

Food Sovereignty in the City: Challenging Historical Barriers to Food Justice

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Abstract:

Local food initiatives are steadily becoming a part of contemporary cities around the world and can take on many forms. While some of these initiatives are concerned with providing consumers with farm-fresh produce, a growing portion are concerned with increasing the food sovereignty of marginalized urban communities. This chapter provides an analysis of urban contexts with the aim of identifying conceptual barriers that may act as roadblocks to achieving food sovereignty in cities. Specifically, this paper argues that taken for granted commitments created during the birth of the modern city could act as conceptual barriers for the implementation of food sovereignty programs and that urban food activists and programs that challenge these barriers are helping to achieve the goal of restoring food sovereignty to local communities, no matter their reasons for doing so. At the very least, understanding the complexities of these barriers and how they operate helps to strengthen ties between urban food projects, provides these initiatives with ways to undermine common arguments used to support restrictive ordinances and policies, and illustrates the transformative potential of food sovereignty movements.

Keywords: urban agriculture, food sovereignty, food justice, food policy, environmental ethics, food ethics

Food Sovereignty in the City¹

Local food initiatives are steadily becoming a part of contemporary cities around the world and can take on many forms (Holt-Gimenez et al. 2011; DeLind 2011; Martinez et al. 2010). While some of these initiatives are concerned with providing consumers with farm-fresh produce or improving urban population's access to foodstuffs in urban areas, a growing portion of movements are concerned with increasing the food sovereignty of marginalized urban communities. Here food sovereignty should be understood as a broader understanding of food, where food is bound up with human rights concerns or justice issues.² In contrast to programs that make use of industrialized food systems, food sovereignty movements work hard to increase local community control of the production, processing, and distribution of food, as this is seen as a necessary condition for liberating communities from oppression (Werkheiser and Noll 2014; Schanbacher 2010). With this in mind, urban food initiatives often make use of various strategies, from direct community action, to lobbying for local policy and ordinance changes, to achieve their various short term and long term goals.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical analysis of urban contexts with the aim of identifying conceptual barriers that may act as roadblocks to achieving food sovereignty in cities. Specifically, in this paper, I argue that 1) taken for granted commitments created during the birth of the modern city could act as conceptual barriers for the implementation of food

¹ Note: this chapter draws on and expands some of the ideas in my article "History lessons: What urban environmental ethics can learn from nineteenth century cities." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* Volume 28(1): 143-159.

² It should be noted here that the terms "food sovereignty" and "food justice" are often used interchangeably, as both signify food related movements that accept a wide range of justice concerns, including but not limited to increasing community control of food systems. For this reason, both terms will be used interchangeably in this chapter.

sovereignty programs and 2) that urban food activists and programs that challenge these barriers are helping to achieve the goal of restoring food sovereignty to local communities, no matter their reasons for doing so. While increasing food sovereignty in urban areas includes policy, direct action, and community activism, purposefully challenging historical conceptual barriers may help to remove roadblocks to food sovereignty.

In addition, the theoretical analysis presented in this chapter could help urban food practitioners the following practical ways: 1) It could help cultivate cooperative relationships between a multiplicity of urban food projects guided by disparate goals 2) help undermine seemingly reasonable arguments (such as nuance and public health claims) commonly used to justify strict ordinances and policies concerning food production in the city, by exposing their biased histories, and 3) provide alternative visions of urban spaces as centers of agricultural production that could serve as examples and/or models for future development. At the very least, understanding the complexities of barriers to urban agriculture and how they operate helps to illustrate the transformative potential of food sovereignty movements.

