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People, power, change: three pillars of a food sovereignty research praxis

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ABSTRACT

This article is situated within nascent debates on the role of academics within food sovereignty movements. Drawing on insights from a collective autoethnography, we report on our experiences conducting three food sovereignty research projects in different contexts and at different scales. We suggest that that the principles and practices of food sovereignty translate into a food sovereignty research praxis. This consists of three pillars focusing on people (humanizing research relationships), power (equalizing power relations) and change (pursuing transformative orientations). This article discusses these pillars and analyzes the extent to which we were able to embody them within our projects.

CAFS	Canadian Association for Food Studies
CFICE	Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement
CFS	Committee on World Food Security
FSC	Food Secure Canada
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
LVC	La Vía Campesina
UN	United Nations

Introduction

Scholarly interest in food sovereignty has increased dramatically over the past decade. This is evident in the sheer numbers of conferences,[1] articles and special journal issues,[2] and edited volumes (e.g. Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010; Andrée et al. 2014; Trauger 2015; Holt-Giménez et al. 2017) taking on both practical and analytical aspects of food sovereignty. These engagements suggest that 'food sovereignty research' has become a burgeoning field of activity.

[1]Prominent examples include the International Food Sovereignty Conference at Yale University (2013), and the International Institute of Social Studies' Critical Dialogue on Food Sovereignty at The Hague in 2014 (see https://www.iss.nl/research/research_programmes/political_economy_of_resources_environment_and_population_per/networks/critical_agrarian_studies_icas/food_sovereignty_a_critical_dialogue/).

[2]Some recent examples include the *Journal of Peasant Studies* issue on Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty (Vol. 41, Issue 6, 2014), the *Globalizations* issue on Food Sovereignty: Concept, Practice and Social Movements (Vol. 12, Issue 4, 2015), and *Third World Quarterly's* issue on Food Sovereignty: Convergence and Contradictions, Condition and Challenges (Vol. 36, Issue 3, 2015).

Amongst the thickening encounter between academics and the concepts, practices and actors associated with food sovereignty, there are signs that these relationships have become, if not a source of contention, a dynamic topic of discussion (Edelman et al. 2014).[3] Though somewhat piecemeal, and predominantly behind the scenes, critical reflection on the nature of these relationships has found expression in a range of scholarly debates raising important issues, including: the dynamics of power and accountability between food sovereignty actors and academics (Edelman 2009; Brem-Wilson 2014; Andrée et al. 2016; Borras 2016); the types of knowledge and conditions needed to support the food sovereignty movement (Pimbert 2006; Rahmanian and Pimbert 2014); and the perspectives necessary to capture the dynamics of food sovereignty's pursuit and realization in specific contexts (Schiavoni 2016). Collectively, these interventions provoke a fundamental question: What implications does an engagement with food sovereignty carry for academic researchers and academically-situated processes of knowledge production?

This paper is situated within the context of nascent debates on the role of academics within the food sovereignty movement. To address this question, we draw on the lessons learned from a process of collective autoethnography. We began this process as three white, male-identified academics committed to the principles of food sovereignty, but unclear about what this implied, if anything, for our research. To explore this concern, we engaged in comparative reflection of our involvement in collaborative research projects in three distinct contexts and at different scales. This involved collectively analyzing our experiences working with family farmers and urban allies in the province of Manitoba, Canada; a Pan-Canadian food movement organization and community partners; and the transnational peasant movement La Vía Campesina (LVC). In each case, food sovereignty goals were explicit in the research, or implied by the actors involved in the project.

Emerging from this autoethnographic process, we came to see food sovereignty as a cluster of principles, concepts and practices with implications for research practice. Indeed, we suggest that our academically-positioned engagements with food sovereignty translate into a food sovereignty research praxis. This consists of three pillars focusing on: *people* (humanizing research relationships); *power* (equalizing power relations); and *change* (pursuing transformative orientations). In this paper, we discuss these pillars and analyse the extent to which we were able to embody each of them within our projects. We begin by discussing food sovereignty and its relationship with researchers and academic institutions, and then describe our different research projects, identifying their common principles and practices as well as their shortfalls in relation to the three pillars.

Before continuing, we note that the framework emerges out of *our* experiences, which, given our positionality as three middle-class white men, living and working in the global north, and the positionality of our projects (also located in the global north), are not representative of the full range of experiences at the research-food sovereignty movement interface. While we cannot know the precise impacts of our positionality, in recognizing these limitations we acknowledge the provisional nature of the framework. Thus, as we discuss in greater detail below, these reflections are shared in a spirit of dialogue and

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[3]For example, the 2014 Critical Dialogue on Food Sovereignty in The Hague brought social movement actors and academics together to reflect on challenges and opportunities within relationships surrounding food sovereignty work (see Sandwell, Kay, and Hajdu 2014).

openness, inviting engagement from colleagues and critics whose potentially diverging experiences and ideas may well qualify, enrich, or contest our thinking.

Food sovereignty, knowledge and the academy

Food sovereignty was first brought to international attention through LVC at the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome. It emerged in the context of the deteriorating conditions of rural life arising from the declining public investment in agriculture, the liberalization of agricultural markets, and the increasing enclosure of food and agricultural policy-making by transnational institutions (Desmarais 2007; Rosset and Martinez-Torres 2014). Food sovereignty reflected a rejection of food security as a dominant discourse, critiquing it as an approach based on scientific, technical fixes that evaded the problematic political underpinnings of the global food crises (Patel 2009). Thus, food sovereignty arose, in part, to contest the dominance of scientists, non-governmental organizations, policy makers and corporate elites in shaping the food security narrative and to create a counter-narrative based on the politicized and grounded knowledges of farmers, Indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolk. Food sovereignty emphasizes the democratization of food systems, policy, practice, knowledge and the rights and autonomy of food producers (Nyéléni Declaration 2007).

Over the last two decades, the food sovereignty project has been adopted well beyond its initial constituency, providing a rallying point for diverse actors across the globe with shared goals for food system transformation (Levkoe 2014; Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2015; Brent, Schiavoni, and Alonso-Fradejas 2015; McMichael 2015). Food sovereignty activism has manifested in diverse ways, from dispossessed peoples occupying land in Brazil (Wolford 2010), to multi-sectoral social movements convening across sector, scale and place in Canada (Levkoe 2015), to small-scale farmers defending the infrastructure of local food systems in the Basque Country (Masioli and Nicholson 2010). Cutting across these different dimensions are a range of struggles related to questions of who holds power and whose knowledge counts in food system decision-making. These questions are especially important considering the imperialism of economic rationality, western worldviews and productivist scientific thinking, which have displaced traditional knowledge systems as a part of an ongoing process of colonialism (De Sousa Santos 2014).

