

Irena Knezevic · Alison Blay-Palmer  
Charles Z. Levkoe · Phil Mount  
Erin Nelson *Editors*

# Nourishing Communities

From Fractured Food Systems to  
Transformative Pathways

 Springer

# Nourishing Communities

Irena Knezevic · Alison Blay-Palmer  
Charles Z. Levkoe · Phil Mount  
Erin Nelson  
Editors

# Nourishing Communities

From Fractured Food Systems  
to Transformative Pathways

 Springer

*Editors*

Irena Knezevic  
Carleton University  
Ottawa, ON  
Canada

Phil Mount  
Just Food  
Ottawa, ON  
Canada

Alison Blay-Palmer  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
Waterloo, ON  
Canada

Erin Nelson  
International Development Studies  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, ON  
Canada

Charles Z. Levkoe  
Department of Health Sciences  
Lakehead University  
Thunder Bay, ON  
Canada

ISBN 978-3-319-56999-4

ISBN 978-3-319-57000-6 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-57000-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017937521

© Springer International Publishing AG 2017

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature  
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Preface

*Nourishing Communities: From Fractured Food Systems to Transformative Pathways* is the product of more than a decade of collaborative work by a network of scholars, community-based partners and practitioners interested in constructing more sustainable and just food systems. Established in 2007, the Nourishing Communities research network aimed to foster direct connections between university- and community-based actors, and to draw on tools rooted in both theory and practice to support food system transformation. Our early work was based primarily in the province of Ontario, Canada, where we explored a wide range of sustainable food systems initiatives in an effort to better understand their successes, innovations and challenges and make their experiences more accessible to a wider audience. Drawing on the varied backgrounds and areas of expertise of the network's first members, we adopted an interdisciplinary approach and collaborated closely with regionally anchored community organizations, businesses and government personnel representing the interrelated actors that comprise a food system.

As our work evolved, so too did these relationships and connections with community partners from different sectors, creating a number of opportunities. For example, we began to more explicitly incorporate *participatory action research* into our activities, collaborating in action-oriented projects with a food justice organization in eastern Ontario, a participatory research network with close ties to First Nations communities in northern Ontario, and a municipal government and food system roundtable in the south-western part of the province. Beyond those specific in-depth efforts, we also began to turn more directly to our growing network of partners to inform our data collection and analysis and to more fundamentally shape our work by identifying their most pressing research needs. We established a system of multi-actor regional advisory committees that, through regular meetings and ongoing communication, could identify areas of investigation crucial to understanding key challenges and promising trajectories for the development of sustainable and resilient place-based community food systems. Drawing heavily on the ideas and expertise shared by these advisors, our work in Ontario has explored a

number of specific themes related to local sustainable food systems, including tensions between food affordability and producer livelihoods; connections between food and housing security; access to land for new farmers; creative food distribution models that serve both small farm and limited access communities; and innovative food initiative financing strategies such as crowdfunding.

While this research helped us to better understand the ongoing transformations in Ontario's diverse food systems, it was clear that our work would be far richer if it could be expanded in scope to allow for trans-local learning beyond the boundaries of one Canadian province. Building upon the solid structural foundation of community-university partnership that had been developed through our efforts in Ontario, we began to extend the network by turning to colleagues in other parts of Canada, as well as the USA, Europe, Africa and Latin America, fostering more active relationships of collaboration with them and, by extension, their networks of community partners. As a result of this process, the Nourishing Communities research network has evolved to become a continuously growing global network of scholars and practitioners deeply concerned about food system transformation.

Housed in Waterloo, Ontario, at Wilfrid Laurier University's Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, our collaborative research and action projects continue to be shaped by advisory committees that, now regional, national and international in scope, ensure our connection to a wide range of grass-roots, place-based food initiatives. Simultaneously, these activities create opportunities for dialogue at a global scale regarding the imagination and construction of more sustainable food systems. As we have grown from a regionally focused to a global community of practice, the Nourishing Communities research network has remained committed to the spirit of multi-actor engagement and interdisciplinarity—as well as to the participatory, action-oriented approach grounded in community-identified priorities—that informed our initial work. In all of our work, we actively seek to cultivate and maintain relationships with community partners that are based on an exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity that brings mutual benefit to all those involved.

While the chapters in this collection could not possibly cover the full scope of collaborative projects associated with our network, this collection of chapters represents many of the key learnings of the Nourishing Communities work to date and highlights some of the commonalities and divergences of the sustainable food system research and practice engaged in by our group. Our research partnership has grown from a handful of actors in 2007 to now include nearly one hundred organizations, from universities and research centres to small community-based organizations. As we have worked to weave together the diversity of initiatives and experiences represented by Nourishing Communities, we are gradually fine-tuning our understandings of some of the key concepts used in our work. Far from offering

any definitive conclusions, *Nourishing Communities* aims to provide a general foundation for the interrogation of sustainability and transformation of food systems, with a recognition that specific conceptualizations and uses of these concepts are contested and context specific—as pathways to food systems transformation.

