

Canadian Food Studies

La Revue canadienne des  
études sur l'alimentation

Editorial

## **Transformations revealed through food studies**

Ellen Desjardins

This issue brings us food-related research and perspectives from across Canada, from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories to central Alberta, Kenora (Ontario), and Nova Scotia. A common thread weaves throughout this work: one of transformative change—either already in progress or still needed—among individuals, communities, and food systems.

Moquin and co-authors focus on community gardening and its power to bring about heightened social cohesiveness and ecological involvement. Scrutinizing this subject through a camera lens and the voices of gardeners in Northwestern Ontario, they learned that such transformation is possible but not to be taken for granted, for it requires extra attention and resources to overcome feelings of exclusion and challenges of access, especially among Indigenous people of the region.

Connelly and Beckie, in their study of two Alberta local food initiatives (LFIs), explore the sustainability and transformative potential of these programs. Longer term success, they found, is greater if LFIs stick with models that promote progressive social infrastructure than if they struggle to co-exist with the price-convenience-efficiency target of the corporate food world.

Roberts-Stahlbrand has chronicled for us an historic overview of the apple industry of Nova Scotia between the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the present. Transformation in the maritime apple business was influenced by numerous factors: the rise and fall of market demand; the influx of mono-cropping, pesticides, and fertilizers; mechanized production and processing capacity; land consolidation and crop insurance; and tariffs, subsidies, and other policies. Further change, she argues, needs to happen through attention to ecologically sustainable practices.

Hiebert and Power have shone a spotlight on the way major news media have perpetuated discriminatory and “othering” attitudes towards people in Nunavut, in terms of food insecurity and actions to alleviate it. The message here—important but not always obvious—is that transformation in public discourse is a prerequisite for change, including federal and territorial policies that improve food security in Nunavut.

Conversely, the research of Wesche and co-authors with northern Indigenous people illustrates a respectful approach that centres on capacity and agency. Colonization transformed the food available to these communities, resulting in “nutrition transition” and food insecurity that, as these authors learned from local interviews, is worsening with various forms of environmental change. Transformation towards more sustainable local food systems, they argue, is best led by Indigenous peoples themselves, especially by supporting the resources, skills, and traditional knowledge that enable procurement of foods from the land.

Bancerz has explored the transformative influence of various types of corporate social responsibility that food companies have devised, including non-traditional corporate food interests such as animal welfare and food literacy. She suggests that such engagement can exert a positive effect on food policy, if genuinely integrated with social benefit, but also a negative effect, if it is a smokescreen for boosting profit.

For those interested in ways to minimize food waste throughout the food system, MacRae and co-authors offer a kaleidoscope of policy, program, and regulatory frameworks for doing so. True to the MacRae approach, long-term transformation in the handling of food waste would require the cumulative efforts of reduction, efficiency, substitution, and redesign initiatives. This review article is a goldmine of detailed information that can serve as the basis for action as well as further research.

Finally, reviewers of books are like hewers of wood: with a critical eye, they start with a tome and carve out a discernable shape for us. The reviews in this issue will whet your appetite for books on food-related issues of feminism, human rights, food sovereignty, communication studies, and urban agriculture.

An experimental review format has been introduced by associate editor Phil Mount, in response to the dilemma of reviewing edited books that are by nature heterogeneous in content. The solution: a composite book review in which every chapter is individually reviewed. The treat is yours: you will find, in this issue, 15 chapter reviews for the book by de Zeeuw and Drechsel (2016) and 17 mini-reviews for each of the chapters in the book by Elliot (2016). Such lengthy reviews do require extra effort, but, as Mount points out, it can be a satisfying collective project resulting in greater depth of analysis—and certainly a greater sense, for the reader, of what an edited book offers.

The editorial team welcomes collaboration with the new CAFS Journal Governance Committee, established in June 2016: Rebecca Schiff, Lenore Newman, Jennifer Brady, and Kristin Lowitt. We thank the University of Waterloo for providing our OJS online platform, plus essential library staff support.

2016 Editorial Team:

Ellen Desjardins, PhD, Editor  
[edesjardins@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:edesjardins@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

Wesley Tourangeau, PhD Candidate, Managing Editor  
[wtourangeau@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:wtourangeau@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

Phil Mount, PhD, Associate Editor  
[pmount@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:pmount@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

David Szanto, PhD, Associate Editor  
[dszanto@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:dszanto@canadianfoodstudies.ca)

Rod MacRae, PhD, Associate Editor  
[rmaerae@yorku.ca](mailto:rmaerae@yorku.ca)

Alyson Holland, PhD, Associate Editor  
[eholland@canadianfoodstudies.ca](mailto:eholland@canadianfoodstudies.ca)