In response, social movements both North and South have advanced a range of knowledge strategies in pursuit of food sovereignty (Rumetshofer and Kay 2016; People's Knowledge Editorial Collective 2017). For example, food sovereignty advocates have contested proprietary knowledge and private intellectual property rights around the patenting of nature (Desmarais 2007, 35). Instead, they claim the collective experiences of food producers and harvesters as essential situated knowledges and part of the commons (Martinez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Levidow, Pimbert, and Vanloqueren 2014). The international network of peasant universities and agroecology schools established by LVC members is another example of a food sovereignty knowledge strategy to develop and spread agroecological knowledge[4] (McCune, Reardon, and Rosset 2014). Through these types of initiatives, social movements are building alternatives to mainstream educational

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[4]Most emblematic are the Instituto Agroecológico Latino Americano (IALA) located in Venezuela (IALA Paulo Freire), Paraguay (IALA Guaraní), Brazil (IALA Amazonas) and Chile (IALA de Mujeres) and the *Amritha Bhoomi Agroecology School for South Asia, India*.

institutions, which often reproduce dominant social structures and prioritize technical, expert knowledge. Through the development of counter institutions and grassroots educational processes, social movements are strengthening their autonomous knowledge systems (La Vía Campesina 2015; Brem-Wilson and Nicholson 2017). These kinds of dialogues, education, grassroots innovation, farmer-led research and the everyday knowledge practices of social movements activities demonstrate how, 'the food sovereignty movement is, in itself, a process of knowledge co-creation' (Rumetshofer and Kay 2016).

Given the growing academic interest in food sovereignty, it is perhaps surprising that there has been little systematic reflection on the nature of the relationship between food sovereignty actors and principles and professional research practice (for exceptions, see Edelman 2009; Brem-Wilson 2014; Levkoe et al. 2016; Kepkiewicz et al. 2017). This absence is pertinent, especially given the issues of power and control that are ubiquitous within the research process (Lather 1986). Academics typically hold privileged positions in research relationships, exercising control over key stages of the research process (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, and Pessach 2009). This includes defining research objectives, formulating methodologies, and producing outputs. While principles such as informed consent required by university ethics boards ostensibly protect research participants, they typically fall short of valorizing and enabling non-academic agency in research processes. Indeed, within the field of social movement studies, concerns have been raised about the degree to which the interests of non-academic actors remain subordinated to the imperatives of career advancement or the development and revision of theoretical frameworks, leading to knowledge outcomes that are often irrelevant and, at times, antagonistic to movement concerns (Routledge 2004; Bevington and Dixon 2005; Federici 2009; Chesters 2012).

Advocates of critical methodologies have emphasized different kinds of relationships between academic and non-academic researchers. These include feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding 2004), feminist political ecology (Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996), anti-colonial methodologies (Tuhiwai Smith 1999), queer public sociology (Santos 2012), activist research (Hale 2006), and politically engaged ethnography (Juris 2007), to name only a few. A shared characteristic of these critical approaches is the attempt to change the relationship between researchers and research participants from one of exploitation, to collaboration and co-production. This shift is a response to research approaches that have had destructive impacts on a range of communities. For example, Indigenous peoples around the world continue to experience colonialism and imperialism under the guise of research, facilitating the extraction of traditional knowledge systems used to deny claims to existence (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Further, community-based research often favours the interests of academics and their constituencies and fails to adequately consider and/or address community needs (Flicker 2008; Bortolin 2011). These kinds of exploitative relations not only limit the overall impact of research, but also reproduce inequitable power relations. Critical approaches attempt to bring together knowledge interests and identify mutually beneficial outcomes (Petras and Porpora 1993). Focusing on the outcomes as well as the processes of research, these approaches are often explicitly oriented to a transformative agenda, where the goals shift from the production of abstracted theoretical insights to knowledge that contributes to political and social change.

Contrasting these different approaches illustrates that research is structured by a series of methodological questions, like: Where and when to begin research? Who should be involved? What outputs should be produced? Such decisions are often made unconsciously

and are conditioned by disciplinary and institutional imperatives. Given the characteristics of food sovereignty's knowledge agenda (i.e. challenging power relations and claiming autonomy) and the existence of critical research approaches showing what is possible, it seems reasonable to expect that researchers working with food sovereignty actors should critically reflect on choices they make throughout the research process. Reflecting on our own research projects led to a mutual recognition that we had not sufficiently explored the resonances and tensions between our research and the food sovereignty knowledge agenda. In response, we engaged in a critical process of reflection over a period of 30 months to explore these dynamics using a form of collective autoethnography.

Methodology and the three research projects

While autoethnography involves a process of individual self-reflection to interpret the sociocultural meanings of personal experiences (Spry 2001), a collective autoethnography involves the inter-subjective analysis of experiences. As Chang, Ngunjiri, and Hernandez (2016, 24) write,

> In a collaborative autoethnography, each participant contributes to the collective work in his or her distinct independent voice. At the same time, the combination of multiple voices to interrogate a social phenomenon creates a unique synergy and harmony that autoethnographers cannot attain in isolation.

We used collective autoethnography to explore and understand our experiences working within academic institutions and collaborating on research projects with people, organizations and communities involved in food sovereignty movements.

In the winter of 2014, we began a process of collective reflection, centred on our experiences with three different research projects (described below) in which food sovereignty goals were explicitly or implicitly present. This provided a comparative dimension, enabling us to recognize and examine the key elements, motivations and impacts of our different research experiences, as well as their commonalities and differences. We started with a process of personal writing about the dynamics and tensions of our own research processes and outcomes. This was followed by collective reflection and analysis, and a deeper investigation into our projects. As commonalities and differences began to emerge, we sought to establish their relationship to the principles and practices of food sovereignty, both as we had encountered them in our research, and as they were articulated across a wide-ranging set of literatures. This process culminated in the (collective) writing process, and through multiple drafts allowed us to seek further clarity and refinement.[5]

At the same time, we attempted to place our emerging ideas into dialogue with other activists, academics and practitioners through a series of engagements. This included workshops held at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University, England (August 2015), the Royal Geographical Society Annual Meeting in Exeter, England (September 2015) and Monkton Wyld Court in Dorset, England, with farmers and activist members of the Land Workers Alliance (September 2015). It also featured a conference presentation to academics and activists working on food sovereignty at the International Rural Sociology Association Congress in Toronto, Canada (August 2016).

