



# Advancing Food Sovereignty Through Interrogating the Question: What is Food Sovereignty?

Shane Epting<sup>1</sup>

Accepted: 6 October 2018  
© Springer Nature B.V. 2018

## Abstract

The topic of food sovereignty has received ample attention from philosophers and interdisciplinary scholars, from how to conceptualize the term to how globalization shapes it, and several areas in between. This bounty of research informs us about food sovereignty's practical dimensions, but the theoretical realm still has lessons to teach us, especially how to develop action-based guides to achieve it. This paper is an exploration in that direction. To have that effect, the author interrogates the question, "what is food sovereignty?", through asking about its motivations, scale, and the answers that will inform solutions. This process reveals that, despite the differences between conceptions of food sovereignties, there is a pattern at play that concerns their nature. The benefit of gaining an understanding of this pattern is to uncover the necessary elements that each solution will require.

**Keywords** Strong food sovereignty · Weak food sovereignty · Philosophy of food

## Introduction

Philosophers have done a great deal of work interpreting the world of food, and a few of them realize that the point is to change it. For example, a recent anthology focuses on food-justice issues in cities such as Detroit, examining how such efforts lead to real-world improvements (Werkheiser and Piso 2017). While this research informs us about the work being done in the fields and on the streets, there is more conceptual analysis that requires us to spend time tinkering with ideas in armchairs, barstools, at kitchen tables, and perhaps at drive-through windows.

To this end, plenty has also been said about the theoretical notions that pertain to food sovereignty. Academics and activists have developed several definitions and accounts (Via Campesina 2007; Jarosz 2014; Navin 2014; Grey and Patel 2015). They charted its historical influence, developing different categories that help us

---

✉ Shane Epting  
shane.epting@gmail.com

<sup>1</sup> Department of Philosophy, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

understand various social and political circumstances (Werkheiser 2014; Werkheiser and Noll 2014; Werkheiser et al. 2015; Menser 2014; Epting 2016). Scholars have enlightened us to the many ways that globalization shapes and brings forth calls for food sovereignty (Ayres and Bosia 2011). There are also several accounts that speak to different forms of oppressions that have correlating forms of revolution (Holt-Giménez and Altieri 2013). Researchers have also debated its limits (Bernstein 2014; Whyte 2016). Despite showing that food sovereignty is a resourceful concept for thinking about food-related issues, it has critics. Aerni (2011), for instance, holds that for several of the people working to gain food sovereignty, it is not an ideal lifestyle, showing that people employing the concept in different parts of the world are dealing with vastly different conditions. Moreover, historical incidents also show that food sovereignty is not always as glorious as it sounds (Aerni 2011).

While the non-exhaustive list of topics above have been thoroughly investigated, the subject that receives nary an inquiry is the question: *what is food sovereignty?* Upon first glance, one might think that I am merely asking the question, “what is food sovereignty?”, but that would be a mistake. I already said that such inquiries have been thoroughly explored. I mean, let us examine the question itself: what is food sovereignty? Although we could learn about several aspects of food sovereignty through employing different disciplinary or interdisciplinary lens, my goal is to exhibit that we can understand food sovereignty by interrogating the question above. Most importantly, through analyzing the question, we can also learn about the answers, or, rather—the solutions.

I intend to show that such an investigation can inform us about the conditions that surround the topic, the specific circumstances that move us to care about the inquiry. That is to say, what leads people to wonder about food sovereignty? The short answer is injustice. At the heart of the matter, this notion is what we seek to understand. To undertake this task, I ask: what is the goal of posing the question, “what is food sovereignty?”. After addressing this concern, I investigate the scale of our inquiry, paying attention to the details of food sovereignty at the individual, community, state, national, and international levels. Once we have a better understanding of food sovereignties of scale, I examine how these elements could impact their required solutions. This interrogation shows that there is an underlying pattern that connects calls for food sovereignty, despite having great differences in the specifics that we find with each case. While this investigation has the inherent value of theoretical speculation, understanding this pattern will benefit researchers who are working toward food sovereignty, at least that is the goal. In turn, this paper reviews the literature on the subject, examines the tensions and cohesions that are found throughout food sovereignty movements, and then it sketches some practical ways to work towards food sovereignty.

