

# Food justice in future cities?!

**A feminist  
geographic  
perspective on  
food justice in  
the Global South  
and North**



Source: FemGeo-Rundmail N°72

Dr. Birgit Hoinle,  
University of Hohenheim

International Conference on Climate Justice Gender,  
intersectionality and Climate Justice  
26th October, 2022

# Overview

1. Feminist Political Ecology, coloniality of food and intersectional perspectives
2. What is food justice?
3. Food justice in urban agroecology in Bogotá (Colombia)?
4. Food justice in public catering in southern Germany?
5. Conclusion & perspectives

# 1. (Feminist) Political Ecology

- Point of departure: Criticism on divergence between **nature vs. culture** as ontological fundament of modern thought (Leff 2003)
- In parallel, hierarchisation of **rurality vs. urbanity** in the context of modernity:

*„Who of us wasn't taught that being civilized, developed or progress means moving from the countryside to the city?“*  
(Porto-Gonçalves 2009: 11)

**Coloniality of knowledge** (Lander 2000):  
Appropriation and invisibilization of indigenous knowledge forms



Example: Urban policies leading to displacement of farmers' markets from the center of the city to the peripheries in Bogotá. They were associated with chaos and insecurity (Montoya 2013).

# 1. Feminist Political Ecology

Power

- **Feminist Political Ecology** (Ojeda 2011; Ulloa 2016): Questioning gendered power relations within society-nature-constructions: Nature as the provider of natural resources/ women as provider of care work (Nogales 2017)
- **Intersectionality**: Approach to identify socio-ecological exclusions due to interconnected power relations based on race, class, gender, age,...
- Goal: Analysis and transformation of interrelated **power relations**





# 1. Feminist Political Ecology

Care

- **Historical perspective:** The expansion of capitalism resulted in the enclosure of women into private spaces and roles of reproductive/care work (Federici 2004)
- **Invisibilized care work:** Care work for the preparation of dishes, mostly undertaken by female household members, builds an essential –but often invisibilized– element of the food value chain. It requires certain capacities, knowledge, and agency (Brückner 2020).



Photo: own source

# 1. Coloniality of food

- **„Gastro-Politics“** (Camacho 2014): In different contexts and societies, people perceive, classify and value food in certain forms. This reflects patterns of valuation shaped by colonialism, classist and gendered dynamics (e.g. meat)
- **Coloniality of food** is expressed by the unequal configuration of globally and locally connected food systems (Hoinle & Brückner 2022)
- Analysis of **intersectional power relations within food systems**: Who carries the major work burden for the production and preparation of food? Who maintains the knowledge about food e.g. seeds, recipes?

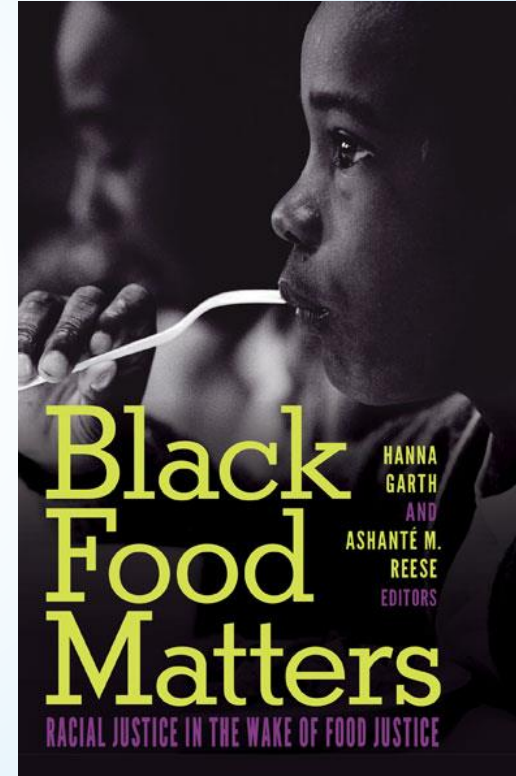
knowledge

care

power

## 2. Food justice

- Origin: **Environmental Justice** movement in North America (Alkon & Norgaard 2009; Garth & Reese 2020)
- **Intersectional perspective:** Neighborhoods with majority Black and low-income groups are often denied access to fresh and healthy food and are more affected by food diseases, e.g. obesity, diabetes,.. → “**Food Apartheid**” (Reese 2019: 7)
- **Gendered food inequalities:** Often women have to take care of the food supplies and hence have to deal with greater distances.