[5]The peer review process itself being a key stage in this process.

It was in these spaces of critical encounter between our own experiences; the principles and practices of food sovereignty; and the critical questioning of colleagues and allies that we constructed the shared features of our projects, and the ways in which these corresponded with food sovereignty. It was here that the idea of a 'food sovereignty research praxis' began to take hold. In other words, by examining our own experiences in dialogue with each other and with food sovereignty principles and actors, we began to develop a deeper understanding of the intersections of academic research, food sovereignty and knowledge production. Sharing our insights in this paper, we seek to contribute to an ongoing dialogue amongst academics and movement activists about food sovereignty research.

The three research projects

While each project was rooted in a different context and at different scales, they shared a common commitment to building partnerships through the co-creation of knowledge for food system transformation. In this section, we briefly describe each project to provide an overview of the context and objectives (Table 1 provides a summary of the three projects).

Sharing the Table Manitoba was a participatory action research project involving academics, farmers and their allies in Manitoba, Canada. Facilitated by Colin Anderson, through his graduate and postdoctoral research, it engaged civil society initiatives and generated a number of sub-projects to support the development of local and autonomous food systems in the province. The project was established as a response to the impacts of the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE; or Mad Cow Disease) crisis on Manitoba family farmers, shrinking farm incomes and concerns around declining rural populations. These challenges led a group of family farmers to question their dependence on export markets and the concentration of power in the hands of corporations. The emerging collective identified a desire to work cooperatively towards community food systems that

Table 1. Summary of the three research projects.

	Sharing the Table Manitoba	Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement	Analyzing United Nations Food Governance
Primary Research Question	How can grassroots collectives develop bottom-up processes to build alternative food networks and gain agency in creating affecting agriculture policy?	How can community-academic partnerships be designed and implemented in ways that maximize the value created for communitybased organizations?	What are the most important contemporary dynamics in UN food governance?
Objectives	To build political capacity and mobilizing structures amongst farmers and their allies	To strengthen community-academic collaboration for advancing the food sovereignty movement	To provide a practical analysis of UN food governance
Core Partners	Family farmers, urban allies, residents in town of Clearwater, Manitoba	Food Secure Canada and the Canadian Association for Food Studies	LVC
Methods/ Process	Participatory action research involving farmers and their allies	Participatory action research involving grassroots food systems actors (e.g. academics, non-profit organizations, Indigenous peoples, and farmers)	Independent research and analysis, liaising closely with LVC counterpart
Scale	Regional (Manitoba, Canada)	National (Canada)	Transnational
Duration	2006–2015	2012–2016	2008–2010
Funding	US$200,000 grant from Heifer International	CAN$2.5 million grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada	£6000 from the Economic and Social Research Council

would provide them with more control, healthier food for eaters, and stronger connections between urban and rural communities. Using participatory action research, the collective sought to find ways that government policy and food safety regulation could support, rather than disable, the development of local and sustainable food systems. This involved collaborative research and developing political campaigns and strategies to advocate for scale-appropriate policies and food safety regulations.[6]

Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) was a Pan-Canadian, multi-partner, participatory action research project, involving academic researchers and community-based practitioners. The project was a response to studies documenting how research collaborations, even when well meaning, tend to favour academics and their institutions (for example, see Dempsey 2010; Bortolin 2011). During the initial phase (2012–2016), the research took place across five thematic hubs in key areas of interest to the community and academics involved. The primary objective was to learn from the experiences of existing collaborations and identify opportunities to strengthen community-academic research networks. As part of his postdoctoral research and then as university faculty, Charles Levkoe acted as the academic co-lead of the Community Food Security Hub in partnership with a community co-lead representing Food Secure Canada (FSC).[7] The Community Food Security Hub worked with twelve different project partners across Canada, each seeking to understand or amplify the agency of grassroots actors within the food system at different scales.[8] Overall, it aimed to build stronger links between research and policy advocacy, and to see that the knowledge of civil society organizations (particularly those working at the grassroots level) was recognized, respected and in dialogue with academic scholarship. Building on learnings from Phase I, Phase II (beginning in 2016) focused on establishing pilot projects to develop tools and infrastructure to put 'community first' within research and teaching partnerships.

Analyzing UN Food Governance, was a collaborative research project undertaken by Josh Brem-Wilson, then a PhD student, in partnership with LVC. The project aimed to provide the movement with a strategically useful analysis of UN food governance to support the advancement of food sovereignty through engagement with transnational food and agricultural policy-making. Following approval from LVC's International Coordination Committee, the project proceeded through an ongoing dialogue between Josh and a designated counterpart in LVC's International Operational Secretariat. In response to the data being collected, the project was narrowed to focus on the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The project generated three briefing papers (two for LVC and one commissioned for civil society by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty on the recently reformed Committee on World Food Security) and a training session for LVC European activists.

Reflecting on these three projects, individually, in relation to each other and with other academics and movement advocates, our aim was to understand whether and how our research related to principles and practices of food sovereignty. In the next section, we describe the three pillars of an emerging food sovereignty research praxis. We draw on

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[6]For more details on Sharing the Table Manitoba visit: http://sharingthetablemanitoba.org http://sharingthetablemanitoba.org/, www.harvestmoonfood.ca.
[7]FSC is a Pan-Canadian alliance of food movement organizations (see www.foodsecurecanada.org).
[8]For more detail on the Community Food Security Hub and the project partners, see: http://carleton.ca/communityfirst/sector-specific-work/community-food-security/.

a selection of examples from our projects to demonstrate the practices, mechanisms and conditioning factors through which each pillar was realized, along with gaps requiring further attention.

Three pillars of an emerging food sovereignty research praxis

Praxis is the dialectical interaction of theory/reflection and practice/action that opens the possibility for transformative political action. Wakefield (2007) writes, 'praxis is giving life to ideas about the way the world is – and could be – by acting on one's (theoretically informed) convictions in daily life' (331). For the purposes of this paper, praxis is also understood as the point of intersection between research methodology and normative political commitments (Lather 1986), in this case, those embodied in the principles and practices of food sovereignty. We suggest that a food sovereignty research praxis rests on three primary pillars focusing on people (humanizing research relationships), power (equalizing power relations) and change (pursuing transformative orientations).

