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WHERE'S THE JUSTICE? A REVIEW OF THE LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT THROUGH A REFLEXIVE LENS

by

Colyn Kilmer

A Plan B Paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTERS OF SCIENCE

in

Human Dimensions of Ecosystem Science and Management

Approved:

Dr. Ann Laudati Major Professor	Dr. Roslynn Brain Committee Chair
Tamara Steinitz, M.S. Committee Member	Mark R. McLellan Vice President for Research and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2012

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ABSTRACT

Where's the Justice? A Review of the Local Food Movement Through a Reflexive Lens

by

Colyn Kilmer, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2012

Major Professor: Dr. Ann Laudati
Department: Environment and Society

As the local food movement has gained momentum over the past several years, so too has it garnered critiques from academic scholars. This literature review identified academic critiques of the local food movement. These critiques were organized into four general categories. A fifth category, reflexivity, was identified, which functioned as both a critique and a way to address the other four categories of critique. This review paired the four categories of academic critique with ways in which several academic scholars suggested reflexivity could be used to resolve these critiques. This review was designed to give scholars, practitioners, and consumers associated with local food projects a broad overview of academic critiques of the local food movement and the ways in which reflexivity has been suggested as a means to address these critiques.

(50 pages)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The local food movement has gained momentum in both the public and academic spheres over the last decade (Baker 2011). The need for alternative agriculture and alternative food movements arose in the mid-1970s in response to the increasingly energy and chemical intense forms of agriculture, a decline in food quality and nutritional content, and the increasingly globalized structure of the agrifood system (Feenstra 1997, Allen and Hinrichs 2007, Baker 2011). The food justice movement gained prominence around 2005 after the beginning of the environmental justice movement in the early 1990s as an alternative to food systems that were perceived as deficient in social justice concerns (DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman, 2011). However, the local food movement has also been critiqued for its deficiency in recognizing and adequately addressing social justice concerns (Allen 2008, Guthman 2011, Levkoe 2011, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, Alkon and Agyeman 2011). This paper analyzes food justice as a key component missing in the local food movement and the broader scope of alternative agriculture and alternative food movements. The significance of this paper centers on the finding that in conjunction with critiques of local food movements which have arisen in the academic community, the idea of reflexivity has been put forth as both a critique and a way forward (DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Allen 2008; Levkoe 2011; Goodman and Goodman 2007; DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011).

This paper is a literature review that identifies and reviews some of the academic critiques of the local food movement within the larger sphere of academic and activist critiques, as well as promotions, of many different types of food and agriculture systems that have proposed justice as an issue of concern. This paper recognizes the importance and hard work of food justice movements including the grassroots movements of food justice. This literature review serves as an overview of current academic critiques of the local food movement, according to what parameters and strategies that have been advanced by these authors to address these critiques. The author's contribution is to summarize the current literature of academic critiques of the local food movement.

The following is an outline of the search strategy and selection criteria or parameters used for this review, and descriptions of the type of literature reviewed. The three main parameters: 1) Local Food Movement, 2) Academic Critiques of Local Food Movements, and 3) Justice, which structure this review of academic critiques of the local food movement, are as follows. The initial parameter, local food, has been selected over other types of alternative food movements for several reasons. First, local food promotion is increasing in popular culture and also as an area of academic research. "Popular discourse on industrial agro-food and its inverse, typically valorized local food, has enhanced the profile of food studies in the academic world" (Baker 2011, p. 3). Second, the use of a scalar strategy, which necessarily encompasses the lived experiences of a diversity of people, has the potential to impact these people differentially. Alkon and Agyeman (2011, p. 3) point out that "the food movement narrative is largely created by, and resonates most deeply, with white and middle-class individuals." Therefore, if this is the demographic wielding the scalar strategy, there are definite implications of biased

outcomes for people not within this social position. Third, there are concerns that justice may not be achieved within market-based, capitalist, neoliberal systems (Allen and Hinrichs 2007). Since the procurement of local food is most prevalently promoted through "Buy Local First" methods and campaigns, which emphasize a market-based, capitalist strategy, Allen and Hinrichs (2007, p. 265) have questioned whether justice in local food systems can be achieved by "fighting capitalism with capitalism." Likewise, a report on local food by the USDA (2010) recognizes that since 'local' is such a nebulous term that is difficult to define with any consensus, parameters for local can best be characterized by market strategies or direct sales between producers and consumers enabled by close proximity (Martinez et al. 2010). Thus economic markets are a defining component of local food systems, which has implications for justice concerns.

The second parameter, academic critiques, has been used in this paper because, while many local food organizations are now incorporating the terms "justice" and "food justice," this does not guarantee that it is being done in a particularly reflexive manner (DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011). The critical lenses of Critical Theory and Standpoint Theory, and their application to research, are located in academic settings. Both of these lenses incorporate elements of reflexivity and therefore make them applicable to the concerns of social justice in local food movements. Critical Theory and Standpoint Theory are both defined and linked to reflexivity in greater detail later in this paper.

The third parameter, justice, is used in this paper because, according to Levkoe (2011, p. 694), "Without social justice at its core, Alternative Food Initiatives (AFIs) risk engendering a two-tier food system in which entrepreneurial initiatives create expensive

niche food alternatives for those who can afford them and cheap food for everyone else." There are many understandings, definitions and perspectives on justice. Due to this, some authors are now advocating as a way forward for a more reflexive stance on this term (DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011).

The methodology section of this paper includes the idea of reflexivity, and the critical lenses of Standpoint Theory and Critical Theory and how these both relate to reflexivity. Following this, the synthesis section will show the four categories of academic critiques: 1) paternalism and politics of conversion, 2) normative conceptions of scale, 3) privilege and elitism, and 4) furthering a neoliberal agenda, and how reflexivity has been put forth by DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) as a way to address these critiques. DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman published a chapter last year on this topic making it recent and relevant to this paper. The conclusion highlights ways in which this overview of academic critiques of local food movements and the application of reflexivity to address social justice concerns can be used in research and application.

Background

Alternative Agriculture

For many food consumers, the globalization and industrialization of the agrifood system represented a threat to social and environmental sustainability. Industrialization of agriculture meant higher inputs of chemicals that had been found to harm the soil, water, air, and plant and animal life. These chemicals were also unhealthy for human consumption in the form of food, and unhealthy for humans associated with applying them to crops (Coit 2009). Globalization was seen as problematic because more people

were reliant upon a distant and impersonal system for their food security. “Interest in food-system localization is a reaction to the destructive, disempowering and alienating effects of large-scale political economic forces” (Allen 2010, p. 296). Globalization was also associated with economic and social injustice, and the ill treatment of workers both at home and abroad.

Alternative agriculture was developed in opposition to conventional agriculture methods that were seen to be polluting and depleting the environment. The conventional agriculture methods were seen to be also harming the people that consumed these types of chemicals and industrially intensive foods (Feenstra 1997). Alternative agriculture systems focused on low-impact and low-input methods that would not pollute and deplete the earth or the harm the people who consumed the food. One type of alternative agriculture that is also a type of alternative food is ‘organic,’ or grown without the use of pesticides and petro-chemical fertilizers. In the next section, this paper continues to outline the background of alternative food movements.

