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## **How place-based initiatives address food justice? A participatory evaluation in Portland, Oregon.**

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**ABSTRACT.** Food Justice is the right of communities everywhere to produce, process, distribute, access, and eat good food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community” (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, 2012). The Food Justice lens addresses social inequities in the access to healthy food, requiring specific attention on food access for disadvantaged groups. Beyond, this approach aims to take into account the broader context of social, racial, and environmental justice struggles spurred by structural inequities (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015). Research on urban agriculture (UA) showed that local agri-food initiatives can have contradictory impacts, contributing to a green gentrification reinforcing inequities, or being a place of resistance where minorities can find a voice to act and decide (McClintock, 2017). In this context, it is a challenge for local activists to know how to act, and what to avoid, in order to advance food justice, beyond helping people to obtain and consume fresh and healthy food.

The objective of our presentation is to design a participatory evaluation of how place-based initiatives can address food justice. The approach mobilizes two fields of knowledge. We mobilized theoretical knowledge of Food Justice through the use of Slocum et al. (2016) four nodes, “equity and trauma”, “land”, “exchange” and “labour”, completed by the “democratic process” (Horst, 2017) and “relations of power” (Reynolds and Cohen, 2016) nodes. We mobilized also practical knowledge of practitioners managing place-based agri-food initiatives. The confrontation of the two approaches was done in a workshop in which the three authors shared knowledge, elaborated indicators, and formulated arguments on how initiatives address or not food justice.

Our results are based on two case studies in Portland, Oregon. If this city is well-known for its efforts to sustainable development, social inequalities and poverty are strong issues, especially in the Eastern and Northern neighbourhoods of the city. Among the many initiatives acting to reduce hunger and food insecurity, we selected two of them which are reinforcing their focus

on food justice. Village Gardens is a community-based organization acting in a social housing neighbourhood of North Portland with a wide social diversity (17 different languages). The project focuses on the education of youths from disadvantaged families toward growing food, and on the self-management of a community garden and a cooperative grocery. Outgrowing Hunger cares for people by nurturing connection to nature, food, and community. It has a specific focus on low-income people, recent immigrants, and refugee's families.

The participatory evaluation allowed identifying nodes of food justice that are goals of these initiatives, some that are not applicable at the initiative scale, and some that are important in practice but absent of the theoretical grid. In our poster, we summarize the approach and highlight results of the evaluation process. This exploring work helped activists to formulate or adjust their goals. It helped research to have a more critical view on the applicability of food justice framework.

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