Pillar I. Humanizing research relations

The first pillar of a food sovereignty research praxis focuses on humanizing research relationships. This involves rejecting the instrumentalisation of relationships and instead, emphasizes a common humanity, mutual agency and blurring the division between the personal and the professional. Rooted in food sovereignty's relational ethos, this pillar implies more than just different kinds of social interaction, but a comprehensive and transformative approach to all relationships. Reflecting on the nature of the relationship between academics and LVC, for example, Paul Nicholson, four-time member of LVC's International Coordination Committee writes,

> There's no common rule, but I think everybody has an understanding that there must be confidence, there must be autonomy, there must be solidarity, and that of course isn't given through a signing of a document, it's given through *common experience*. (cited in Brem-Wilson and Nicholson 2017, emphasis added)

From this perspective, a food sovereignty research praxis rejects the notion of objective, extractive research relationships that can be alienating for everyone involved. Instead, it affirms the importance of developing and deepening trust, sustaining reciprocity, and building solidarity into research practices, all features that are central to food sovereignty (Masioli and Nicholson 2010). In each of our projects, there was a commitment to humanizing, albeit in different ways.

Trust

From our own projects, we learned that developing and deepening trust is central to the process of humanizing research relationships. Sharing the Table, having been formed as a response to the threats to the livelihoods of Manitoba's family farmers, arose from a network of pre-existing partnerships between academics at the University of Manitoba, and farmers and residents of Clearwater, a town in South-Western Manitoba. Colin initial participation in the community was enabled by these pre-existing relationships, and the trust that had been developed over time. One previous collaboration was an

annual undergraduate course where students lived in Clearwater for ten days and learned from community members as the primary instructors. Colin's first formal interaction with this community was as a graduate student co-teaching the course, which became the basis for the participatory action research project. Colin eventually moved into the community for two years to facilitate these relationships. Over time, the initial trust-by-association was deepened by spending time together, not only in terms of collaborating on research, but also by contributing to tangential community-led initiatives and sharing meals, enjoying leisure time together and through regular celebration of accomplishments.

CFICE, as a multi-partner national community-university collaboration, operated at a much broader scale involving the national food movement organization, FSC, and the national academic organization, the Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS),[9] as well as over fifty university- and community-based research partners. When the Community Food Security Hub was initially conceived, researchers active in the food sovereignty movement worked closely with FSC and CAFS as the project's core community partners. These organizations served as brokers,[10] fostering connections with a vast network of individuals and organizations involved in food systems work. Where pre-existing relationships did not exist, FSC and CAFS's involvement gave legitimacy to the research team and facilitated trust-by-association. This enabled the researchers to identify and recruit appropriate project partners. Another way that trust was established and maintained was through the development of Collaboration Agreements that helped to clarify expectations and important details. Additionally, maintaining trust required the Community Food Security Hub management team (consisting of academic and community co-leads) to be extremely flexible around negotiating each project's contributions and needs, and prepared to adapt expectations to accommodate the time and resource constraints of each partner.

In contrast, the origins of the UN Food Governance project, as a collaborative project to examine and improve non-elite participation in transnational governance arenas, did not involve pre-existing relationships. When Josh initially approached LVC to propose what was imagined as a mutually beneficial research project, he had no experience in the food sovereignty movement. Thus, the challenge was two-fold. Firstly, to find a channel to establish a relationship with LVC; and, secondly, to use that channel to build the trust required for a collaborative research project. As feedback from movement activists later confirmed, Josh's persistence in this process (which lasted 17 months) was an important part of building trust with the partners. Josh's conduct further reinforced his commitment, involving constant communication (via sharing documents, email and skype) with his counterpart from LVC to establish and maintain ongoing clarity around project expectations and progress. He was also conscious to respect his status as a researcher, and not to overstep these boundaries. For example, while invited to LVC and other civil society meetings, it was made clear Josh was not an organizational representative and that it would be inappropriate to make substantive contributions to the meetings. His observance of this protocol was appreciated by his counterpart, built a sense of trust, and contrasted with negative experiences with past researchers.

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[9]CAFS is an association of academic and community-based researchers promoting critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad areas of food production, distribution, and consumption (see www.foodstudies.ca).

[10]For more on the concept of brokering organizations in community-campus partnerships see Levkoe and Stack-Cutler (2018).

Reciprocity

Acting with a commitment to reciprocity, or providing mutually beneficial support, throughout the research process, is an important part of humanizing research relations. In our cases, it served to deepen the relationships, and in this sense, transcended the instrumentality (Sayer 2000) of traditional researcher-researched relations. Fulfilling this commitment required that academic and non-academic partners understood each other's needs and expectations, recognizing that they may not always match up, and seeking a commitment to reciprocity to support and contribute to each other's work.

In all cases, non-academic partners made significant contributions to the work of the academics, even when there was little or no direct benefit. Through the partnerships, it was made clear that academic and community-based knowledge interests and outputs were often different and that fulfilling academic requirements demanded contributions that did not always have practical application. Yet, non-academic partners expressed support and affirmation of this work, for example, by reading, discussing and providing feedback on writing, and working to co-author publications. Further, non-academic partners invited researchers into meetings, shared internal documents, brokered relationships with their networks, and made themselves available for research-related meetings and discussion. These kinds of exchanges, while not always directly mutually beneficial, demonstrated that through close working relationships, academic and non-academic partners came to understand each other's needs and interests and act through mutual support.

The academic researchers in the projects also contributed to their non-academic partners in ways that had little or no direct benefit to the research. For example, in the Sharing the Table project, Colin coordinated the development of a farmer-led cooperative (the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative), organized practical workshops and co-developed a political campaign (the Real Manitoba Food Fight). In the CFICE project, academic partners contributed time and skills to pragmatic activities that, while highly valued in grassroots movements, had little academic value. The Community Food Security Hub management team undertook a range of administrative tasks for the project partners as a way to support their work and respect their busy schedules. This enabled the community partners to put more time towards the research, and to play an active role in the processes. The Community Food Security Hub also supported the project partners to produce relevant outputs and to share these with others. Through the UN Food Governance project, Josh reciprocated LVC for their participation in the project by providing briefing papers and contributed to a training workshop for European LVC activists. He also reciprocated for the access granted to LVC and other civil society meetings by performing the role of rapporteur and generating final reports.