Alternative Food Movements and Local Food Movements

Alternative food movements focused on opposing globalization by creating markets for alternative foods that were localized and closer to home both for the consumers and producers (Feenstra 1997, Coit 2009, Allen and Hinrichs 2007). Over the past couple of decades, alternative agriculture and alternative foods, particularly local foods, have been gaining traction and popularity with both producers and consumers (Coit 2009). According to a USDA economic report, sales made directly from agriculture producers to some human food consumers increased by 49% between 2002

and 2007 (Martinez et al. 2010, p. 5). These data from this USDA report indicate the significant increase in consumer demand for locally produced foods. Those who focus on eating as close to home as possible or within a certain radius from their home are sometimes referred to as ‘localvores/locavores.’ This term was even named word of the year and entered into the *Oxford American Dictionary* in 2007 (Baker 2011).

While food system localization can be generally seen as bringing producers and consumers closer together for a variety of environmental, social and political reasons primarily focused on resistance to globalization, the term ‘local’ itself is more nebulous and difficult to define (Coit 2009, Martinez et al. 2010) For some it means eating foods that are within one particular bioregion, but not necessarily a set distance from one’s home. ‘Local’ in terms of food production and consumption is almost invariably a geographic scale of some level and the types of markets associated with these (Coit 2009). As people gain greater access to the foods they eat, they gain a more intimate connection with the land it is grown on, the farmers who grow it, and the quality that is derived from traveling a shorter distance. In this way, food system localization brings food to a point whereby relationships of trust are built and communities are invigorated both socially and economically.

Two examples of alternative food and agriculture marketing avenues that localize food, and bring producers and consumers closer together, are farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares. Shrinking the distance between producers and consumers is seen to reduce environmental impacts due to the distances that foods must travel, or food miles, and the fossil fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions that are entailed (Coit 2009, Martinez 2010). Both farmers’ markets and CSAs

address a concern of alternative food proponents that social connections are crucial for democratic processes within communities, and ensure quality of product for the consumers and quality of life for the producers in the form of fair and livable wages (Martinez et al. 2010). Farmers' markets and CSAs are also seen as mechanisms for keeping community money within the community, thereby enhancing economic security, as opposed to spreading this money globally, which is not viewed as beneficial to individual communities of producers and consumers (Martinez et al. 2010). In CSAs, consumers buy shares, or proportional allocations of the seasonal crop grown by producers, in advance in order to enable producers to focus on growing food full-time. Each week of the growing season, share-holders receive their allocation of the crop. At farmers' markets, consumers interact directly with producers to secure food and also gain knowledge about how that food was produced.

Another market strategy for supporting local farmers, sourcing local foods and enhancing food quality and nutrition is the Farm to School program in which public education institutions procure local food to enhance nutrition in their cafeterias. "Farm to School is... a program that connects schools and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers" (National Farm to School Network website). The Farm to School program has grown to national coverage with over 2000 participating institutions in 2009 from its beginnings in the late 1990s with only two institutions participating (Martinez et al. 2010).

Another type of local food movement is Slow Food, which was founded in 1989 to aid in reinvigorating small-scale and artisanal local food traditions that focus on quality and taste. This echoes the sentiments and rationale of alternative food movements and alternative agriculture because Slow Food also depends on the procurement of local foods, and in this capacity it shares many similarities with the local food movement.

The promotion of local food systems and buying local food has been conducted in large part by the 'Buy Local Food' campaigns that have arisen since the late 1990s. In their detailed investigation of U. S. 'Buy Local Food' campaigns, Allen and Hinrichs (2007) suggest that while these particular campaigns have arisen quite recently, they are tied to a long history of political and ethical consumerism that seeks to enact political change through the market system. Ethical and political ends have long been served through selective market consumerism practices, or selective patronage (Allen and Hinrichs 2007). Selective patronage allows consumers to have either the option of abstaining from the purchase of certain items and simply doing without, which is known as a boycott, or they can choose another item and only buy it, which is known as a 'buycott.' One of the earliest campaigns in the U. S. that exemplifies the distinction between a traditional boycott and a 'buycott' was centered on Northern abolitionists' opposition to goods produced using slave labor (Hinrichs and Allen 2008). Initially, opponents were encouraged to simply not buy, or boycott, these items and do without. Eventually, Northern crafts producers figured out how to make many traditionally slave-produced items using alternative techniques, and opponents were then encouraged to only buy these items, effecting a 'buycott' against slavery products. The act of either buying or not buying certain things for certain reasons has a long history in U. S. consumer culture

(Hinrichs and Allen 2008). The ‘Buy Local Food’ and ‘Buy Local First’ campaigns are ‘buycott’ tactics aimed at creating a local system that effectively dominates, or at least provides a viable alternative to, a global one. To this end, food system localization and ‘Buy Local Food’ campaigns focus on proximities, not only between food and mouth, but between producers and consumers, which is argued to result in increased environmental sustainability and greater social capital (Feenstra 1997, Coit 2008). It is also argued that the economies in closer proximity to these localized food systems will be strengthened by keeping food dollars within the community (Allen and Hinrichs 2007).

Food Justice

This paper recognizes and pays homage to the grassroots of food justice movements. As alternatives arose to the conventional industrial globalized agrifood system, there have more recently arisen alternatives to these alternatives, namely the food justice movement. The food justice movement is based on the same assertions that underpin the environmental justice movement, to which it is related. Both of these justice movements arose because social justice concerns were not being adequately addressed by either public or private, conventional or alternative sources (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996, Gottlieb 2009). This takes the form of a disproportionate burden being born by a disproportionate segment of the population. People of color and low-income populations, it is argued, are more likely to bear more of the impacts of environmental and agrifood system pollution while simultaneously receiving fewer of the benefits either in the form of economic security or healthier food and environment (Bullard 2000, Gottlieb 2009). “Often led by people of color, food justice organizations see dismantling racism as part of

food security" (Morales 2011, p. 158). Environmental justice and food justice arose to put these situations of inequity center stage and make them a priority.

In many ways, there is a discernible split between alternative food and food justice, even though they are both concerned with many of the same issues and see a need for alternatives to destructive conventional processes. From a food justice perspective, however, alternative food is still an adherent of a certain type of conventional process because it does not adequately address injustices attendant with race, class and gender (Morales 2011). As an illustration of this, a word search, done by the author of this paper, of the 2010 USDA document "Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts and Issues" (Martinez et al. 2010) yields only one result for the terms 'justice' or 'food justice' and that is found in the glossary entry for Farm to School in the title of the organization Center for Food and Justice. Following on this illustration is an excerpt from a speech by Tom Vilsack (2009, p. 9), current secretary of agriculture, in which he imagines that the response to a hypothetical inquiry from Abraham Lincoln as to the success of the USDA would be "Mr. President, some folks refer to the USDA as the last plantation." This suggests that the USDA could be more proactive in fostering social justice.

Guthman (2011) has noted and commented on this split between alternative food and food justice, and the need for alternatives to the alternatives, but does not view the split between alternative food and food justice as a means of fostering greater justice and inclusivity. Though the food justice movement addresses a pressing need for ensuring food access sovereignty and security in the face of conventional and institutionalized racism and bias, it does not force a structural change in the unjust system in which it is

embedded. Rather, Guthman (2011) argues, it can function as a pressure release for conventional alternative food movements, enabling them to maintain their status quo, not critically inspecting racial privilege, and not addressing social injustice. If there are two movements, Guthman argues, alternative and local food on one hand and food justice on the other, local food is less obligated to attend to justice concerns.

