



Keynote Speech II Abstract (English)

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Over the past decade, issues around food – production, distribution, sustainability, diet, accessibility and more – have become increasingly urgent. From the World Food Crisis of 2007 - 2008 when dramatic price increases pushed the number of hungry people over one billion for the first time in human history, to climate change, environmental degradation, widespread food and fuel insecurity, global land grabbing, and a mounting international refugee crisis, the future of food is a critical concern. The international community has responded in a variety of ways: in 2008, the World Development Report focused on agriculture for the first time in 25 years and in 2008, the Food and Agriculture Organization published its fairly radical International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development. Major philanthropic initiatives have been announced that integrate agriculture, food loss, nutrition and development around the world. At the same time, new peasant movements, international campaigns, and transnational networks around issues such as land grabbing, resource extraction and food sovereignty, have pushed the conversation towards inclusive, sustainable and socially-just systems.

All of this makes the contemporary moment an important one for the study of food, but a difficult one. At Cornell University, we have many departments, centers and schools in which the study of food is critical: Plant Sciences, Anthropology, Development Sociology, Food Science, Nutrition, Applied and Behavioral Economics, Business, the Hotel School, the School of Veterinary Sciences, and more. But questions of the future of food require multiple perspectives and a diverse set of methodological tools. To have significant and lasting influence and to generate real impact at multiple levels, partnerships with external organizations are central at Cornell. We have worked hard to build collaborative partnerships with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, government, social movements and activist networks. We also emphasize collaboration and mutual capacity-building with local research institutions in areas where we work – from upstate New York to northeastern Mozambique.

Questions around the future of food are inherently multi-disciplinary and multi-scalar and so some of the most exciting work in the university is happening in thematic, cross-disciplinary units and teams. We have developed university-level centers to coordinate such work, including most prominently the Einaudi Center for International Studies, the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future and the Cornell Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development. These three university-level centers have undertaken the critical work of convening, promoting and facilitating theme-driven, collaborative and results-oriented work. In this talk, I will highlight five different projects: a team of economists, ecologists, sociologists and ornithologists who together study the ways in which shade grown coffee can promote biodiversity in Central America; a new Masters of Public Health that integrates plant and animal science, nutrition, and the social sciences to train students in the multi-dimensional and multi-directional relationships between food and health; a participatory community conference titled “Farm to Plate” that brought together Cornell faculty, students, regional community activists, and farmers to debate the nature of a sustainable and just local food system; a competitive Student Multidisciplinary Research Team (SMART) program that assembles graduate student groups who complete hands-on, short-term assignments in food and



agriculture with sponsors around the world; and finally a certificate program in Integrated Land Management that brings together scholars from Law, History, Engineering, Plant Genetics, Crop and Soil Sciences, Sociology, Geography and Horticulture with civil society partners such as CARE, Oxfam, The Nature Conservancy, Unilever and more to create on-campus training opportunities as well as in-field experiential learning around local food systems.

Ultimately, all of us are intimately connected to food; thus, scholarship on food needs to be both intimate and connected.