Urban Agriculture

In the current literature, urban agriculture is generally characterized as part of the local food movement that focuses on food production in urban areas. More specifically, individual initiatives are often understood as projects that achieve particular ends, such as a novel way to provide populations living in city centers with a fresh supply of foodstuffs (Angotti 2015), a method to support sustainability efforts by limiting our ecological footprint (Huang and Drescher 2015), a way to connect urbanites with the natural world (Light 2003), and an activity to promote community connections (Delind 2011). Thus, while common urban farming endeavors (such as farmers' markets, community gardens, etc.) can all be placed under the umbrella of urban

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agriculture, they are guided by disparate goals and motivations (Delind 2011; Werkheiser and Noll 2014). For example, international organizations, such as the FAO, conceptualizes urban food initiatives as a way of increasing food and nutrition security around the world, as urban populations are increasingly facing global food price inflation.³ In local contexts, community supported agriculture projects, such as the Kimberton CSA⁴ in Pennsylvania, are frequently guided by the goals of providing local populations with biodynamic, organic, and/or sustainably produced fruits, vegetables, and animal products, supporting the local economy, and training future farmers. Community gardens, such as the Hunter Park Garden House Project⁵ in Michigan and The School Garden Project of Lane County⁶ in Oregon, are guided by the goals of providing food education, strengthening community ties, and bettering the health of local populations.

Food Sovereignty in Cities

Within this wider urban food landscape, food justice or sovereignty movements, such as the Detroit Food Justice Taskforce,⁷ are committed to the specific goal of increasing local community control of food systems. In fact, key justice commitments and an expanded conception of “food” play important roles guiding food sovereignty movements in city contexts (Werkheiser and Noll 2014). The following definition of food sovereignty in Declaration of Nyéléni illustrates this point perfectly:

³ "Food and Nutrition Security." *FAO: Growing Greener Cities*. (Accessed June 09, 2016.) <http://www.fao.org/ag/agp/greenercities/en/whyuph/foodsecurity.html>.

⁴ "Kimberton CSA." (Accessed June 11, 2016.) <http://www.kimbertoncsa.org/about/index.html>.

⁵ "Hunter Park Garden House." *Allen Neighborhood Center*. (Accessed June 11, 2016.) <http://allenneighborhoodcenter.org/gardenhouse/>.

⁶ "The School Garden Project." (Accessed June 11, 2016.) <http://schoolgardenproject.org/>.

⁷ "Detroit Food Justice Task Force." *Detroit Food Justice Task Force*. (Accessed June 11, 2016.) <http://www.detroitfoodjustice.org/>.

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations... It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.”⁸

In the above passage, food sovereignty’s definitions of “food” moves beyond the limited conception of “food” as a commodity or food-stuff to include a wide range of social justice concerns, such as matters of food autonomy, ecological preservation, food system and policy issues, future generations, and gender and racial equality. Here the conception of food that guides food sovereignty movements is bound up with personal, spiritual, and social identity (Werkheiser and Noll 2014; Pimbert 2008; Whittman et al. 2010). As such, it is difficult if not impossible to separate food issues from wider social issues. In addition, food is seen as a way of addressing a plethora of human rights or justice concerns beyond increasing access and thus employs an expanded conception of justice (Flora 2011). In urban contexts, food sovereignty initiatives address a wide range of justice issues often faced by marginalized communities in urban contexts, such as the realities of living in a food desert (Schafft et al. 2010), biases in food systems and food policy (Taylor and Ard 2015), and the lack of urban spaces for food production (Angotti 2015). As such, while food sovereignty based programs frequently work towards many of the goals guiding other urban agricultural programs, a key impetus for food justice is addressing human rights and justice concerns in urban contexts by increasing community control of food systems.

The Context of the City: Challenges faced by Urban Agriculture Projects

⁸ “Declaration of Nyéléni.” *Forum for a New World Governance*, 2007. <http://www.world-governance.org/article72.html?lang=en>.