Ottawa, Canada  
Thunder Bay, Canada  
Guelph, Canada  
Ottawa, Canada  
Waterloo, Canada

Irena Knezevic  
Charles Z. Levkoe  
Erin Nelson  
Phil Mount  
Alison Blay-Palmer

# Contents

## Part I Need for Transformations

- 1 Connecting Food Access and Housing Security: Lessons from Peterborough, Ontario** ..... 3  
Patricia Ballamingie, Peter Andrée, Mary Anne Martin  
and Julie Pilson
- 2 Strengthening the Backbone: Local Food, Foreign Labour and Social Justice** ..... 23  
Janet McLaughlin
- 3 Community Food Security in Pictou Landing First Nation** ..... 41  
Pictou Landing First Nation and Irena Knezevic
- 4 The US Experience in Planning for Community Food Systems: An Era of Advocacy, Awareness, and (Some) Learning** ..... 59  
Samina Raja, Subhashni Raj and Bartholomew Roberts

## Part II Pathways to Transformation

- 5 Can Community-Based Initiatives Address the Conundrum of Improving Household Food Access While Supporting Local Smallholder Farmer Livelihoods?** ..... 77  
Peter Andrée, Patricia Ballamingie, Stephen Piazza  
and Scott Jarosiewicz
- 6 Nourishing Learning Environments: School Food Gardens and Sustainable Food Systems** ..... 95  
Elizabeth Nowatschin, Karen Landman and Erin Nelson
- 7 Using a Complexity Lens to Address Local Food Dilemmas in Northern Ontario: The Viability of Crowdsourcing and Crowdfunding** ..... 113  
Mirella Stroink, Connie H. Nelson and Adam C. Davis



**8 The Local Food Policy Audit: Spanning the Civic-Political Agrifood Divide** . . . . . 131  
Jill K. Clark, Caitlin Marquis and Samina Raja

**9 Supply Management as Food Sovereignty** . . . . . 147  
Phil Mount

**10 Navigating Spaces for Political Action: Victories and Compromises for Mexico’s Local Organic Movement** . . . . . 165  
Erin Nelson and Laura Gómez Tovar

**11 Communities of Food Practice: Regional Networks as Strategic Tools for Food Systems Transformation** . . . . . 183  
Charles Z. Levkoe

**12 Postscript** . . . . . 201  
Alison Blay-Palmer, Irena Knezevic, Charles Z. Levkoe, Phil Mount and Erin Nelson

**Erratum to: Strengthening the Backbone: Local Food, Foreign Labour and Social Justice** . . . . . E1

**Index** . . . . . 205

# Introduction

Over the past three decades, hundreds of community food initiatives have sprung up across North America. Diverse as they are in their mandates and levels of success, they collectively contribute to transformational changes to food systems. Take the example of FoodShare in Toronto. In 1985, the City of Toronto was experiencing deep economic crisis and, along with it, a crisis of food insecurity. As part of the response, the municipal government funded a small \$30,000 pilot project designed to connect food donors with people in need. Early leaders of this initiative, which was given the name FoodShare, recognized that reliance on a charity-based model of emergency food relief would never adequately address the problems of poverty and hunger that were plaguing the city. As a result, FoodShare decided to focus its efforts on coordinating food aid, but also advocating for systemic solutions such as increasing the minimum wage, providing more affordable housing and day care, getting trucks coming from the Ontario Food Terminal to supply co-op markets and improving social assistance. They also made it a priority to research the underlying causes of rising rates of food insecurity and food bank use in the city. Although initially there was just one staff person and a tiny budget, the agenda was ambitious and that ambition proved effective. By 2016, FoodShare had become one of Canada's leading food movement organizations, distributing more than two million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables through a range of programmes, including a Good Food Box, urban agriculture sites, partnerships with several remote northern Indigenous communities and student nutrition programmes delivered in partnership with School Boards, their Foundations, Toronto Public Health and community groups serving more than 1,77,000 students across more than 500 schools. Given this success, it is not surprising that, in 2012, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, included a visit to FoodShare as part of his Canadian mission. This provided an opportunity for the organization to raise the profile of its long-time advocacy for a national student nutrition policy and broader changes to Canada's public food system. To this day, FoodShare continues to be a key voice in conversations about the development of a national food policy that could support a transformation to more sustainable food systems.

The story of FoodShare is central to the message in this book for two reasons. First, the organization has always been deeply committed to combining research and practice to maximize the impact of its work. As one of the founding partners of the Nourishing Communities network, FoodShare exemplifies the spirit of community-engaged scholarship that informs food systems research and practice. Second, FoodShare demonstrates that “because of its material, cultural and social importance, food is special in its power to mobilize people to action” (FoodShare, n.d.), and the complexity, scope and success of its programmes offer a clear demonstration of how efforts to increase access to healthy food, support local farmers and provide food education can serve as pathways for broader transformation of our food systems and, by extension, our society.

