



Whose Justice is it Anyway? Mitigating the Tensions Between Food Security and Food Sovereignty

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Abstract

This paper explores the tensions between two disparate approaches to addressing hunger worldwide: Food security and food sovereignty. Food security generally focuses on ensuring that people have economic and physical access to safe and nutritious food, while food sovereignty (or food justice) movements prioritize the right of people and communities to determine their agricultural policies and food cultures. As food sovereignty movements grew out of critiques of food security initiatives, they are often framed as conflicting approaches within the wider literature. This paper explores this tension, arguing that food security is based on a particular model of justice, distributive justice, which limits the sovereignty and autonomy of communities as food producers and consumers. In contrast, food sovereignty movements view food security as a necessary part of food sovereignty, but ultimately insufficient for creating food sustainable communities and limiting wider harms. Rather than viewing food security and food sovereignty as in conflict, we argue that food sovereignty's justice framework both encompasses and entails justice claims that guide food security projects.

Keywords Food security · Food sovereignty · Philosophy of food · Environmental philosophy · Justice

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Introduction

For over half a century combating worldwide hunger and malnutrition has been a priority for global development programs.¹ In fact, access to food is often considered a condition that must be established before various other issues are addressed, such as myriad environmental, health-care, and political goals (Bernstein 2014; Schanbacher 2010; Sunderland et al. 2013; Noll and Werkheiser 2017). Today a wide range of non-government organizations, charities, and government agencies run programs aimed at bringing about “food security.” This term is often used by these organizations to signify various development efforts that share the common goal of eliminating hunger. However, previous strategies that predominantly utilize market-based mechanisms have recently been critiqued (Lyson 2012; Pimbert 2009; Morales 2011), sparking the development of an alternative model called “food sovereignty” (Bernstein 2014; Schanbacher 2010; Werkheiser and Noll 2014). Food sovereignty is comprised of a diverse array of social movements (such as small-scale, landless farmers, indigenous rights movements, etc.) that critique the theories at the heart of previous food security efforts, the policies informed by this model, and the effects of market-based initiatives. Indeed, in the current literature, there often appears to be a conflict between food security and food sovereignty paradigms as mechanisms for alleviating global hunger. This paper situates itself within these conversations, exploring what motivates the current conflict in the literature in an attempt to break down the untenable dualism between food security and food sovereignty.

Specifically, this paper explores the ways in which the conflicts between food security and food sovereignty are not simply about food or market-based mechanisms, but fundamentally concern various and divergent conceptions of justice. Food security initiatives accept a limited concept of justice and rights claims, grounded in distributive justice, while food sovereignty movements are guided by a more holistic paradigm. Rather than viewing these distinct approaches to alleviating world hunger as in insurmountable conflict, we argue that food sovereignty’s justice framework both encompasses and entails justice claims that guide food security projects. Further, we argue that food security on its own and as the primary model for alleviating hunger is insufficient for creating sustainable communities and limiting harms. While food sovereignty, as a movement, largely rejects the use of global markets as a means to address hunger issues, as they are seen as “akin to colonization,” the more holistic models of justice that guide food sovereignty initiatives can help to highlight wider justice concerns that may arise when addressing food access issues, even those that make use of market mechanisms. However, before presenting this argument, it is important to define our terms. It is our hope that this analysis will provide greater conceptual clarity concerning the justice frameworks that guide food focused initiatives. The next section provides a brief definition of food security and food sovereignty.

¹ Note: this chapter draws on and expands some of the ideas in our short chapter (Murdock and Noll (2015)).

Food Security

Today, a wide range of multinational organizations and government agencies [such as the World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), and International Monetary Fund (IMF)] use the term “food security” to signify the large-scale project of eliminating malnutrition and hunger worldwide (Ashley 2016; Schanbacher 2010). While “food security” was coined after reconstruction efforts post World War II and was originally understood to focus on the national level or state level, more recently this term has come to apply to individuals, as well (Maxwell 1996; Sassi 2017). According to the Food Agricultural Organization (FAO), a nation is food secure when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO 2003). Within this definition, lack of food security is largely understood as an “access” issue. It thus encompasses a wide range of social goals aimed at increasing access or removing distribution barriers, such as the eradication of poverty, emergency access to food staples, public and private investment in “developing” countries, and the creation of stable environments through the eradication of war, terrorism, and other disruptions. In fact, both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) currently see the achievement of food security as dependent on the following four determinate factors or “pillars”: economic access, food availability, stability of supply, and food utilization. It should be noted here that three of the four determinate factors concern access, while the fourth concerns increasing supply through the better utilization of foodstuffs.

