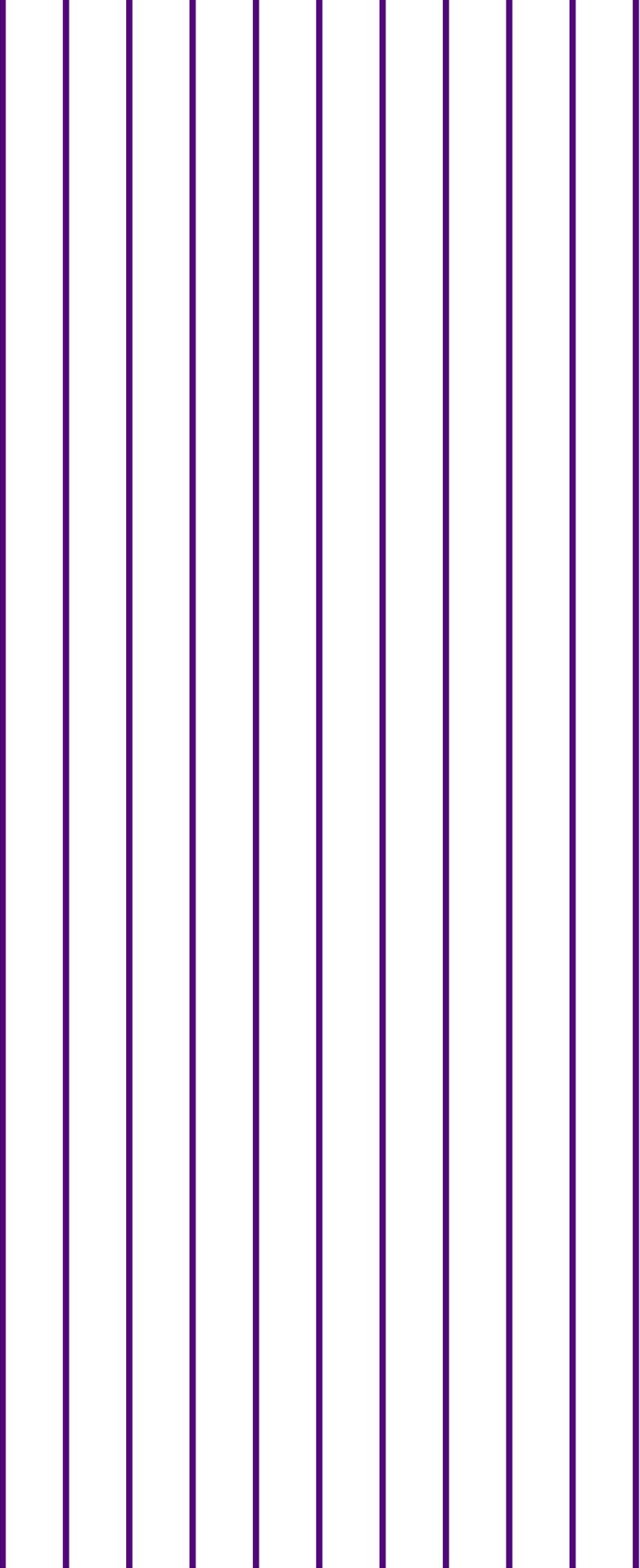


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'A parar la olla': learning from
ollas comunes in times of crisis
to enhance resilient and just food
systems

By Francisco García González

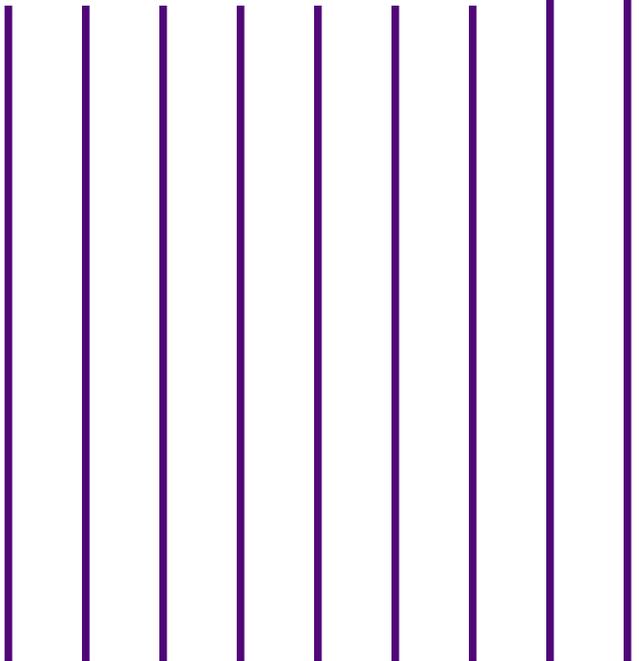


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‘*A parar la olla*’: learning from *ollas comunes* in times of crisis to enhance resilient and just food systems

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore the relationship between resilience and justice, focusing on how grassroots movements can contribute to more resilient food systems, while simultaneously building pathways towards socioenvironmental justice. To address this question, the paper considers a case study situated in the resurgence of *ollas comunes* in Santiago during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to learn the relevance of local communities to react, recover and prepare before food insecurity shocks. Using an environmental justice analytical framework, the paper examines the significance of food justice and sovereignty agendas as pathways to developing community resilience, while mobilising changes in the political sphere to reach food justice. At the same time, *ollas comunes* represent a caring, collective and creative citizen movement that effectively responds to the food emergency of the most vulnerable. Yet, they are often excluded from political decision-making, in which misrecognition and maldistribution impact the capacity of those more exposed to risks in building resilience against future threats in times of multiple crises.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo explorar la relación entre resiliencia y justicia, centrándose en cómo los movimientos alimentarios de base pueden aportar a sistemas alimentarios más resilientes, y que simultáneamente, construyan caminos hacia la justicia socioambiental. Para abordar esta pregunta, el artículo considera un caso de estudio situado en el resurgimiento de las *ollas comunes* en Santiago durante la pandemia por COVID-19, con el fin de conocer la relevancia de las comunidades locales para reaccionar, recuperarse y prepararse ante los shocks de inseguridad alimentaria actuales y futuros. Utilizando un marco analítico de justicia ambiental, el artículo examina la importancia de las agendas de justicia y soberanía alimentaria relacionadas con el surgimiento de las *ollas comunes* como vías para desarrollar la resiliencia comunitaria, mientras se movilizan cambios en la esfera política para alcanzar la justicia alimentaria. Al mismo tiempo, las *ollas comunes* representan un movimiento ciudadano solidario, colectivo y creativo que responde eficazmente a la emergencia alimentaria de aquellos habitantes más vulnerables. Sin embargo, generalmente son excluidas de la toma de decisiones políticas, en las que la falta de reconocimiento y la mala distribución impactan la capacidad de aquellos más expuestos a riesgos en construir resiliencia frente a futuras amenazas en tiempos de múltiples crisis.

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This paper explores the *ollas comunas* movement as a local, urban and collective platform to develop multiple activities within localised food systems, strengthening community resilience for future shocks, whilst simultaneously, contributing to reach food justice.

01. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely worsened food security worldwide, exposing deficiencies in industrialised food systems that operate under a corporate regime and intensive agriculture development based on fossil fuels, among other unsustainable mechanisms (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2010; Clapp & Moseley, 2020). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) et al. (2021), population with chronic malnutrition increased to 811 million people in 2020, while almost a third of the world's population does not have access to adequate food. Similarly, a growing number of nations are experiencing the 'double burden' of malnutrition, where undernutrition coexists with obesity, usually affecting the poorest inhabitants (Popkin et al., 2020; Littlejohn & Finlay, 2021).

While the majority of the global population lives in urban areas, recent evidence highlights the differentiated impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups from the urban poor in terms of health, socioeconomic and environmental consequences (Wilkinson, 2020; Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir, 2020). These groups have also suffered disproportionate adverse effects due to the food emergency, demonstrating the fragility and injustice that sustain the prevailing urban food systems (Ruszczuk et al., 2021). At the same time, humanity faces multiple and interconnected crises, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, which represent a unique opportunity to move towards sustainably produced food and healthy diets for all (Bisoffi et al., 2021) by reconnecting food, nature and communities (Wittman et al., 2010). Furthermore, it is also a turning point to rethink food systems in order to reduce environmental impacts, while being resilient to future shocks such as climate change or fluctuations in food prices (Bisoffi et al., 2021).