Transformation is necessary, given the current state of the dominant food system. The corporate-led industrial food system has been constructed through centuries of capitalism, colonialism and industrialization and governed by the drive for power and profit (Patel 2007; Albritton 2009). Each of those historical trajectories has worked to stratify and segment communities, economies and the environment. As contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalism are characterized by increased privatization, decreased regulation and “free” trade,<sup>1</sup> it is promoted as a pathway to increased personal (and, by association, business) liberties. However, its consequences have been far reaching and perhaps most poignantly evident in the realm of food, where stratification and segmentation have been enormously damaging.

## **From Fractured Food Systems to Transformative Pathways**

The journey of food from the fields, forests and oceans to our plates and back into the soil weaves together a multitude of biological, material and social elements in that complex set of relationships we call a “food system”. This interrelated assemblage of people, ecosystems and food itself not only describes the convergence of multiple systems, but also reflects the particular constraints, possibilities and aspirations of place that are much more than the sum of their individual parts (Levkoe and Wakefield 2013). Key to food systems scholarship is the recognition that all of these processes and elements are inextricably linked. In contrast, the economic logic inherent to neoliberalism splits apart, stratifies and silos sectors, governments, people and nature from each other. This creates an atomistic set of relationships, where food systems are broken into component parts understood as individual actors rather than parts of communities, bioregions and networks. The neoliberal food system is not entirely devoid of integration, as we can observe in the scale and reach of major agri-food conglomerates that integrate economic activities horizontally (absorbing smaller enterprises) and vertically (up and down the value

---

<sup>1</sup>As this trade (especially in food) is still very much governed by logics and regulations that benefit the larger corporate players, it is only “free” to those who benefit directly.

chain). Such integration, however, only concentrates political and economic power and through promoting competition serves to further fracture the food system. At the same time, the structure of this industrial political economy precludes the fostering and convergence of collaborative synergies needed to effectively deal with complex and pressing global problems. Neoliberalism's inherently profit-driven, market-focused and segmented structure renders it incapable of acknowledging or dealing with difficult challenges. While private corporations are seeing record profits and immense benefit, the majority of the world's population faces growing pressures with a limited ability to bring about the needed structural changes.

It is increasingly acknowledged that the industrial food system—from production to consumption to waste management—has dispersed a suite of common challenges to communities around the globe (Patel 2007; Roberts 2013; Blay-Palmer et al. 2015). Examples of food system dysfunction that have emerged from this neoliberal segmentation abound. They include the push by corporations for costly, high-technology fixes for small-scale farmers. They encompass the enormous scale of greenhouse gas emissions caused by industrial food production and distribution, which account for up to 57% of total global emissions (GRAIN 2011). There is also the damage to human health caused by the double burden of persistent food insecurity coupled with increasing food-related health problems and non-communicable diseases. Predatory bi- and multilateral “free” trade deals are also part of this dysfunction and have a proven track record of degrading local food systems, combined with the increased enclosure of the land, seed and gene commons as corporations increasingly take private ownership of these resources, and displace and impoverish communities (ETC Group 2015). Escalating rates of food-related disease, increasing and entrenched food insecurity, shifting growing conditions, declining farm incomes, increasing rural–urban migration, ageing farm populations and increasing structural barriers to local food are common, and increasing challenges are felt in both the global north and south (McMichael 2011; Van der Ploeg 2013). These examples, and many others, illustrate how the neoliberal order has worked to pull people apart from the sources of their food, from their environment, from basic resources such as land and water, and from one another. The industrialization of food, as Canadian food scholar-practitioner Brewster Kneen described more than two decades ago, has produced multiple forms of *distancing* in the food system (Kneen 1995), and these examples point to a series of pressing needs generated through the resulting segmentation (Friedmann 1994; Kneen 1995; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002).

As the economy lurches from one crisis to another, communities look for ways to reduce and reverse stratification and segmentation, by creating alternatives that highlight commonality rather than difference, prioritize engaged participation and build collaborative solutions to shared problems. Community-based food hubs, farm-to-school programmes and multi-stakeholder food cooperatives are just a few examples of alternative approaches designed to transform food systems (Feenstra 2002; Elton 2010; Hinrichs and Lyson 2010; Winne 2010; Gottlieb and Joshi 2010; Levkoe 2015). *Nourishing Communities* builds on existing research about alternative food initiatives and food movements to explore how a systems approach to