## 2. Food justice

- Different **justice dimensions**: procedural, distributional, capability, and global justice (Tornaghi 2017)
- Procedural justice → call for **food democracy** by food movements. Food as a **commons** on which citizens should have a say upon and equal access (↔ food as commodity) (Vivero-Pol 2019).
- Origin: First **food policy councils** founded in the 1980/1990s in North America in response to the exclusion of socially disadvantaged groups from fresh food
- Germany: rising movement since 2016. Engagement, e.g. regarding public catering, regional producer-consumer networks







Farmers markets

Community supported agriculture



(Photo: Hoinle 2016)

# Diversity of food initiatives

Food policy councils



(Photo: Meyer-Renschhausen 2006)

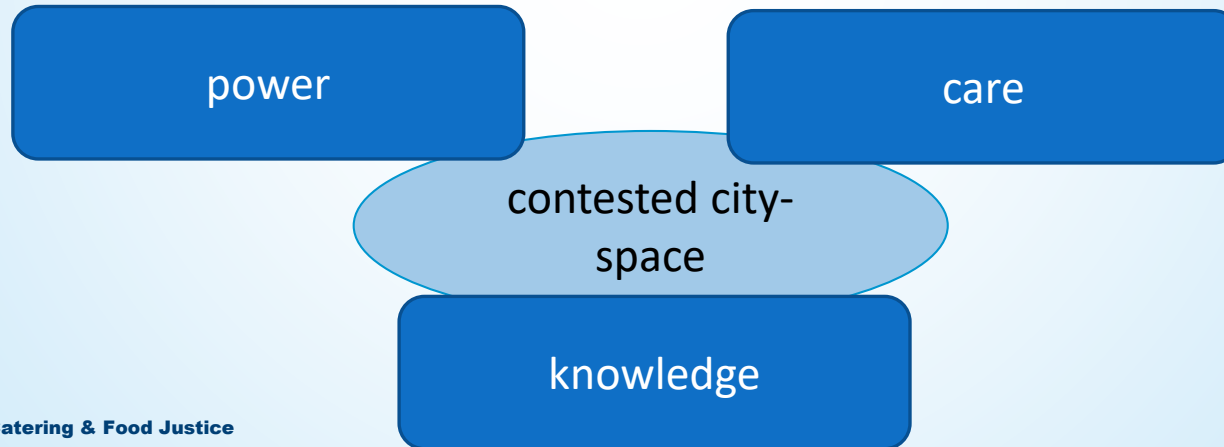
Urban gardening

(Photo: Martinez Cuchimaque 2013)

## 2. Food justice

In view of ongoing postcolonial socio-ecological food inequalities in cities of the Global South and North:

- What motivates women\* to engage in local food initiatives?
- What are perspectives for empowerment and transformation toward more food justice in cities?





### 3. Food justice in Bogotá – urban agroecology & empowerment processes





urban animal husbandry



farmers markets



**Agroecological  
initiatives in  
Bogotá**

using small spots of biodiversity



traditional sorts





### 3. Food justice in urban agroecology?

*“My parents are peasants, I was growing up with this kind of education. That not all was to eat, no no! Instead, of every harvest you keep some seeds to sow them again. We’ve never got used to buy the technological packages but we always had to have some seeds at home to go sowing again.”*  
(Guardian de Semilla, Bogotá)

- **Epistemic empowerment:** Recognition of local peasant knowledge forms
- **Diálogo de Saberes** (Castro-Gómez 2007): Dialogue of diverse knowledge forms: by changing seeds and knowledge about them, the urban farmers contribute to the maintenance of seeds as commons – as shared cultural goods.

knowledge



(Photos: Hojle)



### 3. Food justice in urban agroecology?

- **New recognition of rural practices in city-space:** Conversion of urban vacant spaces into community garden projects by collective actions (*mingas*) with *ollas comunitarias* (shared pots)
- **Decolonizing city-space:** Naming of urban gardens with indigenous names e.g. *Techotiba* (= guardian of water) in the district of Kennedy
- **Role transformations:** More visibility for women in the role as producers when selling own home-prepared products at public places, e.g. *La Red de Mujeres Productoras de Fontibón*



(Photos: Hoinle)



care

power



## 4. Food justice in southern Germany



## 4. Food justice in public catering?

- School canteens could be the place in which all pupils have access to quality, sustainable food  
→ Food as **public good** (Vivero-Pol 2019)
- Cities (local scale) are decisive for transformations towards **sustainable food systems** (Schanz et al. 2020).
- ⇔ In Germany, school meals are usually delivered by commercial catering companies (86%). In public tenders, the most relevant criterion for selection is the cost factor. Seldomly, factors of sustainability (e.g. regionality, organic origin) are taken into consideration → **Food as commodity**.