While “urban food” captures a wide array of food related projects guided by various values, these movements often face similar challenges unique to the urban context, such as soil contamination, the high price of land, and regulatory hurdles, when attempting to start farming enterprises in cities. In fact, one of the greatest barriers faced by urban agricultural programs are policy and zoning regulations (Huang and Drescher 2015; De Zeeuw et al. 2000; LeJava and Goonan 2012). Depending on the specific context, current zoning ordinances can make it difficult, if not impossible, to acquire sites for community gardens and other production activities, thus hindering the implementation of agricultural programs (Castillo et al. 2013; Roehr and Kunigk 2009; Voigt 2011). Indeed, factors such as whether or not your operation is community based or commercially focused can greatly impact whether or not you can successfully integrate your enterprise into the cityscape. This is particularly the case concerning food animals, as municipalities often prohibit raising livestock (such as chickens, goats, and pigs) in urban areas due to public health concerns, such as that they could spread diseases, become a nuisance, or attract pests (Huang and Drescher 2015; Pollock et al. 2012).

The above list of concerns is not meant to be exhaustive but rather to curiously illustrate how the context of the city creates unique challenges for urban food projects. Land-use policy, zoning regulations, food system choices, and most importantly for this chapter, food initiatives do not happen in a vacuum, but are grounded in specific environmental, historical, and socio-economic contexts (McGirr and Batterbury 2015; Mitchell 2003). These contexts are not value free but are molded by the values of previous generations (Lyson 2004; Thompson 2015) and interwoven with basic commitments and assumptions that often help to guide decision making, such as particular conceptions of disease (Atkins 2012b; Barnes 1995; Howell 2012), what a city is (Noll 2015), and the perceived “right” relationship is between humans and animals (Brantz

2011; Clutton-Brock 2011; Kalof 2007).⁹ The next section of this chapter takes up what Rose (2003) calls “the project of delimiting and determining the governing features of everyday social existence” in the context of the city (p. 462). Specifically, it explores how a) the context of the city and b) actors and stakeholders in this context include or accept key assumptions and commitments that play a role in shaping the current challenges faced by urban agriculture initiatives today.

For instance, as argued below, the seemingly reasonable justifications for prohibiting livestock urban areas just listed, such as public health and nuisance concerns, were historically guided by sustained efforts to limit the food sovereignty of working class communities and guided by a specific vision of how cities should be structured. Today we often assume that cities, in general, are densely developed population centers largely divorced from the natural world, in general, and food production, in particular (Light 2001; Thompson 1994). However, this was not always the case. Prior to the nineteenth century, urban areas were often sites of intense agricultural production, with food production, processing, and distribution occurring in the urban neighborhood. The next section teases out metaphysical commitments created during the birth of the modern city that are now embedded in the cityscape and illustrates how they 1) help to inform the policies and regulations above and 2) act as conceptual barriers for the implementation of food sovereignty programs. It will end by arguing that urban food initiatives

⁹ For the purposes of this chapter, a “commitment” should be understood as an underlying feature of social existence (Rose 2003) or a basic concept that a person holds concerning what something “is” (Inwagen 2013; Noll 2015). Such commitments are influential in all areas of life, including the development of personal identity (Ricoeur and Blamey 1995), how we treat various groups, such as other those of other cultures, animals, and the environment, and in scientific inquiry (Haraway 1989, Harding 1993). There is a plethora of work in humanities and social sciences devoted to teasing out the social, symbolic, and cultural aspects of food (McGirr and Batterbury 2015). This chapter builds on this work, by identifying historical commitments that may act as conceptual barriers to food sovereignty.

that challenge these barriers are helping to achieve the goal of restoring food sovereignty, no matter their specific goals.

An Analysis of Nineteenth Century Cities

During the nineteenth century, urban areas around the world experienced widespread changes that culminated in the development of what today is recognized as the basic structure of the modern city (Atkins 2012a). It should be noted here that the literature on the urban landscape is vast and covers a wide range of topics (Steinhoff 2011). For the purposes of this chapter, the following analysis primarily focuses on teasing out conceptual and structural changes concerning 1) the relationships between humans and domesticated animals in urban areas and 2) urban agriculture practices. It pays particular attention to how the shifting contextual landscape culminated in drastic changes to urban agriculture and animal husbandry practices and to the power dynamics helping to prompt these changes. As will be discussed, cities during this time period saw drastic changes to urban food production, processing, and distribution. Specifically, shifting understandings of key concepts combined to cleanse the city of livestock and the resulting loss of cheap fertilizer (in the form of manure) forced urban crop production to move out of the city.