food can bring about health and well-being through enhanced cohesion. Food can make it possible for citizens, practitioners, policy-makers and academics to understand the connections between the social, economic and ecological aspects of sustainability. Initiatives that build community food system resilience have the potential to act as pillars for regional transformation in concentrated urban areas, isolated and remote rural environments and also bridge between the two spaces. A systems approach offers an integrated, nonlinear way to understand challenges. Given the lack of synergy between government departments, between disciplines and across sectors, a systems approach is critical to realize transformation (Fraser 2005). Clare Hinrichs notes, “What commends many “systems” approaches is their attention to comprehensiveness, connections, juxtapositions, places of leverage, and potential feedback” (2010: 26). However, she also challenges us to be mindful of the blinders and boundaries that can come with systems thinking. Systems approaches can prevent researchers from looking for the disconnections in their efforts to find the connectivity. Making choices about the boundaries of a system unavoidably limits the extent of research and analysis—in some ways a necessary limit, as it is impossible to study everything at the same time. Similarly, systems approaches set up the “field of concern” (Hinrichs 2010: 27), which can be particularly challenging when looking at power and social justice issues, as researchers must decide who is included and who is not.

To understand how innovative initiatives can transform the dominant food system, we must identify why such transformations are needed in the first place. As evidenced by the multifaceted initiatives highlighted in our book, sustainable food systems work allows us to weave together diverse approaches in the efforts to contribute to collective resilience and well-being. As Garnett (2013) explains, problems—from environment to health—have their roots in excess and insufficiency, rather than technology or individual decisions. A sustainable food system transformation approach seeks equity for all actors in the food system:

At its ethical heart lies an emphasis on social justice...the emphasis is on the responsibility of the system to deliver the desired objectives rather than on the individual...it questions the ability of the market, as it stands, to deliver benefits equitably (Garnett 2013: 4).

Sustainable food system transformation is about changing relationships over space and time to bring about the needed structural transformations, change power and class imbalances and heal disconnections. Given the fractured and compartmentalized realities that different organizations and institutions inhabit, tolerate and reproduce, bringing about change is a tall order.

Place-based considerations are fundamental to sustainable food systems: there is no one-size-fits-all solution (Marsden 2012; Knezevic et al. 2013). The chapters in *Nourishing Communities* shine a light on myriad ways in which community-driven actors are working to foster food systems that are socially just, embed food in local economies, regenerate the environment and actively engage citizens by breaking down the segmentation through the forging of communities of food practice. Through integration, they are creating synergies where the zero-sum game rules of neoliberalism do not apply. As Sekler (2009) argues, neoliberalism works in

multiple and adaptive ways and in a variety of realms, so countering it also has to be multifaceted and dynamic (pp. 62–63). The process of articulating the way that food systems have been fractured illuminating the transformative pathways is the focus of *Nourishing Communities*.

## Methodology and Approach

A key contribution made by *Nourishing Communities* is the focus on approaches and methodologies that both support and recognize the value of community-based practices. Throughout this book, we identify success stories, challenges and opportunities that link practitioner experience to critical debates in food studies, practice and policy. By making current practices visible to scholars, this book speaks to people engaged in the co-creation of knowledge. *Nourishing Communities'* case studies identify existing and needed capacity as well as pathways to food systems transformation. By describing these underexplored opportunities to make connections between segmented issues, we make the practice more accessible to scholars and the scholarship more connected to practitioners. The research described in all of the chapters is rooted in community engagement and, in many cases, active practices of transformation. While the traditional academic approach is to collect research and translate it into scholarship that adds to social theory, this book has been constructed through a grounded, integrative and participatory methodology.

We are writing in the midst of a complex set of existing debates around agroecology, food sovereignty, gender, race, social justice, colonialism and class. While these themes are present within, and deeply inform our work, many of these important debates are not explicitly addressed in this book. Rigorous community-based scholarship demands an approach that engages relevant and operational theory. As with all scholarship and practice, the authors decide where, how and what questions to ask. In many cases, the research direction and questions emerged directly from the communities of practice. Consequently, there may appear to be some misalignment between a critical academic framing and what is useful and relevant on the ground. To communicate the results of their community-based research, the authors in this volume strive to speak directly and equally to the academic-practitioner and the practitioner-academic. The result is a set of chapters rich in relevant detail and innovative practices that serve as a starting point for theoretical engagement without privileging the theoretical as the ultimate goal.

Our work is still developing, and we continue to look for ways to better bridge contemporary theory and the lived experiences of our research participants and community co-researchers. Whereas racialization, class differences and the rural-urban tensions are all featured to some degree in this volume, several major theoretical streams regarding social justice are not addressed here. Most palpably, considerations of gender remain largely underdeveloped in this account. Given the

excellent body of literature that already exists on this topic (Counihan 1999; Federici 2012; Sachs 2013), our ongoing research agenda attempts to better incorporate gender theory in our work as a complement to the integrity of community-driven research.

As a result of a shared vision founded in sustainable food systems, social capital is developed and strengthened in and between the communities of research and practice in the process of iterative research-creation, knowledge-mobilization networks. While the approach is the same, the questions and challenges to nourishing communities are context specific, so that every chapter is based in specific community needs. Partnerships and ongoing community consultation about research tools—and who to include in our research—are the basis of the community-defined research, helping all parties to define needs and identify transformational pathways as part of their communities of food practice.

