



Food Justice and Agriculture: introduction

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Food Justice and Agriculture

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Introduction

The renewal of the relations between urban and rural areas has been marked, in recent years, by the emergence of many initiatives for the solidarity of urban spaces or their reconnection with agricultural environments, via the food register (as found with local markets or agricultural shows for example). However, while agriculture has never been so widely talked about – urban and peri-urban agriculture in particular (Poulot, 2014, 2015) – a gap persists between some disadvantaged areas and agricultural spaces, even when these are close (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011; see also Beisher and Corbett in this issue). This gap is all the more striking since, conversely, initiatives that link communities to ‘small local farmers’ have become a habit for well-educated and wealthy populations, whether in the Global North or in the Global South.

Not all consumers actually benefit from farm products in their daily food routine. Finding that the return of agriculture has been mediatized but highly “selective” is what brought us to focus on this area for this issue of JSSJ. Indeed, the emergence and spatial juxtaposition of two-speed food systems is of concern. In a caricatured

way, “food” (understood as “stemming from the global and dominant food system”) might be reserved for underprivileged populations, while “good food” (“which stems from the local short food supply chains and can be traced from the field to the consumer’s plate”), might be reserved for the wealthiest populations. Likewise, gaps are being created between farmers who can become part of the so-called “alternative” food system and other farmers. As a result, we wanted to focus on a notion which is rather well-established in Anglophone research but only emerging in Francophone research, that of food justice, as well as its links with agriculture.

It is only recently and in furthering studies on social justice that this notion emerged, from discourse concerning the right to food (see also *food movement*), the risks of food insecurity in situations of poverty and precariousness, and sustainability objectives applied to food systems. The food justice movement seeks to ensure ‘that the benefits and risks of where, what and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly’ (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010). However, the problematics of the relations (or non-relations) between food, agriculture and justice is incomplete. On the Francophone side, the majority of studies on agriculture – peri-urban agriculture in particular – omit the social aspect altogether (Boivin and Traversac, 2011, Maréchal, 2008), while making very little use of the conceptual framework of justice (Perrin, 2015). On the Anglophone side, the focus is on the underprivileged populations’ consumption: links with agriculture, even urban agriculture, as productive economic activity, are still not tackled very often, despite a few recent evolutions (Alkon, 2012; Slocum and Cadieux, 2015). Thus the role of agriculture in reducing inequalities has not yet been understood (Chiffoleau, 2012). Consequently, this issue of JSSJ seeks firstly to increase our understanding of the notion of food justice, by placing relations with agriculture at the centre of its definition, and secondly to think about processes linked to agriculture and contributing to food justice. Is it because of its links with agriculture, and the potentially special place granted by it, that food justice differs from other endeavours to implement a more equitable food system?

Considering the different approaches to food justice, we intend first of all to review the definition of food justice and its issues. The various articles will then identify which role gives the food justice movement to agriculture and on which spaces the notion focuses. Finally, suggesting that a more agri-food *and* spatial justice should be defended brings us to think about educational, empowerment and governance plans and their practical role in the construction of more equitable food systems.

1. Defining/redefining food justice

It is only recently and in furthering studies on social justice that the notion of food justice emerged (Gottlieb and Joshi, 2010), at the crossroads of discourses on the right to food (partly stemming from the North American food movement), sustainability objectives applied to food systems and the risks of food insecurity in situations of poverty and precariousness. While the authors refer in a consensual way to Gottlieb and Joshi's definition above (2010), the theoretical questionings of the issue show that the notion's outline still inspires many debates. The vagueness of the expression and the multiple interpretations it gives rise to – in this regard A. Beischer and J. Corbett ask whether it is a theory, a political tool or a claim – appear to limit its dissemination in scientific and practical circles. It seems easier to say what food justice *is not* or *is not only*. The articles in this issue of JSSJ highlight the fact that food justice cannot amount to a lack of accessibility or food security. They implicitly propose a renewal of the definition that seeks rather to grasp what it *is*.

1.1 Food justice *is not* only an accessibility issue

Traditionally, food justice is underlain by a food resource distribution and food access problem. This approach is for example what the notion of food desert in the United States is based on, defined as a space where populations do not have access to healthy food at a reasonable cost, due to a lack of supermarkets and an inability to move around to buy food (Paddeu, 2012; Cummins and Macintyre, 2002)¹. Likewise, distance or proximity effects between production, marketing and consumption areas,

¹ A *food desert* is a census unit where the poverty rate exceeds 20% and where at least 33% of the population resides more than 1,6 km away from a supermarket or a large grocery (Paddeu, 2012).

reinforced by more or less efficient transport systems, favour (see H. Leloup) or penalise (see C. Keske *et al.*) food justice situations.

This issue gives us an opportunity to go beyond matters dealing with commercial equipment or the efficiency of supply networks. Accessibility is also envisaged from an economic point of view, thereby raising the issue of what is accessible, for whom and at what cost. More particularly, stressing on several occasions the right to food highlights the fact that accessibility is above all a matter of entitlement: irrespective of the content of discourses and laws, not only is it important to have access to food, resources etc., but also *to have the right* to have access to these.... and *to have the capacity to make one's voice heard* so as to have access to food and resources. When, in a mixed suburb under gentrification, well-off populations ask for the opening of an organic food shop, fully conscious of the fact that it will supplant the classic supermarket where the less well-off Latino populations go to shop (R. Slocum, V. Cadieux and R. Blumberg), we can see whose voice is louder, and what the logics of domination and self-censorship are.