The Problematic Issue - Academic critiques of the local food movement

As the local food movement has gained momentum, it has also garnered critiques, specifically from academic scholars (Allen 2008, Baker 2011). The academic scholars cited in this paper appeared most often in the academic journal articles reviewed by the author (Table 1). They have offered some of the most prominent critiques with regard to local food movement and the ways in which the lack of a critical reflexive stance has hindered the incorporation of greater social justice into these movements. All these critiques challenge normative and uncritical conceptions of scale, the use of universalized epistemologies that erase the knowledge and lived experience of others outside this limited and unrepresentative category, and the reliance on positivist perspectives that ignore the socially constructed nature of politics, economics and demography (Allen 2008 and 2010, Born and Purcell 2006, DuPuis and Goodman 2005, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, Guthman 2011, Hinrichs 2003).

Table 1. Most-cited authors of academic critiques used in this paper

Author
Julie Guthman – University of California, Santa Cruz (associate professor of Community Studies)
Patricia Allen – University of California, Santa Cruz (Director of the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems)
Clare Hinrichs – Pennsylvania State University (associate professor of Rural Sociology)
Branden Born – University of Washington (associate professor of Urban Planning and Design)
Mark Purcell – University of Washington (associate professor of Urban Planning and Design)
David Harvey – City University of New York (professor of Anthropology)
E. Melanie DuPuis - University of California, Santa Cruz (professor of Sociology)
David Goodman - University of California, Santa Cruz (professor emeritus of Environmental Studies, also visiting professor in the Department of Geography, Kings College London)
Jill Lindsey Harrison – University of Colorado, Boulder (assistant professor of Sociology)

The main argument linking these critiques is that failure by the local food movement to account for these factors has resulted in exclusion of certain demographics, the perpetuation of existing power imbalances, and greater social injustice (Allen 2008 and 2010, Born and Purcell 2006, DuPuis and Goodman 2005, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, Guthman 2011, Hinrichs 2003). All of these critical scholars assert that if the tenets of reflexivity were applied to strategies of food system localization, greater social justice would result (Allen 2008 and 2010, Born and Purcell 2006, DuPuis and Goodman 2005, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, Guthman 2011, Hinrichs 2003).

Categories of critique and how reflexivity relates to these

DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) outline a framework of critiques that can be addressed using reflexivity to promote social justice. Based on the distillation of

critiques, by the author of this paper, into several broad categories with reflexivity, and the lack thereof, functioning as both a critique and a way forward, this paper defines and discusses these critiques and elucidates the power and utility of reflexivity in research and application. Based on the findings from this review of the literature of academic critiques of the local food movement, this paper organizes these critiques into four main categories: 1) paternalism and politics of conversion, 2) normative conceptions of scale, 3) privilege and elitism, and 4) furthering a neoliberal agenda. There is also a fifth category of critique, which is that local food movements need to be more reflexive in order to foster greater social justice. While this is a critique, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) specifically outline ways in which the application of reflexivity to local food movement projects can result in greater social justice. DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman say that 1) “Reflexive approaches emphasize process rather than vision” (p. 298), 2) “Reflexivity does not favor any one scale of political practice” (p. 298), 3) “Reflexivity works within a strong memory of past inequalities” (p. 300), and 4) “Reflexivity distinguishes between equality and charity” (p. 299). Reflexivity is central to addressing academic critiques of the local food movement.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The general idea of reflexivity is now being applied to the local food movement. Reflexive localism or localization, as the strategy is termed, is “a theoretical project vis a vis local food movements and their conceptualizations that works to get beyond the typical normative and potentially conservative/reactionary localisms that have become *de*

rigeur in local food activism and scholarship" (Goodman and Goodman 2007, p. 3). There are many types of localism that have been identified as being undesirable for a democratic and just society, such as defensive, nativist and reactionary (Hinrichs 2003). A basic example of these undesirable localisms is evident to anyone who has ever experienced the exclusion and isolation of not fitting into a small community and yearning for a larger pool of options and points of access. DuPuis and Goodman (2005, p. 360) argue that, "Unreflexive localism… can deny the politics of the local, with potentially problematic social justice consequences. Second, it can lead to proposed solutions, based on alternative standards of purity and perfection, that are vulnerable to corporate cooptation." On the other hand, anyone who has ever found a comfortable place in a small community recognizes that not all localism is negative. This should illustrate as well that there is nothing inherently good or bad about the scale of small or local; the outcome depends largely on the reflexivity of those involved.

A further concern is that "'the local' as a concept intrinsically implies the inclusion and exclusion of particular people, places and ways of life" (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, p. 361). The author of this paper believes that this does not bode well for the inclusion of justice from the beginning. Those who get to make the determination of what exactly is local in any given context are privileged by the power dynamics that simultaneously erase other competing and presumably equally valid definitions. Simply making the call on what is 'local' ignores that issues of power lie behind the ability to do so, which is why reflexivity is needed. Likewise, unreflexively ignoring power dynamics and historical contexts of inclusion and exclusion presents problems for developing effective methods of cooperative work. For example, many popular strategies focus on

'bringing people to the table' without reflecting upon the underlying contexts that have included some and excluded others from the table to begin with (Guthman 2011). These contexts are systemic and structural rather than incidental anomalies, and substantive change will not take place until these systems and structures of injustice are challenged through greater reflexivity. Simply adding more bodies to a table situated in structural injustice will not increase justice because such a table is not the location of justice. It is an example of structural injustice and the potential for justice is located within the system (Guthman 2011, DuPuis and Goodman 2005). "Reflexivity is not a set of values… It is also not a particular, fixed process, but one that responds to changing circumstances, imperfectly, but with an awareness of the contradictions of the moment" (DuPuis, Harrison, and Goodman 2011, p. 297). Reflexivity is not a fix by itself, but it is a necessary precursor to understanding that we often don't know what we don't know.

Standpoint Theory

The critical lenses of Standpoint Theory and Critical Theory are also defined and described in relation to reflexivity which is a central tenet of this paper and, according to DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) a primary way of fostering greater social justice in the local food movement. Standpoint Theory and Critical Theory are also critical lenses used by academic researchers to generate greater reflexivity and incorporate justice concerns, which is relevant to the academic critiques of local food movements that this paper focuses on. In reviewing the literature, Standpoint and Critical Theory were used in development of parameters and reference to reflexivity as a way forward.

Standpoint Theory challenges normative understandings of knowledge and a positivist approach to knowledge generation. Positivism as a scientific inquiry paradigm is grounded in purely objective or value-free research, deductive logic, empirical observations and the ability, through these methods, to discover irrefutable causal laws (Neuman 2006). For Standpoint Theory, this represents the pervasive and oppressive perspective of one, non-representative group that is posited and upheld as universal truth for all, regardless of position or perspective. Standpoint Theory stems from Feminist Theory in which case the hegemonic perspective was that of a white male. From this perspective, it is very difficult to ever know, or convey, anything of other truths and realities, which is a source of frustration for many disenfranchised groups, and in this case, women in particular. So long as only one perspective is privileged, there is no hope for a broader view that incorporates and respects the lived experiences of others (Neuman 2006). Nancy Hartsock theorized Feminist Standpoint Theory as an epistemological and methodological basis for feminism and a challenge to positivism and the hegemony of masculine truths and knowledge (Hekman 1997, p. 341).

