**Division of Community Engagement and Food Systems**

Public Health Association of BC

# Food Justice
# Community Planning Tool

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# What is the Tool and Why Did it Get Built?

**The Food Justice Community Planning Tool is a guide to help communities make their food-related activities and initiatives fair, inclusive, and less harmful. It's not a complete solution but a tool to be used along with other planning processes.**

This tool is meant to be used early on in food planning, decision-making, and engaging with the public. The goal is to help individuals, communities, and organizations develop the skills and awareness to create fair and resilient ways of dealing with food systems.

The tool was created by asking important questions like how do people do food work, who benefits from it, and who decides what should be done? It focuses on recognizing and changing unfair practices and behaviours that affect how communities are impacted by food services, programming, policies, and more.

In Canada and British Columbia (BC), the current global food system (also referred to as the 'mainstream food system') feeds many people but also causes hunger, poverty, and a lack of control over food for others, especially people of colour, individuals living in poverty, experiencing homelessness, or living with a disability, and students.[1,2,3,4] Communities are starting to create alternatives to this system, like community gardens, local food systems, and farmers' markets, to reduce harm and dependency on the global food system. This tool was developed in recognition that, despite good intentions, these alternatives sometimes fall short in fully incorporating principles of social justice or addressing responsibility for harm.[5] Without a social justice lens, alternative food initiatives may inadvertently sustain unfair power relationships, and the benefits and burdens of these initiatives may not be shared equally among all groups (see section 4.3 for examples).

The tool is based on the idea that the current global food system is working as intended, relying on unfairness and harm to continue.[6] To really make a change, we need to break the foundations of the food system that are the source of suffering, like racial injustice, globalized corporate control of food and food production, and the persistent prescribing of expensive and risky technological solutions to solve global problems that fail to address social inequalities.[7,8] Breaking down these foundations is important to make room for new, genuine, and more equitable ways of doing things. These new ways could focus on community self-determination, taking care of the planet, and creating food systems that treat everyone and all living beings fairly. This means separating our food systems from the legacies of colonialism, including big corporations and the influence of late-stage capitalism.[9]

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1. Long, M. A., Gonçalves, L., Stretesky, P. B., &amp; Defeyter, M. A. (2020). Food Insecurity in Advanced Capitalist Nations: A Review. *Sustainability,* 12(9), Article 9. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12093654
2. Dhunna, S., & Tarasuk, V. (2021). Black–white racial disparities in household food insecurity from 2005 to 2014, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health,* 112(5), 888–902. https://doi.org/10.17269/s41997-021-00539-y
3. Wang, Y., St-Germain, A.-A. F., & Tarasuk, V. (2023). Prevalence and sociodemographic correlates of food insecurity among post-secondary students and non-students of similar age in Canada. *BMC Public Health,* 23(1), 954. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15756-y
4. Morrison, D. (2020). Reflections and Realities: Expressions of Food Sovereignty in the Fourth World. In P. Settee & S. Shukla (Eds.), *Indigenous Food Systems: Concepts, Cases, and Conversations* (pp. 17–38). Canadian Scholars.
5. Glennie, C., & Alkon, A. H. (2018). Food justice: Cultivating the field. *Environmental Research Letters,* 13(7), 073003. https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aac4b2
6. Holt-Giménez, E. (2017). A foodie's guide to capitalism. NYU Press.
7. Dring, C. C., Čajková, T., Mendes, W., Stein, S., Valley, W., & Clegg, D. J. (2022). Ontological Awareness in Food Systems Education. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems,* 6. https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fsufs.2022.750776
8. Holt-Giménez, E. (2016). Racism and Capitalism: Dual Challenges for the Food Movement. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development,* 5(2), 23–25.
9. Bradley, K., & Herrera, H. (2016). Decolonizing Food Justice: Naming, Resisting, and Researching Colonizing Forces in the Movement. *Antipode,* 48(1), 97–114. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12165

The tool challenges the idea that our current food system is the best we can have and promotes the need for different, fair, and sustainable food futures.[10]

To explore alternatives to the mainstream food system, we need to ask questions like:

- How can we better recognize the ways in which community food planning can unintentionally support the mainstream food system?
- What would food systems look like if they cared more about people and the planet than making money for big companies?
- How can we build communities that prioritize caring relationships, connecting people and the planet through respect, reciprocity, accountability, and empathy?
- How can our relationship with food exercise care and responsibility for other living beings and the planet?
- How can we be more honest and transparent about the roles we play in supporting the mainstream food system and be open to transforming ourselves to create a more just and fair food system?