The way the articles revisit the notion of accessibility, constitutes the first advance in defining food justice, in that it does not so much depend on resource availability or distribution as on a system of spatial or social relations, marked by asymmetries.

1.2. Food justice *is not* only a food insecurity problem

The link between food justice and food security is another "classic" in the definition of food justice. While food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life", the paradigms of this old concept have changed. It was not long before research (De Castro, 1961) raised the question of feeding more people with less producers (Brunel, 2008). But the issues and criteria underlying the definition of food security have changed. From logistic (approach in terms of supplying) then nutritional considerations in the 1990s, we moved on to ideas of food safety and quality in response to food scandals in the North, and to food sovereignty issues, straight after studies on hunger and insecurity

in the South (Landy, 2006; Brunel, 2002). While no one contests the challenge posed by food security since the contemporary famines (Sen, 1982) and the 2007-2008 crisis (Kirwan and Maye, 2013), there are differences in the way it is understood. For the actors of the dominant food-processing industry, food security is a matter of world production; for the supporters of the food movement, food production and consumption ought to be associated with the “health” of people, the planet and the economy (Alkon, 2012).

Is food justice only a transposition of the food security concept from the Global South to the Global North, where preoccupations seem less urgent at first sight? What does the concept contribute in comparison with the concept of hunger or food insecurity, and what can it assert, reassert or reveal about the food and agricultural situation of territories on different scales and in different parts of the world?

None of the case studies tackles the issue of food security upfront. The only case study bearing on a country of the South (Peru, H. Leloup) avoids the problem at once by showing that, in the metropolitan region of Lima, access to food is ensured, thereby reflecting much lower undernutrition rates than in the rest of the country.

Nevertheless, the articles provide other notions that contribute to renewing thoughts on food security. In the article on Saint Pierre and Miquelon (C. Keske *et al.*), introducing the food sovereignty notion makes it possible to explicitly link food security to justice which, in the context of the island, is understood as the “right to food”. The authors highlight the importance of capacity issues, that of populations in particular for defining and controlling their own food system when faced with an extrovert government food policy. The articles also evoke food poverty and increasing food aid in Canada (A. Beischer and J. Corbett) or New-York and Detroit (F. Paddeu), as well as issues concerning supplying disadvantaged populations in the North on racial bases (F. Paddeu, R. Slocum *et al.*). They also show how the obesity phenomenon is on the increase, particularly among disadvantaged populations in North America (R. Slocum *et al.*) and in Peru (H. Leloup), pointing out nutritional problems among certain population groups. As many subjects that aim at making visible and especially denouncing food insecurity among disadvantaged populations,

particularly in the North where the phenomenon is said to be “silent”, “non-observed”. It is precisely because of the striking contrast between reality and the fact that the media and politicians are giving no visibility to the problem, that the debate is initiated not only in terms of food insecurity but also in terms of justice.

The renewed way of envisaging food security through the prism of inequalities – be they social, racial or gender-based – constitutes the second major input in defining food justice in this issue of JSSJ. The authors ask: What is more important in the expression, food or justice? In the end, finding a solution to food insecurity is not a simple matter of food production, nor is it a simple matter of quality in production or food; the idea is to ensure that improving access to food is carried out fairly. As such, consumer food security (disadvantaged consumers in particular), ensues from an improvement in food justice in the area where consumers live. This approach entails to first act on the structural inequalities that shape food systems.

1.3. Social justice, a prerequisite to food justice

Accessibility and food security are not enough in defining food justice. These articles highlight the need to also act on the roots of inequalities. This explains why, in the articles relating to the Anglo-Saxon approach, structural inequalities which are formulated in racial, class or gender terms, are also important: because they form the basis of inequalities in the food system. The shift, in the article of Slocum *et al.*, towards the notion of racial justice, illustrates the importance of the social justice (i.e. its components and functioning) in order to conceive food justice.

Yet this is not the dominant point of view in research; sectorial approaches (e.g. production, marketing and consumption) continue to prevail, as does fragmentation in the discipline which is regularly highlighted in the domains of food studies (Miller and Deutsch, 2009; Wilk, 2012). The articles gathered in this issue reflect the need to stop sectorialising food issues, and take into account the structural factors of food injustice in relation to the general politico-economic system which, in the end, leads to a multidisciplinary approach to food justice.

Filiation with social justice questions the origins of the food justice movement. Can food justice actions amount or be likened to charity? F. Paddeu recalls that, in New York and Detroit, certain urban agricultural initiatives are part of religious or charity networks, and are in line with a tradition of religious activism. R. Slocum *et al.* even define certain food justice initiatives as “redeeming good works” for the mainly white and well-off groups taking part in them, which according to the authors are a deviation from the initial food justice objective of equity. In this sense, some food justice projects, as found with the example of community gleaning in Kelowna in Canada (A. Beischer and J. Corbett), or that of food production in urban farms (F. Paddeu), aim at rehabilitating human dignity through the actual form of the systems being implemented: the fact that people are actually involved in the production or gathering of food changes their status (from beneficiary to actors), gives them a sense of responsibility and obliterates any shame they might feel. Far from doing charity work, the supporters of food justice favour empowerment, an important process since controlling all the stages of the food system, at the local level, is also a way of fighting against the unequal “power geometries” (R. Slocum *et al.*) of the world food system.