## The Goal of Inquiry

One way to answer the question above is to hold that the goal of any food sovereignty discourse should be to rid ourselves of the need to have discussions about food sovereignty. Aside from the inherent joys of rigorous speculation, we would

probably not be asking the question if there were no problems with the food supply or issues related to food security. However, considering that food researchers have produced a litany of publications that address problems that pertain to the production, control, marketing, consumption, and disposal of food, we have good reason to believe that our food systems are in peril (e.g. Thompson and Kaplan 2014).

Due to these dangers, we merge the concepts of “food” and “sovereignty” to give us a theoretical device, “food sovereignty”. One of the motivations behind developing this term is that it can reveal that our collective ability to preserve the integrity of our food supply demands attention. Through putting these words together, we underscore the idea that food is inextricably bound to the political realm (Wilde 2013). This reality suggests that we can develop measures that can alleviate or can exacerbate social or public-health harms, conditions that move us to formulate responses to the question.

To focus on another dimension of the question, through posing the query, “what is food sovereignty?” we find that there is an implied notion that the person asking the question wants an answer for a particular reason, assuming that such a purpose is not for the intrinsic value of inquiring. One could argue that the motivation behind posing the question is to figure out how to obtain food sovereignty, either for one’s self, community, or for a higher cause such as justice in society. If a person is attempting to define the concept of food sovereignty, and it is implied that they want it, then we can also know that the possibility exists for someone or something else to have it, meaning that the questioner probably does not possess it, either partially or fully. From this point, we can identify a certain tension between the individual or group who does not have authority over their food security and the entities that do have control over it. That is, identifying the political nature of sovereignty with respect to basic control over who has access to food or healthy food in a way that is consistent and dependable is a critical aspect of carrying on such a discourse.

Conversely, we also can know that the opposite could be the case. People could have food sovereignty because they have either reclaimed or defended it from a party that wants power over food. If there is a struggle between two parties, say the government and community, then the possibility exists that there could be different varieties or competing degrees of food sovereignty. For example, there could be absolute or near-absolute food sovereignty, suggesting that a person or community could have total control over all or virtually all aspects of their food supply. We could call this absolute, total or “strong” food sovereignty, keeping in mind the degree of authority that is required to have it, “total food liberationists”. For example, the Declaration of Nyéléni (Via Campesina 2007) would fit under this description, considering the scope of the requirements that they demand. Consider the following excerpt:

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime,

and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal-fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

While the above passage does not include all of the aspects of concern, it exhibits that food sovereignty is not an isolated issue. It remains interconnected with numerous other aspects of life, and wanting to have this degree of authority would require more control than regulation of agricultural production allows, considering that it extensively appeals to markets and future generations. It goes beyond wanting to grow vegetables and raise backyard chickens. If we are to engage in a battle for food sovereignty, then we concurrently must engage in numerous other struggles. This approach wants to control the means of production while keeping an eye on future generations, along with several other considerations. It also wants to delegitimize the economic controls of competing national sovereignties, pitting one sovereignty against another—the nation state versus local communities. However, if this approach is too extreme, then there is reason and room to compromise.

This leads directly to the approach that would allow for citizens to participate in the decisions that control *some* of the aspects that pertain to food in various capacities. This version would be compatible or “weak” food sovereignty, wherein governments and people share control over the elements that pertain to a jurisdiction’s food security, a form of what could be called ‘food co-sovereignty.’ We could further divide this category into a range of outcomes, considering that there are numerous ways to compromise. Menser’s (2014) account of state-sponsored food sovereignty would match this description, a kind of food sovereignty wherein the government retained official control over food but permitted the people to control its local production and consumption (e.g. Cuba). Within the spectrum of weak food sovereignty, there is no reason why there cannot be different arrangements wherein compromises of authority are expressed through several outcomes. People or groups can differently control elements of their food supply.