- How can we create spaces where we can explore new ways of living, thinking, and acting that bring people and nature back together?
- How can we create spaces where we can explore new ways of living, thinking, and acting that bring people and nature back together?

The journey of exploring these questions helps us prepare for the challenges and uncertainties of working towards food sovereignty, a concept that represents a critical alternative to the mainstream food system and is broadly defined as the right of local peoples to control their own food systems.[11]

In Canada, food sovereignty represents an array of rapidly evolving and changing food projects that are designed to address the unequal distribution of power and resources across the vast and diverse Canadian food, agricultural, and social landscape.[12] Achieving food sovereignty in Canada requires moving away from culinary and agricultural monocultures and toward uplifting the rich diversity of food traditions that are inextricably linked to health, wellbeing, and environmental sustainability.

10. McGreevy, S. R., Rupprecht, C. D. D., Tamura, N., Ota, K., Kobayashi, M., & Spiegelberg, M. (2022). Learning, playing, and experimenting with critical food futures. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems,* 6. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2022.909259
11. 1Wittman, H. (2011). Food sovereignty: a new rights framework for food and nature?. *Environment and Society,* 2(1), 87-105.
12. Desmarais, A. A., & Wittman, H. (2017). Farmers, foodies and First Nations: getting to food sovereignty in Canada. In *Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty* (pp. 253-274). Routledge.
13. Wittman, H., Desmarais, A. A., & Wiebe, N. (Eds) (2011). Food Sovereignty in Canada: Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems. Fernwood Publishing.

The above questions and the principles they convey are a starting point, not a complete guide. The Food Justice Community Planning Tool is there to help in the early stages of planning, decision-making, and issue identification. It will not give you a step-by-step plan for a perfect and fair food system. Instead, it encourages you to reflect on your assumptions about people's relationships with food and the common ideas held about groups facing inequities as a result of the mainstream food system. The tool can be used in different ways depending on where your community is at.

**Before using the tool, think about:**

- Your personal relationship with food and the food system.
- Whether your views include any of the foundations (e.g., human-centric, capitalist economic relations) mentioned earlier.
- Whether your relationship with food limits you from seeing other possible relationships.
- How hungry people are seen in your community and if there are false assumptions.
- How food producers are portrayed and if there is diversity in these representations.
- How is food talked about— as a commodity, a commons,   or through different beliefs?

14. Vivero Pol, J.L. (2013), Food as a Commons: Reframing the Narrative of the Food System. SSRN-Elsevier. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2255447

## Who is the Food Justice Community Planning Tool For?

The intended audience and users of the Food Justice Community Planning Tool are diverse and encompass individuals, communities, and organizations engaged in various aspects of food planning, decision-making, and implementation. This tool is designed for anyone committed to creating more equitable, inclusive, and just food systems. Community leaders, activists, educators, planners, and members of organizations working on food initiatives can benefit from this tool by integrating it into their early planning stages. It serves as a guide for those who recognize the need for transformative change in the way we approach food, promoting a shift from existing systems that perpetuate inequities to alternatives centered around fairness, sustainability, and community well-being.

Furthermore, the tool acknowledges the importance of engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including those directly impacted by food inequities. Community members, especially those with lived experiences related to food challenges, are essential users of this tool. By involving diverse voices, the tool seeks to challenge normative representations and assumptions, fostering a participatory approach that ensures the inclusion of different perspectives.

Ultimately, the Food Justice Community Planning Tool aims to empower individuals and communities, encouraging them to critically examine their roles in the current food system and explore alternatives that prioritize justice, respect, and reciprocity.

# Ways to Engage with the Tool

**What really matters is that we take responsibility for the impacts of what we do in a fair, accountable, and respectful manner.**

When using this tool, it is important to know that there is no one 'right' way to deal with the deep problems causing unfairness in our food system and wider society. Instead, every action we take has consequences—some may be more helpful, and others might cause harm.

This could mean fixing any harm we caused or standing up for others' stories and committing to help in the future. So, this work is about getting better at handling tough issues in food justice and building the stamina necessary to persist in efforts to make things right. Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures is an art/research collective and practice that offers a number of resources (shared below) that foster the kinds of self-reflection and awareness that is required in food justice work.

## Resistance

When you use or share this tool and try to challenge deep-seated ideas and norms, you might face a range of resistance. It can be tough to confront how we contribute to the problems in our food system. For example, addressing issues like racism might require supportive networks and caring relationships to help individuals who are not actively engaged in anti-racist and anti-colonial discourse and social movements. It is important to find ways to deal with emotional responses like feeling indifferent, angry, or sad, as these can slow down progress towards dismantling inequitable institutions and norms. Setting up a community of practice or hosting regular kitchen table talks can provide both support and accountability.