The issue also tackles another relationship: that of food justice with environmental justice, the former being considered as an avatar of the latter (Gottlieb and Fisher, 1996). Yet, only one article (F. Paddeu) tackles these links, a sign that concerns for more egalitarian access to food resources are not necessarily associated with improving accessibility to environmental resources. While local agricultural resources are evoked in the Lima case (H. Leloup), they are not analysed from the point of view of environmental justice. The North American case tackled by F. Paddeu is in itself unclear about this relationship. While environmental justice activism finds its origin in the civic rights movement, partly like that of food justice, and while the social context is similar, it seems that these two causes relate more to two types of different mobilisations. Furthermore, the food justice initiatives studied by F. Paddeu almost never refer to the environment, which can seem paradoxical in that they rely on a re-appropriation of agricultural resources and production.

1.4. Food justice: activist stance or analytical framework? Methodological challenges

The notion of food justice has an ambiguous status, between activist stance and matrix for scientific analysis, which requires a last clarification. Stemming from radical geography, spatial justice appears as a value system used to analyse or even denounce certain realities (inequalities) (Veschambre, 2010). It is sometimes criticised, because there is a very good chance that one will pass a value judgement on places and social groups, which would go against the scientific observation approach (Gervais-Lambony and Dufaux, 2010; Morelle and Ripoll, 2009). What stance should then one adopt to study food justice?

While all the articles in this issue of JSSJ adopt food justice as a framework for scientific observation, with a view to analysing practices that are often activist (C. Keske *et al.*, F. Paddeu, H. Leloup), some go further by making of food justice a fully-fledged research stance (R. Slocum *et al.*, A. Beischer and J. Corbett). The activist dimension is very much present in the articles on North America. R. Slocum *et al.* advocate scholar-activism because they believe it leads to better understand what food justice actors say, and to propose an analysis based on what they say rather than some preconceived analytical framework. Scholar-activists also seek to bring food poverty and inequalities out in the open.

Wondering what food justice "is", between theories and practice, brings one to think about possible methods and stances for working on this theme. Diagrammatically, this issue of JSSJ comprises two types of articles: militant articles where the theory of social justice is mobilised at once in conducting research, and articles where the food justice matrix has been used afterwards for analytical purposes. These two stances lead to different although qualitative methods (ethnography, long surveys, participative observations etc.). The first type of articles (R. Slocum *et al.*, A. Beischer and J. Corbett) resorts to an important theoretical system enriched by case studies. With the second type (C. Keske *et al.*, H. Leloup), food justice is considered as an action or a practice, although it is not always analysed as such. For example, H.

Leloup's approach on Lima relies on a relatively classic network analysis, where the justice matrix came in afterwards to question in other ways the phenomena observed initially.

Finally, the various methodological stances questioning how to conduct research on food justice, and how this relates to actions, constitute the fourth input in defining this notion. The decompartmentalisation between the introspective and practical spheres, as requested by several authors such as Cadieux and Slocum when they ask "what does it mean to *do* food justice" (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015), would be the condition to make it happen.

While these articles reinforce the classic definition of food justice, they invite us to go even further by highlighting the need to redefine the notion around several aspects.

2. How and why agriculture can be mobilised in justice issues?

Towards agri-food justice

The definitions being established, we must understand the role played by agriculture within the food justice-social justice relation we propose to decipher. It seems that there is a paradox between the fundamental place occupied by agricultural resources in food systems, and the few thoughts around their role in the creation or decrease of food inequality and injustice. This is a double issue, theoretical as well as practical. Why is it important to rely on the productive part of food systems to understand food justice? What is the potential of available agricultural resources in building more equitable food systems?

2.1 Agricultural resources, at the centre of food systems to be recontextualised

To bring justice back in food systems, a requirement mentioned by R. Slocum *et al.*, means firstly to pinpoint where mobilising the notion will appear particularly pertinent. Here, food systems are understood as all spaces, interactions, processes and actors involved in feeding and supplying consumers (food production, transformation, marketing, distribution and consumption) (Rastoin and Gherzi, 2012).

Yet, agricultural resources constitute the base of food systems and as such they are one of their main components to be analysed to understand food injustice.

Agricultural resources express either the natural capital (as stock) or elements built and used by societies (Corrado, 2004; Gumuchian, Pecqueur, 2007; Kebir, 2010). They belong to a greater whole: that of food resources which, like them, represent *productions* and at the same time *spaces* for food production, marketing and distribution. The richness of this issue is to offer articles that analyse resources accurately, at the different phases of the systems, including up to the rarely summoned recycling/waste spaces. From the parcel of agricultural land to the kitchen or the food bank, via wholesale markets and up to the foot of fruit trees where apples and peaches are rotting, these spaces express the complexity of the food system analysis, while showing the constant presence of the connection with production. This is a way of recalling that all the phases observed in the construction of food justice refer to land or land resource, as testified to by R. Slocum *et al.*'s article which makes of *land* a node of their food justice definition.