While these goals are laudable, several scholars (such as Pimbert 2009; Schanbacher 2010; Desmarais 2008) and local food movements (such as *La Via Campesina* and those represented in the Declaration of Nyeleni) have critiqued food security efforts, as they claim that such projects were historically built on broadly liberal and neo-liberal political ideals. These include but are not limited to the idea that food is an interchangeable commodity, that people are largely autonomous individuals, and that “economic growth, via market mechanisms, provides the most suitable solution for [food distribution] curbing poverty and achieving food security” (Schanbacher 2010, p. viiii). For example, Morales (2011) argues that, while we live in an era where industrial agriculture produces record quantities of food, the modern food system, built on market-based distribution, is associated with increasing food insecurity, social exclusion, malnutrition, and deepening poverty, especially in the developing world. According to Pimbert (2009), in a study on poverty by the World Bank, “200,000 farms disappeared between 1966 and 1995” alone, as the decline in agriculture commodity prices coupled with the increase in price for production inputs led to rising bankruptcies and poverty within rural farming communities worldwide. This resulted in, paradoxically, both a greater need for food security programs and further critiques of these same initiatives, in so far as they utilize current global markets and trade policies.

Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty movements and alternative methods of addressing hunger (such as local food initiatives) often grow out of critiques of industrial food production methods, market-based strategies, and food security programs (Morales 2011; Schanbacher 2010). For food sovereignty movements, food is more than just a commodity that we need to increase access to—food is intertwined with political action, culture, identity, and place (Werkheiser and Noll 2014). Desmarais (2008) illustrates this position when she argues the following about the social and political significance of *La Via Campesina*:

This place-bound identity, that of “people of the land,” reflects the belief that they have the right to be on the land. They have the right and obligation to produce food. They have the right to be seen as fulfilling an important function in society at large. They have the right to live in viable communities and the obligation to build community. All of the above form essential parts of their distinct identity... (p. 138).

Thus, food sovereignty can be understood as the *right* of people and countries to define their agricultural policy without the above negative effects. It organizes food production and processing “according to the needs of local communities, giving priority of production to local consumption” (Schanbacher 2010, p. 98).

Food sovereignty frameworks and movements focus importantly on the concept of sovereignty. While sovereignty is a complex concept, most fundamentally sovereignty focuses on the related concepts of self-determination and self-governance. Importantly sovereignty as expressed in the movements referenced in this paper are not primarily informed by the Eurowestern tradition’s concepts of independence or autonomy of atomistic, “rational,” individuals, but rather through a focus on the self-determination of communities as sovereign collectives empowered to achieve justice on their own terms and in culturally appropriate (as opposed to culturally imperialistic) ways. Take for example how the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (2019) contextualizes the existence of their organization and their mission in their own words:

It was and is our view that *the most effective movements grow organically from the people whom they are designed to serve*. Representatives of Detroit’s majority African-American population must be in the leadership of efforts to foster food justice and food security in Detroit. While our specific focus is on Detroit’s African-American community, we realize that improved policy and an improved localized food system is a benefit to all Detroit residents.

Here we see, not only notions of sovereignty in terms of community solutions designed and enacted by community members, but also the wedding of achieving food security to the goal of food justice. The importance of crafting food security initiatives informed by the collective lives and goals of the communities experiencing food insecurity or food imperialism is a goal intimately connected with moving toward achieving food justice more broadly. Importantly as the Detroit Black

Community Food Security Network (2019) states, realizing food justice is a goal that lifts up and develops sovereign food producers and consumers, in this case Detroit's African American community, but it also improves local food systems in ways that benefit "all Detroit residents."

As discussed above, definitions of food sovereignty place a wide-range of other issues above trade policies and simple distribution or access, such as sustainability, participation, equal land access, and ecological impact. Food sovereignty is importantly grounded in concepts of self-determination and self-governance and is thus concerned with the idea that in many ways food and eating (and all that this entails) is an integral part of human identity, community, and self-actualization.