For instance, one could argue that local food movements around the world aim to have a kind of authority that does not want to extensively deal with the minutiae of food production and distribution. They simply want to grow vegetables such as tomatoes and lettuce, in the vein of community gardens. While such efforts greatly differ from the motivations found in state-sponsored food sovereignty, remaining compatible with the government shows that this kind of food sovereignty is weak, albeit weaker than Menser’s (2014) description of state-sponsored food sovereignty. To count as meaningful, however, steps would have to be taken to ensure that citizen participation could actually have an impact, rather than giving the illusion of amelioration of the lack of food sovereignty (Barber 1984).

Lastly, of course, there is no food sovereignty, a case that is defined by its absence, meaning that an external power forbids your ability to be sovereign over your food, either unofficially or through tacitly controlling enough of the food system that all practical considerations are rendered useless. That is to say, through a

complex web of bureaucracy or political double-speak, a government could provide the illusion that people have a say in the decisions that pertain to food security, but such arrangements would lack any kind of meaningful ability to improve the food system. While such an option is not something that people who are fighting for food sovereignty would ever want or graciously accept, it is a possibility in the range of answers, suggesting that it should be included for the purposes of a thorough investigation.

Bearing in mind that these kinds of food sovereignties can exist, they would intersect with different political systems. The kind of food sovereignty that would emerge would correlate to the political entity in question. For example, in a dictatorship, there would likely be an absence of food sovereignty. In a representative democracy, there could be a compatibilist version of the concept. People could choose to have their own food sovereignty or relinquish it to another party, or perhaps some combination of these extremes, hence “weak” food sovereignty.

Although the list above is non-exhaustive, it indicates the variety of alternative political systems that will or will not permit food sovereignty, along with their respective gradations. One challenge to this view is that it is not possible to have kinds of food sovereignty, either you have it or you do not have it. For instance, one could argue that food sovereignty entails that you have control over food security. Yet, if a person or group only controls a particular aspect of their food supply, then they are under the impression that they can determine their food security, but they cannot control the conditions that set the course for their food supply, meaning that any kind of “weak” food sovereignty only counts as a way to placate people who need to believe that they have control. In reality, however, having minimal influence does not equal having an ability to determine the conditions of your food security. It is merely a version of “illusionary control” (Thompson 1999, 187). In turn, anything less than absolute or strong food sovereignty is an illusion.

While such a response does pose certain challenges for the view holding that there can be degrees of food sovereignty, it fails to weigh a significant consideration. That is to say, simply because one cannot decide the extent that one can or cannot influence all aspects that pertain to food security does not eliminate one’s ability to determine the conditions of the dimensions that a person actually can control. For example, people could be free to grow crops, but the government could oversee animal husbandry. People would not have complete authority, but they would not be without some degree of power. Although it does not eliminate the possibility that previously granted powers could be withheld, this point establishes the possibility that compatibilists’ positions have a strong case.

Having seen that our primary question can tell us a lot about the conditions that surround food sovereignty, we can now investigate how we can extend the question to larger and complex cases wherein the topic applies. For instance, we have seen why individuals and groups would want to pose the question, along with the goals that motivate such inquires, but there are other actors that can impact food sovereignty. In the following section, I undertake the task of examining the scales that need to be taken into account when applying the insights that I listed above. This moves the discussion from theoretical speculation to practical application.

## The Scale of the Question

While we addressed the notion of personal and community food sovereignty in the previous section, the question, “what is food sovereignty?” goes beyond mere categorical speculation. Of course, the individual person is the extreme lower limit to this scale, but what about the opposite end with larger bodies such as nations? Can they hinder another country’s food sovereignty? Bearing in the mind that we live in a globalized world, addressing this dimension will show us how we must weigh this consideration. For instance, Jonas (1984) suggests that today’s geopolitical power-struggles mean that we have to talk about exploitation and oppression between nations, mostly in terms of resources and production.

If we consider the power dynamics behind trade wars, intergovernmental neo-liberal trade agreements, and involvement from international financing organizations, then it is simply naive to deny that stronger nations can exploit weaker ones. Stronger nations could leverage other nations and organizations to direct food production so that it works to their advantage. In turn, the complexities of these interactions play out in actual scenarios that lead to food insecurity through distorted control of food supplies and availability can create conditions wherein one nation or a group of them can affect the quality of another nation’s food sovereignty. When such events happen, we can apply the same reasoning about why and how such events unfold from the previous section to those situations, along with the views on weak and strong food sovereignties.