Foto: dpa



# 4. Food justice in public catering?

## Exploratory study 2021-2022 in southern Germany:

- Quantitative online-survey with 1,000 pupils in Tübingen
- 12 exploratory interviews with actors all along the school food value chain: producer association, kitchen management, city administration, parents, teachers)
- 4 Qualitative interviews with pupils
- Literature analysis

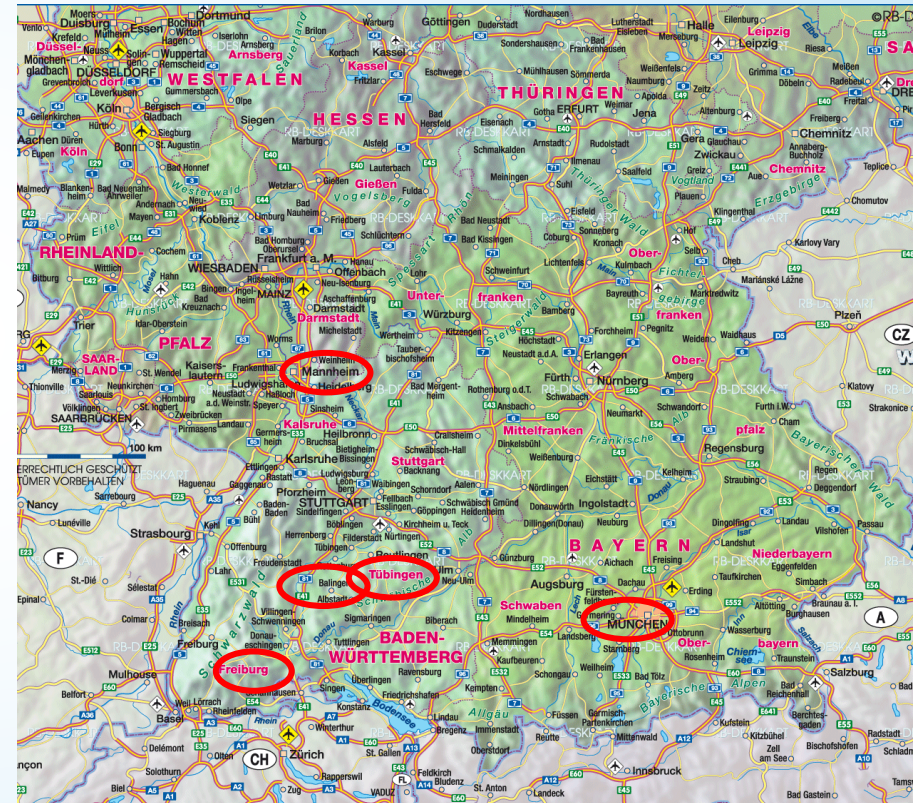


Foto: weltatlas.de

## 4. Food justice in public school catering?

### Potentials:

- Rising demand for **ecological** and **vegetarian** food by pupils
- **Participation:** rising movement of food initiatives in Germany
- **Organic food:** incentives by network of “Biostädte”, “Biomusterregionen”

### In-Between:

- **Social Justice:** Additional funding for children of low-income households; subsidies for school food depend on each municipality

### Challenges:

- **Regionality:** European competition law impedes the integration of regional value chains
- **Seasonality/ freshness:** Mostly highly processed food delivered by external companies
- **Participation:** Pupils’ participation is rarely put into practice (Jansen 2019)
- **Diversity:** Diverse cultural eating habits are seldomly considered (meat meals without pork)
- **Education for sustainable food:** only in form of projects (no structural integration in curriculum)
- **Low acceptance by pupils:** School canteens appear rather unattractive; elder pupils prefer to buy fast food at city centers.



## 4. Food justice in public catering?

### Recommendations:

- **Fair working conditions at public canteens:**  
after decades of neoliberal city-planning and externalization, the care work of preparing food in public canteens is rather undervalued. More efforts are necessary for fairer working conditions and further education for kitchen staff.
- **Participation:** all interviewees agree that pupils should have more space for democratic decision-making in school food organization: „They should co-cut, co-cook, and co-decide!“ This would also allow the consideration of diverse eating habits of children with migrant backgrounds.
- Cooperation with **food policy councils** (e.g. Freiburg): Integrating regional providers and education offers on sustainable food.

care

power

knowledge

## 5. Conclusion & further perspectives

- There is huge potential for integrating feminist perspectives in food justice issues, especially regarding the dimensions of care work for food preparation, as well as the recognition of gendered food knowledge and (invisible) engagement of women\* in food initiatives.
- In Colombia, food initiatives (e.g. urban agroecology) try put food justice into practice by re-appropriating city-space for urban agriculture and sharing local knowledge about native seeds. These initiatives also have potentials for decolonizing city-space and empowerment processes, although these processes are always contested.
- In Germany, the food justice-perspective with regard to public/ school catering is still rather underexplored. However, food initiatives (food policy councils) and pupils do have a rising interest for sustainable food. Particular challenges are the improvement of pupils' participation and the consideration of diversity in school food organization.



**Thank you for  
your attention!**

**Questions &  
comments?**