As researchers, we are all committed to and integrated into communities of food practice. We have many common beliefs in terms of our commitments to more socially just and ecologically regenerative food systems. Part of our commitment is to recognize our positionality, how we are different and where we disagree. We are also conscious that, as academics, we have certain power and privilege in relation to the communities we work with. As described in the chapters, we have attempted to use the research processes as a way to redistribute resources when possible by providing salaries to community-based researchers, supporting our community partners to speak with their own voices at conferences and in publications, and providing opportunities to contribute at all stages of the research.

The findings are a product of our participatory methodologies that explore links between sustainability and social justice through storytelling and community-based research. Given the complexity of different food systems, the diverse and competing voices demand multiple, context-specific approaches and pathways for the co-creation of knowledge. Research tools include community engagement, interviews, focus groups, workshops and photovoice. The people integrated through this work are from multiple political jurisdictions (municipal, regional, national, international), policy spheres (e.g. economic development, agriculture, education, the environment) and sectors (public, private, civil society). The work is also interdisciplinary, bringing together academics from communication studies, environmental studies, geography, health sciences, landscape architecture, law, nutrition, planning, political science, psychology and social work.

As a result, the research is relevant for food studies scholarship and community-based programmes that have practical impact. Policy-makers and shapers will find in the case studies practices that illuminate pathways towards policies that will support a sustainable and just food system. For those doing practical research/critically informed practice, these chapters exemplify different ways to do and write about scholarship rooted in both critical thought and community-based practice. The diverse perspectives and approaches demonstrated throughout this book contribute to the development of community-based theory, helping us to recognize and identify patterns that emerge directly from the community. This in turn illustrates broader patterns that inform the pathways to transformation.

## Structure of the Book

The first part of *Nourishing Communities* highlights some of the impacts of this historical trend, presenting examples of complex and sometimes seemingly insurmountable challenges resulting from a “failure to strategize by anticipating the ripple effects” of the capitalist food system (Roberts 2013: 23). The four chapters in this part reflect on how neoliberal foodways contribute to social and economic stratification and the resulting marginalization in the North American context. Each chapter looks at the neoliberal dynamics through specific forms of marginalization—of farmers, people living in poverty, migrant workers, Indigenous communities and racialized cities.

Collectively, these chapters uncover how inadequate governance and compartmentalized policy models reproduce inequities that are born of global mechanisms, but play out at local and regional scales. Each chapter also points to some action-oriented perspective on how we might begin to address marginalization, be it through more deliberate collaborative efforts, more comprehensive approaches to economic inequities in post-industrial settings, a more compassionate understanding of farm labour, non-traditional ways of engaging communities through research or more inclusive, integrated planning strategies. Further, while acknowledging the deeply embedded structural challenges related to these issues, each chapter provides insight into the tensions and opportunities that can point us towards pathways to food system transformation.

The second part of this book builds upon those beginnings, delving more deeply into examples of how people are working towards solutions that bring together disjointed segments of the food system to offer pathways towards food system transformation. The chapters in this part focus on some of the ways that collaborative alternatives are being created by a range of (sometimes unexpected) allies. These alternatives point to a need for an integrated, holistic, systemic approach as a means of addressing the problems created by our stratified, segmented food systems, for example through building networks and social capital, and working to achieve multi-stakeholder policy interventions at various scales.

*Nourishing Communities* reflects critically on these experiences, identifies the pathways to transformation that they represent and explores the insights that they offer into how we can collectively create more sustainable food systems that are ecologically regenerative, economically localized, socially just and grounded in active democratic engagement. Each of the chapters in this volume is the product of long-term relationships developed between researchers, organizations, communities and social movements based in Canada, the USA and Mexico. The case studies are all grounded in particular regional contexts; however, the stories they tell highlight how both food system problems and innovations can unfold locally, but reverberate at regional, national and global scales. By presenting these cases, *Nourishing Communities* aims to illustrate patterns of divergence and marginalization, but also of collaboration and integration as we connect empirical studies to broader debates



in food systems literature and highlight the many potential pathways for transformation through both policy and practice.

## **Collective Insights From *Nourishing Communities***

Several common themes surfaced in the chapters of *Nourishing Communities*, including the merits of adopting place-based approaches for sustainable food systems analysis and project development, the emergence of various innovative governance mechanisms and the need for both local and global governance supports to foster sustainable food systems from multiple scales.

The importance of place-based initiatives emerged with communities serving as foundational spaces for identifying, establishing and fostering the parameters for sustainable food systems. There are two sides to the place-based coin, as communities identify their own challenges *and* the solutions needed to create lasting change. In the example from Pictou Landing (Pictou Landing and Knezevic, Chap. 3), members of the local Mi'kmaq community identified a number of challenges to their community food security. These included industrial pollution preventing access to traditional country foods, thereby violating their right to cultural safety, and resulting in food swamps and deserts, and an overall lack of physical and economic access to healthy foods. At the same time, the community recognized the presence of key assets such as the wealth of indigenous knowledge about the local food system. This example highlights how important it is for communities to conduct place-based food systems analyses, to identify their own complex challenges and to develop solutions that will be relevant to their context. It also demonstrates that those solutions may be critically reliant on funding and/or regulatory and legislative action from non-local state actors.