Within this scenario, community-based organisations have been crucial in providing local support to the most vulnerable, often filling the gaps that the state and private left during the pandemic (Duque Franco et al., 2020). Since COVID-19, low-income communities around the world have organised themselves via community kitchens to cook and distribute meals for those most vulnerable. Examples of the latter have emerged from African cities such as Freetown (Osuteye et al., 2020) and Cape Town (Hamann et al., 2020) to Latin American cities including Lima (Hartley, 2020), Asunción (Benítez & Díaz, 2020), and Santiago (Geografías Chile et al., 2021), explored in this paper. Despite the different contexts and historical legacies, community kitchens have operated

based on solidarity networks that incorporate strategies such as rescuing and collecting surplus food from markets, savings groups to collectively pay for the transport of food to marginalised neighbourhoods and building community gardens to self-grow and supply locally (Richer, 2000; Hartley, 2020; Gennari & Tornaghi, 2020). This collective response to food planning is one of the dimensions explored in this paper.

On the one hand, food security has been the mainstream discourse in responding to food crises, in most contexts underpinned by an industrialised food model. On the other hand, ‘food justice’ and ‘food sovereignty’ agendas have been embraced by social movements and scholars, aiming to build more equitable and sustainable food systems based on democratic control (Holt-Giménez, 2011). These notions are usually more focused on food production and agroecological practices in the rural world, rather than on food needs of non-farmers and communities in urban centres (Altieri & Nicholls, 2008; Bernstein, 2014). Some studies do focus on the urban, such as the potential of school-based food sovereignty initiatives in urban Bolivia (Moncayo, 2009), the community garden movement in New York City (Schiavoni, 2009), and the community kitchens movement in Peru and Bolivia (Immink, 2001; Schroeder, 2006). Despite these exceptions, more research is needed to incorporate the role of grassroots organisations in the dynamics of urban food systems.

In line with the above and building on Schlosberg’s environmental justice work (2009), then expanded by Allen et al. (2017) with its relationship with urban resilience, this paper analyses the case of *ollas comunes* (community kitchens) through a multidimensional approach. The objective is to study citizen practices that are crucial for delivering food justice to their communities during COVID-19, while at the same time examine the relationship between justice and resilience in urban food systems. As such, based on secondary data and through a case study method (Yin, 2014) situated in Santiago, this paper explores the *ollas comunes* movement as a local, urban and collective platform to develop multiple activities within localised food systems, strengthening community resilience for future shocks, whilst simultaneously, contributing towards food justice.

The paper begins with a literature review that seeks to contextualise the COVID-19 crisis and others, such as climate change, in terms of its impact on urban food systems, and to explore the role of community-led responses towards transformative resilience to build food justice. Likewise, debating food security, food justice, and food sovereignty concepts, the paper also reflects on resilience research, linking it to justice literature to set the basis on how community-led strategies can build more equitable, just and sustainable urban food systems, examining the interrelations between environmental justice and resilience in cities of the Global South.

The third chapter contextualises the case of *ollas comunes* in Santiago, a city significantly shaped by neoliberalism, focusing on how different actors from municipalities to community-based organisations reacted to the consequent food emergency in light of a three-part definition of resilience: the ability to withstand the shock; the ability to recover from the impact; and the ability to bounce back better that reduce future risks (Satterthwaite, 2013). In the fourth chapter, the case study is examined through the lens of environmental justice. Thus, the *ollas comunes* movement is analysed through the dimensions of environmental justice, namely: distributional justice, parity of participation, and recognition, demonstrating their potential and limits for enhancing resilient and just food systems. The final section concludes based on the findings.

Community-based organisations have been crucial in providing local support to the most vulnerable, often filling the gaps that the state and private left during the pandemic.

The pandemic has also exposed the vulnerability of already fragile food systems in urban centres, presenting severe disruptions in food supply chains due to mobility restrictions and markets closures.

02. Literature review and analytical framework

The COVID-19 crisis and community-led responses to food emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted inhabitants' daily routines, affecting wellbeing and livelihoods across the globe and pressing new challenges to encourage decision-makers to take action in several social and economic aspects for a sustainable recovery (Stiglitz, 2021). The pandemic has also exposed the vulnerability of already fragile food systems in urban centres, presenting severe disruptions in food supply chains due to mobility restrictions and markets closures (Singh et al., 2021; Clapp & Moseley, 2020) and, hence, have had severe implications for securing global food production and supply chain logistics in this short period (Blay-Balmer et al., 2020). For instance, Rusczyk et al. (2021) show how the loss of incomes and limited access to livelihoods by the most vulnerable have impacted food security in two cities from Bangladesh, particularly in terms of the decrease in quantity and quality of food consumed in already precarious food and nutrition situations. In a similar vein, both Resnick (2020) and Ogando & Abizaid (2020) emphasise that lockdown measures have significantly affected informal food workers, reducing their daily income and producing a ripple effect on the nutrition of a large urban population that depends on them for food. As a result, people experiencing severe food insecurity reached almost 12% worldwide (FAO et al., 2021). Therefore, effective responses, adaptation strategies, and collaborative efforts are needed to ensure resilient and sustainable food systems for all (ECLAC, 2020; Clapp & Moseley, 2020).

Within this context, grassroots organisations have played a vital role in providing immediate and medium-term responses in fighting the pandemic crisis in the urban poor (Wilkinson, 2020), sometimes even filling gaps left by state's social policies and emergency aid (Papeleras & Gaddi, 2021). Experiences across the globe are many, including community-led interventions in Latin American (Duque Franco et al., 2020), African (Osuteye et al., 2020), and Asian cities (Papeleras & Gaddi, 2021; Chan et al., 2021).

With regards to food systems, recent literature emphasises that current scenarios of food insecurity due to the pandemic have brought a unique opportunity for real changes toward urban food sovereignty (Loker & Francis, 2020), such as strengthening urban agriculture and community gardens (Lal, 2020), enhancing agroecological urban systems (Tornaghi & Dehaene, 2020), supporting informal food traders (Resnick, 2020), and the potential of community kitchens as urban platforms for community-based food planning (Deh-Tor, 2017). Thus, this paper focuses on exploring the potential and limitations of community kitchens in Santiago, Chile, as an example of community resilience in times of crisis, which will be analysed in chapter 4.

Current scenarios of food insecurity due to the pandemic have brought a unique opportunity for real changes toward urban food sovereignty.

Cities, food and climate change

A vital angle in exploring food systems is their relationship within the city. On the one hand, food systems encompass all “the set of activities and relationships that interact to determine what, how much, by what method and for whom food is produced and distributed” (Whatmore, 1995, p.35), including the participation of multiple and complex networks of actors, from farmers, private corporations, states, retailers, to consumers and food recyclers (Broad, 2016). On the other hand, more than half of the world’s population lives in urban centres and is estimated to increase to 68% by 2050 (UN, 2019). Both food and cities are intertwined with processes of globalisation and urbanisation, which in turn shape people’s decisions on food practices and consumption (Steel, 2008; Shillington, 2013). Thus, feeding the city has been transformed into a major challenge for urban planners confronting issues such as the deterioration of peri-urban agricultural land and, therefore, making urban centres dependent on globalised food supply chains (Sonnino, 2009; Steel, 2008).

With this in mind, critiques of the underlying injustices in urban food systems have been reinvigorated in recent years. For instance, although enough food is produced, hunger persists as the main problem to overcome in cities (TLPH, 2020). Expanding on this, Wiskerke (2015) paradoxically points out that around 40% of the food produced goes to waste at a global level. This mainly occurs in different stages of the food chains, including harvest and post-harvest losses, unsold food and close to the expiration date in markets, and post-consumer waste (Steel, 2008). Furthermore, food prices volatility is frequent during a crisis. As Cohen & Garret (2010) describe, the urban poor are particularly vulnerable to food price changes rather than rural inhabitants that may have their own food production for eventual shocks, resulting in negative effects on poor people’s nutrition. Therefore, it is a problem beyond food production, considering issues of food access and just distribution, affordability of nutritious diets, and reducing food waste, issues that will be discussed in the next section.