Animals in the City: Shifting Human & Domesticated Animal Relationships

The roles of domesticated animals in urban landscapes greatly shifted during the nineteenth century, so much so that, by the dawn of the twentieth century, cityscapes were effectively cleansed of all but pet animals and those predominantly living outside human control (Atkins 2012a; Brantz 2011; Noll 2015). In contrast, inhabitants in pre-modern urban areas included various types of agricultural and work animals—animals who often spent their lives and eventually died in urban environments. Specifically, the shifting understandings of 1) civilization

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and domestication and 2) disease and filth combined with class based discrimination to culminate in the removal of all but a handful of non-human animals from the city streets. Concerning the first point, key factors impacting human-animal relationships during the nineteenth century were a) an increasing emphasis and reliance on science and rationality, coupled with a growing faith in progress, and b) the emergence of new concepts of “civilization” and “domestication” built upon the key dualisms of wild/tame and primitive/cultivated (Brantz 2011; Noll 2015). These labels signify different relationships between humans and non-human animals (Palmer 2011), as wildness came to emphasize “the absence of a relation and a disposition that is markedly not ‘tame,’ while a domesticated animal is one that is both controlled by humans and has been made dependent upon humans in various degrees” (Noll 2015). Due to these conceptual developments, “civilized” spaces, such as the home and the city, that were traditionally viewed as a place where various animals (such as agricultural and work animals) were welcomed (Edwards 2011; Pascua 2011), were increasingly conceptualized as a place where only the most “tame” or controlled animals (mostly companion animals) could safely enter (Clutton-Brock 2011). In the context of the city, this translated into the upper class ideal of the home as place where an increasingly private and animal-free space was now understood as a marker of status (Gamber 2005). As will be discussed further, most urban dwellers during the nineteenth century lived in boarding houses or with their food animals. For these reasons, they never reached this ideal and were negatively judged by the upper classes.

A consequence of this shift was an increase in claims that agricultural and other working animals were “nuisances” and, therefore, should be further removed from city common areas, such as streets and parks. In fact, these charges played an increasingly prominent role in de-animalizing the city. Like the home, urban areas were re-conceptualized as places of civilization

and thus no longer acceptable habitats for many non-human animals classified as “wild,” or at least not “tame” enough for civilized spaces (see Michelfelder 2003; McNeur 2011; Mitzelle 2011). In this context, “nuisance” claims should be understood as a way of reinforcing boundaries, as these arguments ultimately rested upon the charge that non-humans have transgressed human-animal boundaries in some way. Indeed, as intimated above, such claims fueled by the new concepts of “civilization” and “domestication” exacerbated class-strife helped to ignite the lengthy campaign to remove pigs from New York City at the end of the nineteenth century. The next section of this chapter uses this case study to illustrate how the above changes combined with class strife to de-animalize the city and thus reduce the food sovereignty of immigrant populations in urban contexts.

Food Justice and a History of Class Strife

In pre-nineteenth century cities, it was common for people of all classes to own food and working animals, such as pigs (Noll 2015). However, due to various cultural changes of the time, such as the new ideal of the home and rising land prices, middle-class and wealthy New Yorkers increasingly opted to purchase food at markets instead of growing gardens and raising livestock (McNeur 2011). While the upper classes distanced themselves from food production, working class communities, such as those of African, Irish, and German American communities, relied on raising pigs and other food animals as an integral part of securing enough food for their families. These city neighborhoods were areas where humans, pigs, and various domesticated animals shared both city common space, such as streets, and living space. However, “the cultural ideal of the home cleansed of working animals distanced the upper class from most animals (all but pets and horses), connected raising livestock to the lower class, and essentially shifted this class' perception of pigs from that of a useful animal to nuances or ones that transgress human-animal

boundaries” (Noll 2015, p.148). This shift, in combination with a sharp increase in population during the time period and the resulting push to “gentrify” working class neighborhoods ignited a major legal battle over the proper place of pigs in the city commons and the urban home.