Building solidarity

A sense of solidarity, or a commitment to the causes and wellbeing of the communities and movements we worked with is an important component of humanizing research relations.[11] The absence of solidarity would suggest an apolitical and instrumental approach to research, which lends itself to dehumanized relationships. For Colin, having grown up in a rural farming community, his entry point into this work arose from a

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[11]For a more extended reflection on the relationship between solidarity and research see Brem-Wilson 2014.

desire to participate in developing solutions to the declining viability of family farming and rural livelihoods. An initial emphasis on supporting localized community-led solutions evolved into a recognition of the need to work together towards a more politicized approach, particularly by connecting to and supporting social movements using food sovereignty as a mobilizing framework. Prior to returning to academia, Charles had been active in the food sovereignty movement for over fifteen years in the non-profit sector and as an agroecological farmer. Many of the project's partnerships were based on previous relationships established over time, with a commitment to supporting social change, and specifically, food sovereignty. For Josh, engagement was premised on a belief that power should be held by those that are most affected by its exercise. This inspired him to work in solidarity with peasant movements and engage in research with LVC to transform power relations in the domain of transnational food and agricultural policy-making. Thus, solidarity was central to the work of the researchers in each of the three projects, expressed explicitly through research partnerships signalling the political commitment of the researchers and forming a basis for deeper, more rewarding relationships with greater potential to contribute to change.

Pillar II. Equalizing power relations

Whereas the first pillar of a food sovereignty research praxis focuses on the politics of interconnection, the second pillar emphasizes the importance of critical reflexivity, addressing the uneven power dynamics that are a feature of institutional research. This pillar draws from food sovereignty's explicit concern with the power relations that structure the dominant food system and specifically those that privilege the interests of corporations and state governments over food producers and harvesters, workers and marginalized populations (Patel 2012). For example, the food sovereignty movement aims to transform such dynamics, both in the affirmation of the right of peoples to participate in agrifood governance and in the creation of autonomous arenas through which such rights can be realized (Borras and Franco 2009; Brem-Wilson 2015). A concern with equalizing power relations is also evident in the ways that the food sovereignty movement is organized. For example, LVC uses a quota system when organizing international meetings to prioritize particular groups. This approach aims to unbalance power relations and to favour those typically marginalized across regions, genders, and different constituents in the movement (e.g. Indigenous peoples, farmers, pastoralists, etc.). Thus, we affirm a commitment to equalizing power relations as the second pillar of a food sovereignty research praxis. This means that special attention must be given to establishing research processes that ensure that non-academic partners are not simply objects of study, but autonomous subjects that have agency in shaping the research process and subsequent decisions making (Brem-Wilson and Nicholson 2017). This pillar was reflected in each of the three projects, particularly in sharing of control over the research process and its outputs/outcomes, acknowledging positionality and establishing effective coordination mechanisms.

Sharing control

In the Sharing the Table project, rather than imposing a pre-defined research agenda, research priorities were derived from the experiences and needs of farmer participants. The objectives were to address issues of common practical and political concern,

which evolved over time and shaped the direction of the project and the research questions pursued. For example, in response to a raid by provincial food safety inspectors on a project participant's farm, a campaign was developed for farmers and allies to contest the raid, along with the existing food safety regulations that undermine community food systems (Laforge, Anderson, and McLachlan 2017). In the CFICE project, an attempt was made to distribute power and control between the community and academic partners. One way this happened was through the inclusion of non-academic partners in decision-making bodies to collaboratively determine research priorities and the management and production of outputs. Further, decentralized decision-making enabled each demonstration project to work autonomously, with the Community Food Security Hub management team offering support only when requested. This enabled a context-based analysis of the projects and partnerships and supported the 'community first' mandate of the research. Moving from an evaluation of the twelve projects in Phase I to action projects in Phase II, participants identified the need for brokering initiatives to support and maintain community-academic partnerships. As a result, a decision was made to pilot a new collaboration platform through FSC to strengthen and support the food sovereignty movement in Canada. In the UN Food Governance project, research priorities were set jointly by Josh and LVC. This involved developing a project proposal based on LVC's research priorities. Once approved, all significant project decisions were undertaken collaboratively. LVC was also given the opportunity to review all outputs and the right to withhold content deemed sensitive.

While none of the three projects encountered any major controversies in their relationships, attempts at sharing control in the research process were not always straightforward. For example, because of the grounded starting point of the Sharing the Table research, it became challenging to translate project outcomes into debates in the academic literature. In another example, LVC initially rejected Josh's research proposal, which was formulated without any LVC involvement. This led to a recognition that despite his commitment against extractive research, Josh had failed to properly give LVC adequate voice in the setting of researching priorities, provoking a subsequent shift in approach. Likewise, while Charles and colleagues in the CFICE project were committed to a participatory action research agenda, the priorities of academics and community-based organizations did not always align. At times, this led to disagreements necessitating careful and committed negotiations and compromises. For example, an agreement was reached with an Indigenous food sovereignty partner organization that CFICE would relinquish all control of research findings and knowledge mobilization activities to respect the self-determination of the project partner. As opposed to submitting a final written report, the results of the project were shared through a podcast that featured a conversation about the nature of doing research with Indigenous communities. This output allowed the Indigenous partners to control the research findings, and share experiences on their terms.

Acknowledging positionality

A commitment to equalizing power relations requires reflexive consideration of researcher positionality (England 1994). Positionality recognizes that, who researchers are and where they come from (i.e. their position) predisposes them towards particular ways of seeing the

world and working, and has a significant influence on the research process and research outcomes (McCorkel and Myers 2003). Researchers must be self-aware of the ways their own identity (e.g. class, race, gender) functions to create different entry points and power dynamics throughout the research process. Further, research relationships are often established through pre-existing networks that have their own power geometries that further reflect identity-based power configurations. Thus, it is important to consider the extent to which social differentiation shapes research relationships.