Agricultural resources accomplish two types of functions as far as the food security of a population is concerned: increasing the quantities of available food (whether transformed food or not) or improving food quality. The spaces presented in this issue do not fulfil such requirements: these functions are neither available (geographically and financially), nor known (culturally) everywhere and by/for everyone. This observation is essential if one is to prevent any risk of normalising the agricultural resource/food justice connection: indeed, this resource cannot be used "properly" if it cannot even be accessed.

Consequently, specifying the place and role of agriculture in the actions for the implementation of food justice, cannot happen without contextual analysis. It should concern the geographical and agronomic context at first, since production requirements and diets vary according to the environment. The standardisation process, which is supported by technical improvements and the globalisation of trade, does not prevent the preservation of strong specificities, as recalled by the article on Saint Pierre and Miquelon. It should also concern the demographic and

economic context: it can seem difficult not only to increase the availability of agricultural resources against the extent of population and urban growth, but more so to ensure equality of access for the populations, in a context of specialisation and globalisation of the agriculture and food system (as testified too by the 2007-2008 food riots). Finally it should also concern the ideological context, where the place given to resources also depend on agri-food models. As such, the sustainable development paradigm worms its way into food systems to redraw production areas, within metropolises in particular (Emelianoff, 2007; Poulot, 2014), and transform the behaviour of consumers (Ripoll, 2013) who ask for the more transparent and direct circulation of resources. We thus suggest to ask: which place does the food justice paradigm reserve for agricultural resource?

2.2 Diverse agricultural forms expressing the experience of domination

Within the systems analysed, agricultural forms are diverse: urban farming and gardens – a classic in research work on food justice (F. Paddeu) – as well as intensive peri-urban farming dedicated to market-garden crops and small livestock farming (H. Leloup), orchards (A. Beischer and J. Corbett) and polyculture (R. Slocum *et al.*). Innovative agricultural forms are also introduced, although these are vulnerable due to the specificity of boreal ecosystems (C. Keske *et al.*), which bring the authors to focus on fishery resources rather than land resources. This overview shows how important it is to get out of the urban framework and its resident consumers, who are currently overrepresented in the research on food justice, to explore and study other research fields and actors, closer to the productive dimension of food systems.

However, the importance of case studies does not so much reside in the description of specific forms of agriculture as in their position in the food system hierarchy: the agricultural spaces presented are described, depending on the articles, as “excluded”, “on the margin”, “relegated” and (corollary) “in difficulty”. These situations describe a triple marginality. First of all, a geographic marginality, as recalled by the boreal *and* island farming and fishery systems (C. Keske *et al.*), by the inaccessibility of the Jefferson-Mack neighbourhood in Detroit with its degraded environment (F. Paddeu),

or by the feeding of the Peruvian capital which is more taken care of by distant producers than by nearby producers, following the distortion of the centre/outskirts supplying model (H. Leloup). The marginality is also a land-related marginality, regarding the local context or the dominant global farming system: thus in Lima, 58% of agro-pastoral producers must live with surface areas smaller than 0,5 ha (H. Leloup), while urban forms of agriculture are being established on vacant interstices and spaces that were used to other ends (case of Detroit). Finally, the issue lets appear a strikingly social marginality. R. Slocum *et al.* call for examining what type of population, race or phenotype has access to land and works in spaces where resources are produced or transformed. Not only has the loss of land resources affected non-white populations and “tribal communities” in the United States, but also the men and women from these populations and communities are today overrepresented in jobs with the lowest salaries, as farm workers or in the food-processing industry.

Highlighting situations of marginality and marginalisation brings to light the experience of domination to which farming spaces are subjected, or those linked to productive resources and their actors: unlike other publications on food justice, the point of view of this issue is far from being that, unchanging, of underprivileged urban consumers. It aims at generating proposals for a transformative social change, such as defending migrants’ rights in production (cf. Allen *et. al.*, 2003; DeLind, 2002 ; Morice and Michalon, 2008 ; Michalon and Potot, 2008).

2.3 Agricultural resources to be mobilised more often

However, integrating the agricultural resource into research on food justice could be more exhaustive. Two shortcomings/biases need to be pointed out.

Firstly, the poor reference to rural space, restricted to the Minnesota case in R. Slocum *et al.*'s article (and to a lesser extent in the Saint Pierre and Miquelon case) may seem surprising. Metropolises and larges towns, where the notion of food justice emerges, are privileged observation centres for three reasons at least. They offer a guarantee of diversity as far as production and consumption spaces are concerned,

and as such contain potential relations and conflicts concerning resources, more than in average or small towns. Moreover, at the urban/rural interface, metropolisation effects result in fragmented socio-spatial configurations that are stimulating for analytical purposes in terms of justice (Harvey, 1973; Soja, 2010). Finally, agricultural resources are subjected to pressures giving rise to competition for their appropriation, which is likely to generate situations of socio-spatial and food injustice. Nevertheless, the marginalisation and domination principles raised can also be located in the rural space where, in addition, very specific issues are deployed, such as food deserts or agrarian reforms (the latter having been tackled by H. Leloup). There is here a research field which is little explored, a sign perhaps of the persistence of boundaries between urbanists and ruralists.