Depending on the political circumstances, a nation could end up with one of these food sovereignties, bearing in mind that there would have to be adjustments in these categories to account for the shift in scale. If a powerful country is free to engage in any kind of agricultural production to have food security, then we could say that they have strong food sovereignty on a grand scale. However, if a smaller nation were beholden to an international monetary agency for developmental funds, and part of repayment conditions included provisions for growing tea, but they were free to produce all other foods, then we could say that they have a very weak sense of food sovereignty. The danger with this issue is that millions or billions of people could be subject to the harmful conditions that could come about due to the unjust conditions that lead us to ask, “what is food sovereignty?”.

With dominant nations wielding power as single actors, all individuals remain subject to such an authority, and control over food security could be out of the people’s grasp. Moreover, it could be the case that a government could be indirectly influenced through political chicanery. Consider, for instance, that a study from Gilens and Page (2014) shows that everyday citizens lack any practical means of influencing their elected representatives in the US, but corporations who that make significant campaign contributions have such abilities. Bearing this position in mind, food conglomerates could attain control of a country’s food supply or influence foreign policy in a manner that could impact another nation(s). If one nation were inclined to appropriate the food supply from another country, or aimed to supply food to another nation in a manner that impeded local residents’ established practices, then this kind of situation could entice the population to

push for food sovereignty on a smaller scale, sending a ripple of protest through both nations. However, if things were fair on this scale—then we could deliver a better quality of life for those same populations. This point gestures toward my claim that the goal of food sovereignty discourse is to eliminate the need to ask questions about food sovereignty, assuming that the production of food was not subject to conditions that would garner grand-scale social disapproval.

Keeping these points in mind, along with the concerns addressed in the previous sections, we have enhanced our understanding about the purpose and scale of the question, “what is food sovereignty?”,—or at least that was the goal. Through this interrogation, we have a better understanding behind our motivations for posing the inquiry, along with an understanding that it can transcend the individual. Having problematized the issue of food sovereignty in these ways, we can venture into (mostly) uncharted territory: solutions. That is to say, the fact that we are dealing with a question of this caliber suggests that we are also looking for an answer, or, solution. In the section that follows, I focus on this topic.

## Solutions for Food Sovereignty

“What is food sovereignty?”, the question under interrogation is now ready to be examined about its possible answers. One can also assume that we are not merely looking for an answer to the question, but *we want an answer that informs action*. Such an answer can inform policymakers so that they can develop realistic solutions, on local and global scales. For example, if I were to say that food sovereignty is the ability of people to have authority over their food security, then we would use this answer to guide how we develop policies that would facilitate bringing this definition into the lived world. Yet, bearing in mind food sovereignties of scale, we cannot assume that all groups participating in food sovereignty movements are engaged in the same fight, but it might be safe to say that they are all fighting on the same side of food justice. In turn, the solutions that are informed by an answer remain interconnected, even though they differ.

Once we know what is food sovereignty, we need to ask: how can we facilitate a process that would bring it to the parties that want it? One complication is that, as indicated earlier, not all food sovereignty movements require the same kind of solutions. On one hand, for strong food sovereignty, as we saw in the Declaration of Nyéléni, an acceptable solution could require complete and total food liberation. On the other hand, weak food sovereignty might only require that we address particular elements that the food sovereignists desire. This point could indicate that food sovereignty discourses are too dissimilar to have a common conversation. To deliver a viable and shared solution means that we have to identify the commonalities between them. When we stack them against each other, we can identify a pattern that emerges from behind the particular characteristics.

For instance, the kind of strong food sovereignty activism that we saw in the Declaration of Nyéléni has received criticisms for being too expansive (Flora 2011). It wants to fix a broken world in order to deal with a malfunctioning food system. I am sympathetic to these critiques because they are assessing the effectiveness of

dealing with an isolated topic, one that needs attention to alleviate harm and prevent future suffering. However, food is not an issue that we can easily separate from its socio-political-material surroundings. Bearing in mind that food is social and political, these elements affect the physical distribution of networks that feed the people on the planet. To pretend that these issues can be dealt with in a vacuum is to avoid the harsh realities that remain inextricably linked to food: exploitation and abuse of workers and nations, along with treatment of nonhuman environments that have led to climate change. If we were to tackle all of the stipulations described in the Declaration of Nyéléni, it would require a global revolution.