In the Sharing the Table project, communities of colour and Indigenous participants were noticeably absent from the network. This reflected the starting point of the project which focused on rural farming communities where the pre-existing networks were made up largely of white, settler families. Further, Colin's positioning as a white man from a similar background, reinforced a trajectory and set of priorities reflecting this positioning. In the CFICE project, it took additional time and understanding to develop agreements with Indigenous communities over ownership and control of data. While committed to principles of social justice, Charles and the Community Food Security Hub management team were all white, middle-class settlers. In these projects, negotiating across cultures periodically led to misunderstandings and discomfort. This suggests the persistence of cross-cultural boundaries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that conditioned the collaborations. This is particularly important in the Canadian context, where much of the food sovereignty work is taking place on contested territory, often being administered by settler organizations (Kepkiewicz and Dale 2018).

These examples illustrate the importance of critically examining the relationships between identity, institutional positioning and to use this awareness to challenge hierarchies and to make power a generative force for social transformation. As Routledge (2004) notes, 'the point is not to escape our institutional or locational identities, but to subvert them, or make them work for us in political ways that attempt to effect social, environmental, and political change' (84).

Establishing effective coordination mechanisms

The third element of equalizing power relations was the coordination mechanisms within each project that enabled non-academic partners to play an active role in key aspects of decision-making. Coordinating mechanisms refers to the governance processes through which research relationships were established and maintained. Both academics and non-academics are subject to competing demands, meeting externally-imposed performance criteria and dealing with emerging crises. Through these challenges, coordination mechanisms have the potential to maintain stability and to especially help to even out unequal power dynamics. They can also serve an epistemic value, in so far as ongoing dialogue with community and movement actors help academics to better understand their aspirations, challenges, and worldviews. Reflecting the diversity of the three projects, these coordination mechanisms took varying forms.

In the case of Sharing the Table, coordinating mechanisms were based on an informal agreement between the farmers, activists and community organizers that formed the participatory action research group through ongoing negotiation of informed consent. The commitment to collectively documenting and analyzing the work was based on mutual interest and understandings of each situation in relation to the wider context. All major

decisions were determined and negotiated collectively and agreements were made to pursue a common course of action, with dedicated time to step back and reflect on the progress and change course as needed. At one point, a research sub-group was established to consolidate the collective experiences through documentation and analysis. This mechanism was a vital part of fulfilling academic outputs, but also enabled community-based outcomes.

The Community Food Security Hub's coordinating mechanisms took a more formal structure with institutional backing from the universities and non-profit organizations involved. This formality included the management team being co-led by academic and non-academic representatives, written contracts (e.g. the Collaboration Agreement), evaluation reports, and financial agreements. The project also benefited from a steering committee of leaders from diverse academic and non-academic sectors across Canada. In addition, because shortfalls in non-academic partner capacity affected their ability to participate in formal meetings, the management team took time to connect with each partner organization on an ongoing basis, ensuring that they were kept informed and able to provide input into relevant decisions. However, while contributing to equalizing power relations, there were ongoing tensions around the nature of the project's funding that required academics to maintain ultimate control (as dictated by the funding agreement).

Within the UN Food Governance project, the coordination mechanisms were very informal. This centred on a highly effective working relationship between Josh and his LVC counterpart, through which dialogue was constant, key decisions were shared, and understandings and expectations were clarified through the production of framing documentation (e.g. proposals, clarifications of positionality, interim reports, etc.). Being based in different countries, communications were highly dependent on Skype and email, punctuated by occasional face-to-face meetings on the fringes of civil society gatherings and UN meetings.

While attempts were made in all of the projects to equalize power relations among academic and non-academic partners, on some occasions our aspirations fell short. Despite a commitment to sharing control, acknowledging positionality and establishing effective coordinating mechanisms, many of the power dynamics were not fundamentally changed through the projects. Often, compromises were imposed from the institutional structures and reified knowledge hierarchies of the academy. For example, in the case of Sharing the Table Manitoba, a farmer/activist and co-author on publications was invited to join Colin's Master's thesis committee, based on her substantial intellectual role in the project. However, according to the university regulations, when Colin transitioned from a Masters to a PhD programme, this individual could no longer sit as a member of his committee, because she did not hold a PhD. In contrast, the fact that Josh had a full scholarship with significant field work allowance and a supervisor deeply committed to his collaborative approach, meant that he was able to devote considerable time to relationship building with LVC and a movement-driven research process more generally. Both of these examples illustrate the ways in which research possibilities are conditioned by the wider structural contexts of the academy.

Recognizing positionality is an important first step, but acknowledgment must be followed by action. For example, it is often necessary to unbalance power relations and ensure that those most marginalized by the dominant food system can play a meaningful

role. Despite encountering barriers, each project found ways to acknowledge and challenge norms and structures to ensure that non-academic partners had a prominent role in shaping the research process and in decision making. Like food sovereignty itself, equalizing power relations in research must be an ongoing effort, demanding critical reflexivity and compromise. It is important to note, however, that power dynamics in the movement/community-academic relationship are not unidirectional. Movement actors have the power to not participate in research projects (see: Borras 2016), of denying academics access to their meetings and activities, and indeed may themselves be guilty of instrumentalising their academic collaborators from time to time. This emphasizes the importance of Pillar II: sharing control and equalizing power relations can only be achieved in a context of solidarity and trust, from both parties.

Pillar III. Pursuing transformative orientations

At its core, food sovereignty is a transformative project, emphasizing concrete political and practical action as a 'bottom up' articulation of power (Patel 2009; Fairbairn 2010). It seeks to transform the food system from one that is dominated by corporations and state governments to one in which power is shared democratically and control is rooted within people and communities. We identify the third pillar of a food sovereignty research praxis as a transformative research orientation, which entails a commitment for research to contribute, in real terms, to the transformative work of progressive social movements. In each of our three projects, a commitment to contributing to transformative action was evident through the orientation of research objectives, an emphasis on contributing to practical and political outcomes, and the different roles and resources that each researcher brought to the project.

Transformative research objectives: committing to practical and political outcomes
Rather than pursing objectives formulated to address gaps in academic knowledge, the three projects were committed to research objectives that aligned with the priorities and projects of partners working for food sovereignty. In the Sharing the Table project, there was a common aspiration to establish platforms for collective economic and political action amongst farmers and allies, and move beyond the individualism pervasive within food movements in the global north. Here, participatory action research focused on bringing people together in collective action to increase their capacity and agency. The project led to the creation of a cooperative community food initiative and generated a comprehensive range of outputs and outcomes in pursuit of its core goals. These included, contributions for popular media, collaborative videos, processes to reflect on and improve group dynamics, popular education workshops, and websites for various groups. In addition, the project established a number of networks and campaigns that were important organizational structures for small farmers and allies in the province (Anderson, Sivilay, and Lobe 2017).