The Bus metaphor practice (linked below) serves as a helpful tool for individuals to understand and regulate their emotions and physical reactions, which in turn can help them stick to their goals and intended actions:

- The Bus practice
- As a companion text to generate responses, read the Beyond Hunger Stories and use the Bus practice to identify and manage your 'passengers'.

When working on this complex task, there is a tendency to focus on solutions and hope, without making room for complaints, inaction, and hopelessness. This can be a problem for learning and unlearning, especially for groups who experience food system harms in different ways. When bringing people together to build relationships and solidarity, it is crucial to be able to handle all aspects of reality—both the good and the challenging parts. The 7 steps back and 7 steps forward/aside exercise provides guidance on how to increase your capacity to hold the weight of multiple moving layers of complexity, complicity and uncertainty. It also aims to foster deeper levels of insight, hindsight, foresight, analysis and discernment, as well as demonstrate how to build relationships differently. The intention of this exercise is to help you develop stamina so that you are not immobilized and/or overwhelmed by discomfort, uncertainty, complexity, and/or complicity in systemic harm.

- 7 Steps back/forward

## Process Focused

How work gets done is critically important, perhaps even more so than the results we achieve. Paying attention to the process, or how we do our work, is a key part of creating fair food systems and building trust. It helps us be more aware of how we take up space and how we understand others and food problems.

Additionally, it helps us understand different points of view as we realize the communities we are trying to assist are also observing and evaluating our efforts. When we act like saviors or heroes, it creates unequal power dynamics, especially in deciding what to do, setting goals, and planning programs. To make things fairer, we may need to reconsider what 'leadership' means and establish rules to prevent certain people or groups from dominating discussions and solely pursuing their own interests.

Consider how you or your group can effectively respond when someone challenges the way you see yourself. Learning to read and be read is a helpful resource for understanding and changing unfair power relationships while learning how to understand others and be understood:

- <u>Learning to read and be read</u>

When we act like saviors or heroes, it creates **unequal power dynamics**, especially in deciding what to do, setting goals, and planning programs.

It can be really difficult to address and change our own harmful behaviors. This is true for people who are affected by inequities and unjust situations, and also for those who are realizing their own advantages and the unintentional harm they might have done. Sometimes, even actions that come from good intentions can harm relationships between groups facing violence, dispossession, and exploitation. For example, trying to agree on everything or ignoring conflicts and different lived experiences can cause problems. To create caring communities, it is important to have spaces where people can openly discuss their feelings, be told when they have done something wrong (with kindness), and be guided on how to do better and fix any harm they caused with the best version of themselves.

## Embracing 'Failure'

Strive to hold and create spaces that cultivate a culture where failure is seen as generative and fun. We are often taught that failure is 'bad', and high effort should result in, well, results! Holding space for the gifts and insights that come from failure is important as it expands the capacity for difficult and uncomfortable feedback and responses. It also allows for deeper learning about ourselves and our own patterns and responses. Consider actively structuring and using

arts-based and creative processes to facilitate this mindset shift. This can be helpful in building collective capacity to imagine differently, learn from mistakes, and generate solutions that can be tried out, explored, and redesigned (or tossed out). The Gifts of Failure resource and activity can help you to experiment, explore, and learn deeply from failure:

- Gifts of failure

# Unpacking the Food Justice Planning Tool

**By prompting self-reflection and collaborative discussions, this section encourages a nuanced understanding of how decisions are made, dissent is addressed, and interventions are shaped within the context of food planning.**

In this comprehensive exploration of key concepts within the realm of food systems and planning, six categories are unpacked to help us understand patterns of behaviour and thinking in food work that reproduce inequities (Table 1). These categories are modified from critical education efforts by the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective.[15] The modified categories show patterns that can be a problem because they support ideas like everyone should think the same way (Universalism) or some groups are better than others (Supremacy). The tool also points out ways our food systems continue to have issues, like attempting to solve complex problems with overly simplistic solutions (Simple Solutions), ignoring where advantages and disadvantages come

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15. Andreotti, V., Stein, S., Sutherland, A., Pashby, K., Susa, R., & Amsler, S. (2018). Mobilising different conversations about global justice in education: Toward alternative futures in uncertain times. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review,* 26, 9–41.