The use of Standpoint Theory enhances review projects by illuminating the interdependence between author, society, subject and strategy. "Standpoint Theory opens the way to stronger standards of both objectivity and reflexivity. These standards require that research projects use their historical location for obtaining greater objectivity" (Harding 1991, p. 163). It helps to disrupt the subject/object dichotomy that can lead to normative and paternalistic results. As long as the object, the review author, is never the subject, who or what is being reviewed and written about, there is limited opportunity for holistic inspection. Without holistic inspection, a portion of the issue or problem will

always be missing, and therefore an incomplete picture is presented for which an incomplete solution will necessarily be crafted (Levkoe 2011). The lack of reflexivity means the object never becomes the subject and thus an inherent blind spot remains. Donna Haraway (1991) has termed this type of activity the "god trick" and, as the name implies, it serves as a useful sleight of hand for escaping detection, culpability and introspection, but it has no utility in the realm of accurately identifying and solving problems. "This is the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation" (Haraway 1991, p. 189). Standpoint Theory challenges the ability of unmarked categories to remain unexamined by illuminating the ways in which normative assumptions can become embedded in research so long as researchers refuse to recognize the value-laden context of science (Neuman 2006). A reflexive recognition of positionality or standpoint is necessary for highlighting marked categories and presenting a more holistic perspective on social justice considerations in local food systems. A question for future research is, "How do we get everyone's voices?"

Critical Theory

Critical Theory is based on the epistemologies of subjectivism, constructionism and feminist perspectives, seeking to produce a sociopolitical critique and address inequities in order to promote change in communities (Koro-Ljungberg, et al 2009). Critical Theory was presented by a group of German philosophers as a distinctly new form of knowledge, one that is "differentiated from the natural sciences as essentially 'reflective': the knowledge it provides guides us towards enlightenment as to our true interests, and emancipation from often unsuspected forms of external and internal

coercion" (Geuss 1999, p. 2). Critical Theory challenges positivism, which is an epistemological perspective grounded in the ability of scientists to objectively and impartially discover ultimate truths outside the influence of society or personal bias (Harding 1991, Geuss 1999). Like Standpoint Theory, Critical Theory upholds the importance of reflexivity over knowledge that flows in only one direction. "One basic goal of the Frankfurt School is the criticism of positivism and the rehabilitation of "reflection" as a category of valid knowledge" (Geuss 1999, p. 2). The production of knowledge in this capacity requires the recognition that all standpoints are relevant. Critical Theory also recognizes that the world is highly contextual, not universally the same (Neuman 2006). Both Critical Theory and Standpoint Theory recognize the need for reflexively locating both subject and object in context and understanding a diversity of positions.

Chapter 3

Academic Critiques of the Local Food Movement

Critical and existential inspections are found in academic critiques. Allen (2008) has suggested that the best way that academics can assist with bringing justice to local food movements is by teaching students the processes by which they socially construct their world and knowledge through narratives, discourse and epistemology, and encouraging critical thinking when designing research projects and challenging normative conceptions of scale and desirability. "In these ways, the academy can be a key player in the creation of a diverse agrifood movement that embraces the discourse of social justice" (Allen 2008, p. 157). Beginning with a basic understanding of social

construction, Critical Theory and how epistemologies determine what we can know, academics and non-academics alike will be equipped with the skills to develop better strategies to critique practical and applied projects. As the local food movement is relatively new, its critiques are even more recent. Critiques are not aimed at defeating the object of criticism, in this case food system localization, so much as highlighting and addressing some of the problematic underpinnings and enactments that are made visible through a subjective rather than positivist lens.

Justice

Most local and alternative food movements cite justice concerns in terms of agricultural workers' rights, but stop short of meaningful action with regard to participation and access (Allen 2008, Levkoe 2011). Justice in this capacity is the ability for people to meaningfully participate in, and have agency over, a food system that meets their dietary, cultural and economic needs. This is also in line with the definition put forth by California food-system leaders in a 2004 meeting (Activist Research Consortium, 2004): "A socially just food system is one in which power and material resources are shared equitably so that people and communities can meet their needs, and live with security and dignity, now and into the future" (Allen 2010, p. 297). In other words, food justice is not possible without justice in general, which requires an inspection of the underlying structures and power dynamics that uphold injustice.

These conceptions of justice also include elements of food sovereignty in that people should have the ability to be directly involved in producing (if they want), procuring and selecting food that they want. Food sovereignty originated in the areas of

peasant studies and indigenous rights in the global south, but is gaining traction in the U. S., particularly in efforts by African American activist groups seeking to increase farm ownership and challenge historically racist governmental policies having to do with agricultural production (Alkon and Mares 2012).

Another aspect of justice is inclusivity and diversity as opposed to exclusivity and homogeneity. According to Hinrichs and Kremmer (2002, p. 75), "Local food system movements tend to be white, middle-class consumers and that the movement threatens to be socially homogenized and exclusionary." One more demographic element that is often overlooked, but that is crucial for food system justice, is the divide between rural and urban, consumers and producers. In many cases, rural consumers have been excluded from participation in local or alternative food movements due to lack of access, and rural producers may not actually be as advantaged as the urban consumers they provide for (McEntee 2011). "A just and inclusive city-country politics would give voice to political interests that go beyond consumers' interest in local farmers. Those we sell and buy from are not the only country people worthy of our thoughts" (DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, p. 299). For reasons of access, inclusivity, diversity and democracy, social justice is an important consideration in developing food systems.

Chapter 4

Synthesis

This paper organizes the critiques of the local food movement into five categories, even as there is much overlap and interdependence. They are all underpinned by a lack of justice considerations, and all have implications for creating greater injustice. The four

categories are 1) conversion politics and paternalism, 2) normative conceptions of scale, 3) privilege and elitism, and 4) furthering a neoliberal agenda. The fifth category is 5) reflexivity, or a lack thereof. Many scholars (Allen 2008 and 2010, Levkoe 2011, Goodman and Goodman 2007, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011) propose that a reflexive stance would go a long way in correcting the errors of the other four categories and also in promoting justice within local food movements. This paper does not propose to know where we are going, however, academic critiques of the local food movement suggest that where we have been is mired in normative conceptions of scale and a critical lack of justice considerations.

The four categories of critique are employed to organize the literature. The synthesis builds on the work of DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) and their recognition that reflexivity can be used to address the lack of social justice in these four categories. In the following section, their ideas on reflexivity are paired with the categories of critique to illustrate ways in which food system localization projects can foster greater justice.

First, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011, p. 298) recognize that "Reflexive approaches emphasize process rather than vision." This speaks to the criticism of paternalism and a politics of conversion in which an unrepresentative yet powerful group determines, enacts and converts others to one particular vision. In process, many people are more likely to be able to contribute and shape the outcome.

Second, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011, p. 298) argue that "Reflexivity does not favor any one scale of political practice." This speaks to the caution against

relying on normative conceptions of scale. Born and Purcell (2006) say that "there is nothing inherent about scale," so care must be taken to keep end goals in mind rather than believing that achieving a certain scale will automatically lead to desired results. Another reason to be cautious of normative conceptions of scale is because, as Harvey (1996) has argued, "local is not an innocent term," and as such it cannot be assumed to mean the same thing to all people, or achieve justice for all people.

Third, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011, p. 300) assert that "Reflexivity works within a strong memory of past inequalities." This insight highlights the fact that what one group takes for granted as inherently given, another group may have made possible, and that this history has engendered a divide that cannot be bridged if not recognized and addressed. This applies to the critique of elitism and privilege, not only in what some groups are currently able to access, but the past attendant inequalities that made this possible. Values are formed by histories, so they cannot be taken for granted as universal or devoid of historical processes.