When dealing with weak food sovereignty, there is no demand for a food uprising. Yet, this notion does not entail that it is entirely different from strong food sovereignty. Consider, for example, community-focused food sub-movements that hold food sovereignty as a value and a goal (Werkheiser and Noll 2014). One reason that they could champion this cause is due to topics such as food deserts. For example, scholars who examine food deserts argue that the socio-material arrangements of transport infrastructure and policies, coupled with aspects such as zoning and crime, directly impact people's food security (Walker et al. 2010; Guy et al. 2004; Acheson 1998). Such considerations could remain hidden through blending in with the backdrop of our urban existence. However, a solution to such a problem would require us to go beyond discussions centered on food, but we would also have to examine how food issues emerge in complex urban networks that involve topics such as municipal budgets, infrastructure management, zoning ordinances, and lending practices. Consider, for instance, what sense would it make to say, "well, our city has crumbling infrastructure and polluted water, but at least our people have food sovereignty!"

With this point in mind, we should be motivated to identify that the common ground that strong and weak food sovereignties share because we cannot determine the requirements for a solution in isolation from the larger socio-political panorama. There is a basic underlying pattern at play with regards to developing a solution to different kinds of food sovereignties. The significance of this point is that there is a basic injustice that drives people to ask questions about food sovereignty. Through focusing on this aspect, we can begin to better understand how to develop solutions that are informed by answers to the question, "what is food sovereignty?"

Now, I want to turn our attention toward how we can work with this notion to create pathways to food sovereignties. For instance, in a paper published elsewhere, I argued that we could pair participatory budgeting with vertical agriculture to increase community's food sovereignty (Epting 2016). Although this work modestly deals with a partial solution to food sovereignty in a site-specific context, it vacillates between practice and theory, leaving much of the theoretical grounds concealed. Regarding the practical affairs of such a project, those concerns are addressed most fully if we turn them over to engineers, architects, planners, community groups, and municipal representatives.

On the theoretical side, however, I argued that to increase and improve global food sovereignty, to deliver radical change, we had to do so in an incremental fashion (*ibid.*). I held that to take command of food security, communities could engage in projects that would lessen multinational food conglomerates' stranglehold on the world's food supply (*ibid.*). Keeping in mind that these companies control

the majority of food sources, from bioengineered seeds to products' placement on stores' shelves, I argued that radical change had to be gradual (*ibid.*). Yet, the challenge to this view is that the terms "radical" and "gradual" seem incongruent (*ibid.*). Sticking with a strict definition, "radical" means a complete and foundational change to something. Yet, as we have come to know it today, "radical" bears a connotation that it happens at once, a *coup d'état*, so to speak (*ibid.*).

To radically change the food system, according to contemporary conceptions of the term (e.g. Nyéléni), we need revolution in the aisles of supermarkets. Golden, neon arches smashed. Toppling monuments of hamburger-hawking clowns—as if they were statues of Saddam Hussein in Bagdad or Vladimir Lenin in Kiev. Farmlands returned to their iconic glory. Imagine husbands and wives holding pitchforks in front of family farmhouses, providing food security for the townsfolk. Factory farms closing. Although such utopian food visions would delight gastronomic incrowds, they are highly unrealistic. An alternative is to provide whole foods through incremental progress, gradually working towards food justice. While this description is hyperbolic, it shows that if we employ the term "radical" in its popular usage—one that seems consistent with total food liberation—then we choose a path that is subject to the same ridicule as the statements above, if they were meant to be taken at face value. In turn, we must ignore such positions. Instead, endorsing a course that can stand up to basic scrutiny and facilitate the changes that reasonable food sovereignty requires sounds appropriate.