By prompting self-reflection and collaborative discussions, this encourages a nuanced understanding of how **decisions are made, dissent is addressed, and interventions are shaped within the context of food planning.**

from (Denying Time), perpetuating unequal power dynamics and shutting down different ideas (Removing Dissent and Power), and believing it is the job of powerful people to save others (Saviour Complex).

The tool also comes with guiding questions designed to assist individuals and communities to identify these patterns, recognize where things might be unfair or based on flawed assumptions, and take responsibility for the benefits they gain from a system that may not be equitable for everyone. These questions can guide a shift in the way plans are formulated, decisions are made, and people are engaged to achieve greater equity in terms of power, resources, skills, training, and knowledge.

By prompting self-reflection and collaborative discussions, this section encourages a nuanced understanding of how decisions are made, dissent is addressed, and interventions are shaped within the context of food planning. Each concept serves as a lens through which to examine the intricacies of food systems and envision transformative approaches that prioritize equity, sustainability, and diverse perspectives. Lastly, the resources provided in Section 2 (above) offer support for dealing with any challenges or feelings that might arise when using the tool.

**Table 1: Patterns of Behavior and Thinking in Food Work that Reproduce Inequities**

| Category | Description |
|---|---|
| Supremacy | Promoting the dominance of one group/ perspective. |
| Universalism | Projecting one's culture or view as superior and universal. |
| Denying Time | Being unaware/ indifferent toward historical legacies, complexities, and implications. Foreclosing alternative futures. |
| Removing Dissent and Power | Denying, ignoring, trivializing, and/or managing, unequal power relations. |
| Saviour Complex | Seeing oneself as 'saving others' in a way that projects others as helpless. Burden of the fittest. |
| Simple Solutions | Offering easy and uncomplicated solutions that do not require systemic change. |

# Supremacy

Supremacy means supporting the idea that one group or way of thinking is better than others and should be in control. It believes that dominating others and nature is the normal and right thing to do. This often leads to putting one perspective, group, or idea above others, creating a hierarchy. For example, diverse cultures, food practices, and knowledge might only be recognized or assimilated into dominant ways of thinking. This can include uncritically assuming the superiority of science and/or professional expertise.

For instance, during the 20th century, many Canadian scientists and government officials falsely assumed that the malnutrition and starvation experienced by Indigenous communities were the result of wrong diets (i.e. traditional foods) as opposed to the systematic removal of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands, and subsequently, dispossession from their traditional food sources.[16] This misdiagnosis of the problem resulted in the Canada Food Guide being presented as a gift to Indigenous peoples for them to learn how to eat. [17]

In policies or plans that mention the importance of culturally appropriate foods, this can be watered down to mean access to ethnic foods in stores, while still treating Western foods as the normal and dominant choice. Supremacy can also push for universal viewpoints, ignoring or rejecting other perspectives and refusing to acknowledge their authority or representation. For example, regulations established to protect the safety of the food supply are often experienced as an impediment to the preparation and distribution of traditional foods in schools and public places.[18] Collaboration between Public Health and Indigenous communities is needed to enact culturally appropriate food safety protocols that enable traditional foods to be safely served in public spaces.

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16. Robin, T., Dennis, M. K., & Hart, M. A. (2022). Feeding Indigenous people in Canada. International Social Work, 65(4), 652-662.
17. Mosby, I. (2014) Food Will Win the War: The Politics, Culture, and Science of Food on Canada's Home Front. Vancouver: UBC Press.
18. Fraser, N. (2009). Scales of justice: Reimagining political space in a globalizing world (Vol. 31). Columbia University Press.

**...diverse cultures, food practices, and knowledge might only be recognized or assimilated into dominant ways of thinking.**
This can include uncritically assuming the superiority of science and/or professional expertise.



Lastly, in the world of food system planning, discussions and decision-making often happens among a small group of people who typically share similar ideas and backgrounds, and others may only feel welcomed if they agree with the same values and ideas without causing conflict or disagreement.

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- Is there a dominant group that designs, implements, and evaluates food work/ideas? Who are they? Who should it be?
- How do the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying problems/solutions) address privilege in perspectives, knowledge, participation, and contributions?

# Universalism

'Universalism' means thinking that one's own culture, beliefs, or views are the best and applying them to everyone. It makes certain ideas seem automatically 'good' and 'right' without questioning them. This often creates false either/or choices and oversimplifies complicated concepts. For instance, saying homemade meals are always healthier than take-out or that local food is always better than global supply chains is making universal claims that might exclude other cultural foodways and undermine transnational food movements. [18]

'Universalism' is related to Supremacy because it does not happen without power. People who disagree with universal claims might be seen as problematic or causing division. It is important to understand that different people see and experience the food system in different ways. Saying no or disagreeing is crucial when we look at how food system interventions affect people and how these interventions are decided. However, those who raise issues are often expected to come up with solutions, even when they are struggling to survive. For example, if people using a food bank critique the service for being delivered in an undignified or stigmatizing way, they might be told to find solutions instead of just criticizing (i.e., the saying "beggars can't be choosers").