Secondly, where the idea behind the call for publications was to see the use of the food justice concept between Global North and South decompartmentalised, only one article on the Global South (H. Leloup on Peru) has been used. This publication leaves out debates around the use and transfer of concepts and theories.

Including agricultural resources into the food justice issue brings us to reconnect with the food system basis, and to propose the use of the expression 'agri-food justice', so as to balance research proposals between production and consumption. This expression invites us especially to shed light on the processes underlying various forms of exclusion, and at the same time to examine the spatial dimensions of food justice.

3. Acting spatially for food justice: working with space or making the space

What is today the space which is representative of the opposition to the dominant agri-food system, which food justice movement is part of? Faced with the drifts of the productivist model developed after WWII (Deléage, 2013), the alternative food movement "relocated" food systems. The promotion of what is local is such, within

initiatives and policies, that spaces or consumers unable to access it are considered negatively².

This relocation movement highlights the spatial dimension of the food discourses and practices of the last decades (cf. R. Slocum *et al.*), while introducing a very strong bias: the mixture between a “more local” (often urban or peri-urban), “healthier” and finally “more equitable” food system. Yet, forms of exclusion are revealed within the actual local food movement, where *“initiatives for local food did not significantly show their ability to provoke sustainable social changes in areas suffering from inequalities”* (H. Leloup). As such, are food justice areas necessarily “local”? While the food movement creates increasingly white areas, which areas create food justice? Are food justice areas necessarily “other types of areas”, different from classic food system areas, or do they transform existing areas from within?

3.1 Food injustice areas, spatial injustice areas: “traumatised areas” (R. Slocum *et al.*)

By observing the social characteristics of the residents of areas suffering the most from food injustice, as in F. Paddeu or A. Beischer and J. Corbett’s articles, very clear forms of segregation are revealed, opposing majority Afro-American or Latino³ populations to minority or absent white populations. These findings can be explained with initial collective and historical traumas (R. Slocum *et al.*), nourished by structural power relations (between races, genders and classes) which can take on various expressions at the local level (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015). Looking more closely, these areas also accumulate other employment, infrastructure and basic service problems. Therefore, tackling the spatial dimension of food justice is like saying that it comes not only from social injustices but also from spatial injustices.

While food injustice is one of the forms of expression of spatial injustice, the latter is particularly present within food systems. Two scales are concerned. We find spatial

² In many aspects, the stance of H. Leloup’s article is situated entirely in a theoretical, political and ideological context promoting the local, by seeking to explain Lima’s supply system. H. Leloup’s article stems from the author’s surprise at the extra-metropolitan nature of the supply system, and therefore from critical thinking on the possibilities which peri-urban producers have to reconnect with urban consumers, and from expected and real effects in terms of food justice.

³ According to American terminology.

injustice at the metropolitan level, where “fetishisation of the local” (R. Slocum *et al.*) does not affect every neighborhood. Indeed, in Kelowna (A. Beischer and J. Corbett), typical alternative food movement areas are found next to poverty areas: the former advocate what is local as well as direct contact with resources and the latter are covered with an increasing number of food banks and disconnected from abundant local resources. We also find spatial injustice at the level of areas affected by food system “relocation”, where the *truly* alternative character of initiatives is the subject of debates. Actions to officially make up for the distortions of food systems – and that especially do not rely on initial traumas – reinforce whiteness in the areas which characterized the local food system, and at the same time make food injustice spaces slightly more invisible. This case shows a process which creates consciously exclusion space according to R. Slocum *et al.* (who go as far as using the loaded expression “nutritional apartheid” to explain the presence of food deserts).

In turn, areas which the alternative food movement pretends to create or recreate regarding the dominant food system, also become excluding areas and create new inequalities. Consequently, how to create agri-food areas that are different from the areas created by dominant *and* alternative food systems?

3.2 Are food justice spaces utopian?

This question calls for conducting active research on *spatial processes* leading to food justice. Without this, the definition of this notion will remain incomplete and its global, universal and operational impact limited. Does it concern a process of spatial change or does it require one?

The spatial proposal of agri-food justice is still only at the planning stage. In order to act on structural inequalities, according to R. Slocum *et al.*, the idea is to design a social, relational space, a space for the exchange of products but also and especially ideas and values, a political space. To design it, the authors rely on four nodes: trauma/equality, exchange, land and labour. This is where processes likely to transform space for more justice are implemented (see also Cadieux and Slocum, 2015).

Is this only a utopian space? Admittedly, outside the article dedicated to Saint Pierre and Miquelon, the issue struggles to come out of the local food system scale. Yet, several authors insist on the need to create such a space for food justice to occur, according to two processes. On the one hand, it is initially a matter of "building networks that typically do not exist" (R. Slocum *et al.*) against fragmented or even segregated food systems. An analysis in terms of networks (see also Darly, 2013, Paturel, 2012) makes it possible to distinguish relegated poles and spaces, as well as to conceive the accessibility of all the populations to productions and quality diet, or all the producers to markets. Some articles propose eradicating former structures or changing the way space is used, such as "getting rid of the factory" in Hunts Points in the Bronx, or using a vacant space in Jefferson-Mack in Detroit or in the shared gardens of Lima. More especially, land appropriation seems to be a key factor. Appropriation is "physical" and financial, whether it is a matter of explicitly (and politically) reserving or buying land for projects, as in Lima, where producers do not hesitate to sell their peri-urban plots to go further away and benefit from more favourable employment and production conditions. Appropriation is also juridical, as in Detroit where the food justice community joins forces to legalise urban farming, or in Minnesota where R. Slocum *et al.* suggest the creation of an exception to the rule stipulating that only individual farmers have access to land, so that migrants, women and new farmers can access land as a cooperative. Finally, appropriation is territorial in the sense that mobilisations and practices within food justice spaces give visibility to the inhabitants and "represent" them (F. Paddeu).