Fourth, DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011, p. 299) suggest that "Reflexivity distinguishes between equality and charity." This argument points to the critique that uncritical acceptance of anti-political local food systems potentially plays into the hand of a neoliberal agenda. Depoliticizing is accomplished through such narrative tactics as purifying, perfecting or assuming innocence, which all fall under the umbrella of normative values attached to arbitrary scales. This discourse of 'perfect politics' is "embedded in social narratives of salvation and degradation that have been a part of U. S. middle class, romantic, reformist culture since the early nineteenth century" (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, p. 365). As non-profits pick up the slack for a devolved government

social security system, issues of poverty are depoliticized, and the only point of participation in an alternative food system is through market based individual consumption (Levkoe 2011). A neoliberal agenda is flourishing. Charity is not compatible with sovereignty as it relies on the continued existence of the system in which people are not positioned to exercise agency over their own lives. Charity does not fix the broken system. It just enables it to continue relatively unchallenged. Therefore, charity as an ideal is not compatible with justice or reflexivity and has no real place in a reflexive local food system (Guthman 2008, Allen and Guthman 2006).

There are many problems that arise from the failure to critically reflect on positionality. The common factor is unreflexiveness, and most all the problems can ultimately be traced back to this. That is not to say that merely reflecting upon positionality will fix the problem, but the problem has no chance of being fixed if it remains obscured. So, simply adding the word "justice" to the narrative has no hope of resulting in justice unless the fundamental basis of the narrative is first inspected in a reflexive manner. Some might even call it co-optation of a word that is used by groups who are genuinely disenfranchised within the socio-political system (Spivak 1988). In this way, the status quo of a market-driven, privatized, consumptive neoliberal agenda is upheld. Injustice is never truly challenged because the word has been co-opted and applied to a narrative that allows participants to believe they are effectively agitating for change when in fact they are not (Levkoe 2011, Guthman 2008, Allen and Guthman 2006).

Understanding that power dynamics and social interactions are what define scale, rather than the assumption that scale is somehow inherent and innately comprised of

immutable elements, is crucial for seeing how different scales may lead to different levels of justice. "Historical processes have shaped regions and social relations with vast differences in wealth, power and privilege and this has implications for thinking about and enacting equity through food-system localization" (Allen 2010, p. 295). Simply choosing "local" as the a priori perfect scale ignores the social elements of which it is structured. Social interactions of contestation and struggle for power and legitimacy are constantly changing and being negotiated. But if this is not made evident up front, then the reification of local risks upholding local systems of injustice and power imbalance.

Conversion Politics, Paternalism and Limited Range of Enactment

The local food movement has been criticized for limiting options for resistance to globalization and devising alternative food justice schemes to a very narrow conception of correct enactments (Holt-Gimenez and Wang 2011, Guthman 2007 and 2008). By virtue of dominance and power, the typically white, middle-to-upper class proponents of local food have the ability to set the agenda for the right and proper ways of procuring food, determining the meaning of quality and desirability, preparing food and even eating food. Recognizing this state of affairs, DuPuis and Goodman (2005, p. 365) "seek to free food reform from its control by consumers of a particular class and ethnicity who have historically set the agenda for 'saving' the food system." Salvation projects based on the ideals of a narrow or unrepresentative group that seek to limit the input and devalue the knowledge and experience of others outside this group are examples of what Childs (2003) has called "the politics of conversion." In these situations, one group is positioned as the experts in designing strategies to help and improve all other groups. The other groups are expected to adhere to the methods of the experts, or risk disapproval and

conversion efforts. Groups that attempt to enact diverse interpretations of local food are often disparaged for doing it incorrectly (Hinrichs 2003, DuPuis and Goodman 2005, Guthman 2011).

Conversion politics is evident in rural local food strategies, which have been largely ignored by both local food activists and scholars alike. Of the few who have investigated rural local food procurement strategies and resistance to globalization and injustice, McEntee (2011) has identified an interesting dichotomy in types of localism. The focus of local food has been centered on urban consumers, with rural producers as the secondary focus serving the first. This has left rural consumers virtually invisible, not only in academic research and theory, but also in daily life. Since rural people are often limited in their options due to a lack of market concentration and/or lower incomes than their urban counterparts, they are forced to rely on and leverage a set of resources that are typically not available to city-dwellers. In many cases, they eat local because it's the only thing to eat, and/or it is the only thing they can afford because they are able to hunt it or grow it.

This is localism out of necessity not ethics, but it serves the purpose of providing food and resisting systems of greater domination. McEntee (2011) has termed this traditional localism, as opposed to contemporary localism, or the dominant local food movement. Interestingly, contemporary localism is of no utility to traditional localism because the two realities are so different. Many rural people have noted that either they have no access to markets that purvey local food, or if they do, it is most often prohibitively expensive (McEntee 2011). Thus far, the strategies of traditional localism have yet to catch on, or even gain legitimacy, within the contemporary local food

movement. To the limited extent that it has, the only acceptable form is for urbanites to make occasional forays into the "wilderness" to hunt their own meat and forage their own berries. But even hunting and gathering is only acceptable if people don't actually *have* to do it to survive (McEntee 2011).

Currently however, if the strategies are not promoted by Michael Pollan or Slow Food, they are often not as salient or valued, though there are always exceptions. This largely ignores a wide range of ways in which people have been dealing with food access issues and resisting globalization (Holt-Gimenez and Wang 2011). The dominant local food paradigm adopts a paternalistic attitude to difference, believing that these people must be ignorant or uneducated and that once they are enlightened they will see the true path. Guthman (2007, p. 78) writes,

> Many of my students have strong convictions that they should and can teach people how and what to eat…I worry that Michael Pollan reinforces this highly privileged and apolitical idea and reinforces the belief that some people – in this case thin people – clearly must have seen the light that the rest are blind to.

The subjugation of people is a major problem attached to the belief that there is only one right way to solve a problem. In projects of paternalism and conversion politics, there is necessarily a subject in need of education, charity or both. There is an implicit assumption that these subjects, all those who do not adhere to a dominant prescription, are eagerly awaiting salvation, or will soon be once they are shown the error of their ways (Guthman 2008). No credit is given regarding the possibility that different strategies may be equally valid, or at least more applicable to those utilizing them to address issues of greater relevance. The need for charity is also implicit in such projects

because it is assumed that if people had the means, they would already be choosing the dominant prescription and if they are not they must not have the means. In her 2008 research on projects that frame a certain demographic as hapless subjects needing proper foods to be brought to them, Guthman (2008, p. 431) characterizes these activities as "selling, donating, bringing or growing fresh fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods inhabited by African Americans – often at below market prices – or educating them to the quality of locally grown, seasonal, and organic food." Once subjugated, these people were never given the opportunity to express their true needs, desires and strategies, which turned out to be substantially different than those of the people designing these projects.

Different situations, or locales, require different responses, not one uniform standard for all situations. Through projects aimed at education followed by conversion, the local food movement has delineated boundaries that effectively exclude strategies that do not fit this form (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). A better strategy would be to inspect the underlying social structures and normative assumptions in an effort to understand other narratives that might, in fact, work more directly toward justice and sustainability.