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- How is food talked about as normal/abnormal, good/bad, natural/unnatural, or desirable/undesirable? Where do these assumptions come from?
- How could the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying problems/solutions) acknowledge and recognize other ways of looking at the same issue using different perspectives?

# Denying the Influence of Time

Denying the Influence of Time' in this tool means two things.[19] First, it is about ignoring the impact of history on the present and future. For example, saying things like 'colonialism happened in the past' didn't personally cause slavery' tries to separate us from history and the connections between different generations. However, where you live is often linked to past events, like colonialism dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands and confining them to reservations across Canada.

Denying these historical connections stops us from making up for past wrongs and harms, like intergenerational trauma, labour inequities, and racialized poverty. It also supports the harmful idea that some people are naturally better than others and encourages competition instead of cooperation.

The second part of 'Denying the Influence of Time' is about not being able to imagine a different future from what we have now. Some people might resist ideas for sustainable and fair futures by saying we should go back to old ways like hunting and farming without modern technologies, while failing to consider how this nostalgia also harkens back to a time where racial violence and gender inequality was normalized.

This inability to imagine a new and very different future is a false binary and a defensive reaction that keeps people from identifying possibilities for transforming our relationship to food, to people, other living beings, and the planet.

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- How are discussions about food issues and problems situated/contextualized? Are they introduced in the present moment without a reference to historical events?
- How do benefits/burdens from the past enter the analysis of food problems and solutions? Who is responsible for/complicit in creating and maintaining these problems?
- Who has the power/authority to give voice to the future? Who has the power/authority to make the future a reality?

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19. A caution that this simplification may reproduce the supremacy and dominance of a linear conception of time (Past > Present > Future).

## Removing Dissent and Power

The tool includes 'Removing Dissent and Power' because in food planning, disagreement is often seen as a bad thing. When someone disagrees, they might be shut down or ignored. People who want to keep things the way they are might say, 'Don't be divisive' or suggest voting to settle conflicts. However, relying on a simple vote can ignore important differences and silence diverse perspectives. Some communities resist the idea of rushing through decisions, especially when dealing with complex issues like food insecurity and unequal power.

Consensus and shared goals are seen as good practices, but sometimes the power dynamics behind these decisions are not examined. The idea that different knowledge systems and cultural norms can all work together in one space does not always work well. Some problems with this approach include:

- Authorities (i.e., longest involved, most degrees, highest status) in the group expect everyone to have the same values.
- The ways of working are already decided and controlled, and there are rules to follow often set by highly-educated professionals and experts.

- Selective processes in recruitment and retention exclude those who might disagree or want more recognition of diversity.

**Advocates have been saying that different groups should organize independently and join broader networks in ways that let them keep their own identity. Supporting groups materially and relationally can help them create food futures that match their values and needs, while also addressing the root causes of food system inequities.**

Ignoring, downplaying, managing, and silencing diverse voices can keep unequal power relations in place. It also takes away people's ability to say no. For example, saying 'farmers' markets benefit everyone' might not be true, as these markets may not be accessible or affordable for everyone. [20, 21] Moreover, 'everyone' usually refers to people like themselves, who share similar life circumstances and experiences.

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20. Alkon, A. H., & McCullen, C. G. (2011). Whiteness and farmers markets: Performances, perpetuations… contestations?. Antipode, 43(4), 937-959.
21. Gibb, N., & Wittman, H. (2013). Parallel alternatives: Chinese-Canadian farmers and the Metro Vancouver local food movement. Local Environment, 18(1), 1-19.

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- How do the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying) recognize and identify power dynamics within the community? How are they addressed (or avoided)?
- How is dissent addressed or avoided? How are dissenting groups thought of and talked about (i.e., represented)? How are dissenting groups/individuals engaged with (if at all)?
- How are 'win-win' framings used to ignore unequal power dynamics, to deny that there are those who benefit and those that do not?

## Saviour Complex

The 'Saviour Complex' is when someone or a group sees themselves as responsible for helping or saving others, but in a way that makes those they are helping seem helpless (i.e., the belief that it is the duty/burden of the fit to save the weak). This often comes from a belief that being independent is inherently 'good,' as you are able to support dependents (e.g., spouse, children, elders), pay taxes, and donate to charities. People who depend on society or the government are often looked down upon as "lesser" or "shameful."