If we turn to the kind of changes that strong food sovereignty advocates demand, achieving this goal will require the concerted efforts of communities, congressional committees, farmers, and experts in logistics, just to name a few. Such an approach would take time, perhaps decades. Paying attention to this practical element requires that we abandon the instantaneous demand for "Food Justice Now!" Here is the bottom line: if you want to fundamentally change food systems in order to restore food sovereignty, the realistic ways that could bring it to fruition are not consistent with contemporary views of what it means to be radical (*ibid.*). We must make concessions to practical considerations. It will be an arduous battle with very little instant gratification. When we consider that piecemeal progress is the most likely way to advance the goals of the food sovereignty movement in a county such as the US, then we can extrapolate details about the global food system.

This point brings up a certain tension that pertains to how we conceptualize solutions to problems such as food sovereignty. That is to say, should we address them as isolated issues to deliver desired and specific outcomes such as alleviating harm, or should we just turn to environmental virtue ethics or care ethics to deliver an ethical mindset that is required to cultivate the kind of character that would be sympathetic toward improving issues that stem from a lack of food sovereignty? Both make theoretical sense, but it seems impractical to think that changing people's worldviews on complex food issues could deliver faster and better outcomes for people who are suffering due to food harms, bearing in mind that now we are thinking about food issues as inherently interconnected and multidimensional affairs.

Perhaps we could develop international, national, and municipal policies geared toward changing mindsets, a process that could deliver gradual change to all of the areas that require attention. This point bolsters the gradually radical solution that I

suggested above, but it adds additional layers that could significantly delay actions that could mitigate food harms. Due to this expansion, alleviating the conditions that turn people toward wanting food sovereignty becomes an even more distant reality. The means in this sense eliminate the possibility of securing the ends. In turn, we are better suited to employ an approach that has the mere possibility of attainment. To this end, we can verify that community groups have made modest progress towards achieving food sovereignty, while making simultaneous progress toward the need to not have conversations about it. We can follow and learn from their success.

That is to say, community gardens and farmers markets have steadily increased over the last few decades, and their presence has also had unintended consequences for areas that are seemingly unrelated to food (Voicu and Been 2008). While there are different kinds of community gardens (city-sponsored, religious, private), they do exist within political jurisdictions, meaning that they are weak forms of food sovereignty. For example, research shows that community gardens play a role in decreasing crime rates and increasing property values (*ibid.*). If these kinds of results become the norm, then they could eventually blend in with the urban landscape, becoming the rule instead of the exception. Assuming that this could be a reality, then “food sovereignty” could become a distant notion that does not require a movement because it is a sustained and integral part of communities. If such an outcome were to happen, then we would not need the concept of food sovereignty to serve as a theoretical device to understand food injustices. In turn, we would not need to have conversations about food sovereignty.

## Conclusion

Although “total food sovereignty now!” or “complete control over all elements that affect a community’s food security” might be an unfeasible answer to the question, “what is food sovereignty?” moving toward this goal remains a worthwhile undertaking for instrumental and intrinsic reasons. Appealing to the former is obvious, but the latter suggests that there is something that is inherently good about controlling one’s food supply. I will not debate this point, but I will question if it provides us with enough reason to pursue it. If it is necessary, then what are its limits? One set of limits is when food becomes weaponized or is used as a means of oppression or any similar scenario. The other set of limits is when food systems remain just.

While hoping for a just food system might be too ambitious, having one that is always working toward this goal could provide us with an ethical orientation toward food systems. If we can envision such outcomes, then conversations about food sovereignty that will endure become not a fight for what is good, but an intellectual undertaking that shows that the questioners have sided with the right side of food history. Living in such a world entails that we should not be satisfied with unjust food systems, and lacking food justice should provide food movements with the motivation to persist, delivering incremental progress.

Despite our theoretical exercises, community groups have formed sub-movements wherein food sovereignty is a required component for food security, and they have been able to secure a weak version. (Werkheiser and Noll 2014).

Although their efforts remain modest, they show that progress is possible. One could argue that any such progress could not have an impact on the overall condition of global food justice. This is a fair point when considering the minimal impact that they make on a global scale. However, this criticism does not eliminate the reality that they do take steps to improve the quality and integrity of their local food, a humble step towards better outcomes.