This urban world can lead to several benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, cities can offer advantages in terms of connectivity, job opportunities, access to the health system and quality schools, among others, yet recognising that rural areas have an unbeatable connection with nature (Steel, 2020). On the other hand, cities bring environmental problems, including the spread of biological pathogens, chemical pollutants, the scarcity of natural resources that affect livelihoods, and natural and human-made hazards that increase vulnerability (Hardoy et al., 2001). In this debate, climate change is one of the top global challenges that impact both society and nature, generating winners and losers of global change impacts (O'Brien & Leichenko, 2003), which is also a manifestation of the lack of sustainability that the prevailing model entails (Pelling & Manuel-Navarrete, 2011). As such, restoring humanity in a world of climate change will be crucial to rethink how society interacts with, and relate to, the nonhuman realm (Schlosberg, 2012).

Climate change is interconnected to urban food systems in a twofold manner. Firstly, food production is contributing to the global warming effect by emitting up to 30% of the greenhouse gases (Vermeulen et al., 2012), whilst simultaneously being influenced by these climate conditions in terms of where food will be grown (or not), distributed (or not) and consumed (or at risk of malnutrition) (Garnett, 2008). Secondly, urban agriculture is gaining greater attention by both academics and policymakers as an important pathway through adaptation and mitigation tactics (Wiskerke, 2015). However, efforts must be driven beyond urban agriculture, for instance, by public food provisioning and enhancing relationships between the city and region food systems (Sonnino, 2009). Therefore, this paper recognises a global context of multiple and interconnected crises, where urban food systems can play a vital role in becoming more sustainable in their practices while, at the same time, being more resilient to climate-change risks.

This paper recognises a global context of multiple and interconnected crises, where urban food systems can play a vital role in becoming more sustainable in their practices while, at the same time, being more resilient to climate-change risks.

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Debating food security, food justice and food sovereignty concepts

Considering Holt-Giménez' (2011) reflections on the relevance of food discourses around injustices that have caused hunger, malnutrition, and environmental degradation in recent decades, key concepts related to the corporate food regime and the social food movements will be framed and discussed in this section.

Globally, achieving 'food security' and 'the right to food' have been the important discourses of the 21st century in which governments, policymakers, and multi-stakeholder bodies, have fostered to eradicate hunger and malnutrition issues driven by unprecedented productivity in food production (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005). Broadly, food security considers that "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996). While the right to adequate food is "the right of everyone to have physical and economic access at all times to food in adequate quantity and quality or to means of its procurement" (CESCR, 1999). Although food security is in line with the right to food principle, the latter adds, for instance, important considerations of human dignity and citizen empowerment that the former does not address (Mechlem, 2004).

Yet, under the food regime perspective, numerous academics highlight critical factors that have sustained how food is produced, distributed and marketed as a result of corporate and neoliberal structures that dominate global food systems (e.g., McMichael, 2009; Friedmann, 2009; Burch & Lawrence, 2009; Davies et al., 2019). This can be illustrated in food injustices and environmental degradation driven by current profit-driven interests throughout food systems (Schanbacher, 2010; Biel, 2016). For instance, the lack of access to affordable healthy food due to situations of poverty can generate a 'double burden' of malnutrition (Heynen et al., 2012). According to FAO (2015), almost 500 million people presented obesity in 2015 while, at the same time, around 800 million people were undernourished. In addition, global population growth means that food production should expand its capacity by 60% to meet the estimated demand for food by 2050 (FAO, 2015). This may lead some wealthier countries to introduce food security strategies such as acquiring land in low-income countries to grow industrialised food for themselves but at the cost of smallholder farmers. Similarly, uncontrolled urban expansion could mean the loss of appropriate land for crops used for self-consumption in poor urban areas (Cabannes, 2021).

Within this context, some scholars argue that food security agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals with the case for SDG 2 'zero hunger', might be not enough to face the ongoing severe food insecurity (Udmale et al., 2020; Clapp & Moseley, 2020) if the prevailing economic growth is not decoupled of the system (Naidoo & Fisher, 2020). In this vein, IATP (2012) affirms that international aid for hunger relief can perpetuate food

insecurity and health disparities because it is underpinned by the corporate food industry. For instance, it could be argued that current food security approaches have shaped vulnerabilities to food systems in the catastrophic food crisis during COVID-19 (Clapp & Moseley, 2020). Therefore, the food security model does not necessarily confront the causes and effects of malnutrition coupled with the inequities in food systems that the neoliberal system entails (Goulet, 2009; Biel, 2016).

In line with this critical standpoint, alternative ideas of food systems, such as ‘food justice’ and ‘food sovereignty’, emerged in the food research arena and activism. Although these perspectives are sometimes used interchangeably, they have different characteristics and advocate particular forms of governance and control over food (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). While food justice discourse is more used in the North American food movements, food sovereignty is generally linked to a more radical path from the Global South (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). In addition, some differences between these concepts may occur concerning their objectives and strategies to promote resilient and sustainable food systems in contexts of food crisis (Holt-Giménez, 2011; Bornemann & Weiland, 2019), as shown in table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1

Corporate food regime versus food movements. Adapted from Holt-Giménez (2011).

	Corporate Food Regime		Food Movements	
Politics	Neoliberal	Reformist	Progressive	Radical
Discourse	Corporate Food Regime	Food security	Food justice	Food sovereignty
Orientation	Corporate	Development	Empowerment	Entitlement
Approach to the food crisis	Increased industrial production; unregulated corporate monopolies, land grabs, expansion of GMOs, public-private partnerships, liberal markets, international sourced aid	Same as neoliberal but with increased medium farmer production and some locally sourced food aid, more agricultural aid but tied to GMOs and ‘bio-fortified/ climate resistant’ crops	Right to food, better safety nets, sustainably produced, locally sourced food, agroecologically based agricultural development	Human right to food sovereignty, locally sourced, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, democratically controlled focus on UN/FAO negotiations

Food (in)justice, which is central to this paper, has been defined in numerous ways. Some have characterised it as “the maldistribution of food, poor access to a good diet, inequities in the labour process and unfair returns for key suppliers along the food chain” (Lang & Heasman, 2004). Others, like IATP (2012), have defined the term as “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”. In essence it is a critique of the industrialised food model that implies negative and unequal effects both in society and the environment (Purifoy, 2014). For instance, inhabitants from low-income groups cannot easily afford healthy food while they are struggling with other inequities and everyday difficulties such as the rising cost of housing, land loss, health disparities and structural sexism, classism and racism (Alkon et al., 2013; IATP, 2012). Thus, the food justice movement offers a calling for action that emphasises the relevance of strengthened communities by building resilience and self-determination of their own food system (Gottlieb & Joshi 2010). Likewise, it provides a concept that can be analysed from the environmental justice lens, a matter that will be addressed in section 2.5.

Food sovereignty is broadly conceived as “the right of inhabitants to control their own food systems, including markets, ecological resources, food cultures, and production modes”.

On the other hand, the concept of food sovereignty has gained increasing popularity in the academic debate to frame agri-food systems issues (e.g., Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005; Patel, 2009), going beyond food security in terms of questioning where does food come from and how is it produced (Rosset, 2003), and focusing on reaching a higher degree of citizen autonomy across food systems (Pimbert, 2009). Food sovereignty is broadly conceived as “the right of inhabitants to control their own food systems, including markets, ecological resources, food cultures, and production modes” (Wittman, 2011, p.1). This concept was first coined by *La Via Campesina*, an international peasant movement that installed food sovereignty as a transformative framework to challenge the predominant neoliberal perspective around food and agriculture (Martinez-Torres & Rosset, 2010). For instance, food sovereignty complements pathways towards new conservation models between land use and biodiversity (Mattison & Norris, 2005). Yet, Edelman et al. (2014) reflect on a set of questions around food sovereignty related to various issues, such as its connection to justice movements, its integration with agroecology, and the role of the private sector and governments in its implementation. Despite these challenges, a number of voices propose filling this gap by converging urban and rural struggles into an overarching urban agroecological strategy that offers the ground to unite both standpoints (Tornaghi, 2017).