In addition to their place-based nature, it is well documented that sustainable food systems offer multiple solutions at the same time to address “wicked” problems (Nelson and Stroink 2014; Marsden and Sonnino 2012; Clark 2005). In accordance with Stroink et al.’s Complex Adaptive Systems analysis (Chap. 7), an integrated perspective also supports the need for a systems approach to effect the kind of structural changes required for sustainable food systems to thrive. *Nourishing Communities* adds to the body of evidence about a systems approach and stretches our understanding of the interconnectivities into new realms. For example, the development of The Mount Community Centre in Peterborough, Ontario (Chap. 1) illustrates the interconnected nature of housing and food security and demonstrates how a public housing project can address both issues by providing more affordable housing spaces, as well as community gardens, revitalized orchards, common spaces for community meals and supports for food skilling initiatives. Similarly, in Eastern Ontario, initiatives such as CSA work-shares and Good Food Markets in low-income neighbourhoods aim to tackle the interwoven challenges of increasing fresh food access and providing fair compensation to

farmers (Chap. 5), while Levkoe elaborates the simultaneous benefits of community sharing and capacity building through community networks (Chap. 11). School Food Gardens provide another excellent example of a systems approach, as they are at once sites of learning, social development, inclusive community engagement, skill building and, of course, food production, fostering an environmental ethic, food and health literacy, connections to the land and nature, local food and sustainable agriculture linkages (Chap. 6).

While the dominant industrial food system creates shared vulnerabilities across many different groups, sustainable food systems can help seemingly unlikely partners identify common interests and platforms to work synergistically through mutually beneficial initiatives. McLaughlin's chapter on labour makes this clear as she identifies the potential benefits of adopting fair labour practices for migrant workers but also for farmer-employers (Chap. 2). Intersections between housing and food security (Chap. 1) and access to healthy food at a fair price for farmers (Chap. 5), as well as the multi-stakeholder food system assessment conducted in Buffalo Niagara (Chap. 4), are other examples of these synergistic opportunities. Using place-based initiatives as the foundation for scaling up sustainable food systems work to the national level was demonstrated in Levkoe's description of Food Secure Canada's "People's Food Policy" (PFP) (Chap. 11). In this case, country-wide kitchen table consultations produced a document that was co-written and edited by hundreds of people representing many different food systems perspectives.

The research presented in *Nourishing Communities* also points to several areas of alternative, innovative governance mechanisms. One such mechanism is the integration of food into municipal and regional planning processes as a means of shaping policy in favour of sustainable food systems (Chaps. 4 and 8). As Raja et al. make clear, there is an opportunity for a supportive planning environment to address normative concerns (e.g. equity). Planning can also provide practical tools needed to, for instance, enhance food access by creating better links between eaters, producers/harvesters and vendors. Innovation in food systems planning recognizes the need to move away from blunt regulations, towards investment and other tools that foster more structural change. For example, rather than entrenching emergency food systems, which provide important services but do not challenge the underlying structural causes of hunger (Tarasuk et al. 2014; Guthman 2008), planning strategies could take a more systemic and forward-thinking approach. In order to achieve more equitable solutions, municipal governments need to become active in working towards sustainable food systems. Evidence of food in some comprehensive plans is a positive step in this direction, but it also needs to be included in more specific ways, such as in transportation planning documents. Raja et al.'s case study of Buffalo points to the importance of institutions that are able to implement food system plans (Chap. 4). It also underscores the benefit of wide engagement as plans are developed as platforms for knowledge building and sharing, empowerment and engagement.

Mechanisms that allow community actors and initiatives to translate their work into effective and collective political action are also important for food system

governance. The Food Policy Audit (FPA) (Chap. 8) is an excellent example of how to segue from *civic* to *political* engagement, thereby bringing about more systemic change. The Franklin County Local Food Council (FCLFC) used the FPA as a way to capture information about policy as it related to their goals and, in the process, they were able to build a broader advocacy coalition, increase their capacity to engage in food system governance and help define a sustainable food systems policy agenda for the future. Raja's discussion of Buffalo youth unemployment, distressed communities and food security (Chap. 3) raises the importance of recognizing multifunctional benefits of food and food policy and, if enacted, the capacity to address complex problems. The discussion of Mexico's Network of Local Organic Markets (Chap. 10) offers another example of how a sustainable food systems initiative grounded in civil society can achieve policy influence. By creating a strong, unified voice for the Mexican local organic movement, and leveraging linkages between the organization's leaders and key government contacts, the network was able to play an important role in the crafting of legislation to govern the country's organic sector. While it was unable to transform Mexico's overarching, conventionally oriented, agri-food policy agenda, the organization's ability to gain legal recognition for participatory organic certification still represents an important political achievement for community-based SFS advocates, particularly smallholder, ecological producers. A similar political victory is shared by Mount (Chap. 9), who aptly describes a recent accommodation in the Ontario supply management system as a "textbook food sovereignty solution" (p. 89), and an example of an innovative and effective policy intervention by farm-based advocates. Like accommodations for participatory certification, Ontario's Artisanal Chicken Program provides policy support for small- and medium-sized producers, many of whom have highly diversified production systems and who aim to supply local markets. While neither example was transformative of the entire food system, both represent important openings for food system governance that facilitate—rather than constrain—the development of sustainable food systems.