The fact that several authors give attention to the impacts of food justice projects highlights the inferred spatial restructurations as well as the performative dimension of some discourses, a way of noting that the process is actually already ongoing, even if it is limited. Beyond the general project, two vectors appear particularly fruitful to engage the transformation process: education and empowerment issues on the one hand, and food governance issues on the other.

4. Education at the service of food justice: paths to empowerment

The transformation of food systems towards more food justice, leads us to refocus on the actors and their capacity to act for food justice. There again, the alternative food movement critique supplies the bases of the questioning. Indeed, as recalled by A. Beischer and J. Corbett, with slogans such as “vote with your fork three times a day”, the alternative intention insists on the possibility which consumers have from now on to choose their diet. But in the declaration: “we do have choices”, what does “choices” mean, and according to which criteria? To be able to give once more a choice to food system actors (producers, consumers, labourers etc.), the food justice movement leaves an important place to educational systems, in favour of the empowerment of the most vulnerable populations.

4.1 Taking into account psychological and cultural factors in food injustice situations

Defining food justice only through the accessibility criterion appears simplistic. Other food inequality factors, cultural and psychological in particular, deserve to be taken into account. Indeed, the perceptions between consumers and farmers regarding food and food supplies deserve to be heard, because they are expressed by choices and practices that influence food system configurations (Dixon and Isaacs, 2013). At first sight, the access to ‘fresh and healthy’ food for consumers from disadvantaged areas would not seem to be an option because of price or lack of availability. However, several studies indicate that price is not the main obstacle limiting marketing or consumption of nearby agricultural products in socially varied environments (Mundler, 2013; Rödiger and Hamm, 2015; Nikolli and Le Gall, 2016). Several hypotheses have been formulated to better understand the social links being forged or not in food systems: the value (Appadurai, 1986) given to nearby agricultural resources among various publics, the influence of personal criteria (social origin, race and gender) in cases of self-censorship at the time of the purchase or the sale (Slocum and Saldanha, 2011), and the social content of the trade (Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine, 2004).

The articles in this issue of JSSJ lead us to examine these possibilities in depth, by warning against the normative usage of discourses on food. "What does it mean to eat right?" ask A. Beischer and J. Corbett. By pointing out the bodily differences between those who can consume fresh food (bodies rich in time, money, knowledge and often white) and the others (heavy, disproportionate and non-white bodies), R. Slocum and her co-authors offer a glimpse and denounce the dichotomy between a "good" *vs* "pathological" usage of the resource (which is often a non-usage indeed). F. Paddeu also comments in this direction when she says that the vegetables produced in Jefferson-Mack are "culturally appropriate". The "good" or "appropriate" nature of food is above all indissociable from the context of the statement: as such, the case of the archipelago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon defended by C. Keske *et al.*, shows the tension between local "traditional" diet, centred on fishing and compelled by the boreal environment, and an "extroverted" diet stemming from the French culture to which the archipelago belongs. That is why the residents also define their food sovereignty by "the right to import" food, such as goose liver pâté. Avoiding a discussion on what "good" means and for whom, amounts to losing sight of the unequal "geometry of power" in the analysis of the relation between agricultural resource, food and justice.

4.2 Educating about or co-building food justice?

In this context, the field of education seems to have an essential role to play. Indeed, experiences in food education as advocated in food justice movements, are perceived as a form of consumer retraining against their passive situation in the global agri-food system (Levkoe, 2006). However, none of the articles looked into these educational experiences directly: Is this a sign that producing a normative discourse is a too great risk? Or is it a sign that the percolation of justice processes goes through specific forms of transmission not yet identified?

The expressions used by the authors shed light on the matter: A. Beischer and J. Corbett evoke a process of awareness of food injustice issues; R. Slocum *et al.* indicate that capacity building is the first indispensable step for populations to

understand the initial “traumas” affecting them; while H. Leloup and F. Paddeu speak of empowerment. Against a top-down movement reproducing relations of domination, following a “redemptive action” (R. Slocum *et al.*), the authors seem rather to suggest co-building forms of food justice processes that aim at “pursue equity locally and globally”.

Two main lines are privileged in this regard. The first, informative, aims at increasing the knowledge populations have about food systems and, more widely (and as a priority), about their unequal structures and processes. In this JSSJ issue, this knowledge is evoked mostly at the global level, however F. Paddeu’s paper also shows the importance of mastering local issues at the metropolitan level to act on them. Here, all the themes are tackled, from production to public health issues. The second main line which is turned towards action, favours learning methods to concretely transform the food system in its current form. For instance, F. Paddeu’s study leads to understand, in detail, the emergence of mobilisations among populations being marginalised through farming practices (seedling, building a greenhouse etc.).