Normative Conceptions of Scale and Spatiality

The general basis behind alternative and local food movements has been seen in opposition to globalization and its attendant negative aspects such as environmental pollution and unethical behavior (Feenstra 1997, Baker 2011, Allen 2008). This has become a dichotomous way of viewing the world in terms of global versus local, as if these are the only two distinct possibilities. Binary thinking can serve some purposes quite well, such as limiting options in order to achieve a certain desired result. However,

binaries are not particularly useful in resolving complex interconnections. Many scholars have recognized that this limited interpretation is an impediment to developing more just and sustainable food systems and therefore challenge this either-or binary (Hinrichs et al. 1998). At the base of this challenge is the critique that scale is not a naturally occurring thing so much as it is a socially constructed devise for dealing with space and resources. Social construction in no way diminishes the impact that these constructs have on people or how different people experience these impacts. So, while scales such as local or global are socially constructed, the impacts that such definitions and constructions exert on people have real consequences.

> The particular ways in which scale is constructed are tangible and have material consequences. In other words, scale-making is not only a rhetorical practice; its consequences are inscribed in, and are the outcome of, both everyday life and macro-level social structures. Finally, framings that can have both rhetorical and material consequences are often contradictory and contested and are not necessarily enduring. In short, scale construction is a political process endemic to capitalism, the outcome of which is always potentially open to further transformation. (Marston 2000, p. 221)

Narratives of local can carry with them tones of provincialism, defensiveness, and exclusion just as easily as they can convey a sense of community, trust and intimate knowledge (Hinrichs 2003). It greatly depends on ones' standpoint as to how these narratives translate to an overall discourse of any given location. Certain narratives are deployed to challenge and contest or assert and dominate. So, to assume that scale is inherent and that it has the same meaning for everyone is a gross mistake. There is great power both in being able to determine a particular scale and applying it to a location and also in having this conception become the dominant discourse, subverting all others beneath it. Dynamics of power are bound up in the politics of scale making it very

important to inspect the agendas of those framing the discourse of space. "Struggles over representation are as fundamental to the activities of place construction as bricks and mortar" (Harvey 1990, p. 418). Without inspecting the power dynamics in any spatial system, it is easy to inadvertently uphold existing structures of injustice that have resulted over time from contestation and subjugation, even as one has the opposite objective.

Many scholars have speculated on why there is such an allure to the particular scale of local and also why this might not be a bad thing (Escobar 2001, Winter 2003, Sonnino 2010, Hinrichs 2003). This paper does not suggest that local is inherently any better or worse than any other scale. Nor are scholars suggesting that local is negative. Rather they are suggesting that it can be negative, like any other socially constructed form, if it is uncritically and unreflexively accepted. The use of local as a specific strategy and point of resistance is quite powerful and useful, so long as it is not blindly enacted (Escobar 2001).

Two of the most widely cited critiques with regard to normative conceptions of scale are Born and Purcell's (2006) idea of the "local trap" and Harvey's (1996) assertion that "local is not an innocent term." The local trap refers to the propensity of scholars and activists to assume that the local scale is somehow inherently better than any other. However, they say "Scale is not ontologically given but socially constructed; therefore, there can be nothing inherent about scale" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 195). Furthermore, different scales fit different agendas and situations. Thus it is imperative to attend to the agendas of those promoting certain scales. "Scale is a means that may help achieve any of many different goals…(It) depend(s) not on the scale itself but on the agenda of those who are empowered by the scalar strategy. Localizing food systems…leads wherever

those it empowers want it to lead" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 196). This has important implications for research in that asking questions about agents, positionality and agendas is likely to be more revealing than asking questions about the relative merits of a particular scale. Asking questions about scale without recognizing their social creators is erroneous anyway. This line of thinking also has important implications for reflexivity in that it requires the explicit identification of agents, of which a researcher is certainly one, and interrogation of their agendas (Born and Purcell 2006).

Born and Purcell (2006) argue that the 'local trap' "treats localization as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end, such as justice, sustainability, and so on" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 196). The aim is to achieve local for its own sake, which often obscures the initial reasons for seeking a solution, such as, for example, social justice or food security. Project designers who are susceptible to the 'local trap' become unwilling to entertain the possibility that local may not always be the best solution for a given situation. "Local as an end, for its own sake, is merely nativism, a defensive localism that frequently is not allied with social-justice goals" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 202). Local becomes mantra rather than method.

The local trap is not exclusive to food system planning. It is more a commentary on conceptions of scale in general and how these can impact planning and development decisions around the world. However, Born and Purcell (2006) have critiqued the local food movement for falling squarely into the local trap. Born and Purcell (2006) believe that understanding the roots of the local trap is important for being able to avoid it. These roots are actually much the same as the roots of alternative and local food movements in that they were a reaction to ever-increasing globalization of the agrifood system. The

appealingly simple dichotomy of local versus global seemed to offer the answer. However, dichotomies are deceptive because the world is generally greatly more complex than they allow for. Local is not necessarily the opposite of global if the objective is to get away from neoliberal globalization by taking an uncritical approach to localization and inadvertently furthering a neoliberal agenda (Hinrichs et al. 1998). "Because capitalization has been associated so closely with globalization in this (very brief) historical era, many have conflated the two, assuming global agriculture is somehow the same thing as capitalist agriculture, that globalization necessarily equals capitalization" (Born and Purcell 2006, p. 199). The dichotomy becomes even more dangerous if arbitrary values, such as good and bad, are attached to the scalar strategies of global and local.

When Harvey (1996) suggests that "local is not an innocent term" he is cautioning against applying a blanket assumption of universal goodness. There are situations in which local does not work well or promote justice. However, there are also situations in which local has worked well for certain groups. In situations where local has always been effective and functional without the appearance of injustice or dysfunction, it seems natural to romanticize and promote this as a scalar strategy. For the groups that the strategy of local has served well, the term is an innocent one, as it is merely the spatial description of a system that has always worked. Therefore, there is no need to interrogate it more deeply. Because these groups hold the privileged perspective and can perform the "god trick" (Haraway 1991) they automatically assume their experiences and values to be universal. Since scale is a social construct, it is essentially the container for social actions and histories and it is no more innocent than those. Scale cannot be separated from that of

which it is constituted. What was unequal and unjust in a locale will continue to be so when it has been localized, which should indicate that this will in no way lead to greater justice. "To understand the ways in which localization can lead to inequitable consequences requires understanding how it might relate to various existing forms of power" (DuPuis and Goodman 2005, p. 365). Unless these histories and underlying structures are addressed and the term that delineates them viewed with suspicion rather than presumed innocence, localization risks maintaining the status quo of existing injustice.

Privilege and Elitism

No discussion of privilege, and for that matter, food justice, is complete without an understanding of 'white privilege' and the ways in which the unmarked category of 'white' allows injustice to be perpetuated even in light of the best intentions. Put another way by Slocum (2007, p. 520) "Whiteness coheres precisely, therefore, in the act of 'doing good'." Since whiteness studies, an area of academic inquiry from which the term 'white privilege' originates, is a voluminous subject far beyond the scope of this paper, the following is only a basic primer to inform reader understanding of how whiteness relates to privilege and how they both relate to critiques of local food movements. Power is privilege and both very often go unnoticed by those in possession of them because they are held invisible by normative discourse. This is somewhat akin to not knowing what we don't know; if we have no conception of an alternative, we will assume our condition to be ontologically given and 'natural' not a socially constructed and upheld privilege as those outside this narrow frame of reference can clearly see.