Differing Conceptions of Justice

While both food security and food sovereignty movements attempt to address hunger related issues, they do so in different ways and rely on different conceptions or models of justice. The initial push to create and run food security programs is guided by egalitarian conceptions of justice, or basic human rights claims where individuals are recognized to have what is called a "positive right" to food (or an entitlement strong enough to compel others to act on one's behalf). For example, The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child both state that all people have an intrinsic right to have access to food (UN OHCHR 1989; UN 1948). However, additionally, they are also often built on liberal and neo-liberal conceptions of justice that recognizes "negative rights," such as the right of non-interference in one's liberty of choice and the preferred use of economic markets and trade to address hunger. Indeed, we argue here that, with their focus on the distribution of certain material goods and increasing economic access, food security programs largely accept a distributive model of justice. This is apparent when reading the various Declarations of positive rights mentioned above, as these institutions are careful to limit this intrinsic right to a right to food access, in general, and not to a right to particular foodstuffs, methods of food production, or to various other food-related rights.

In contrast, food sovereignty movements largely accept a more holistic justice paradigm that includes a wide range of social concerns and rights claims. For example, let us look again at an accepted definition of food sovereignty—specifically, one from the Declaration of Nyéléni (2006). In this document food sovereignty is defined as follows:

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.

This definition clearly includes a wide array of social justice issues in the broader discussion of food-related changes.² One can also see the connections here to the centering of the communities affected as key stakeholders and, indeed, self-governing decision makers in realizing food sovereignty. As illustrated by the above definition, food sovereignty movements demand that environmental impacts be considered. They hold broadened conceptions of who or what is an “ethical patient” to include the surrounding future generations, ecosystems, and biotic communities. Food sovereignty movements are also and importantly community focused, place-based, and seek to address racial and gender injustices (Werkheiser and Noll 2014). Food sovereignty, accordingly, identifies an important locus of harm in food insecurity and food in-sovereignty as food imperialism that historically has been a result of colonialism, liberalism, neocolonialism, and neoliberalism, which affects market conditions on the ground necessitating food justice movements as remedies (Grey and Patel 2015; Morales 2011; Schanbacher 2010). Thus, in contrast to food security initiatives that are careful to limit positive rights claims to food access, food sovereignty places a wide range of social justice concerns under the umbrella of food justice *and* mandates that change be made at both the local and systems level.

While we could stop here with this broad outline of food sovereignty’s holistic justice paradigm, this analysis should at least touch upon the following three key pillars of food sovereignty justice frameworks: (1) Indigenous conceptions of justice, (2) community focused commitments, and (3) environmental commitments. While not all food sovereignty movements are guided by these commitments to equal degrees, this exploration is important for understanding the breadth of food sovereignty, as a justice paradigm, and how (when applied or used as a heuristic device) such models could help to highlight potential concerns that may arise when addressing food access issues.

Indigenous Models of Justice

First, it is imperative to note that some food sovereignty movements, such as those in the Pacific Northwest and Central American contexts, are guided by Indigenous models of justice.³ We recognize, as Smith (2012) argues, that discussing Indigenous methodologies is inextricably bound up with the “collective memory of

² Although it should be noted here that, as food sovereignty definitions arise out of local food movements, this definition could shift depending on the context and which specific movement we focus on. However, with this being said, *La Via Campesina’s* definition is often identified as one of the most widely accepted definitions of this term. With this being said, a common thread running through definitions of food sovereignty is that they place a wide-range of other issues above trade policies.

³ The following analysis provides a general discussion of Indigenous methodologies and not is not meant to provide a detailed analysis of specific traditions, as this is beyond the scope of this paper. Specifically, the intention of this section is to begin a discussion, as this paper focuses on theoretical justice frameworks.

imperialism” (p. xxi) With this history in mind, the aim of our analysis is to contribute to the project of providing counter-stories that can act as “powerful forms of resistance,” pushing back against Imperial and Colonial projects (p. x). While our treatment is cursory, recognizing Indigenous conceptions of justice as a pillar of food sovereignty is meant to highlight this important contribution and to push for further work in this area. Very generally, Indigenous models of justice typically offer a more holistic view of the cosmos, such that justice involves right relations established and maintained amongst and between the cosmos (Melton 1995; Wall 2001). As Wall (2001) states, “Western philosophical concepts generally reflect a discursive process of thinking that results in a dichotomous way of conceiving the world—for example, universal/particular, one/many—emphasizing distinctness rather than interrelatedness across concepts of meaning” (p. 532). The Western penchant toward differentiation and distinctness has already been observed in the separation of food security and food sovereignty as well as the differing conceptions of justice outlined above.