Considering this is an evolving debate, this paper supports the claim from Holt-Giménez (2011) and other scholars (Agyeman & McEntee, 2014; Heynen et al., 2012) about drawing connections between food justice and food sovereignty in the context of urban food struggles. This can potentially lead to reinforcing the idea of the right to food by fostering democratic participation in the policy food agenda (Goulet, 2009), promote greater social resilience that can cope with complex future scenarios (Edelman et al., 2014), and overcome situations of poverty and hunger towards sustainable livelihoods (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005). Still, it requires a deeper understanding of the underlying causes of injustices within the food systems that make people vulnerable to these and other situations related to environmental change (Agyeman & McEntee, 2014; Ingram, 2011), issues that will be analysed through environmental lens later.

Resilience as a vital ingredient for enhancing urban food systems

In this section, resilience thinking will help uncover the risk of food insecurity that urban areas entail, particularly those from the Global South, facing global environmental change scenarios. It will also provide an understanding of resilient food systems both to respond and recover from disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the proactive capacity to adapt to future shocks.

Resilience is a concept that is long used in a variety of disciplines, and its definition can differ depending on the field in which it has been developed (Brand & Jax, 2007). The term was first introduced by Holling (1973) connected to ecological systems to withstand or absorb change. In a similar vein, it has also been defined as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks” (Walker et al., 2004, p.2). However, in this paper, the idea of resilience will be used in the context of global environmental change in terms of the capacity of a system to absorb shocks, to recover from them, and the ability to bounce back while reducing risks from future threats (Satterthwaite, 2013). This ‘bouncing back better’ notion has gained attention in the arena of risk reduction research, focusing on how systems can recover and return to better states as a consequence of natural or human-made threats through adaptive processes (Johnson & Blackburn, 2014; Manyena, 2006). However, resilience thinking has been increasingly criticised for its apolitical orientation (Griffin et al., 2017), questioning its capacity to deliver socioenvironmental justice often led by top-down approaches (Kaika, 2017), and therefore undermining the participation of communities in resilient-building processes (Manyena, 2006). Thus, this paper emphasises transformative resilience as a concept that integrates the resilience lens beyond the adaptation and mitigation to shocks by developing a socio-political dimension of resilience to address structural conditions and power relations of systems (Pelling & Manuel-Navarrete, 2011).

Considering cities as complex socioecological systems, urban resilience has gained relevance in the urban planning arena. While it can be defined as “the degree to which cities are able to tolerate alteration before reorganising around a new set of structures and processes” (Alberti et al., 2003, p. 1170), a city can require at least two pathways to be resilient. The first is related to its ability to manage disaster risk reduction, including activities that reduce exposure to threats, such as mitigation infrastructure, risk education and planned emergency responses (Johnson & Blackburn, 2014). The second is the product of the resilience accumulated throughout socioeconomic development and basic infrastructure that allows citizens to cope and recover from shocks (Satterthwaite, 2013). Overall, it can be said that while cities located in wealthier countries demonstrate better performances to a variety of risks, cities in poorer countries present low levels of accumulated resilience depicted in social inequalities and poor basic infrastructure that implies a limited capacity to cope, recover and adapt to future threats (Johnson &

Blackburn, 2014). This situation can be related to political underpinnings in cities, where a long-term view by political actors is crucial to reduce risk factors (Johnson & Blackburn, 2014), as well as the role that local communities can play to push the structural changes in both national and local governments to enhance resilience (Satterthwaite, 2013; Collier et al., 2013).

This paper emphasises transformative resilience as a concept that integrates the resilience lens beyond the adaptation and mitigation to shocks by developing a socio-political dimension of resilience to address structural conditions and power relations of systems.

In order to bring resilience into food systems, it is important to frame how the growing population living in urban areas and the uncontrolled cities' physical expansion have produced serious concerns in food systems, including problems of soil erosion, loss of agricultural land, and spatial segregation for the most vulnerable that often live in disadvantaged places within the city (Hardoy et al., 2001). This can also lead to reduced interactions between urban and rural areas, often causing more demand from global food chains which are usually based on intensification in agriculture, thus worsening environmental problems (Sonnino, 2009). Responding to this scenario, modern visions suggest the idea of developing more localised food systems within urban agriculture practices and local food movements (Sonnino, 2016). Likewise, there is growing consensus across actors, including the Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Food Security (RUAF) and FAO, that nowadays city-region food system provides a comprehensive framework for achieving sustainable and resilient food systems by enhancing urban-rural interlinkages (Blay-Palmer et al., 2018). This means that improved city-region systems can help to achieve better economic, social and environmental conditions while limiting food insecurity factors, including volatility in food prices and disruptions in food supply chains due to disasters, climate change, or other global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Blay-Palmer et al., 2020). Yet, some scholars point out that strengthening localised food systems should not be seen as a unique strategy to combat food insecurity, but rather as part of tactics to fight deeper social inequalities of the marginalised population in urban centres (Sonnino, 2016).

Therefore, holistic and multi-scale actions and approaches are needed considering complex and uncertain problems of food insecurity under global environmental change (Bullock et al., 2017). In a way, the pandemic has proven to be a turning point to reflect on what approaches are enhancing resilience in cities, particularly through the capacity of broader citizen initiatives, including urban agriculture and community kitchens that are coping with threats in food provisioning. However, it is important to examine to what extent these grassroots responses by the urban poor are recognised and included in the political decision-making. Otherwise, distributional injustices will likely continue undermining the transition to urban resilience.

Framing environmental justice in relation to resilience and food systems

What does environmental justice mean to achieve resilient food systems amidst multiple and interconnected crises? To answer this question, it is necessary to frame what is understood by justice and connect it with environmental justice and food justice. Then, try to reach an understanding of food justice that allows an integrated discussion of resilient food systems.

In brief, justice is a term that has been conceptualised by different schools of thought, some of which focus on its distributional dimension (e.g., Rawls, 1999; Miller, 2001), while others move beyond it. For instance, Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2006) and Max-Neef (1991), based on a capability approach, provided a broader understanding of justice, including people's wellbeing and opportunities to develop maximum human potential. However, over the last decades, the terms 'justice' and 'environmental' combined have gained force as an integrated, comprehensive and political conceptualisation in social and ecological activism worldwide (e.g., Walker, 2012; Mohai et al., 2009).

Environmental justice has been defined by a plethora of scholars who have highlighted the multidimensional and evolving nature of the term (e.g., Holifield, 2001; Schlosberg, 2009; Sze & London, 2008). Similarly, environmental justice as a normative approach can be a valuable tool to examine various vital systems

For the purpose of this paper, the approach developed by Schlosberg (2009) will be the compass for navigating the analysis, providing a comprehensive and inclusive framework that articulates three intersecting principles of environmental justice: distribution, participation, and recognition.

such as food, water and sanitation, energy, housing tenure, among others (Walker, 2012). Additionally, environmental justice can interlink to other theory streams, looking at debates, tensions and contradictions between important concepts, including, for instance, how sustainable development interacts with environmental justice (Atapattu et al., 2021), to what extent resilience and environmental justice are intertwined (Griffin et al., 2017), discussions on climate change (Schlosberg, 2012; Schlosberg, 2013), and debates on its relation to food systems (Heynen et al., 2012; Gottlieb & Fisher, 1996).

For the purpose of this paper, the approach developed by Schlosberg (2009) will be the compass for navigating the analysis of the case study in chapter 4, providing a comprehensive and inclusive framework that articulates three intersecting principles of environmental justice: distribution, participation, and recognition. According to Schlosberg (2009), distributive justice implies fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among communities; participatory justice focuses on parity of political participation in decision-making regardless of citizens' gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion or ability; and political recognition involves a legitimate space of the marginalised and voiceless groups. This view goes beyond the maldistribution of a variety

of environmental 'goods' and 'bads', such as inequities in access to fresh and healthy food, but also incorporates a pluralistic conception in which the non-human world can create conditions towards social justice (Schlosberg, 2013).