While, in many respects, the chapters illustrate hopeful examples of innovation, they also make it clear that there are multiple challenges in addressing all sustainability dimensions simultaneously, and capturing the multitude of potential interconnected benefits through any given initiative remains a somewhat elusive endeavour. Solutions that take a truly multifunctional approach and target the root causes of our food system crises still need to be more thoroughly examined. For example, our research on the links between poverty and food insecurity suggests there would be real merit in looking closely at the opportunities and challenges presented by implementing a Basic Income Guarantee, an initiative that is beginning to gain political traction in Canada. As well addressing head-on the negative effects of food quality and access would improve individual, household and community health and well-being.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the tension that surrounds community initiatives that, while doing important work, almost inevitably lack sufficient financial, physical and human resources and are often situated in an unsupportive macro-level policy context. Scaling up sustainable food systems efforts under these

conditions presents a seemingly intractable challenge. Drawing on the nut-cracking analogy that demands pressure exerted from all sides (raised by Levkoe in Chap. 11), complementary local *and* global institutions are needed to bring about sustainable food system transformation. There is significant potential for multi-scaled policy interventions, from local through to supranational, to leverage the multifunctional benefits of SFS work. For instance, direct access to national policy-makers to make the case for investment that mitigates expensive problems (e.g. arguing for labour rights for migrant workers as way to increase productivity, Chap. 2) would enable this process.

## Conclusion

While *Nourishing Communities* contributes to a better understanding about pathways to food system transformation, there is a need to do even more detailed work within communities. The research, analysis and reflections in this book add to the guiding approaches about engagement with communities of food practice, but finding lasting solutions requires specific information about community resources and needs. There are no shortcuts—the only way to do this work is on the ground through trust-based community initiatives. Whether school or community gardens, a food hub or a community kitchen proves the best entry point depends entirely on community specifics. As the chapters in this book demonstrate, the pathways to transformation can be realized through a detailed understanding of community capacities and needs as well as increased commitment to evidence-based policy. For transformation to be effective, there needs to be iteration across multiple scales, sectors and disciplines, increasing the extent and depth of sustainable food systems, and making the hidden and messy realities of practice evident and documented. The journey of food from the fields, forests and oceans to our plates and back into the soil is part of complex system that is much more than its aggregate parts. In isolation, each of the food initiatives, projects, practices and policies on these pages might appear as a drop of water. A few drops of water may cause some dampness, but a rushing stream has the power to change the very structure of the earth itself. Our task is to describe and explain how those drops of water can become the stream.

## References

- Albritton, R. 2009. *Let them eat junk: How capitalism creates obesity and hunger*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.
- Blay-Palmer, A., R. Sonnino, and J. Custot. 2015. A food ‘politics of the possible’? Growing sustainable food places through collective action. *Agriculture and Human Values*. doi:[10.1007/s10460-015-9592-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9592-0).