The result was a violent clash between wealthy New York citizens, who argued that city pigs were a nuisance, impeded progress, violated the delicate sensibilities of cultured ladies, and a health hazard, and working class citizens, who argued that food animals were useful for cleaning city streets, as pigs eat garbage accumulated in urban areas, and necessary for providing income and food to their families (McNeur 2014; McNeur 2011; Noll 2015). Indeed, tradesmen at “piggerys” often collected food waste during this time and boiled it down to both sell to various manufactures and to fatten up pigs that were then sold to local butchers (McNeur 2014). After lengthy legal battles, city officials and police officers clashed with working class communities over the forceful removal of pigs from the neighborhoods around Central Park in what is now called New York City’s “Piggery” War of 1859 (McNeur 2014). This war ended in the removal of pigs from urban common areas and city homes and new land use laws strictly limiting animal agricultural production in the city proper.

Importantly for this chapter, these changes also resulted in the marked reduction of food sovereignty in city neighborhoods, as working class communities were now increasingly reliant on markets to purchase food-stuffs. In essence, this argument was not about pigs but a deeper conflict concerning divergent visions of the proper use of urban public space (McNeur 2011), food production in the city, and human-animal relationships. The emerging concepts of civilization and domestication guided by the key dualisms of wild/tame and primitive/cultivated combined with class prejudices to cleanse urban environments of all animals considered nuisances by the wealthy. A New York Times writer captures the interplay of these concepts with

class discrimination perfectly, when he describes a working class neighborhood as an assemblage of “shanties in which the pigs and the Patricks lie down together while little ones of Celtic and swinish origin lie miscellaneously, with billy-goats here and there interspersed” (McNeur 2015, p.1). Beyond the specific context of New York City, such arguments were used to remove a wide array of working animals from the city sphere, including, interestingly, stray dogs and dogs used in dogcarts, which were the primary means of transportation for those unable to afford a horse (Howell 2012; Kalof 2007). Thus “nuisance” claims are not value neutral but come out of often class-charged conflicts concerning divergent visions of how urban areas should be structured and used.

Disease and the Cleansing of Human Spaces

In addition to nuisance claims, basic assumptions concerning disease, how diseases are transmitted, and dirt or “filth” also played a part in the de-animalization of urban areas (Noll 2015). Atkins (2012b) argues that major changes of widely held conceptions of disease transmission helped to accelerate the process of de-animalizing urban areas. During the nineteenth century, populations commonly believed that foul odors could transmit diseases and that the increasingly chaotic and polluted city environments could cause illness (Atkins 2012b; Barnes 1995; Coleman 1982; McNeur 2011). In fact, “several significant elements of the pre-germ theory etiology of tuberculosis survived intact through the late nineteenth century... Among these elements are filth, stench, and overcrowding, all symptomatic of the underlying pathology of the city” (Barnes 1995, p.25). In the early part of the nineteenth century, household livestock were a common site in the city streets, slaughter houses were located in urban neighborhoods, and manure from working animals, such as horses, filled the gutters (Atkins 2012b, p.85).

However, the above assumptions associated with disease, dirt, and disease transmission

manifested into the increased sanitary policing of urban spaces that culminated in the use of new legislation to address issues of smell coming from horse manure, drains, slaughter houses, and trash (Atkins 2012b; Stallybrass and White 1986).