Drawing on the above, environmental justice can connect to the food justice agenda in several ways. Firstly, food justice calls for developing sustainable and local agriculture that can face environmental injustices, including problems of land, water and contamination (Gottlieb, 2009). Secondly, food justice encourages the consumption of fresh, local, and healthy food, which connects to environmental justice in terms of addressing health disparities and the lack of healthy food choice that triggers diet-related illnesses (Purifoy, 2014). Thirdly, both food justice and environmental justice advocate issues of the built environment, concerning problems such as 'food deserts' in where supermarkets and food stores often have little economic incentives to settle in neighbourhoods where stigmas of poverty or racism prevail (Alkon et al., 2013; Holt-Giménez, 2012), and thus, affecting marginalised groups to confront barriers within urban areas to buy and consume local, fresh, and healthy food (Alkon, 2017; Holt-Giménez, 2012).

Likewise, it is also relevant to highlight the role of recognition within the food systems. Food is a central element that constitutes human identity (Shillington, 2013). Yet, globalised food systems can contribute to the homogenisation of food diet, and hence, the destruction of local food cultures (Shiva, 2016). This social, cultural, and political misrecognition for diverse food identities, including how communities produce, distribute, and eat their own food in their own culturally appropriate ways, can lead to increased insecurity of access to food locally (Shiva, 2016; Tornaghi, 2017; Shillington, 2013). For instance, traditional practices in farming and local seed banks can be a threat to corporate interests linked to industrialised food systems (Shiva, 2016; Schlosberg, 2013). As a result, inhabitants tend to depend more on the global food supply than on local food production, thus losing spiritual and social connection with the inherent characteristics of food in the stages of production, harvesting and tasting (Feenstra, 2002).

Finally, participation can be framed in a long debate over the last decades (e.g., Williams, 2004; Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Lombard, 2013; Maiello et al., 2013; Connelly, 2010), frequently in a tension between opposite positions, whether as an exercise to legitimise political power by subjugation or, alternatively, as a route to transformative socioenvironmental changes. From a food systems perspective, participation implies the extent to which urban citizens are central in the decision-making process about what food is produced, where it is bought, and how it is consumed (Shillington, 2013). Here, Feenstra (2002) reflects on the importance to carve political space in policymaking, including from schools to government spheres towards more full and authentic community participation within a variety of food systems projects. However, the reality is that multinational corporations often control food systems dominated by a profit-driven approach, undermining the room for people to have a voice and control over their own food (Shiva, 2016). For instance, the technology introduced to genetically modify crops to make them more resistant to diseases has usually not been discussed with small farmers and local communities (Schlosberg, 2009), leaving them aside from the ethical and cultural concerns around this intervention (Praton & Price, 2021). Therefore, meaningful and equal participation in the decision-making processes is needed to address distributional injustices, as well as political and cultural recognition of marginalised voices to build transformative change in food systems.

Having looked at the above, it is important to bring resilience to the environmental and food justice arena. For instance, framing a food justice agenda emphasising only maldistribution problems tends to be reductionist and can depict a restricted understanding of urban resilience and complex food systems. For that, this paper sees value in the work of Griffin et al. (2017), which highlights justice as a precondition to ensure resilience, revealing a subservient relationship between both concepts. In other words, although

Although building community resilience is a strong pathway to elaborate sustainable food systems for future shocks, the central strategy to combat the systemic risks and structural vulnerabilities is through addressing unequal distributional injustices in food systems, hand in hand with the lack of recognition and limited participation.

building community resilience is a strong pathway to elaborate sustainable food systems for future shocks, the central strategy to combat the systemic risks and structural vulnerabilities is through addressing unequal distributional injustices in food systems, hand in hand with the lack of recognition and limited participation. As summarised in table 2.2, these three dimensions together seem to be necessary for ensuring more equitable, just and resilient food systems. Ultimately, the paper interrogates the relation, contradictions and implications between environmental justice and resilience in practice, focusing on community-driven initiatives in Santiago that collaboratively cooked and distributed food to those most needed during COVID-19.

TABLE 2.2

Dimensions of environmental justice for food justice. Authors' own.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FRAMEWORK		
Approach to food justice	<p>Distribution</p> <p>Problems of land, water and contamination.</p> <p>Lack of healthy nutrition connected to health disparities.</p> <p>'Food deserts'</p>	<p>Recognition</p> <p>Misrecognition to diverse food cultures and local communities' knowledge.</p> <p>Lack of recognition in local and family farmers' practices.</p>
		<p>Participation</p> <p>Lack of equal participation of local communities in the decision-making about food systems.</p> <p>Limited political space for local communities in the development of food policies.</p>

Although poverty has fallen steadily in the last three decades, today, 10% of the wealthiest population is capturing about 60% of the average national income, representing the highest wealth inequality in Latin America.

03. Contextualising the *ollas comunes* movement in Santiago

Neoliberal Santiago and social response

Nowadays, 88% of the Chilean population lives in urban areas (The World Bank, 2021). Santiago (Fig. 3.1), its capital city and home to more than 6.5 million people (INE, 2017), has been studied as a case of neoliberal city concerning many aspects of urban life and social development, such as where people live, where people eat, and how people use transport to move throughout the city (Rodríguez et al., 2012; Levi, 2017). This situation is underpinned by the neoliberal experiment that took place in Chile (Valdés, 1995) that basically prioritises economic development through deregulated markets, private property, and entrepreneurial freedom, among other principles (Vergara-Perucich, 2017). Although poverty has fallen steadily in the last three decades, today, 10% of the wealthiest population is capturing about 60% of the average national income, representing the highest wealth inequality in Latin America (De Rosa et al., 2020). For instance, given its segregated character, the city has different options for goods and services according to inhabitants' socioeconomic status, exacerbating social injustices within the city (Garreton, 2017). Thus, the wealthiest families live, study, and eat in certain zones of the city that frequently have a high-quality supply. In contrast, the middle class and particularly the lower-income sectors generally live on the periphery, where housing, education, and food are often of lower quality than wealthier neighbourhoods (Vergara-Perucich, 2017).



FIGURE 3.1

Overview of Santiago. Source:
Photo by Alogo Life.

In terms of the socio-political legacies, the economic model implemented by Pinochet's dictatorship in the 1970s led to a commodification of social life, unlocking the deficiency in essential rights of the population, including public education, the pension system, public health, healthy and affordable food, to name a few (Valdés, 1995; Boano, & Vergara-Perucich, 2017). However, since October 2019, Santiago experienced a social revolt pushing for structural political changes that seek a dignified life (Arias-Loyola, 2021; Gonzalez & Morán, 2020; Sehnbruch, 2019). Despite how difficult and complex is to define its causes, several factors clearly converged, such as the deep social inequalities and urban segregation generated by the neoliberal model and the complicity of the political class, added to the numerous cases of corruption over the last two decades (Arias-Loyola, 2021). As one result of this process, 155 democratically elected constitutionalists wrote the first gender parity constitution of the world and with a high proportion of indigenous representation aiming to end Pinochet's legacy (Cociña et al., 2021) by building an opportunity for a new social contract that pursue a more plural, inclusive and socio-environmentally just future. Nevertheless, it was rejected by an overwhelming majority in September 2022 (Bartlett, 2022).

'A parar la olla': overview of the ollas comunes movement

'A parar la olla' is a Chilean expression that generally refers to having enough resources to bring food home and survive. Hence, in times of crisis, it may not even be enough to *parar la olla*. According to the last report from FAO et al. (2021), the prevalence of severe food insecurity in Chile increased from 2.9% to 4.3% of the total population between 2014 and 2020, which means that 300,000 additional people faced severe food insecurity in the wake of the pandemic. Despite some state efforts to respond to the food emergency, these were isolated aids and were often late for the magnitude of the disaster that the most vulnerable population faced. For example, under the programme "*Alimentos para Chile*", food boxes were delivered (solely on two occasions) to the most affected inhabitants by the pandemic. Yet, most of the items were not enough to cover the minimum nutritional needs of the families (INTA, 2020). Likewise, while many inhabitants lost their jobs and main sources of income due to lockdown restrictions, state interventions focused on facilitating mechanisms where people could withdraw their savings from pensions, instead of providing social protection methods (Jiménez & Mora, 2020). In other words, individual resources outweighed a collective and supportive approach to address the pandemic crisis. Within this context, *ollas comunes* embody a cooperative initiative where citizens create the means to survive, including strategies such as collecting food from *ferias libres* (i.e. open farmers' markets) and donations from neighbours, which made a system of alternatives to *parar la olla*.