The 'Saviour Complex' also includes the idea that those who receive help should be grateful for it. For instance, although there are many examples of progressive food access programs that centre dignity in their approach, in other instances, people who rely on food programs may not be given much say in the help they get, and there can be a lack of effort made to empower them with greater choice and agency. Those who see themselves as saviours may perceive people who receive help as being in a lower position, while they are made to feel good about themselves and receive praise for their actions, like winning awards or being recognized for volunteering.

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- Who is to be celebrated/elevated for identifying problems and creating potential solutions? How are recipients of 'help' represented?
- How is the relationship between the two groups (helpers/recipients of help) represented? How does the creation and maintenance of hierarchies between them perpetuate injustice and harms?

## Simple Solutions

"Simple Solutions" is a part of the tool that focuses on simplifying complex social problems and their underlying causes. These solutions aim to be easy to implement without changing the existing system and/or benefit those in privileged positions. Examples of this include the idea that we can address climate change by adopting a vegan diet and making more sustainable consumer choices (i.e., "voting with our forks"), or the belief that providing a basic income can solve food insecurity in the short term for those struggling to survive. However, in a late-stage capitalist society dominated by big food corporations,[22] these private sector actors can increase food prices, making it difficult for people to afford essential goods.

There is a common assumption that the "best" and most "civilized" way to access food is through the market, without challenging issues like land dispossession and lack of control over food systems by citizens. To overcome this pattern, we need to explore various strategies at different levels to meet immediate needs while also striving for a fair and sustainable food future. Achieving this transformation requires both personal and collective development in terms of politics, culture, technical knowledge, and legal reforms.

Practice by yourself or with colleagues, discuss the following questions:

- What are potential unintended consequences of the prescribed solutions? How, if at all, are measures identified that can prevent or address harm to people and groups?
- How well do the prescribed solutions line up with the complexity of problems? Why are simple analyses and answers privileged?

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22. McMichael, P. (2021). Political economy of the global food and agriculture system. In Rethinking food and agriculture (pp. 53-75). Woodhead Publishing.

**Food Justice Planning Tool - Key Questions and Examples Statements and Situations**

| Category | Key Questions | Example statements and situations |
|---|---|---|
| **"Supremacy (Promoting the dominance of one group/ perspective)** | • Is there a dominant group that designs, implements, and evaluates food work/ideas? Who are they? Who should it be? <br> • How do the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying) address privilege in perspectives, knowledge, participation and contributions? | • Diverse foodways and knowledge are recognized but are often an afterthought (e.g., cultural foods just mean ethnic ingredients). <br> • Food work happens in an echo chamber with the 'usual' people present (e.g., new people only allowed if they're the same as us). |
| **Universalism (Projecting one's culture or view as superior and universal)** | • How is food talked about as normal/abnormal, good/bad, natural/unnatural, or desirable/undesirable? Where do these assumptions come from? <br> • How could the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying) acknowledge & recognize other ways of looking at the same issue using different perspectives? | • Certain viewpoints are uncritically assumed to be 'good' and 'right' (e.g., Home-cooked meals are healthier than takeaway meals, Global food chains are worse than local food chains). <br> • People, who disagree are represented as 'problematic' or 'divisive' and/or should come with 'solutions' rather than 'critiques'. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Denying the influence of time (Being unaware/ indifferent toward historical legacies, complexities, and implications)** | • How are discussions about food issues and problems situated/contextualized? Are they introduced in the present moment without a reference to historical events?<br>• How do benefits/burdens from the past enter the analysis of food problems and solutions? Who is responsible for/complicit in creating and maintaining these problems?<br>• Who has the power/authority to give voice to the future? Who has the power/authority to make the future a reality? | • Denials of the importance of the past as influencing the present and future (e.g., Colonialism was a 'thing of the past' and doesn't exist in food work).<br>• Denial of the possibility of multiple different futures (e.g., 'Creating a just and sustainable food future means going back to the land and not using technology'). |
| **Removing dissent and power (Denying, ignoring, trivializing, managing, unequal power relations)** | • How do the ways food work gets decided and done (e.g., planning, governing, identifying) recognize and identify power dynamics within the community? How are they addressed (or avoided)?<br>• How is dissent addressed or avoided? How are dissenting groups thought of, talked about (i.e., represented)? How are dissenting groups/individuals engaged with (if at all)?<br>• How are 'win-win' framings used to ignore unequal power dynamics, to deny that there are those who benefit and those that do not? | • Framing actions as benefiting everyone (e.g., Everyone will eat healthier if there's a farmers' market).<br>• Conflict and dissent are to be avoided and are negative (e.g., when someone disagrees, they are shut down and 'canceled' - "Don't be so divisive!"). |