In contrast, definitions of justice, coming out of various Indigenous traditions, entail a conception “that is relationship-centered, not based on a political authority beyond an individual” (Wall 2001, p. 535). Thus, what it means to be a just food producer, food consumer, or any food-related positionality in the process of making, distributing, and consuming food relies fundamentally on a web of relations and relationships, which Indigenous cosmologies center. As Melton (1995) argues,

The indigenous justice paradigm is based on a holistic philosophy... [where the] circle of justice that connects everyone involved with a problem or conflict on a continuum, with everyone focused on the same center. The center of the circle represents the underlying issues that need to be resolved to attain peace and harmony for the individuals and the community. The continuum represents the entire process, from disclosure of problems, to discussion and resolution, to making amends and restoring relationships. The methods used are based on concepts of restorative and reparative justice and the principles of healing and living in harmony with all beings and with nature.

Part of holistic justice frameworks is restoring and repairing relationships, identifying the myriad issues that need to be resolved to bring about peace, and the entire process needed to obtain this equilibrium within the community. When applying this paradigm to food issues, food sovereignty movements, informed by this more expansive consideration is attentiveness to the various series of relationships that produce and maintain healthy and whole food communities. With this framework in mind, community focused and environmental commitments clearly fall within the sphere of justice.

Community Focused Commitments

Second, food sovereignty movements are often community focused and thus can be understood to be guided by a conception of justice that is place-based and participatory. For example, individuals and groups combatting food accessibility issues

not only conceive of the lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables as a justice issue, but often have deep commitments to their specific community. Many of these groups argue that common strategies used to fight food inaccessibility, such as creating neighborhood gardens, not only address problems surrounding food access, but also serve as a way to empower individual communities through the development of small scale, embedded economies, and combat implicit racism in the food system. Another strategy or goal of these organizations is to protect and reconnect fellow community members to their food traditions. Indeed, Delind (2011) argues that the local food movement (which is similar but distinct from food sovereignty movements) is as much about place-making and community building as it is about securing food access. She writes that local food is both a “part of a regenerative agrifood system... [and] also about restoring ‘a public culture of democracy’ and engaging in the continual creation, negotiation, and re-creation of identity, memory, and meaning” (p. 279). Thus, food sovereignty appears to be deeply grounded in community-focused principles, such as a commitment to and cultivation of community, the importance of culture and tradition, the conception of the self as embedded within a specific context, and the necessity of community participation in decision-making.

Environmental Justice

Connectedly, food sovereignty movements often hold broadened conceptions of justice, which include the surrounding ecosystem and biotic communities. These issues encapsulated in food sovereignty can be broadly defined as environmental justice concerns. According to Bullard et al. (2008), work in environmental justice seeks to address issues of environmental injustice often faced by communities that have been historically discriminated against. For example, the groundbreaking United Church of Christ study “Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States” found that race was one of the most important factors influencing where toxic waste sites are located. Work in environmental justice seeks to expose such injustices and challenge corporate and governmental policies that are ecologically and socially harmful. In the case of food sovereignty, initiatives often argue that environmental injustices need to be addressed when food-related issues are on the table, so to speak (Whyte 2011). For example, the Declaration of Nyeleni (2006) clearly states that “food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods” and places biodiversity management in the hands of local populations.

While a plethora of social justice concerns are encapsulated in food sovereignty’s holistic justice paradigm, it is our hope that the above exploration helped to give you a sense of the breadth of food sovereignty frameworks in comparison to the, arguably, limited rights claims guiding food security programs. Indeed, from this position (and when taking market-based critiques into account), it is understandable that food security and food sovereignty initiatives are often conceptualized as in conflict with one another in the wider literature (Schanbacher 2010). However, rather than seeing these two strategies, as an oppositional dualism or a mutually-exclusive pair,

we argue that food sovereignty's justice framework both encompasses and entails justice claims that guide food security projects.

What we mean by this is that both the basic human rights claim that people have a positive or intrinsic right to food and the negative rights claim of non-interference in one's liberty of choice (if not at the individual level, then especially at the level of community) are encompassed in food sovereignty theories of justice. For evidence to support this, we need only return again to the Declaration of Nyéléni (2006) or the mission statement of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (2019), whose definitions rely on making the positive claim that people have a right to food and the further negative rights claim that they have a right to "define" or choose their own "food and agriculture systems," which center their communities and self-governance.

However, unlike the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration of Nyeleni (2006) (and indeed most if not all food sovereignty movements) are careful NOT TO limit their positive rights claims to a right to food access, but to include, as we've discussed, a wide range of social and environmental justice issues. Even while rejecting the claim that economic growth is the best way to address hunger, here food access and thus distributive justice claims are included and greatly expanded.