FIGURE 3.2
Interactive map of *ollas comunes* in Santiago. Source: Elaborated by Fundación Vértice and made by Google My Maps.

Although *ollas comunes* were present in other historical periods, they are commonly traced to the 1980s due to a deep economic crisis and the weak response of the military dictatorship (Hardy, 1986). Then, in the 1990s, a small group of *ollas comunes* formalised themselves as non-profit organisations, with the aim of being eligible as suppliers of meals at public schools (Richer, 2000). However, first as a result of the social revolt of 2019, and then, due to the pandemic, *ollas comunes* re-emerged as a mechanism of resistance and dignity for the marginalised to combat food insecurity (Apablaza, 2021). An interactive map of solidarity initiatives developed by Vértice Urbano (2021), geolocated around 170 *ollas comunes* in Santiago (Fig. 3.2). Other sources estimated almost 500 *ollas comunes*, delivering around 70,000 meals daily (Apablaza, 2021). The map reveals the diversity of the territorial distribution of community responses within the city, excluding only wealthier areas in which the actions only appear in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of these localities.

***Ollas comunes* embody a cooperative initiative where citizens create the means to survive, including strategies such as collecting food from *ferias libres* (i.e. open farmers' markets) and donations from neighbours, which made a system of alternatives to *parar la olla*.**

Particularly in Chile during COVID-19, the provision of food to the population has mainly depended on the individual social status, where wealthier citizens can easily access nutritious diets, while low and middle-income neighbourhoods, due to quarantines and loss of income, faced difficulties in accessing healthy food and access to complementary state programs for healthy eating.

04. Learning from *ollas comunes* through environmental justice lens

Addressing maldistribution

Since the 1980s, Chile experienced a profound transformation of its economic system towards a neoliberal one (Valdés, 1995), which resulted in problems of urban segregation, deregulated building in lower-income areas, the extension of urbanisation into peri-urban and agricultural areas, disproportionate pollution, and so on (Vergara-Perucich, 2017). Food systems have also been influenced by this logic at least in four aspects. Firstly, concerning problems of land and water, Chile is internationally recognised for being a food exporting nation under its free trade agreements, which adversely have affected both agricultural soils and the quantity and quality of food left to its population (Jensen, 2021). For example, most of the lands historically dedicated to legume crops have been displaced by more profitable crops for export, such as fruit trees, strongly reducing the cultivation area (Rodríguez Osiac, 2020). Similarly, large industries, such as export-led avocado production in the central region, have deteriorated agricultural lands. In contrast, the effects of extended droughts in the area have exacerbated food insecurity and undermined the right to water of local communities (Madariaga et al., 2021).

Secondly, fresh and healthier food tends to be more expensive. Thus, when financial resources are scarce, inhabitants tend to buy less expensive foods that are usually high in calories and low in nutrients (Zacarías et al., 2009). Particularly in Chile during COVID-19, the provision of food to the population has mainly depended on the individual social status, while wealthier citizens can easily access nutritious diets, low and middle-income neighbourhoods, due to lockdowns and loss of income, faced difficulties in accessing healthy food and access to complementary state programs for healthy eating (Rodríguez Osiac, 2020). As a result, most of the population experienced food insecurity in terms of less quantity of food available and low nutritional quality, which works precisely against a healthy diet to avoid further complications from long-term consequences, particularly in those more vulnerable from COVID-19 (Butler & Barrientos, 2020).

Thirdly, school closures - a measure taken to control the spread of the coronavirus in many countries (FAO, 2020) - have had an impact on the nutrition levels of children and adolescents from public schools, where meals were replaced by food boxes delivered to families. While 64% of this age group is obese or overweight, some critics claim that the JUNAEB (National Board of School Aid and Scholarships) state food programme could be part of the problem by prioritising processed foods in the students' daily diets, among other factors (Carvajal, 2021). Furthermore, Cuevas et al. (2021) point out the importance of family culture around the relationship with eating habits. Here, the most socioeconomically vulnerable population, who at the same time attends public schools, has the highest rates of obesity while they are those with the most significant health disparities.

School closures - a measure taken to control the spread of the coronavirus in many countries - have had an impact on the nutrition levels of children and adolescents from public schools, where meals were replaced by food boxes delivered to the families.

Fourthly, marginalised populations have significant barriers to access local, fresh, and healthy food. With the COVID-19 crisis, low-income populations tend to be more dependent on supermarkets rather than *ferias libres*, where the former have more expensive and ultra-processed options than the latter (Carreño & Silva, 2019). However, during the social revolt in 2019, some supermarkets and local food stores in peri-urban areas were burned, meaning that for a period, citizens from the periphery had problems accessing food (Kanter & Boza, 2020). In addition, after lockdown periods almost 20% of *ferias* were closed (Kanter & Boza, 2020), further reducing healthy food supply options for the urban poor. In this aspect, as *ferias libres* offer fresh food to the population directly from family farmers and small-scale producers, which also represent the main income for those families, the state included specific actions to promote localised food access, such as *Tu Feria a la casa* (i.e. your farmer fair to home) and initiatives that seeks to implement micro food banks in *ferias libres* that distribute recovered food to vulnerable populations (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2021).

To what extent can *ollas comunas* address distributional dimension?

In this context, *ollas comunas* confront the maldistribution of healthy, local, and fresh food in Santiago. In practice, *ollas comunas* are spontaneous and self-organised expressions of resistance and solidarity, yet they are based on cultural traditions and community resilience reactivated from historical legacies mentioned above. Although *ollas comunas* do not have a formal structure to operate, they are mainly led by women from popular sectors, representing a clear image of the historical role that Chilean women have played both at a family and territorial scales (Hardy, 1986; Geografas Chile et al., 2021; Vértice Urbano, 2021). The most relevant activities include collecting food from *ferias libres* or local markets, designing balanced menus, collectively cooking in large *ollas* (Fig. 4.1), and delivering meals directly to the home of their most needed neighbourhoods such as homeless, elders, people with disabilities, and the migrant community (Geografas Chile et al., 2021).

With the pandemic, their organisation also includes new requirements to maintain the state's sanitary protocols and protect the community from the virus, such as wearing facemasks throughout the operation process and encouraging people to bring their own cutlery to the *olla* (Cisternas, 2020). In terms of financing, the main source has come from contributions from the community, followed by private donations, and ultimately by grants from the Chilean state (Geografas Chile et al., 2021). Finally, *ollas comunas* have represented a neighbourhood platform that supports other local strategies to cope with the crisis beyond providing food to the poorest. For instance, some *ollas* also operate as food storage or provide items such as clothing and medicines (Vértice Urbano, 2021). In addition, it has been a relevant space for emotional support throughout these difficult times (Geografas Chile et al., 2021).

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In terms of resilience to cope with the effects of the food emergency, it could be said that the institutional responses, such as *Alimentos para Chile* and *Tu Feria a la casa*, have been insufficient and show inadequate coordination given the magnitude of the situation. Moreover, inhabitants who were already vulnerable to other inequalities, such as access to health care and income loss, were impacted the most by the unequal distribution of healthy food. Here, the food security plan for the COVID-19 crisis included the delivery of healthy food to 138 *ollas comunas* at the national level for solely two months (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2021). Although it has merits in contributing to the food emergency, it falls short of the state's obligation to guarantee the right to food for the entire population. Therefore, grassroots food initiatives such as *ollas comunas* were vital local strategies to react and cope with problems of food insecurity.



FIGURE 4.1

Cooking in a *olla común*. Source: Photo by I. Municipalidad de Santiago.