Jonas (1984) argues that nothing entraps like success, that once a technology or technique takes hold in society, it secures its presence (at least until another successful technology comes along). The thinking behind this point is to be sure about the technologies that we want to unleash upon society. There may be no turning back. They might seem benign at first, but they could have harmful and accumulating effects that only emerge after they have become fixtures in society. Although this notion sounds insidiously detrimental, the right plans could produce beneficial outcomes that play a larger role in just food systems. Considering that technologies could bolster efforts at creating inclusive food systems, enterprising municipalities could work with communities to create them. Bearing in mind that earlier I showed that community gardens are increasing, and food-justice advocates are using advanced technology to improve the conditions that pertain to food justice, this success could entrap us, creating a dependency of a delivering just food systems, one farm and one table at a time.

## References

- Acheson, D. (1998). *Independent inquiry into inequalities in health*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Aerni, P. (2011). Food sovereignty and its discontents. *African Technology Development Forum Journal*, 8, 23–40.
- Ayres, J., & Bosia, M. J. (2011). Beyond global summitry: Food sovereignty as localized resistance to globalization. *Globalizations*, 8(1), 47–63.
- Barber, B. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Bernstein, H. (2014). Food sovereignty via the ‘peasant way’: A sceptical view. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41, 1031–1063.
- Epting, S. (2016). Participatory budgeting and vertical agriculture: A thought experiment in food system reform. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 29(5), 737–748.
- Flora, C. (2011). Review: Schanbacher, William D.: The politics of food: The global conflict between food security and food sovereignty. *Journal of Agriculture and Environment Ethics*, 24, 545–547.
- Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 564–581.
- Grey, S., & Patel, R. (2015). Food sovereignty as decolonization: Some contributions from indigenous movements to food system and development politics. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 32, 431–444.
- Guy, C., Clarke, G., & Eyre, H. (2004). Food retail change and the growth of food deserts: A case study of Cardiff. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 32(2), 72–88.
- Holt-Giménez, E., & Altieri, M. A. (2013). Agroecology, food sovereignty, and the new green revolution. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, 37(1), 90–102.
- Jarosz, L. (2014). Comparing food security and food sovereignty discourses. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 4(2), 168–181.
- Jonas, H. (1984). *The imperative of responsibility. In search of an ethics for the technological age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Menser, M. (2014). The territory of self-determination: Social reproduction, agroecology, and the role of the state. In P. Andree, J. Ayres, M. Bosia, & M. Massicotte (Eds.), *Globalization and food sovereignty: Global and local change in new politics of food*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Navin, M. (2014). Local food and international ethics. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 27, 349–368.
- Thompson, Suzanne C. (1999). Illusions of control: How we overestimate our personal influence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, Association for Psychological Science*, 8(6), 187–190.
- Thompson, P., & Kaplan, D. (2014). *Encyclopedia of food and agricultural ethics*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Via Campesina. (2007). (27 February 2007), Declaration of Nyéléni, Sélingué, Mali. <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>. Accessed 13 July 2018.
- Voicu, I., & Been, V. (2008). The effect of community gardens on neighboring property values. *Real Estate Economics*, 36(2), 241–283.
- Walker, R. E., Keane, C. R., & Burke, J. G. (2010). Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature. *Health & Place*, 16(5), 876–884.
- Werkheiser, I. (2014). Food sovereignty, health sovereignty, and self-organised community viability. *Interdisciplinary Environmental Review*, 15(2/3), 134–146.
- Werkheiser, I., & Noll, S. (2014). From food justice to a tool of the status quo: Three sub-movements within local food. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 27, 201–210.
- Werkheiser, I., & Piso, Z. (Eds.). (2017). *Food justice in US and global contexts: Bringing theory and practice together*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Werkheiser, I., Tyler, S., & Thompson, P. (2015). Food sovereignty: Two conceptions of food justice. In J. Dieterle (Ed.), *Just food: Philosophy, justice and food*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Whyte, K. (2016). Renewing relatives: Indigenous food sovereignty and settler colonialism. In M. Rawlinson & C. Ward (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of food ethics* (pp. 354–365). New York: Routledge.
- Wilde, Parke. (2013). *Food policy in the United States: An introduction*. London: Routledge.