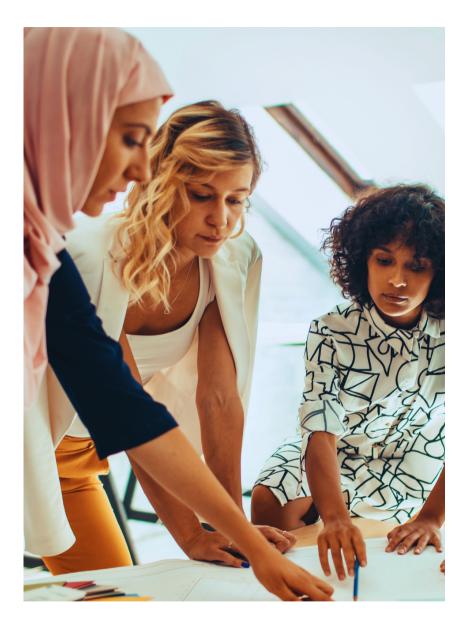| Savior complex (Viewing oneself as 'saving others' in a way that projects others as helpless. Burden of the fittest) | • Who is to be celebrated/elevated for identifying problems and creating potential solutions? How are recipients of 'help' represented?<br>• How is the relationship between the two groups (helpers/recipients of help) represented? How does the creation and maintenance of hierarchies between them perpetuate injustice and harms? | • People in need of help should be thankful for the help they receive (e.g., shouldn't have control or a say in the programming/type of help they receive).<br>• Decision-makers are seen as authorities because they have been elected (i.e., citizens) or selected (i.e., board of directors/hiring committee).<br>• Volunteerism for the purpose of being seen as "good" and celebrated (e.g., Winning an award for humanitarian aid).<br>• Appropriating Indigenous or other cultural knowledge/ teachings as one's own to gain status or benefits. |
| Simple solutions (Offering easy and uncomplicated solutions that do not require systemic change) | • What are potential unintended consequences of solutions? How, if at all, are measures identified that can prevent or address harm to people and groups?<br>• How well do solutions line up with the complexity of problems? Why are simple analyses and answers privileged? | • Food insecurity can be solved by implementing a basic guaranteed income.<br>• Climate change can be solved by eating vegan foods and voting with your fork.<br>• Colonialism can be solved by shifting responsibility to Indigenous people for saving non-Indigenous people. |

# Exploring and Practicing Using the Tool

We have included some teaching activities that we have used in workshops to help participants unpack their own assumptions and to integrate food justice into their work.

## 4.1 Unpacking Common Food Systems Myths/Stories Activity

Many myths/narratives about food system issues exist and continue to entrench biases and mislead food systems work. The purpose of this activity is to explore common food myths and their assumptions around food system issues.

## Table 2: Common food myths/narratives

| Common myths/narratives | Description |
|---|---|
| "If they only knew" | This relates to the role of education/knowledge in addressing food system issues. This concept puts emphasis on a lack of knowledge as the solution to complex food problems. It assumes that people, if they were only educated, would make better choices and be able to address their own problems. |
| Voting with your fork | By spending money on market-based interventions (e.g., farmers' markets, FairTrade certified products) or non-market based interventions (e.g., food recovery programs) this will dismantle the corporate, global food system. |
| Focus on food charity | A narrative that promotes food charity, a band-aid solution as an effective measure instead of exploring long-term, bold, and more creative solutions that confront and tackle the complex structural barriers to food access. |
| "Good" vs "bad" food | Universalism that labels certain foods 'bad' and 'good' based on perceptions of "healthy". For example, kale is widely believed to be healthy in ways that are not spoken of about other greens within the same family or food group (e.g., bok choy, okra, collard greens). |

Adapted from Ali Conrad; 8 Ways White Bias Can Misdirect Food System Work: Leading Voices in Food Podcast_ Episode 94. Work Food Policy Centre, Duke University, 2002. Available at : https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/podcasts/8-ways-white-bias-can-misdirect-food-system-work

Based on the Common Myths/Narratives in the previous table (Table 2), explore the following questions:

- Referring to the common myths/narratives and the descriptions provided, how did you react or respond to them? Describe a time when you encountered this myth?
- What are the underlying assumptions/ideas that make up the common myths/narratives? Identify 1 assumption for 2 of the common myths/narratives.
- What are some counter-examples that challenge the myth?

