in crates "after they give birth" where "they are allowed to suckle their offspring only through metal bars" (Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change" 26). Through their intersectional critique of systems that dominate sects of class, gender, and species, our socialist ecofeminist group recognizes how the hog farm uses their power in such a harmful manner in order to maximize production, ignoring the ethical and environmental harms they cause for the profit they will receive. In their frame of mind, humans are superior to animals and the environment, and therefore, it is okay to dominate and control them. Our group of activists recognizes how such a harmful practice originated from a harmful system with an outlook that prioritizes humans and money.

Bunch's third step is to consider the desired outcome (Bunch 244). Our group comes together and collectively decides what they want out of their approach to a new animal farming

system. Many agree that they want a thriving natural environment, whether it be for the physical and mental health of marginalized local communities or for the sake of the environment itself. In addition to an improved natural environment, our group asks for ethical treatment and consideration for all living beings involved, including the hogs within the farm and the human beings living nearby. Lastly, the group agrees that they would like to remove the alienation between the consumer and 'product,' i.e., hog meat, to reduce the likelihood of unethical practices within the farms.

Charlotte Bunch's fourth step is to create a strategic plan for moving in the direction of the desired outcome (Bunch 245). Our group agrees that abolishing the nearby hog farm is not a feasible option at the time. There would likely be a lack of nutrition in the local communities because they are not accustomed to a vegetarian diet. Instead, they form an organization to produce a small-scale, local, and sustainable hog farm that practices humane animal husbandry. The practice of humane animal husbandry would consist of "raising animals humanely and killing them painlessly" (McMahan 75). The hogs would have plenty of room to walk and run, access to their young, and proper nutrition, and the slaughtering process would minimize the hog's pain and distress as much as possible. Humane animal husbandry would provide a well-lived life with minimal suffering for the hogs while still providing the proper nutrition for the local community. Taking this into consideration, the socialist ecofeminist organization replaces the existing hog farm with a more sustainable farm that contains a smaller number of hogs, practices humane animal husbandry, and considers the worth and needs of each individual being, human and nonhuman, as well as the natural environment.

The group of activists implements collaboration and fewer authoritative positions to avoid domination and a greed for power. They make their farming practices more interactive,

bringing in volunteer community members to remove the alienation between consumer and product. Our socialist ecofeminist group considers the ideas of multiple groups of people – bioregionally, nationally, and globally – to gather a wide range of knowledge and ensure various viewpoints are taken into consideration. The community will have the opportunity to appreciate the animal for the nutrients it gives to them, natural and free of antibiotics, and know that the animal was treated with respect during its life. Our group agrees that placing the feminist ethics of care and Lori Gruen's entangled empathy at the forefront of their organization's practice of humane animal husbandry will allow for the most ethical hog farming system possible.

In putting socialist ecofeminist values in the foreground of their approach, our group of activists has a strong ethical foundation. They prioritize nondomination and egalitarian relationships between all humans and animals and make a step toward strengthening the relationship between humans and nature, which has been largely disengaged, for the sake of itself and for the positive potential outcome — a flourishing environment with happy people and happy animals.

While this approach has its benefits, there are some clear limitations. An animal farming system founded by activists alone would lack the organizational structure and localized expertise to sustain itself long-term, areas in which bioregionalism excels. What we need is a grounded, localized, and informed approach to animal farming systems that is also guided by ethical values. This can be achieved by integrating bioregionalism's structure with socialist ecofeminism's conceptual and ethical framework.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTEGRATING BIOREGIONALISM AND SOCIALIST ECOFEMINISM

Most Relevant Features

In this section, I will describe how the most ethical and sustainable animal farming system is guided by both bioregional and socialist ecofeminist elements. First, I will recap the most important features of each theory. Then, I will carry out my vision by describing the methods that a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist farm might use and illustrate the benefits of the two theories when brought together in the context of animal agriculture systems.

Bioregionalism's most relevant features to include within a combined bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system consist of the Westcountry River Trust's starting approach and Peter Berg's foundational goals of bioregionalism. The WRT's approach, as I've analyzed it, included (i) identifying the ecological problems within their local area, (ii) clearly and immediately defining the goals of their bioregional approach, (iii) creating personalized plans to reduce environmental damage within the area, and (iv) hiring individuals who, together, hold the necessary qualifications in a variety of fields in order for the operations to run smoothly. These steps, I argue, are necessary for beginning an effective and long-lasting bioregional system. Peter Berg's foundational goals consist of (i) "restoring and maintaining natural systems" through "ecological restoration projects," (ii) constructing methods for the people within a bioregion "to meet basic human needs sustainably, relying as much as possible on local materials and resources," and (iii) creating systems of "support for individuals engaged in the

work of sustainability" (Berg et al. 3). Keeping such foundational goals in the foreground of a bioregional system should set the organization up for success in their endeavors.