In the CFICE project, the objectives focused on exploring and strengthening the culture of engagement between academics and community-based organizations. This was pursued with food sovereignty as an explicit goal. Secondary objectives included building stronger links between research and policy advocacy and ensuring that the research capacity of civil society organizations would be better recognized and linked to relevant

academic scholarship. This was demonstrated through the specific objectives of the twelve projects and the ability to connect them to FSC's food sovereignty network. The CFICE project generated a series of reports from each of the twelve projects, evaluating the community-academic partnerships and identifying shared learnings through conference presentations, workshops, working papers, book chapters and peer reviewed papers. It also engaged wider audiences through the use of social media, including blogs and webinars. For participants, the most important outcome was the development of a Pan-Canadian academic-community partnership network for food sovereignty. In Phase II, the focus turned to establishing a pilot project supporting civil society engagement in food policy to implement Phase I learnings and to develop the infrastructure to improve the linkages between research and advocacy.

With the pursuit of food sovereignty as an explicit goal, the overarching objective in the UN Food Governance project was to generate a practical analysis of the complex field of transnational food and agricultural policy making for LVC. The intention was to enhance the movement's understanding of this domain to support its pursuit of strategic and institutional impact at the global level. Research outputs were used to increase understanding amongst civil society actors on the internal dynamics of UN food governance, and to highlight new opportunities and channels for participation.

Taking on a range of roles and marshalling resources for transformative action

The pursuit of food system transformation through research in each project is reflected in the range of roles and responsibilities taken on by the academics involved, and the ways that resources were deployed in each project. This pursuit is indicative of the different ways in which academics can support food sovereignty actor's transformative orientations through the provision of different types of practical support.

In the Sharing the Table project, Colin's role included generating a range of outputs and outcomes with the primary purpose of addressing community objectives. This included research to support initiatives generated by the project, acting as a lead co-ordinator in the development of the cooperative local food initiative and coordinating political campaigns (Anderson and McLachlan 2016). He also facilitated processes of collective reflection for project partners. Furthermore, he assisted with grant writing and helped mobilize over $300,000 for popular education and further research. In the CFICE project, the academics extended well beyond their expected roles by undertaking administrative duties and other project-related tasks (e.g. travel coordination, administrative paperwork, financial claims) for their community partners, enabling them to focus on the details of their work. They also undertook a facilitation role, establishing connections and building networks within and between the community-based groups involved in the project and with the broader food sovereignty movement. Through the grant secured by CFICE, the Community Food Security Hub was able to contribute financial resources to each project to support their work and participation in FSC's biannual assembly, to share their knowledge and experiences and learn from others across the country.

In the UN Food Governance project, Josh's role as a rapporteur and delivering training based on the research outcomes, contributed to LVC's practical and political work. The fact that Josh was able to use the project as part of the methodology for his doctoral research communicated that the distinction between research and practical activities can be mutually supportive. In the two other projects, this distinction was explicitly collapsed,

with the practical work being recognized as contributing simultaneously to increased knowledge for academics and research participants. For example, in the CFICE project, academics worked closely with community partners to document and analyze learnings from the research collaborations to share results in multiple forums (e.g. scholarly and community-based conferences, peer reviewed journals, reports, webinars, blogs, etc.). Put simply, the goal was to understand the world by seeking to transform it.[12]

Challenges to achieving a transformative orientation

This discussion illustrates ways that the three projects, to varying degrees, were embedded within, and made contributions to practical and political food sovereignty projects. However, beyond the outcomes presented, the extent to which each project managed to support broader transformative aspirations is less clear. For Sharing the Table, pursuing the project's immediate pragmatic gains also served to dilute its more ambitious aspects. For example, in efforts to change food safety regulations and access formal policy channels, there were pressures to pursue more conservative approaches and to avoid more confrontational strategies. Through the participatory action research process, space was created to reflect on this tension and the group's different priorities, yet the ability to respond to this by pursuing more transformative and contentious priorities was limited by time, capacity and resources.

For the CFICE project, the Community Food Security Hub played a major role in building on new and existing partnerships and linking them to Pan-Canadian food sovereignty networks through FSC and CAFS. However, an impact assessment of the Community Food Security Hub and its twelve project partners yielded mixed results. While all the projects expressed a commitment to food sovereignty principles, the concrete aspects of their work often appeared quite conservative in nature. In almost all cases the community partners were non-profit organizations facing significant time and resource constraints. While these organizations tend to be better positioned for research partnerships, they were also accountable to funders and were often hesitant to take on radical positions. During early stages of project development, partners appeared extremely eager to engage in food sovereignty work. However, as the projects progressed, many were not able to find the time and resources to engage beyond their day-to-day operations. While the Community Food Security Hub management team kept regular communications with offers of support, part of the 'community first' guiding principle meant letting the projects take their own course, which was often less radical than originally hoped. This tension was also furthered by the Community Food Security Hub's fixed timelines and the structures established by the terms of the project which were, at times, overly restrictive, reflecting the rigidity of institutions and funders which are often misaligned with social movements.

Finally, while the UN Food Governance project was originally conceived as a potentially important contribution to LVC's efforts to engage with UN food governance, the usefulness of this project was undermined by the 2009 reform of the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). This reform process, in which LVC actors participated, resulted

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[12]It is important to note that these same roles can be performed by academics in contexts in which their academic identity is backgrounded or suspended (e.g., when they engage in food activism as citizens or members of movements). However, here we are affirming their status when they engage with food sovereignty actors from their positionality as academics. That is, we are suggesting that they may be inscribed into the roles of an academic seeking to align with and embody a food sovereignty research praxis.

in a re-visioned CFS structure, including extended unprecedented formal participation rights to small-scale food producers and other non-elite food and agricultural constituencies. This appeared to resolve the uncertainty over entry-points into UN food governance that implicitly informed the research project, and made the subsequent analysis being developed by Josh less relevant. He was, however, able to channel the data into a report to aid civil society engagement in the reformed CFS. However, despite anecdotal testimony suggesting that the outputs from this project were useful to LVC and their allies, the exact impacts remain unclear.