In the end, these two co-learning guidelines make of this knowledge the preliminary conditions “for food democracy and transformative political change” (A. Beischer and J. Corbett). They put forward the necessary empowerment of populations as process for changing food systems towards more justice. Yet, insofar as this process means greater citizen participation, it appears necessary to also invent new forms of food governance.

5. Food governance and farming: from policies and initiatives to *praxis*

There is consensus on the fact that the eminently political nature of the food issue, calls for the invention of new action methods based on public policies and, at the same time, on local initiatives so as to better structure relations between producers and eaters (Lardon and Loudiyi, 2014). Yet, paradoxically, some articles denounce the depoliticisation of the food issue through the inadequacy or disengagement of the

political powers. At the same time, the explosion of food and/or agricultural projects presented in this issue, as well as the interest shown by certain communities for the subject, testify to the diversity of dynamics sustaining food governance, towards better links between cities and agriculture, as well as diet and territory (Lardon and Loudiyi, 2014; Delfosse *et al.*, 2012). These contradictions raise the following questions: what place does food justice have in the political projects of territories and how do these contradictions integrate agriculture? What is the gap between discourses, practices and the implementation of operations to transform situations of injustice?

5.1 Political strategies and social initiatives: the two parts of food governance

As a sign of depoliticisation of the food issue, the role of policies in food systems only comes up in the background of several articles, and at different levels: at the international level (question of exclusive economic zone regulations, as in the case of Saint Pierre and Miquelon in the article of C. Keske *et al.* for example); at the national level, to consider the past role of the State in land justice (agrarian reform in Peru) or in food aid policies in Canada (A. Beischer and J. Corbett); at the regional level (measures taken by the State of Minnesota to protect farmland as in the article of R. Slocum *et al.*), and finally at the local urban level (role of municipalities in Minnesota, in Kelowna or the Bronx to support food justice projects)⁴.

In the end, from the point of view of food justice actors, the articles emphasise the role of civil society, consumers and activist movements joining forces. It seems that the forms taken on by an initiative or a project are central and a driving force for the success of that initiative or project. These highly varied forms come from multiple actors, from the simple farmers' organisation (in Lima for example, where farmers have created *bioferias*, urban markets of products stemming from biological

⁴ At that level, in the end, this issue does not mention much the role played by towns in the construction of "more sustainable and fair food systems" (Morgan and Sonnino, 2010). Yet, once on the political agenda, this preoccupation brings out in the cities of the North a diversity of strategies turned towards urban matters (food councils established in British Columbia for example; feeding plans etc.) or peri-urban matters (town and country planning, cf. Perrin and Soulard, 2014), testifying to novel food governance. This research area constitutes one of the shortcomings in this issue.

agriculture), to coalitions of associations gathering consumers, producers, activists or even communities (in Minnesota for example).

The importance of the issue resides in the link between actors, strategies and initiatives. As such, these articles question the objectives, instruments and publics of the policies and initiatives: what do these put forward, and who do they benefit? The initiatives described often result from a weakness in policies and their contesting. The gleaning collaborative project in Kelowna, presented by A. Beischer and J. Corbett, offers an alternate and critical solution to the private food banks or associations of food banks that have proliferated in Canada, following the withdrawal of the State in the food aid domain. Likewise, the food justice initiatives in Detroit, studied by F. Paddeu, make up for the dismantlement of public services following an urban crisis and the major indebtedness of the municipality. These initiatives can be interpreted as a social security net against the State's withdrawal (McClintock, 2014), close to the dynamic of social action privatisation experienced in other places and domains, such as that of the fight against poverty (Hochedez, 2014).

As a result, linking the two dimensions of public policies and initiatives, creates interplays between actors and regulations, and conceives more or less new and fair forms of food system governance. Those interplays occur on two scales. On a local scale, F. Paddeu compares two forms of mobilisation: that for environmental justice in the Bronx, to protest against municipal policies, and an alternative form of mobilisation for food justice in Detroit, to protest against the political vacuum of the municipality in the urban service domain. On a national and international scale, supranational regulation contexts conditioning agricultural production and product trading influence situations of food justice: R. Slocum *et al.* evoke the Common Agricultural Policy (PAC) of the European Union, with its subsidy system being nothing else but a machine reproducing inequalities. C. Keske *et al.* show that food sovereignty in Saint Pierre and Miquelon depends on natural resource, fishing and maritime boundary regulations between France and Canada. Food justice is also conditioned by structural political and geopolitical configurations, from local to global scale.

According to A. Beischer and J. Corbett, it seems that policies do not display or implement justice objectives: "*Ensuring equal access to good food is not regarded as a matter of political concern in wealthy countries*". Policies meet rather sustainability – including social – objectives. But this can be more balanced, by reworking the redistributive/inclusive social justice pair proposed as theoretical framework in F. Paddeu's article: the State acts in terms of redistributive social justice, for example by densifying the food bank coverage, while initiatives seek to correct the negative effects of structural inequalities. The problem resides perhaps less in the absence of a justice reference system in the policies⁵, than in choosing (probably intentionally) to restrict food justice to a question of commercial coverage, in short, of resource distribution, without proposing to bring in depth transformation to the food system. For, as indicated by several authors, the issue is above all to eliminate poverty, with food appearing here as a medium (among other things studied by other critical researchers), to re-politicise the debate and move towards greater democracy. The diversity of the modes of this emergent food governance is a sign that food justice is still seeking its ideal political organisation. Yet, this issue is questioning the collective form as basis of this ideal.