Socialist ecofeminism's most relevant features to include within a combined bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach to animal farming consist of Charlotte Bunch's model for a feminist analysis, an intersectional aim to liberate oppressed beings, the feminist ethics of care, and Lori Gruen's entangled empathy. Charlotte Bunch's model for producing a feminist analysis consists of four steps: "description, analysis, vision, and strategy" (Bunch 244). The first step is to provide details of the situation to deeply understand the problem at hand (Bunch 244). The second step is to identify the root causes, while the third step is to illustrate what the desired situation consists of (Bunch 244). The fourth step is to create a strategic plan to advance toward that desired situation (Bunch 245). Bunch's model will allow any system inspired by socialist ecofeminist values to determine the root of the problem, create a clear, targeted, and achievable goal, and produce the necessary next steps.

When producing a socialist-ecofeminist-driven system, one of the main objectives should be to discover the ways in which the system can uplift those who are oppressed; in this context, it is "working-class people and nature" (Merchant 257). The feminist ethics of care and Gruen's entangled empathy can aid in doing so. Carrying out the feminist ethics of care would include (i) "attending to and meeting the needs" (Held 9) of those who are disadvantaged in the situation and (ii) implementing "care [as] both value and practice" (Held 10). Gruen's entangled empathy, inspired by the feminist ethics of care, aims to extend our ethics to include animals by (i) administering a genuine attempt "to understand as best we can what the world seems, feels, smells, and looks like" from another being's "situated position" (Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* 42), and (ii) "critically reflect[ing] on the "relationships" that we are necessarily and constantly

"entangled in" (Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* 41). Practicing the values within the feminist ethics of care and the process of entangled empathy, while also keeping in mind the aim to "liberate . . . working-class people and nature" will allow a socialist ecofeminist system to maintain the best ethical standards for all beings involved (Merchant 257).

Envisioning the Benefits of Combining the Two Theories

A group of activists living in the coastal plain region of North Carolina— including animal rights activists, social justice leaders, environmental justice activists, and environmentalists — begin an organization led by socialist ecofeminist values in hopes of solving the ethical implications caused by the nearby hog farm's concentrated animal feeding operations. At the same time, a group of people working for the same hog farm — some individuals on the administrative level, while others work within its day-to-day operations — recognize that their farm's CAFOs have brought about environmental damage to their local region and a sense of powerlessness felt by the nearby communities. They decide to take a bioregional approach to hog farming and start an organization made up of fellow workers of the hog farm and local experts on the coastal plain bioregion. Individuals from both organizations hear about one another and, seeing the value within each organization's ideas, decide to come together as one bioregional and socialist ecofeminist hog farming system with the support of the local government and community.

To avoid redundancy, I will simply note that the bioregional and socialist ecofeminist hog farming system would implement the most relevant features of each theory as described above. More details on how each theory develops its features are laid out in their respective chapters. Here, I will speculate methods that unite bioregional and socialist ecofeminist ideas, consider

how a hog farming system located in the coastal plain of North Carolina might implement them, and review their numerous, interconnected benefits.

The integrated bioregional and socialist ecofeminist hog farming organization aims to restructure the existing hog farm from the ground up. The first and arguably most important method that the new, holistic farm carries out would be removing concentrated animal feeding operations and replacing them with humane animal husbandry practices. Rather than packing many hogs in a tight space with little to no room to move, this farming system would have a smaller number of hogs with more land for them to live in. Animal welfare will be significantly improved by giving the hogs an enjoyable life according to their species and abilities, as advocated by socialist ecofeminists. The new hog farm, implementing entangled empathy, would attempt to realize the daily life of the hogs living on the farms by envisioning what it might feel like to live like them. They would practice the feminist ethics of care by catering to the hogs' needs in a compassionate manner. The slaughtering process would minimize pain and suffering as much as possible. The hogs would have a shorter life but one that was lived well, with access to their young, proper nutrition, and comfortable living spaces. Additionally, the removal of concentrated animal feeding operations would significantly reduce environmental damage within the area by minimizing waste production – the smaller number of hogs will allow for less waste and more manageable waste management techniques. Reducing environmental damage is a result that is in alignment with bioregionalism's goal to "increase biodiversity and protect natural habitats" (Cook et al. 4). Finally, a reduction in hog waste and an improvement in waste management techniques will get rid of the awful smell of hog waste that hinders the local community's quality of life, aiding in socialist ecofeminist goal to achieve environmental justice.