Indeed, as we just explored above, claims that food animals were a health hazard helped bolster arguments for removing working animals from city environments (McNeur 2011). Such claims, coupled with rising real estate costs, were also used to push slaughter houses and piggerys from city contexts and (DeMello 2011) increasing fears of rabies were used as justifications to remove stray dogs from city-centers (Howell 2012) and to make the use of dogcarts cost prohibitive for poor and working class families (Kalof 2007). Commonly held beliefs concerning the transmission of disease, and the roles that dirt and manure play in this transmission, again manifested along class-lines, with increasing legislation intended to police industries and behavior predominately undertaken in urban working class neighborhoods. In fact, while this analysis largely focuses on relationships between animals and humans in urban areas, McNeur (2011) argues that conflicts, such as the “Piggery” War of 1859 were as much about censoring and changing the behavior and habits of the city’s working class, as they were about human-animal relationships. Shifting conceptions of disease helped to bolster claims that the animals of the working class were “nuisances” and thus should be removed from city contexts. This, in turn, impacted the ability of various communities that were dependent on these animals to produce food and other goods and thus impacted their food sovereignty.

Vegetable Production in the City

The de-animalization of city landscapes had serious impacts in other areas of urban agriculture practices, especially in the area of vegetable production (Noll 2015). In fact, Atkins (2012c) argues that above changes, coupled with automotive technology replacing the horse,

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helped to undermine food production and the sustainable relationship that made this food production possible between the city-center and the area surrounding the city (between 10-50 miles, depending on the context) known as the “charmed circle” (p.53). In particular, vegetable production in the city greatly benefited from the manure being produced by the plethora of food and work animals housed there, as this abundant resource was continually being used as a cheap source of fertilizer. The fertilizer was used in the peri-urban areas surrounding the city to grow crops that fetched a low price and that could easily be transported, such as beans, potatoes, and grain, and in horticultural operations in the city center to grow delicate and high value crops that were in high demand, such as broccoli, celery, and asparagus (Atkins 2012c, p.54).

This network between the city proper and peri-urban areas was commonly known as the “manured region,” or the radius of agricultural prosperity being sustained by the city’s steady supply of the cheap fertilizer. As the amount of manure being produced in city centers decreased due to de-animalization, the prices paid for the product increased. These economic factors combined with rising land costs and the conceptual shifts above to effectively remove most vegetable production from the city sphere. The result of this exodus of crop production from the city landscape was the removal of food production activities to areas far outside cities, the increasing dependence of cities on global food systems, an “extinction of experience” of interactions between humans and the natural world and the disappearance of local knowledge related to agriculture from urban landscapes (Barthel et al. 2015; Barthel et al. 2010; Pyle 1978; Miller 2005).

Thus the current urban landscape bears little resemblance to pre-nineteenth century cities. Historically, cities were sites of intense agricultural production, with food production, processing, and distribution occurring in the larger urban landscape and within specific

neighborhoods. As argued above shifting understandings of 1) civilization and domestication and 2) disease and filth combined with class based discrimination to culminate in the removal of all but a handful of non-human animals from the city streets. This, in turn, impacted the ability of various communities to produce food, undermined the “charmed circle,” resulted in the “extinction of experience” and an increasing reliance of global food systems. While the conception of the city as an area largely divorced from food animals and crop production is largely taken for granted today, the analysis of the birth of the modern city outlined above illustrates how the current general structure of the modern city is the result of sustained efforts to limit the food sovereignty of working class communities and guided by a specific vision of how cities should be structured.

The Context of the City: Challenges Revisited

When viewed from this position, current urban agricultural initiatives are not new and novel approaches to growing food or increasing food security in cities but a challenge to modern conceptions of civilization (and the dualisms in this concept) and re-instantiation of an older vision of the city, where individual communities again have increasing control of the production, processing, and distribution of food. Many of the social barriers faced by urban food initiatives, such as policy, zoning regulations, and municipal ordinances, in so far as they limit the population’s ability to grow food, can be understood as vestiges of the de-animalization efforts of the nineteenth century. This is especially the case concerning ordinances that ban food animals from urban areas, as municipalities often prohibit raising livestock (such as chickens, goats, and pigs) due to the historically-charged concerns that they could spread diseases, become a nuisance, or attract pests (Huang and Drescher 2015; Pollock et al. 2012). Rather than being value neutral, such claims are made in a context where these justifications were directed at the