5.2 Do collective initiatives guarantee food justice?

By focusing on food initiatives and citizen mobilisations at the local level, this issue of JSSJ proposes a critical analysis of collective mobilisations, by questioning the '*participation = justice*' equation. The idea is commonly admitted that forms of co-operation between actors could lead to more participative (Young, 2000; Goodman, 2004; Maurines, 2012) and fairer food systems. But who should participate? Are activist movements for food justice representative of the population of an area or a town, or of minorities? Certain articles show that participation through associations has pernicious effects, or even reverse effects to those sought initially. In Lima, the *bioferias* that were created initially to pay producers better and offer quality food coming from community farming, are increasing inequalities between producers: only

⁵ This is manifest for example in France in the documents and programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture.

producers already part of a network have access to it, where these producers play a filtering role between the urban market and the producers (H. Leloup). In North American cities, F. Paddeu and R. Slocum *et al.* highlight the fact that the food justice movement remains trusted by an educated, predominantly white population which is often external to the areas where initiatives were established, and where minorities are little visible; the movement does not question the domination structures relying on white supremacy. That is why these articles highlight the urgency of deciphering the power relations taking place via agricultural and food resource (McClintock, 2014; Tornaghi, 2014).

In the process, the political dimension of food justice resides also in the collective dimension of the movement, the commonly admitted hypothesis being that collective forms of mobilisation propose an alternative compared to classic food actions, and make it possible to transform power relations on the basis of greater solidarity (Holloway *et al.*, 2007). There again, certain articles criticise the meaning given to collective, and more specifically to "community", expressions that have been hammered in by the food justice movement as the ideal political and social organisation. R. Slocum *et al.* ask wonder what it means "to be part of a community", and on what basis it is delimited. The articles call for putting into perspective the collective significance of initiatives, since they show that such initiatives rely amply on a relatively exclusive whiteness, preventing people from becoming aware of inequalities and structural differences. Moreover, the supposed alternative status of these communities is also widely criticised, insofar as they continue to function in the context of a free market economy (Allen *et al.*, 2003). As such, food justice, to be reached, might rely more on transnational solidarities able to change the asymmetrical "power geometries" at play in the global food system. The need to change level to create new solidarities, expressed through movements such as Via Campesina, questions whether local initiatives can become the departure points of more ambitious movements, working towards causes which can go beyond mere local preoccupations (e.g. fighting against racial inequalities or fighting against the employment of undocumented immigrant farm labourers, among others) and, in the

end, whether local initiatives can influence the political configurations of the global food system.

All these elements lead us to envisage the depoliticisation/repoliticisation dialectics of the food issue, its political visibility/invisibility, which depend on the actors taking care of it and on the corresponding modes of governance.

Conclusion: guests at the food justice table, exercise!

Focused on the links between agriculture and food justice, this issue of JSSJ raises perhaps even more questions in other domains (political and educational) than in the agricultural domain. The papers, focused rather on urban and peri-urban farming, and in the Global North, outline two-speed research between Global North / South fieldworks, between urbanists and ruralists, where the prism of food justice has still not been tested. Nevertheless, starting from agriculture made it possible to come out of the urban consumers' point of view. The articles highlight the importance of food injustice linked to agricultural resources, or found in the production and transformation of agricultural products. Two research axis seem primordial for future works: conceiving agricultural resources also from the point of view of minorities and marginalised persons (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011), which is urgently needed to ensure the positive evolution of their situation; and relying on injustice linked to land-access (Perrin), which is urgently needed to preserve equitable access to resources.

Food justice seeks change and is in itself a vector of change against social and spatial injustice. On the one hand, the departure point is well documented and known: this issue lets go beyond the definition of the food justice movement, as a review of the dominant and alternative food systems, by emphasising not only the symptoms of inequalities, but also the historical and social processes behind food injustice (and going beyond food issues). The arrival point on the other hand is also outlined: thanks to the research conducted on the spatial dimension of food justice, we can begin to see what a food justice space could look like, even if there seems to be no consensus on what a food justice agri-food model could be like.

Nevertheless, between reality and utopia, there is still a gap to fill. The relations between socio-spatial justice and food justice have still not been fully explored, even if the articles open two very promising research axis. Change can only be carried out through exchange and solidarity, between actors and spaces that are currently ignoring one another. The idea is not only to compensate for racially and socially homogenous communities, or to only invite oneself at the same table as the other, but *to learn* from this exchange “the materiality” of inequality (R. Slocum *et al.*). However, this compensation which aims at going beyond juxtaposition to move towards the *intersecting* of viewpoints, can only take place through praxis, as used by R. Slocum *et al.* as well as A. Beischer and J. Corbett to indicate the mixing of theory and action in the fight to change the world (Wakefield, 2007). Praxis fills the gaps left by local policies, and has the capacity to restore a democratic food system that can integrate marginalised groups. Finally, it could result in the political recognition of collective action, and give food justice political significance reaching far beyond community circles.

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