The second method employed by the holistic hog farming system involves hiring regional experts in the relevant fields. The farm will have experts who possess the necessary knowledge to create a long-lasting system with methods that are personalized to the area of the coastal plain of North Carolina. The knowledge of these experts should consist of waste management techniques such as wetland catchment modeling and animal science involving hog behavior, nutritional needs, and standards for health and welfare. The bioregional and socialist ecofeminist hog farm should also possess team members who know the coastal plain's diverse life forms, climate patterns, and environmental habitats.

The third method that this hog farming system should implement is creating and maintaining a nonhierarchical structure that engages the local community, practices collaborative operations, and supports those working within and living around the farm. This will help the hog farm to be resistant against "formations of domination," a foundational value of socialist ecofeminism (Carlassare 89). Members of the local community will have their voices heard in the decision-making processes, aiding in the goal of producing environmental justice for the communities that were previously affected by the harms of CAFOs. Those working within the farm, as Peter Berg stated, will need assistance to do so, and those who will be inadvertently affected — whether economically or by their location — must be taken into consideration for an ethical system, as noted by socialist ecofeminists.

The community will have opportunities to volunteer to help in the everyday processes of the hog farm, allowing them to appreciate the animals for the organic nutrients provided to them and create a good conscience in knowing that the animal was treated with compassion during its life. This will remove the alienation between the community members who are alienated from their food and, as a result, remove the possibility of exploitation and unethical practices. In the

bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach, hogs will still be eaten. However, their lives will be taken from a place of respect within a sustainable ecological web. The consumption of hogs will occur in harmony with and respect for the broader ecological balance and interdependence of all elements within their environment. There will be an awareness of the power over the animals, which will lead to more care and less suffering.

The fourth method is also an effect of the first two methods but should be considered a technique to prioritize the outcome: creating and protecting a natural environment that flourishes. The new hog farming system should be sustainable and contribute to the health, diversity, and resilience of the ecosystem of the coastal plain of North Carolina. By implementing the knowledge of individuals in the necessary fields, the hog farm will be able to consider and protect the natural systems of the bioregion as effectively as possible (Cook et al. 4).

In total, the hog farming system that integrates bioregionalism with socialist ecofeminism will create a flourishing environment for the sake of the nearby rural communities as well as the environment itself, a result that is in alignment with socialist ecofeminism's goal to uplift the needs of nature and the human beings involved in the process as well as bioregionalism's goal to preserve the natural environment. Bioregionalism provides structural limits and processes to the socialist ecofeminist caring and considerations of power relations. A smaller scale can allow for more impactful changes within the system. Through community engagement, such as volunteering, alienation will decrease, local knowledge will be taken into consideration, and a voice will be provided to the local community.

The holistic hog farm will be informed by experts who have knowledge of the bioregion and the techniques that must be implemented for the system to last sustainably for years into the future, ensuring long-term success in the project. This hog farming system with an integrated

bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach will carry out socialist ecofeminism's element of care and practice of analyzing the root of the problem to ensure that the needs of marginalized beings — humans and animals — are acknowledged and met to create the most ethical system possible. The inseparable relationship between nature, humans, and animals will be carefully considered in this ethical and sustainable hog farming system.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Possible Objections

There will be various hesitations to switch from a large-scale industrial animal farming system to a locally engaged bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system of reduced size. One possible objection is the economic damage it might produce. Jeff McMahan notes that switching to humane animal husbandry, as would be practiced in the animal farming system I propose, would require us "to invest more into each animal than we invest into factory-farmed . . . animals," causing prices to increase considerably and "economies of scale to decline" (76). He notes that the products of small farms, i.e., animal meat, would turn into a rarity that only the rich could afford to have regularly (McMahan 76). The consumption of meat would have to be reduced significantly. As a response, I suggest that financial support toward the bioregional and socialist animal farm provided by the local government may provide an easier transition into the initial costs of the animal products sold. The local government should be able to provide the initiative because the farm is community-based and on a smaller scale. This may be one of the multiple mitigation strategies implemented by the regional government as well as the bioregional and socialist ecofeminist farm to ensure that the economy is not damaged beyond repair. There is a large potential for local economic development in this switch between animal farming systems.