> As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being 'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. The point of seeing the racing of whites is to dislodge them/us from the position of power, with all the inequities, oppression, privileges and sufferings in its train, dislodge them/us by undercutting the authority with which they/we speak and act in and on the world. (Dyer 2005, p. 10)

Slocum (2007) has linked white privilege to the geographies of alternative food practices. White privilege is deeply tied to space and scale in that it affords those who hold it the ability to distance themselves from undesirable locations of pollution, violence, and insecurity. Spaces devoid of this privilege reflect this lack in such examples as 'food deserts' where people have limited access to food. Definitions of local, in cases of this scalar strategy being deployed are delineated by those in power, namely those with white privilege. So, too, are the romanticized agrarian imaginaries that underpin these strategies tied to white privilege in the form of historical land ownership rights and divisions of labor. Unexamined, white privilege allows these imbalances of power to continue and be woven into the fabric of local food projects aimed at creating greater access and democracy. However, in advancing the utility of reflexivity, Slocum (2007, p. 532) concludes that "Whiteness, capable of endlessly transforming itself, can change its tendency to reproduce and enforce racial oppression." Without reflexivity, it is difficult to see that negative attributes and systems are being promoted and upheld.

Scales have histories and those histories become entrenched and institutionalized if they are not investigated and acknowledged. Not everyone in a particular locale has been privileged by the dynamics of power of which it is comprised. By ignoring these

alternate histories and perspectives, the local food movement is reinforcing elite privilege, first by not being the subjects of injustice and second by refusing to recognize that injustice is a reality for others (Gaytan 2004, Donati 2005). Through the process of negotiations over space and time, some have been elevated in economic and political status and the legitimacy that this entails, while others have been subjugated. Not only are some people privileged now, but they continue to rely on a historical system that made them so while refusing to recognize it. Donati describes this concept in her research on Slow Food. “The challenge for Slow Food is to recognize its own heritage of privilege derived from an economic system shaped by imperialism” (Donati 2005, p. 227). Utilizing this same idea that the Slow Food movement, like the local food movement, has potential for resisting negative aspects of an unjust global agrifood system but is hindered by a lack of reflexivity that results in exclusivity, Gaytan (2004, p. 97) argues that “Slow Food members construct a limited notion of local that excludes working class and urban cultural expressions.” It should not be assumed that all groups utilize the same strategies of resistance to such food system related issues as food insecurity or globalization, and utilization of specific and particular strategies should not be a prerequisite for implementing legitimate alternative strategies (Holt-Gimenez and Wang 2011). In fact, Guthman (2011) provides a relevant example of how universalized assumptions can even be viewed as incompetency.

> So, when I teach Wendell Berry, a poet of agrarianism much beloved by the sustainable agriculture movement, I do so not to depict Berry as a racist because of his skin color, but instead to show how a romanticized American agrarian imaginary erases the explicitly racist ways in which, historically, American land has been distributed and labor has been organized, erasures that ramify today in more subtle cultural coding of small-scale farming. For African-Americans, especially, putting your hands in the soil is more likely to invoke images of slave

> labor than nostalgia. Such rhetoric thus illustrates a lack of cultural competency that might be deemed an exclusionary practice. (Guthman 2011, p. 276)

In this insight from her teaching experience, Guthman helps her students understand that diverse strategies are equally valid, and that context and positionality are important for developing uniquely applicable responses.

Furthering a Neoliberal Agenda

Neoliberalism as a political economic theory proposes that the needs of the public can best be fulfilled through private enterprise and entrepreneurship and a free trade market economy (Harvey 2005). The privatization of social services that were once the domain of the state is one key component in this project that is infamous for being ubiquitous and pervasive yet difficult to identify and define with any precision (Peck and Tickell 2002). Neoliberalism relies on discourse that erases histories, promotes universalism and thus feels justified in employing narratives of “boot strap” individual responsibility even as this means people are expected to solve problems they did not create (Guthman 2011, Slocum 2007).

In addition to being incorrect to the extent that it is not often feasible for people to solve problems born of historical and structural inequality not of their own making, individualist strategies are misleading and distracting. They detract from an agenda of increasing justice for all by keeping people separate and not working toward a common goal. In her research on obesity and food justice, Guthman (2011) suggests that a function of the neoliberal subjectivity of health care is to transfer responsibility for health from the state or system onto the individual, thereby disrupting the potential for a unified demand

for a health care system that is available and accessible to all. This is problematic not only because a universal health care system would be in the best interest of more people, but also because people live within a system of environmental factors that impact their health and for which they are not responsible or able to alter. Essentially, a system that economically benefits from environmental pollution and that restricts access to healthy food and health care is simultaneously absolving itself of any responsibility and culpability to the individuals that both enable and suffer from this system.

Allen and Guthman (2006) also use the example of Farm to School lunch programs to illustrate that, while it's good to feed children fresh food, this is not really the issue. The issue and focus should be on why it is necessary to devise such programs in the first place and might it not be more efficacious to just strike at the roots rather than fussing with the leaves (Guthman 2006). The same could be said with regard to neoliberalization and its insidious ways of distracting people from root causes. In addition to being a mechanism of distraction, neoliberal imaginaries are so pervasive that they often slip into discourse designed as an alternative. To illustrate this tendency, Guthman (2008, p. 1172) asks "How it is that current arenas of activism around food and agriculture seem to produce and reproduce neoliberal forms and spaces of governance, at the same time they oppose neoliberalism writ large?" Because neoliberal imaginaries are found in most every aspect of modern life, it is difficult to avoid replicating it. Therefore, greater reflexivity is needed to concentrate efforts against such replication.

The problem with neoliberalism being applied to food is that it simply doesn't work if one believes that food is a basic human right, and it becomes antithetical if one is attempting to incorporate justice into food issues. The reliance on markets to provide life

essentials, such as food, ignores the fact that markets are made up of people and people are not impartial in the way that it is believed markets are. It is the social construct behind the normative concept that proves to be the stumbling block. Markets are no more inherently impartial than is local inherently good. Neither scales nor markets can be separated from the discourse and power dynamics that constitute them.

As a solution to globalization, neoliberalism also fails because the two are dependent upon each other to a large extent. Many local food projects are seen precisely as alternatives to globalization and its attendant evils of environmental and social degradation. However, when local food projects rely on market driven outcomes, individual consumptive habits, and an apolitical discourse of food and food access, they are playing directly into the hands of neoliberal agendas, globalization, and injustice. Freeing markets from the constraints of regulations and opening up free trade on an international basis requires a globalized economy. Other components of neoliberalism, such as personal choice and individual consumption have been strategically tailored to appeal to people who believe that market-based consumptive behavior will result in a better environment and higher quality food.

Neoliberalism, in reality, does not place social justice at the forefront of its campaign. Harvey (2005) suggests that individual freedom and liberation from the constraints of state regulated resources is the primary concern of neoliberalism. However, this ignores the structures already in place which allowed these resources to be distributed unequally, and that even in the deregulation process the unequal distribution will remain the same, only without a state system in place to attempt a more equitable

redistribution. Therefore, increased inequality is a necessary result of such neoliberal projects and ideals.