- Clark, J.R.A. 2005. The 'new associationalism' in agriculture: Agro-food diversification and multifunctional production logics. *Journal of Economic Geography* 5 (4): 475–498. First published online February 24, 2005. doi:10.1093/jnlecg/lbh064.
- Counihan, C.M. 1999. *The anthropology of food and body: Gender, meaning and power*. New York: Routledge.
- Elton, S. 2010. *Locavore: From farmers' fields to rooftop gardens—How Canadians are changing the way we eat*. Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd.
- ETC Group. 2015. *Breaking bad: Big Ag Mega-Mergers in play*. Communiqué 115. Retrieved from <http://www.etcgroup.org/content/breaking-bad-big-ag-mega-mergers-play>.
- Federici, S. 2012. *Revolution at point zero: Housework, reproduction, and feminist struggle*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Feenstra, G. 2002. Creating space for sustainable food systems: Lessons from the field. *Agriculture and Human Values* 19 (2): 99–106.
- FoodShare. n.d. Vision, mission and values. *FoodShare Website*. Retrieved from <http://foodshare.net/about/values/>.
- Fraser, N. 2005. Reframing justice in a globalizing world. *New Left Review* 36: 69–88.
- Friedmann, H. 1994. Distance and durability: Shaky foundations of the world food economy. In *The global restructuring of agro-food systems*, ed. P. McMichael. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Garnett, T. 2013. Three perspectives on sustainable food security: Efficiency, demand restraint, food system transformation. What role for LCA? *Journal of Cleaner Production*. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.07.045.
- Gottlieb, R., and A. Joshi. 2010. *Food justice*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology: The MIT Press.
- GRAIN. 2011. Food and climate change: The forgotten link. *Against the Grain*, September 2011. Retrieved from <https://www.grain.org/e/4357>.
- Guthman, J. 2008. Neoliberalism and the making of food politics in California. *Geoforum* 39: 1171–1183.
- Hendrickson, M., and W. Heffernan. 2002. Opening spaces through relocation: Locating potential resistance in the weaknesses of the global food system. *Sociologia Ruralis*. doi:10.1111/1467-9523.00221.
- Hinrichs, C. 2010. Conceptualizing and creating sustainable food systems: How interdisciplinarity can help. In *Imagining sustainable food systems: Theory and practice*, ed. A. Blay-Palmer. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Hinrichs, C., and T. Lyson. 2010. *Remaking the North American food system: Strategies for sustainability*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Kneen, Brewster. 1995. *From land to mouth: Understanding the food system*, 2nd ed. Toronto: NC Press Ltd.
- Knezevic, I., A. Blay-Palmer, K. Landman, and E. Nelson. 2013. *Models and best practices in Ontario communities of food*. Retrieved from <http://nourishingontario.ca/reports/>.
- Levkoe, C. 2015. Strategies for forging and sustaining social movement networks: A case study of provincial food networking organizations in Canada. *Geoforum* 58: 174–183.
- Levkoe, C.Z., and S. Wakefield. 2013. Understanding contemporary networks of environmental and social change: Complex assemblages within Canada's "food movement." *Environmental Politics* 23 (2): 302–320.
- Marsden, T. 2012. Food systems under pressure: Regulatory instabilities and the challenge of sustainable development. In *Food practices in transition: Changing food consumption, retail and production in the age of reflexive modernity*, ed. G. Spaargaren, P. Oosterveer, and A. Loeber, 291–312. London, UK: Routledge.
- Marsden, T., and R. Sonnino. 2012. Human health and wellbeing and the sustainability of urban-regional food systems. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 4 (4): 427–430.
- McMichael, P. 2011. *Development and social change: A global perspective*. Pine Forge Press.

- Nelson, C., and M. Stroink. 2014. Accessibility and viability: A complex adaptive systems approach to a Wicked problem for the local food movement. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development*. 191–206. doi:[10.5304/jafscd.2014.044.016](https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.044.016).
- Patel, R. 2007. *Stuffed and starved: Markets, power and the hidden battle for the world's food system*. Toronto: Harper Collins.
- Roberts, W. 2013. *The no-nonsense guide to world food*, 2nd ed. Toronto: New Internationalist.
- Sachs, C. 2013. Feminist food sovereignty: Crafting a new vision. *Food sovereignty: A critical dialogue international conference proceedings*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.
- Sekler, N. 2009. Post neoliberalism from a counter hegemonic perspective. *Development dialogue* 51: 59–71.
- Tarasuk, V., A. Mitchell and N. Dachner. 2014. *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012*. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>.
- Van der Ploeg, J.D. 2013. *Peasants and the art of farming: A Chayanovian manifesto*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.
- Via Campesina. 2015. *La Via Campesina: International peasants movement*. Accessed online December 7, 2015 at: <http://viacampesina.org/en/>.
- Winne, M. 2010. *Food rebels, guerilla gardeners, and smart cookin' mamas: Fighting back in an age of industrial agriculture*. Boston: Beacon Press.

# Part I

## Need for Transformations

Each chapter in Part I of *Nourishing Communities* explores a set of challenges created by the fragmentation of food systems. The chapters identify instances of segmentation and seek to challenge the fractures at their source. Chapter 1 explores the simultaneous need for both viable on-farm incomes and access to healthy, affordable food for low-income communities. In a fragmented understanding of the market, the interests of farmers and eaters are irreconcilable. Rather than positioning the interests as competing, the authors argue that making direct connections between them helps to address the need for fairly priced food. In Chap. 2, the authors ask questions about how to achieve both housing and food security for people living in poverty in a more seamless and integrated way, instead of continuing to deal with them as separate and at times competing policy and economic problems. Chapter 3 highlights some of the key issues facing Caribbean and Mexican migrant workers in south-western Ontario and considers how the current regulatory frame pits farmers/employers against workers and social justice advocates. Chapter 4 looks at how economic priorities of settler communities have undermined the food security (and cultural, economic and environmental well-being) of Indigenous communities. Part I concludes with a chapter that draws on experiences at the local and regional government scales in the USA and demonstrates the continued disconnection between food systems and planning, and the imbalance of interests that influence planning policy.