The second possible objection includes an unwillingness among local individuals to reduce their animal product consumption or to engage in their community. The switch to a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farm would require support from many members of

the community. In response to this objection, I suggest that the new bioregional and socialist ecofeminist farm creates opportunities to provide education and awareness about the negative environmental, social, and health impacts of current animal farming practices like CAFOs, the benefits of a more plant-based diet for personal health and environmental protection, the importance of maintaining natural ecosystems, and the current exploitation of both human and nonhuman beings in industrial animal farming. These topics are integral to creating and maintaining support from the local community. Additionally, the bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farm could offer opportunities for local community members to visit the farm, understand its day-to-day operations, view the benefits of the holistic farming process for themselves, and suggest any changes they see fit. Community engagement will not only inform the local people of the benefits of a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist farm but will also empower them and provide them with a voice in the process. Finally, the new animal farming system should collaborate with existing organizations and businesses within the bioregion in order to add to an already active community.

The third possible objection is the potential impact on the workers in the current large-scale animal product industry. If the members of the community are at risk of losing their jobs, the switch to a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist farm would not seem worth it to many individuals, causing resistance to such a big change. As a response, I point to the fact that creating and sustaining a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system would require a number of helping hands, which opens the possibility for new and diverse jobs within the area. According to the article by Wendee Nicole on the concentrated animal feeding operations located within North Carolina's coastal plain, "the industry does not create many working-class jobs" other than those within "the slaughterhouse" (Nicole 185). So, there will be

an opportunity for even more jobs for the local community living by the bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system. As stated in Chapter Five, there will be a need for local communities to give their input on the bioregion's ecosystems, as well as for experts in fields such as animal science, agriculture, and waste management that are focused specifically within the bioregion. Additionally, the moral values within socialist ecofeminism should allow the new animal farming system to prioritize the workers who might lose their jobs on the hog farm and transition them into a different one. Bioregionalism's aim to provide the necessary support for those working within the system and socialist ecofeminism's aim to provide care to those directly or indirectly affected by the changes of the system pair well together to ensure that the well-being of everyone involved is taken into consideration in the switch to a new, sustainable, and ethical animal farming system.

The fourth possible objection includes the fact that while animals do have a better life within these holistic farms, they are still being eaten and utilized for their nutritional value. This is true — the unnecessary systematic death of animals for our own benefit should one day be abolished. However, as I pointed out in Chapter Four, there will be an intense hesitation to completely abolish animal farming systems at this point in time. Additionally, there will be a need for the nutritional value of animals as carnivorous communities switch over to plant-based diets. Switching to a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming practice would be a significant first step in the right direction for animals, humans, and the environment.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Summary

In my thesis, I have examined the potential for a solely bioregional animal farming system, followed by the potential for a solely socialist ecofeminist animal farming system. I then brought the two ideas together to analyze their methods and benefits as a unique, integrated bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system that prioritizes sustainability, local resource use, community engagement, and the welfare of all beings, regardless of class, race, species, or otherwise.

In integrating bioregionalism with socialist ecofeminism, I have suggested a unique theoretical framework for a pressing problem: concentrated animal feeding operations in large-scale animal industries. A bioregional and socialist ecofeminist approach to animal farming systems matters because there are real beings that are currently harmed by CAFOs, including the animals in the system, low-income communities living near the system, and the environment. I propose changes to current animal agriculture systems that are inspired by a theory that will produce a sustainable and long-lasting system, i.e., bioregionalism, and a theory that considers and prioritizes the welfare of all beings affected by the system, i.e., socialist ecofeminism. I have attempted to advance the literature and inform policy and practice through philosophical engagement.

Future Research

There are implications with my approach. While my scaffolded case study was informed by real-life case studies, my case study was only hypothetical. This reduces the accuracy/reliability of my suggested approach. Additionally, I lack information involving the specific environmental management and production system techniques of a successful bioregional and socialist ecofeminist animal farming system, such as further waste management strategies or concrete ways to begin a new animal farming system.

In the future, I may address these implications by conducting a real-life case study on an animal farming system by collecting data on stakeholder perspectives (including animal product producers and consumers) as well as on the bioregion in which the animal farming system exists. I may further examine the possible implications of switching from large-scale animal factory farming systems to small-scale, local, and humane farming and develop in-depth mitigation strategies that combine the practices of bioregionalism and socialist ecofeminism. Additionally, I could produce a theory of bioregional animal ethics informed by case studies at the regional level to deepen the possibilities for ethical considerations of a bioregional and socialist ecofeminist system. This thesis topic has an intriguing future in combining bioregionalism and socialist ecofeminism as unique but very complementary theories to approach such a complex issue within animal ethics and environmental justice.

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