poor and used as a way to limit the food sovereignty of working class communities. For this reason, I argue that all urban food initiatives, no matter the values guiding them, that help to amend these ordinances at least indirectly contribute to food sovereignty initiatives, in that they are helping to change the social structure of the city. Let us turn to a survey of municipal laws concerning back yard chickens as an example of my argument.

Backyard Chickens: A Case Study

Raising backyard chickens has become increasingly popular in urban areas for a multiplicity of reasons, such as the desire to increase personal control over food, a reaction to industrial farming practices, and a way to address a broken food system (Bouvier 2012; Wooten and Ackerman 2011). In response to the increased desire of those living in cities to raise chickens, local governments across the context of the United States are in the process of amending or considering amending their ordinances to allow chickens in urban areas (Bouvier 2012). However, even in the face of this wide-spread push to allow chickens, city leaders commonly raise a common list of concerns, such as that chickens may be a nuisance, could decrease property values, emit greenhouse emissions, cause odors, pass along diseases, and that “chickens do not belong in cities” (Bouvier 2012, p. 9). The above concerns coupled with the wide-spread desire for backyard chickens has resulted in a highly contentious controversy over regulation. While each of the above concerns do not stand up to scrutiny and are being adequately addressed by backyard chicken enthusiasts, what is important for this paper is that the list contains references to the commitments that contributed to the historical de-animalization of modern cityscapes, such as nuisance claims, issues concerning disease, filth, and odors, and conceptions of the city as a place of civilization and thus is no place for a chicken. Just as in the historical case-study concerning pigs in New York, the same concerns are currently being used as

justifications for keeping city landscapes free of food animals. Thus, one could argue that commitments created during the birth the modern city may still be acting as conceptual barriers to the implementation of urban food projects.

However, in contrast to historical clashes between classes on the issue of urban animal husbandry, today advocates for backyard chickens and animals are making substantial progress changing ordinances and laws to allow the reintroduction of a wide range of livestock and food animals into urban areas, such as bees, goats, chickens (Wooten and Ackerman 2011). Indeed, we're even seeing elected officials in the historically charged context of New York City coming out in support of legalizing pig pet ownership in the city. For example, State Senator Tony Avella is quoted as saying that "people die on [illegal] construction sites . . . and yet our threatening enforcement is against the person who has a small pig. There is a total inconsistency in the way the city deals with certain activities" (Fenton 2013). When viewed from an ahistorical position, there may seem to be an inconsistency in the laws, as they've largely succeed in removing animals from working-class neighborhoods. Today advocates for urban livestock come from wide range of socio-economic classes and pursue the reintroduction of food animals for a variety of reasons, such as to increase food security, personal health or environmental reasons, or to increase local control of food systems (Bouvier 2012). This diverse lobbying base is increasingly successful in undermining the above challenges and bringing about change at the legislative level. Thus, no matter their goals, this case study illustrates how urban food advocates and programs are challenging barriers that once contributed to the reduction of food sovereignty in urban neighborhoods and thus helping to make food sovereignty possible.

It should be noted here that, as a counter-argument, one could argue that urban projects do not contribute to food sovereignty, as the above changes in agricultural production are due to

1) economic developments, rather than social and to 2) improving knowledge in the realm of public health. Concerning the first point, one could argue that Akin's (2012c) historical analysis of the undermine of the charmed circle and thus of vegetable production, makes use of Von Thunen's predictive model¹⁰ describing how peri-urban areas organize food production, which looks at economic and not social factors. Regardless of conceptual shifts, the technological developments that displaced the horse combined with rising land values to impact the market prices of manure costs. This, in turn, made it economically unfeasible to grow crops in city areas, thus pushing agricultural production to cheaper land outside of the city or, in the language of Von Thunen's model, a ring with lowering production intensity. Thus, at least in the case of vegetable production, social factors did not play an important role in undermining urban food systems.