However, *ollas comunes* presented several limitations to operate and opportunities to address. Firstly, the dynamics in *ollas comunes* are informal, where most volunteers do not have insurance or labour protections, therefore, are exposed to both COVID-19 and any other risks involved in the communal work (Cisternas, 2020). Secondly, the lack of regular financing by the state and private sector towards *ollas comunes* shows a deficient governance mechanism to support grassroots initiatives that are crucial to cope with emergencies. This puts into debate the sustainability of *ollas comunes*, who mainly use personal savings or raise donations to survive (Espinoza, 2020). And thirdly, there is little evidence to demonstrate how healthy, fresh, and local are the meals prepared by *ollas comunes*. According to FAO (2020), numerous low-income neighbourhoods have had to replace healthy foods with more economical and less nutritious options, which could have consequences for overweight or obesity in the long term. Taking into account the antecedents presented in this chapter, it could be said that *ollas comunes*, in the COVID-19 context, mostly accessed lower-cost processed foods, including those from formal markets and state food boxes. However, initiatives such as the development of community gardens, which supply some fresh food to *ollas comunes*, can represent pathways to build resilience for future crises.

Addressing misrecognition

Santiago and the rest of the national territory have many food identities as there is a diversity of traditional (Berdegué & Rojas, 2014) and indigenous food cultures (Parraguez-Vergara et al., 2018). Over the last two decades, several Latin American migrant communities have arrived, including, for example, the Peruvian food culture (Imilan, 2015). However, as a result of neoliberal underpinnings and other political factors, globalised food systems tend to be the predominant food diet for many Chileans, undermining the richness of the repertoire of food cultures (Cid Aguayo, 2011). This may be rooted in various situations where the recognition of indigenous peoples and local communities has been weak. To illustrate this, just in 2008, the state of Chile approved the acceptance of the 169 Convention of the International Labour Organisation, which establishes the obligation of the state to consult on relevant issues that directly affect indigenous peoples (Fuentes & Cea, 2017). This political commitment can be framed towards multiculturalism based on recognising indigenous peoples' knowledge (Boccaro & Bolados, 2010). However, more significant efforts are needed to move from the discourse of recognition policies towards an exercise of multiculturalism based on rights and sovereignty (Fuentes & Cea, 2017).

Food identities and territories are dimensions that any city can interconnect to political structures in times of a globalised food system (Watson & Cadwell, 2005). For instance, despite state efforts on promoting a food labelling law that incentivises changes in consumption patterns (Schubert & Ávalos, 2020), Chile is still in the position of the highest consumption of ultra-processed foods in Latin America (Jensen, 2021), usually sourced from highly industrialised food systems. In fact, those groups of inhabitants most exposed and vulnerable to the adverse health consequences of the pandemic, such as the elderly and underrepresented minorities, are the same groups that have more problems with malnutrition based on diets rich in saturated fats, sugars and refined carbohydrates (Butler & Barrientos, 2020). This scenario suggests that this type of policy does not solve the underlying problem of malnutrition, showing that the marginalised population do not have adequate mechanisms to replace ultra-processed foods (Schubert & Ávalos, 2020). Similarly, given its characteristics as a neoliberal city described above, Santiago has been fertile terrain for promoting industrialised food systems, while less land is available to develop urban agriculture due to the unregulated growth of the real estate market (Boano, & Vergara-Perucich, 2017). Additionally, Santiago has also encouraged a consumption culture with regards to food markets, where the installation of large shopping malls in places of high population density have been transformed into genuine popular spaces for low-income populations, where the culture of consumption predominates in inhabitants' daily life (De Simone, 2017).

On the other hand, Chile has a historical legacy related to organic agriculture sustained by indigenous and *campesino* knowledge (Cid Aguayo, 2011). For instance, Fuentes & Marchant (2016) highlight a case in the Andean Araucanía region where agroecological practices, based on local and traditional knowledge (e.g., seed recovery, natural fertiliser preparation, natural pest treatment, and so on), contribute to a better performance of communities towards sustainability than a conventional approach. However, it is acknowledged that there is a lack of recognition in family-based traditional agriculture, coupled with limitations around the dominant agri-export regime (Cid Aguayo & Latta, 2015; Gaitán-Cremaschi et al., 2020). Here, the state has focused on transforming local agricultural production towards international commercialisation, including investment in monocultures and overuse of agrochemicals (Cid Aguayo, 2011). Therefore, several local farming actors have seen their security and sovereignty affected by economic interests (Parraguez-Vergara et al., 2018).

Likewise, the implementation of agribusiness, within the framework of international trade agreements, has affected the situation of peasants and indigenous peoples in preserving their food identities, and in some cases, has displaced them to less productive territories (Martinez-Torres & Rosset,

2013). For instance, while the monopoly of seeds and transgenic production is dominated by food corporations, community practices such as *trafkintus* or traditional Mapuche ceremonies exchange of seeds (Cid Aguayo, 2011), or the role of *curadoras de semillas* (i.e. seed curators) that protect and multiply a wide variety of seed in household gardens (Cid & Latta, 2015), are manifested as isolated cases compared to the predominant agro-industrial regime. Therefore, it could be said that Chileans depend more on globalised food systems compared to local ones, having consequences both in the malnutrition of the population based on ultra-processed foods and in the gradual loss of the different identities of local and indigenous foods.

To what extent can *ollas comunes* advance in political recognition?

Ollas comunes are based on local community knowledge. This means that the leaders of marginalised neighbourhoods structure the work of cooking and distributing food built on the multiple identities of each territory, varying recipes and labour structure according to the food available and its cultural relevance (Red Hambre Cero Chile, 2021). Moreover, caring and collaborative work are essential components to organise *ollas comunes*' activities, where each neighbour plays a role according to their skills, knowledge and resources (Red Hambre Cero Chile, 2021). Eventually, this can also build community cohesion and resilience to future threats. Likewise, *ollas comunes* are organisations that promote spaces for marginalised groups within their local territories to participate in a predominantly cooperative and genuine horizontal approach (Geografías Chile et al., 2021). Furthermore, *ollas comunes* are organised mostly by women. According to Vértice Urbano (2021), 68% of these initiatives are women-led, revealing the importance of making visible the roles of women in humanitarian response actions in crisis and emergency contexts. Therefore, it is essential to recognise the crucial role of women in the *ollas* leadership as well as the horizontal character of power dynamics to cope with multiple crises.

It is essential to recognise the crucial role of women in the *ollas* leadership as well as the horizontal character of power dynamics to cope with multiple crises.

Yet, *ollas comunes* have had numerous constraints to obtain political recognition as a local mechanism to cope with the food crisis due to COVID-19. For example, the national government created a 'Food Security Board' to develop a food security plan with social policies to improve access to nutritious food during the pandemic (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2021). On the one hand, this board included the intersectoral contribution of representatives of government institutions and the participation of FAO as well. On the other hand, both civil society and community-based organisations such as *ollas comunes* were excluded from planning the food security strategy. Moreover, *ollas comunes* have struggled with the government regarding their operation due to sanitary restrictions, managing additional instructions, special permits,

and sometimes facing fines for their function (Hiner, 2020). Furthermore, acts of political violence against some *ollas* have triggered policy repression to community leaders affecting their normal functioning (Diario Uchile, 2020). Finally, just as the misrecognition of the role of women in several spheres of society and labour in Chile, something similar happens in *ollas comunes*, where work is done mainly by women volunteers, viewed as a representation of an extension of female care from the household to the community (Hiner, 2020), but also recognising the disparity of this fact compared to the lower burden of men in domestic work and the care of their territories (Vértice Urbano, 2021).

Addressing disparity of participation

In recent times, Chile has seen an increase in social demonstrations against social and environmental injustices, such as the student movements of 2005 and 2011 that put in the political arena themes such as the end of education for-profit and the right to quality education, respectively (Waissbluth, 2013). Indeed, after the implementation of the neoliberal agenda, in the 1990s, new citizen movements can be characterised as urban, local, plural, self-managed and autonomous (from traditional political parties) by fighting against the prevailing power structures and the contradictions of the economic model (Saavedra et al., 2017). In this vein, the environmental justice movement has battled for territories defined as ‘sacrifice zones’ where significant contamination impacts on people and nature, mainly caused by industrial developments (Vásquez et al., 2017). On the other hand, there are still some voices that are underrepresented within local neighbourhoods, for example, immigrant people (Martínez Damia et al., 2020). Tijoux (2016) explains this part of the problem is related to racist behaviour rooted in colonialism, particularly with Latin American immigrant groups such as ‘black’ migrants, as well as indigenous people, due to an extensive conflict for land tenure and environmental struggles.