Additionally, we argue that food sovereignty conceptions of justice *entail* food security rights claims and distributive models of justice. Specifically, this means that meeting the rights claims inherent in food security is a necessary but not sufficient component for obtaining food sovereignty. As food sovereignty movements are guided by conceptions of justice that encompass a wide range of social concerns beyond food distribution, achieving adequate access to healthy food can be understood as one requirement (of many) that are necessary for achieving a just food system. It is important to note here that we are not arguing that food security is irrelevant. Food sovereignty focuses on a wide range of structures and procedures that problematically create injustice and one of those injustices is food insecurity. Additionally, we are not taking a capabilities approach, where equal access to an acceptable quantity of food is conceptualized as a basic capability, which needs to be met in order for other higher order capabilities to be achieved (Nussbaum 2011; Sen 2011). Food access is a necessary condition that needs to be met, but this does not mean that it should be focused on to the detriment of other rights claims. Indeed, as is made clear in a plethora of critiques of food security initiatives, focusing solely on distributive aspects even within the service of other forms of liberation can ultimately ignore larger societal concerns.

For instance, while distributive models of justice address a particular type of injustice, namely material inequality, some scholars have argued, such as Pimbert (2009), that distributive justice can be harmful when guaranteeing the just treatment of individuals and communities. For example, imagine a situation where citizens are given identical and equal shares of corn, but despite this material equality, the result of the mass distribution of corn (and thus the flooding of the corn market) is that some citizens have now lost their farms and thus potentially lost their livelihoods. Additionally, various traditional practices may also be negatively impacted, as all corn is not the same, and citizens may be given corn that cannot be used for certain

cultural activities or destroy native corn populations. Thus, in this example, distributive justice has been served, but injustices still abound at different systemic levels— injustices that may arise as a result of programs aimed at bringing about distributive justice.

This critique is not limited to food movements, as political philosophy as a literature has been moving away from purely distributive accounts of justice, for some time, as it recognizes the inadequacy of this single model alone. Fraser (1995), for example, makes the distinction between socioeconomic injustice that is generally remedied by redistribution and cultural/symbolic injustice that should be remedied by transformative methods, which aim to not only change unjust outcomes, but also the structures that produce and reproduce them. While Fraser asserts that these differing types of injustice interact and influence each other in complicated ways, they still capture distinct aspects of justice such that examining one without the other is problematic. Further, Young (1988) offers compelling reasons to examine endemic and intractable forms of oppression that persist beyond the purview of distributive justice concerns such as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.

Additionally, food security programs may produce procedural injustices—Here procedural justice issues should be understood as those concerned with “the fairness of who gets to participate, and to what extent, in the decision-making processes used to allocate risks and goods.” (Whyte 2011, p. 200) Models that focus purely on distributive justice might be enacting other harms by excluding members of communities from the procedural and decision-making processes that let them define what justice means for them. This is a common issue faced by food justice movements especially when the leadership of community-based food justice initiatives begins to mirror the dominant culture. As the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (2019) states:

We observed that many of the key players in the local urban agriculture movement were young whites, who while well-intentioned, never-the-less, exerted a degree of control inordinate to their numbers in Detroit’s population. Many of those individuals moved to Detroit from other places specifically to engage in agricultural or other food security work.

This issue accompanies a common critique coming out of food sovereignty movements that even the process of making a community food secure might still involve negative colonial attitudes of excluding previously and currently oppressed populations from the formation of sustainable and culturally relevant local food systems and outcomes.

If food security programs could potentially cause unintended harms or have justice related “blind-spots,” so to speak, then adopting an expanded or holistic model of justice (even as a heuristic device) could help to highlight potential issues that may arise, even in projects predominantly focused on increasing food access or that make use of market mechanisms. In terms of solutions, food programs need to be highly sensitive and aware of the different ways in which harms can be perpetuated, *while simultaneously addressing* distribution issues. While food sovereignty movements may reject various liberal or neo-liberal commitments, such as the idea that

the global economy is a viable way to justly distribute goods, at the level of justice claims, these food related projects should not be viewed as mutually exclusive or in conflict, as food sovereignty conceptions of justice both encompass and entail food security rights claims. In the next section, we will explore a case study, with the aim of illustrating how food security may be inadequate to address various food related harms and how adopting food sovereignty's holistic justice paradigm can help identify potential issues.