The discourse surrounding neoliberalism promises greater wealth and quality of life for everyone if only the markets are liberated to a sufficient degree to allow for mass accumulation of capital. Despite these claims, it does not actually translate to greater social justice, since markets are not in the business of assisting those who are unable to enter the market for a wide variety of reasons. In fact, neoliberal projects most often seek to end social welfare programs and other safety nets in favor of private ventures that will fill in the gaps, or not, as the case often is (Levkoe 2011). However, reflexivity offers a perspective for recognizing when, where and how social justice concerns are not being adequately addressed. A reflexive stance presents a way forward beyond local food projects that do not challenge and may, in fact, uphold systems of injustice such as neoliberalism, which does not fully incorporate justice for those outside the capitalist market system.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This paper's contribution to the field is that it is a condensed and accessible overview of the academic critiques of the local food movement and ways in which academic authors have proposed reflexivity as a resolution to these critiques. This paper makes readers aware that there are academic critiques of the local food movement, and the readers have also been presented with some historical and contextual background on this movement and critiques. This paper informs readers of what these critiques are in a

format of broad categorical organization. This paper introduces readers to reflexivity, which is a critical thinking perspective that informs actions and has been proposed by several academic critics of the local food movement as a way to move beyond the ways in which this movement is currently seen to limit social justice application. To create a holistic picture of academic critiques and how reflexivity relates and applies to them, this paper organized the critiques into four general categories, 1) privilege and elitism, 2) normative conceptions of scale, 3) furthering a neoliberal agenda, and 4) paternalism and conversion politics, and paired them with the specific reflexive approaches that address each category.

Academic critiques of local food movements have called into question the reliance on normative assumptions about scale and justice and the ways in which these impact social justice considerations (Allen 2008, 2010; Born and Purcell 2006; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011; Guthman 2011, Hinrichs 2003). In this review, these critiques were organized into the four general categories of 1) privilege and elitism, 2) normative conceptions of scale, 3) furthering a neoliberal agenda, and 4) paternalism and conversion politics. DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011), DuPuis and Goodman (2005), Allen (2008) and Levkoe (2011) have all suggested that reflexivity should be used as a strategy for incorporating greater social justice into local food systems. Specifically, this review has utilized the arguments put forth by DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman (2011) regarding the nature of reflexivity, to address these four categories of critique. Reflexivity, and the illumination of positionality that this entails, makes for a more comprehensive and holistic perspective that should be capable of

providing more answers with broader utility than the limited picture that results when positions and histories are normatively edited out.

An example of how reflexivity can be used in research and applied projects involving alternative food movements is seen in the work of A. Breeze Harper who looks at veganism from a perspective that explicates, rather than obscures, race and class. A vegan diet is one which excludes all animal products, such as meat, cheese, milk, eggs and even honey. Adherents to this diet do so for moral, spiritual, environmental and personal health reasons. This work on the intersection of veganism and "Vegans of Color" is significant because, according to Harper (2011), research on alternative food movements has continued to ignore veganism and animal rights activism as valid components of this movement, even as they share many of the same attributes researchers have attributed to alternative food movements. These attributes, as have been discussed throughout this paper, are tendencies toward white middle class dominance, color-blind perspectives, privileged erasure of histories based on and upheld by socially constructed systems, and universalized assumptions about lived experiences. The expectation that food choices will be made according to certain values and ethics is rarely explicitly stated but is nonetheless pervasively felt by those outside this dominant and normative group (Harper 2011). This is not due so much to *intentionally* exclusionary practices as it is to a lack of reflexivity. A reflexive stance, as opposed to a normative perspective, would allow for recognition of, and challenges to, taken for granted assumptions and white privilege. Such a reflexive perspective would lead to an acceptance of a more diverse range of strategies. Harper's work focuses on the ways in which "Vegans of Color" are either erased from this particular alternative food movement through color-blind paradigms

constructed by the majority white participants, or are framed as the exotic 'other' that is out of place in white vegan culture. In order to illuminate the basis of this situation, which is white privilege, she first has to show that such a notoriously and intentionally invisible thing exists. She explicitly brings race and class back into the discussion, rather than obscuring these significant social factors behind a color-blind assumption of universalized white experiences.

For example, part of Harper's research was a discursive analysis of a best-selling book on eating a vegan diet while pregnant. This book is part of a series on veganism for women, and Harper (2011, p. 223) says that "Texts such as the Skinny Bitch series engage in a 'color-blind' approach to food politics that ignores the affects of race and class on an individual's circumstances." Despite the fact that there are many "Vegans of Color," the book features only white women, who were also consistently skinny since a primary focus of this book is personal responsibility for weight through choosing a vegan diet to begin with. The personal responsibility for health is a theme that has echoed through this paper as Guthman (2011) has referred to it as a neoliberal imaginary and one of the implicit tenets of alternative food based on market economy entrepreneurship that assumes everyone to have equal access. As has been discussed throughout this paper, these blind spots regarding other experiences outside the prescribed norm are not done out of inherent ill-will or a desire to intentionally exclude. Guthman's (2008) question of why neoliberal agendas continue to show up in projects that oppose neoliberalism "writ large" can be answered by recognizing that pervasive elements of structural injustice remain intact and are sustained through re-creation because of a lack of critical reflexivity. In alignment with this understanding, Harper (2011, p. 223) also concludes

that "Though the authors' intent for the book was not to focus on race-and-class-based experiences of veganism and pregnancy, the absence of this personal reflection and assumptions made about their audience are intriguing and quite telling." Alternative food projects are not intentionally perpetuating injustice, but they are unintentionally perpetuating it because they have not confronted it head on. A reflexive stance would make these systems of injustice more clearly visible and would allow projects to more effectively strike at the roots of the injustice. So, the message from Harper's research seems to be two-fold. First, reflexivity is critical for designing alternative food projects that are inclusive, accessible and just. Second, when reflexivity has not been applied to projects, as Harper illustrates in her research on veganism, reflexivity is a crucial component for designing research projects that illuminate the lack of, and the need for, greater reflexivity in these projects. In other words, reflexivity has many functions from enabling justice, to recognizing when it is not present, to rectifying injustice.

Recommendations for research and practice

In closing, attention to scholarly critiques of the local food system, reflexive challenges to epistemologies, and recognition of social constructs, can foster social justice and "thereby make a difference, for everyone" (DuPuis, Harrison and Goodman 2011, p. 302). These reflexive strategies can also help to remedy the need for alternatives to the alternatives, and instead refocus the agenda on developing food systems that are

just for all. The increased use of reflexive strategies and perspectives is necessary for moving forward, both in local food system research and application.

Hints, Tips, and Guidelines About How To Use Reflexivity:

- Think critically
- Challenge normative conceptions
- Be aware that many things are not inherently given but are instead socially constructed
- Think reflexively regarding your standpoint and positionality, and that of others' positionality
- All of these guidelines can be applied to the local food movement
- Continue thinking about how to change larger systems of injustice
- Address state injustice in the system
- Remember, it's not the fault of the local food movement, injustice is everywhere

To reiterate, this paper is of great utility to those in need of a cursory overview of academic critiques and proposed theoretical solutions to the incorporation of greater social justice concerns into food system localization projects. This paper contributes much to those, whether activists, community organizers or city planners looking for an academic perspective on ways to incorporate social justice into food systems, academics looking for an easily accessible synopsis of critiques, or even consumers seeking to expand their perspective on food systems. This paper draws straight from academic critiques and academic insights into reflexivity as the potential resolution to

these critiques, that forms the value of contribution to an expanding body of knowledge on local food movements and critiques thereof.

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