These examples suggest the need for an attitude of deep humility regarding the contribution of academics to the transformative projects of food sovereignty actors. It is also important to note that the attempt to orient academically-positioned research to transformative orientations necessitates mechanisms for evaluation, the goal of which is precisely to capture the impacts of this attempt, both for our partners, and beyond. It is only through such evaluations, making explicit the theories of change that inform our projects, that we can adequately assess the impacts of our work. However, across each of the three projects discussed in this paper, the extent to which this type of evaluation was undertaken varied considerably. None though adequately addressed this need, and this is an important gap that we will seek to address moving forward.

Conclusion: a proposition for engagement

We began by suggesting that encounters between food sovereignty actors and academics posed a question that had received insufficient reflection: What implications does an engagement with food sovereignty carry for academic researchers and academically-situated processes of knowledge production? In this paper, we have attempted to address this question, by building on previous discussions (e.g. Edelman et al. 2014) and claiming that an engagement between academics (and their academically situated processes of knowledge production) and food sovereignty (actors and principles) generates a research praxis composed of three pillars: humanizing research relations; equalizing power relations; and pursuing a transformative orientation. Drawing from three research projects conducted at different scales and in different locations, we have attempted to illustrate the mechanisms and processes by which we have sought to embody that praxis in our work, and where we have fallen short. These pillars reflect modes by which to confront the widely recognized power-imbalances and complex relationships between researchers and actors in food sovereignty and other movements (e.g. Edelman 2009; Brem-Wilson 2014; Andrée et al. 2016). As we suggest above, in developing the pillars of this praxis we took inspiration from a wide range of existing critical research methodologies.

Though we committed a significant period of time to its formulation and are content with the extent to which it captures key aspects of food sovereignty, our framework is not intended to be exhaustive of all the ways that food sovereignty principles and practices could potentially translate into a research praxis, nor is it meant to be overly prescriptive. We understand that research contexts vary, and if the goal of enabling the agency of movement and community actors in research processes is taken seriously, the negotiation of those relationships and the outcomes they produce will vary from place to place.

The three pillars and their respective sub-pillars emerged from our collective authoethnography via their resonance with both our research experience and key ideas and

practices within food sovereignty. It is essential, therefore, that we properly acknowledge the limitations in our positionality. As three white men raised in the Global North, conducting research in Canada and the context of UN food governance, we are aware that our experiences are not and cannot be fully representative of the full range of intersections and experiences between academically-positioned researchers and food sovereignty actors. Thus, we offer this framework in the spirit of dialogue as a contribution to praxis within what Jun Borras (2016) refers to as a 'researchers' movement' that is oriented towards food sovereignty with 'shared broad assumptions and visions about the world as we know it and the world we want to build' (39). Within this milieu, we look forward to engaging critically and refining our framework with colleagues at the food sovereignty-academy interface with different experiences, different stories and complementary analyses to contribute. Ideally, food sovereignty practitioners – the movements and community actors whose activism and struggles are the ground upon which these reflections and practices are built – will be an active part of this conversation. However, in our experience, faced with resource constraints and with other important priorities, these actors often struggle to find entry points within, or see the meaning of methodological debates. This to our mind, underscores the need for the commitment to reflexivity amongst academic actors that we hope is embodied in this paper.

In that spirit, we believe that the three pillars of a food sovereignty research praxis offered here have value when applied critically and reflexively, where researchers and food sovereignty practitioners can collectively evaluate research relationships and outcomes of their own initiatives. While our framework emerged primarily from our grounded experience and search for a food sovereignty research praxis, it also connects to and consolidates political and methodological positions emanating for example from feminist- (Rochleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari 1996; Harding 2004) and activist research (Hale 2006). With this basis, the pillars can be used to reflexively examine and adapt relationships to more fully embody the principles and practices of food sovereignty, considering, for example, how particular projects align with the three pillars and how this might change over time. For example, groups most capable and ready to partner with academics may be those already supported within the existing system (e.g. non-governmental organizations), and thus may have narrower strategies of change. In this case, it may be easier to develop strong and trusting relationships (Pillar I) and work towards equalizing power relations (Pillar II), but possibly at the expense of a more radical transformative orientation (Pillar III).

To be sure, this is not an easy agenda. Attempts at power sharing and exposure to the accompanying vulnerabilities can be fraught. Social movements run the risk of losing time, labour, control over their representation and cultural artefacts. Academics risk losing control of timelines and meeting external funder expectation for project outcomes. For us, this necessitates the importance of an approach that sees the pillars as mutually reinforcing. For example, trust and humanized research relationships enable mutual understanding, which in turn facilitates power sharing, the orientation of research towards a transformative agenda, additional trust, and so on. The framework presented here can help negotiate the balance in food sovereignty praxis between the risk of 'social weightlessness', abstract theorization and the need to deepen critical food sovereignty research that is 'rooted, explanatory and actionable' (Refstie 2018, 201).

This proposed praxis for food sovereignty research however, faces limitations in the neoliberal and elitist academy (Greenwood 2012). Developing deeply involved relationships, confronting power imbalances, and contributing to social movements are all outcomes that carry little weight in academic settings. Researchers are disciplined through audit systems and technologies of standardization limiting outputs that count when measuring quality and productivity (Kitchin and Fuller 2005). The tangible outcomes and political work that result from food sovereignty praxis are predominantly marginalized by performance measurements. In this context, such engaged critical scholarship is marginal and largely hidden in the interstices of the academy (Gabriel et al. 2009). However, there are still spaces within academia where these approaches are tolerated or even supported. In carrying out this work, the three authors faced a number of institutional and cultural challenges, yet over the course of this writing, we have been fortunate to have taken up positions in research environments that actively support the praxis described. These opportunities are rare and food sovereignty research praxis must also include work to strengthen and open up new opportunities within institutional environments to build communities of praxis that connect often isolated researchers and to shift academic culture (e.g. through training a new generation of researchers).

Academics are often constructed as outsiders and conceived as separate from social movements, in some cases as opponents and in others as external experts. Given the history of academia and its institutional context which can encourage extractive and exploitative research approaches, this skepticism is warranted. However, based on our own experiences (and of many others) we believe that academics can make modest but important contributions to movement and activist struggles. One of our contributions to that goal is to affirm the importance of a praxis, consisting of three pillars, to the descriptions of food sovereignty research. In the future, it will be vital to develop institutional innovations and further mechanisms, like the reflexive framework presented in this paper, to support a research praxis that can most effectively contribute to the food sovereignty project.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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