## 4.2 Food System Power Mapping Activity

Food systems work entails a wide range of actors who possess distinct types of power distributed unevenly across them; the levels and directions of power play a crucial role in determining relations and equity in food systems planning. The purpose of this activity is to explore the power dynamics and how they influence food systems.

**Power Defined:** It is helpful to distinguish between "Power To", "Power With&quot; and "Power Over." "Power To" is about the capacity or ability to achieve an individual/group's goals and desired outcomes.

"Power With" is shared power stemming from collaborative relationships which are founded upon mutual respect and support, collaborative decision making, solidarity and empowerment. It can support bridge building both within groups and across differences. [23] "Power Over" refers to an authoritarian power, and is traditionally what power is thought of. This concept of power is about preventing others from acting/doing or achieving their desired ends.

Example of "Power To": A community member is advocating to their local government for a community garden site.

Example of "Power With": A group of food actors with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences band together to collectively identify priority needs and solutions to address food insecurity in their community.

Example of "Power Over": Local government fining a community member for building a garden site without permission.

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23. Stuart, G. (2019). 4 Types of Power. https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2019/02/01/4-types-of-power/

## Individual Reflections

**Instructions**

- Reflect, identify and list at least 6 different actors (e.g., organizations, individual roles, systems/structures) within food systems across your region (e.g., food policy council, local farmers, city hall, etc.).
- For each actor identified - determine what level of power they have in the community (0 - being no power; 10 - all the powerful).
- Provide a brief rationale for your assigned power level.

## Creating a Power Map

**Instructions**

**As a small group (max 3-4 members):**

- In your group, each person puts the actor and their power level onto post-it notes.
- Take turns placing them on the flipchart, if someone has the same actor, match them together. If you have different power levels for the same actor, briefly discuss rationale. Change as needed.
- Discuss the relationship between the actors and use a marker to draw a line connecting the two actors.

- Add arrows to indicate the direction of power.
- Rinse and repeat until you get through all your actors or the time runs out.

**Report out to the large group:**

- Check out the different power maps made by other participants
- Prompting reflections as people circulate
- Who has the most power?
- Who has the least power?

**As a large group:**

Address the following discussion questions (*notetaker to take notes on discussion and responses to questions*):

- What did you observe as you explored each others' power maps?
- Where are similarities and differences?
- Did anything surprise/shock you (positive or problematic)?

## 4.3 Food Justice Scenario Activity

This scenario activity aims to help learners practice using the tool and apply the concepts. We have provided two scenarios drawn from our experiences below, and you may also wish to create your own. We encourage you to read them, explore your responses and reactions, and try to implement some of the questions and content from the guide.

**Scenario 1:**

A community garden is placed in a municipal park with 30 allotment gardens. For the most part, the majority of gardeners are formally educated White seniors who live in nearby single-family homes. Garden theft is a major issue for the garden. Over time, fences and increasingly aggressive signs are popping up in the garden. A food bank nearby serves 1,500 individuals, but estimates of food insecurity are much higher at around 5,000 people. Foodbank users are blamed for the thefts and the foodbank is asked by the gardeners and the municipality to educate food bank users and to task them with identifying solutions. Solutions identified by foodbank users that address lack of food quantity and quality are dismissed, foodbank staff and volunteers threaten bans on those that continue to critique the foodbank and emphasize that they are here to only talk about garden theft.

**Scenario 2:**

A food policy council is established by the municipal government in response to the actions of a small group of local farmers, dieticians, food bank volunteers, and church members. These people become the first members of the food policy council with most of them being highly educated, White (one is Asian), middle income earners (half are retired), and food secure (all). The community is racially and ethnically diverse with a significant amount of racialized people experiencing poverty. The food policy council spends two years working to establish a farmers' market and to communicate to the public where they can purchase local food. When critiqued about the lack of diversity on the council, members point to the one person of colour and that the council is open to everyone, they just need to apply.

Practice:

- After you have read through the scenarios, identify the range of inequities that are present or assumed. Are there any similar/specific examples you have encountered from your own experiences?
- Using the questions in the Food Justice Planning Tool (Table 1), see if you can identify any behaviours, patterns of thinking, or assumptions in food work that can explain these inequities.

- Generate 1-2 different ways that the scenario could have been approached that might have prevented the inequities from occurring. What could be done to repair any harms that might have been caused?

**Division of Community Engagement and Food Systems**

# Food Justice
## Community Planning Tool

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