In reply, I argue that this counter argument is only applicable to the vegetable production section and not the larger argument that takes shifting human-animal relationships into account, as the larger analysis does not use von Thunen's model. Even when accepting this limited scope, however, the critique does not hold, as, even accepting the facile and dubious separation of the economic and social spheres, spatial organization is predominantly the result of historical social relationships, as much as it is influenced by economic factors (Barthel et al. 2015). In fact, von Thunen's model itself has been critiqued, with scholars arguing that Thunen's prescribed boundaries between different types of production (in this case milk production) "are as much the product of economic margins as they are the product of political outcomes" (Barthel et al. 2015, p. 81). In the complicated contexts of the city, a multiplicity of factors influence both the

¹⁰ Von Thunen's influential thesis was that when there is a lone market located in an urban center, "crops with high transportation costs and intensive uses of land would be produced near the market than would other types of crops... Distance determined land value and transportation costs and therefore the margin of profit from a particular enterprise needed to be sufficient to pay these costs" (Barthel et al 2015, p.80). In this theory, economic factors cause the creation of "rings" of varying productivity around city-centers.

structure of urban areas and the various production activities performed in these contexts, from food production to the production of industrial goods and later services.

When replying to the to critique that the removal of animals from the social sphere was largely due to improving knowledge in the realm of public health, readers should remember that the current literature largely argues that elements of pre-germ theory (such as the view that foul odors could transmit disease) helped increase the sanitary policing of urban spaces and culminated in the increased removal of non-human animals from urban spaces (Atkins 2012b; Stallybrass and White 1986). Even today, the topic of disease transmission between humans and animals is complex, dependent upon the specific species involved, and an area of knowledge that urban populations (including those involved in governing bodies) are often not well versed in (Bouvier 2012). Let's look at the example of the chicken to see how current knowledge of disease transmission largely does not play an important role in determining whether or not municipal ordinances. According to Bouvier (2012), the two diseases commonly raised as objections to the back-yard chickens are avian flu and salmonella. However, public health officials have found no evidence that the chance of incidences of these diseases in small flocks are a concern (Greger 2006; Pollock et al. 2012). Nonetheless, fear of these diseases play a role in whether or not ordinances are changed. Fairlie (2010) provides a similar analysis of the influence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (Also known as BSE and mad cow disease) on ordinances regulating pig production, even though BSE does not infect pigs. My point here is not to downplay public health concerns or work in this area but to point out that a wide variety of factors, including current assumptions and fears, influence zoning-laws, municipal ordinances, and other regulating laws and mandates. Thus the counter-argument does not hold.

Conclusion: Challenging Historical Barriers to Food Justice

Local food initiatives are steadily becoming a part of contemporary cities around the world and can take on many forms (Holt-Gimenez et al. 2011; DeLind 2011; Martinez et al. 2010). While some of these initiatives are concerned with providing consumers with farm-fresh produce or improving urban population's access to foodstuffs in urban areas, a growing portion of movements are concerned with increasing the food sovereignty of marginalized urban communities. The purpose of this chapter was to provide a theoretical analysis of urban contexts with the aim of identifying conceptual barriers that may act as roadblocks to achieving food sovereignty in cities. Specifically, in this paper, I argued that 1) taken for granted commitments created during the birth of the modern city could act as conceptual barriers for the implementation of food sovereignty programs and 2) that urban food activists and programs that challenge these barriers are helping to achieve the goal of restoring food sovereignty to local communities, no matter their reasons for doing so. At the very least, understanding the complexities of these barriers and how they operate helps to strengthen ties between urban food projects, provides these initiatives with ways to undermine common arguments used to support restrictive ordinances and policies, and illustrates the transformative potential of food sovereignty movements.

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