Regarding food systems, there are food sovereignty movements in Chile that have struggled against the dominant power exercised by corporations of the agri-food business (Cid Aguayo & Latta, 2015). For example, in rural contexts, ANAMURI’s work with *curadoras de semillas* network, who has ‘healed’ the seeds of agro-industrial practices in southern Chile. On the other hand, at the urban scale, community gardens (Martínez, 2016) and *ollas comunes* (Red Hambre Cero Chile, 2021) in Santiago’s neighbourhoods have the potential to fight over the control of food, while at the same time, appropriate public spaces such as patrimonial heritage, squares, or streets. However, the food regime has reshaped the relationship with food systems, leaving family-based agriculture and indigenous people with less control over their own food production and consumption, and thus, relying on the globalised agro-industry to feed themselves (Cid Aguayo & Latta, 2015).

With regards to spaces for political empowerment, although there are multiple conflicts within the city and the periphery, urban social movements tend to demonstrate their discontent via massive manifestations in public spaces such as the streets and squares of Santiago, reappropriating the common areas of the city (Saavedra et al., 2017). Although most of the demonstrations occur in the centre of Santiago, most of the socioenvironmental conflicts are taking place in the periphery, such as the installation of sanitary landfills (Ducci, 2004). Still, there are few formal spaces for communities to express their voices and co-create new food policies in the political sphere. For instance, regarding food policies for students in public schools, they have been dominated by top-down approaches, thus needing to incorporate the academic view and multiple stakeholders’ knowledge in a comprehensive long-term food policy for healthy food programmes (Salinas & Vio, 2011).

To what extent can *ollas comunes* promote parity of participation?

In terms of equitable participation in the decision-making process about food systems, the *ollas comunes* movement represents a key player at the local scale. Throughout the pandemic, community leaders creatively fulfilled the role of obtaining the necessary food to survive in the wake of food insecurity. This implied, for example, that considering the scarcity of financial resources due to unemployment, *ollas comunes* made extra efforts within neighbourhoods to gather the food and the tools to be able to cook and distribute meals to those vulnerable neighbours. This also implied understanding and controlling all aspects throughout food systems, such as where to get unsold food at *ferias libres*, how to transport food to *ollas*, while cooking meals complying with sanitary requirements to prevent the spread of the virus (Geografas Chile et al., 2021; Red Hambre Cero Chile, 2021). Therefore, citizens were central in the decision-making process to operate *ollas comunes* in times of crisis.

Likewise, it can be said that *ollas comunes* interact with various actors in different layers of decision-making, from the central government for the reception of food boxes, managing with public schools or neighbourhood committees to be able to use those common spaces for cooking, coordinating with *ferias libres* to recover unsold food, and raising financing even with private companies and NGOs that support grassroots, among other activities (Geografas Chile et al., 2021). Thus, it can be affirmed that *ollas comunes*, themselves, occupy governance spaces at the territorial level, representing collaborative community strategies that respond efficiently to crises while improving community cohesion and resilience against future risks in the urban poor. In other words, it is the sense of community and mutual care, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, and so on, that pursues a better life in the territory they are living in (Ducci, 2004; Geografas Chile et al., 2021). Even these social ties also allow the development of new community actions of common benefit, for example, the installation of community gardens that supply the same *ollas*, in addition to the educational benefits that these green spaces have locally (Martínez, 2016). Furthermore, social media platforms facilitate communication between *ollas* and the search for donations for the organisation's sustainability (Apablaza, 2021).

However, *ollas comunes* dealt with several restrictions regarding equal participation in the decision-making process of food policies. For example, the state board excluded the crucial role of grassroots initiatives in the food security plan in response to the COVID-19 crisis, although part of the solution was precisely the support of *ollas comunes* by delivering healthy food boxes (Ministerio de Desarrollo Social, 2021). Additionally, the *ollas comunes* movement does not have a formal network that unites them. Yet, it is observed that there is a fluid interaction between *ollas* through social networks. At the same time, *ollas comunes* also represent spaces of incidence in public policy, as in the case of *Red Hambre Cero Chile* (2021), who are fighting for the right to food and cultural pertinence to be included in a new Chilean constitution. In a sense, they are struggling with the aim that the right to food is guaranteed and, hence, *ollas comunes* are no longer necessary in times of crisis. Lastly, without a doubt, *ollas comunes* have a particular gender dimension, in which disparities between men and women are evident both in family care roles and in extending it to the entire community (Hiner, 2020), as well as the uneven reality of the working conditions through volunteering, therefore without legal labour protections.

In a sense, they are struggling with the aim that the right to food is guaranteed and, hence, *ollas comunes* are no longer necessary in times of crisis.

It is necessary not to romanticise the role of *ollas comunes*, taking into account that the main struggle is to put pressure on the state to guarantee the right to healthy and culturally relevant food for all.

05. Conclusion

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that food systems need urgent changes towards sustainable and resilient practices, such as through urban agriculture or agroecological practices, which contribute to the regeneration of soils and their biodiversity. However, this transition is not enough if solely the wealthier population tends to access these healthier foods over lower and middle-income inhabitants. As a result, systematic injustices throughout food systems occur both in distributional aspects, as well as in the participation of communities in political decision-making and in the recognition of diverse food cultures. Behind all these injustices are the corporate and neoliberal structures that undermine the ability of communities to build sustainable food systems.

Likewise, the logic of food security and urban resilience on the part of government institutions and international organisations has not been sufficient to face the current food crisis. For this reason, community-based organisations, such as *ollas comunes*, have had to fill the inefficient response of the institutions. Based on solidarity and collaborative work among neighbours of local urban territories, this autonomy and empowerment is precisely related to the food justice and sovereignty agendas, which emerge as a necessary paradigm shift in the face of the control of food systems by the community itself considering a current context of climate-related food insecurity for marginalised people.

On the one hand, the lessons seem to be connected to historical legacies from inhabitants struggling with hunger and poverty in Santiago, while urban resilience has been built in complicity with weak planning from the state to manage disaster risk reduction. The pandemic demonstrates that the government delivered food boxes under the food security umbrella, yet not enough to solve the food emergency and healthy nutrition in the urban poor. From an environmental justice perspective, although *ollas comunes* enhance distributional dimensions based on solidarity and collaboration that allow controlling some of the dimensions of urban food systems, there is a lack of political recognition and a lack of political spaces in the decision-making process. This situation can undermine urban resilience vis-à-vis future threats.

On the other hand, *ollas comunes* illustrate lessons of resistance and solidarity in times of crisis. At the same time, it represents a political space that enhances the social ties within territories, considering the complex political scenario in the midst of writing a new constitution triggered by a social revolt. Moreover, *ollas comunes* can transform urban planning in local territories, reappropriating public spaces within the city, and developing community gardens that contribute to the local supply and the environmental education of their inhabitants. However, sustaining these citizen-led initiatives seem to be problematic in the long term. Therefore, it is necessary not to romanticise the role of *ollas comunes*, taking into account that the main struggle is to put pressure on the state to guarantee the right to healthy and culturally relevant food for all.

Ultimately, some room for further research can be related to gender issues through a feminist lens, recognising that *ollas comunes* represent spaces of empowerment as well as subjugation. Similarly, more in-depth analysis is needed regarding the interconnections between environmental justice and urban resilience, understanding the role of social movements connected to the underlying causes that create injustices across food systems, such as colonialism, capitalism, and racism, among others.

From an environmental justice perspective, although *ollas comunes* enhance distributional dimensions based on solidarity and collaboration that allow controlling some of the dimensions of urban food systems, there is a lack of political recognition and a lack of political spaces in the decision-making process. This situation can undermine urban resilience vis-à-vis future threats.

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