A Case Study: The Columbia River Salmon Contamination

AmerIndian tribes living around the Columbia River have cultivated a special relationship with the salmon of the river since the beginning of their history. In fact, the land surrounding Columbia River's Celilo Falls was a large trading area, where as many as 5000 people would gather to trade and fish. Historically, tribes of the Northwest struggled to maintain fishing rights in the face of powerful political interests, such as timber, farming, mining, and hydroelectric power. Today, tribal people of this region continue to use traditional fishing methods to harvest salmon from the Columbia River for a variety of purposes, such as commercial, ceremonial, and subsistence practices. According to the Tribal Fish Commission, "Salmon is important and necessary for physical health and for spiritual well-being" (CRITFC 2012). However, the waters of the Columbia River are now contaminated and dams impede the natural migration patterns of salmon. Tribal members have noticed that the fish are sick and/or deformed, with curved spines and unusual tumors. An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study found concentrations of mercury (PCBs), and (DDE) in salmon and concluded that a person eating an average of 48 meals a month from the contaminated catch will be 50 times more likely to develop cancer. Despite these findings and a push to replace fresh salmon with canned fish and other processed foods, tribal members still practice traditional methods of harvest and consume these fish.

From a food security standpoint, agricultural production in the Northwest region of the United States could adequately address the loss of food reserves due to salmon becoming unsafe to eat. In fact, according to Hormel and Norgaard (2009), the strategy of replacing traditional foodstuffs with processed food, such as canned fish, is the current strategy being implemented to address the contamination of fish in the Columbia River (pp. 343–366). This potential band-aid fits FAO's definition of food security, as the tribes could be given access to "safe and nutritious food" that would meet their dietary needs (FAO 2003). Thus, if we focus only on distributive justice or providing access to an adequate amount of "food," then the problem appears to be solved in an acceptable manner.

However, as Hormel and Norgaard (2009) argue, providing communities with processed foods while destroying local food traditions produces a multiplicity of harms. This argument can be extended to models of food security, in general. Specifically, models based on distributive concepts of justice miss key ethical components of the contexts that they are applied to. Here it is important for tribal members to have access to food that is safe to eat, but the salmon contamination

issue is not simply a matter of distribution or food access. Humans and salmon have a long-standing relationship that is of both cultural and spiritual significance that cannot be displaced and, indeed, could be disrupted by the implementation of possible solutions that utilize food security models.

Efforts to rectify the situation based on more holistic conceptions of justice, such as those that form the basis for food sovereignty movements, would be more sensitive to the wide array of justice issues (such as ecological, social, cultural, health, etc.) that tribal members are facing in this situation. Proposed solutions made by the tribes themselves include various strategies to mitigate the effects of the contamination for the better health of all involved, including the river basin ecosystem, the salmon, and the people (as well as the commercial viability of the fisheries). Specifically, they draw from and embody the three pillars of food sovereignty: (1) Indigenous conceptions of justice, (2) community focused commitments, and (3) environmental commitments. If we rely solely on increasing access to food, we would not only not foresee this harm, but we would also not be able to articulate how and why there might be more to be done.

While a variety of historical and continuous factors have contributed to the current state of the Columbia River watershed and salmon populations, the introduction and development of the structure of settler colonialism is a foundational one. Settler colonialism is defined as the imposition of external values on peoples and landscapes through various forms of violence (e.g. conquest, genocide, removal, forced assimilation, etc.) (Hooegeven 2015). Importantly, settler colonialism is an insidious form of colonialism where settlers come with the intention of remaining and making an already inhabited, occupied territory their permanent home (Tuck and Yang 2012). The imposition of external values to note in the case of hand is the disruption and transformation not only of landscapes by European settlement and occupation of Indigenous lands in the Columbia River watershed area, but relatedly the interruption of food systems through processes that accompanied colonization such as land theft and expansive industrialization in the form of the timber industry. (Heart of the People, 1996) These processes had severe impact on Indigenous peoples, salmon populations, Indigenous lifeways as well as relationships of Indigenous peoples to the salmon.

As the case study illustrates, conflicts between food security and food sovereignty are not simply about food or market-based mechanisms, but concern competing conceptions of justice. Efforts to alleviate hunger that accept limited concepts of justice may cause unintended harms. Focusing on the goal of making communities food secure might be inadequate for providing communities with the autonomy necessary to make them sovereign food producers and consumers. When viewed through the lens of more expansive conceptions of justice, food security becomes an integral part of food sovereignty, complicating the rigid distinction between food security and food sovereignty. Hence, food security is a necessary, but insufficient requirement for just food systems. In terms of solutions, then, adopting food sovereignty justice paradigms can help to highlight potential concerns that may arise when addressing food access issues, even those that make use of market mechanisms.

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