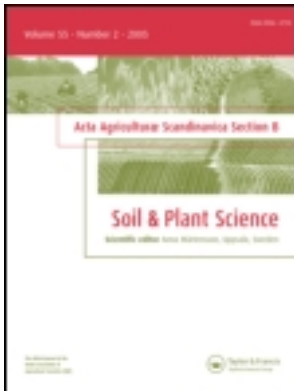


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### **Defining local food: constructing a new taxonomy - three domains of proximity**

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PERSPECTIVE

## Defining local food: constructing a new taxonomy □three domains of proximity

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Despite evolving local food research, there is no consistent definition of “local food.” Various understandings are utilized, which have resulted in a diverse landscape of meaning. The main purpose of this paper is to examine how researchers within the local food systems literature define local food, and how these definitions can be used as a starting point to identify a new taxonomy of local food based on three domains of proximity.

Keywords: local food; local food systems; proximity

## Introduction

“‘When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean □ neither more nor less.’ ‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’ ‘The question is,’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master □ that’s all.’” (Carroll 1865/1966, p. 185)

Locally produced food and locally inspired dishes is a growing food trend in Europe and North America (see e.g. Fonte (2008), who distinguish between the North American and European perspective on local food). The local food trend is not new □ confer the existence of different regional “culinary cultures” in Europe (Askegaard & Madsen 1998). However, the current buzz over local food has captured the attention of consumers, journalists, chefs, politicians, academics, farmers, and food retailers (Mount 2012). But what exactly identifies food as local? Various theoretical understandings of local food are utilized, which have resulted in a diverse landscape of meaning. The usage of the term local food has not been consistent nor, one could argue, particularly clear. Borrowing from Mount

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(2012), local food tends to be perceived by each actor based on their unique priorities, anxieties, capacities, goals, and values. Hence, in Humpty Dumpty fashion local food seems to mean different things to different people in different contexts.

Perceptions of local food vary, for example, with the location of the consumer. To some it refers to food that has been produced in the locality close to where “I” live. To others food is considered local if it is produced in the same country it is consumed. There is also great variability in what constitutes local food for producers and for consumers. Research shows that the most striking difference is

the importance attributed to freshness, taste, and quality. While these nonmonetary values were important factors for consumers, they were not identified by any producers (Selfa & Quazi 2005). Additionally, the parameters food retailers use to define local food differ from those of consumers and producers. However, most definitions used are “based on a general idea of where local food is coming from” (Dunne et al. 2010, p. 50). In their UK-based study, Blake et al. (2010) examined how local food is understood within consumer–retailer relations. They found that farmer advocacy groups argue “for a definition of local food, to differentiate food that is grown, processed, and sold within a relatively

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48 S.N. Eriksen small area and that contributes to the sustainability

of that area. At the same time retailers [. . .] are increasingly drawing on the discourses of the local as part of a marketing strategy aimed at distancing themselves from the negative connotations of globalized and industrialized food practices [. . .] ultimately to capture a larger share of the market” (Blake et al. 2010, p. 410). So, when viewed from the consumer perspective, constructions of local food become less straightforward than when viewed from the farmer’s perspective (Blake et al. 2010). The result is confusion around the meaning of the term local food.

The clash over different understandings of local food is not just a matter of academic concern, it can have practical consequences, such as frustrating further developments in the sector (Pearson et al. 2011), preventing local food system development and responding inefficiently to customer desires (Dunne et al. 2010). Selfa and Quazi (2005) suggest that researchers need to continue to refine their investigations and methodologies in order to uncover the nuances in meaning and purpose in the constructions of local food. Enhanced clarity would minimize risks of misunderstandings between the different actors (Tregear 2011). As such, the purpose of this paper is to examine (1) how researchers within the local food systems literature define local food, and (2) how these definitions can enhance clarity by advancing into a new taxonomy of local food based on three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relations of proximity, and values of proximity. In doing so, the hope is to stimulate conceptual debate, as well as offer a more informed basis for empirical research.

This paper consists of four further sections. The following section outlines the method applied. The second section introduces the local food systems literature that makes use of the concept of local food. The third section defines local food and introduces a new taxonomy based on three domains of proximity. The final

section presents the concluding remarks and suggestions for future research.

## Method

This paper gives a thorough overview of the variety of existing meanings on local food in the literature, and shows how ambiguous the term is. Note that this paper is not intended to constitute a complete bibliography of definitions of local food. The method applied consists of two steps. First, definitions of local food were gathered through a literature review. Second, three domains of proximity were identified through a meta-analysis of the definitions.

The review draws on literature within the local food systems field, as it constitutes an appropriate boundary for the chosen topic and level of analysis. The literature search was led by the research question: How is “local food” defined? On this basis, publications were either included or excluded. The search strategy was inspired by a systemic review and hermeneutic approach to the literature review. The hermeneutic approach “ensures a continuous identification of relevant literature” (Cecez-kecmanovic & Boell 2010, p. 14). Whereas the systemic review, among other things, follows a structured approach, e.g. developing the research question (Cecez-kecmanovic & Boell 2011). The literature review was undertaken using the social science databases, Web of Knowledge and Scopus, to determine available information on local food. The search term “local food” (in article titles) was chosen for identifying relevant articles. Although effort was made to obtain all materials considered relevant to the research question, some publications were excluded simply because of lack of availability. Also, some studies may not have been identified due to the narrow key wording. The search was restricted to publications in English between 2000 and 2012 (June). Hence, there may be relevant non-English literature, which is not included in this review. Nevertheless, the literature review gives a reliable overview. Additional articles were identified through reference reading. As such “the processes of searching and selection are interwoven” (Cecez-kecmanovic & Boell 2010, p. 9). Included articles were those defining the concept, by either explicitly using the word “define” or implicitly explaining the meaning by making use of formulations such as “local food refers to”. Note that the definitions identified in this paper do not distinguish which actors, i.e. producers, consumers, etc., contribute to meaning-making of local food. This ensures a focused review answering the research question. From the search process, 15 articles and reports, in which local food is defined, were obtained. The new taxonomy was identified through a meta-analysis of the definitions. The definitions were outlined in Table 1 and central concepts highlighted. From this, a pattern arose, indicating that local food can be understood in terms of three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relations of proximity, and values of proximity.

## Local food systems

An extensive literature, under the heading of local food systems, has developed since the early 1990s (see e.g. Feenstra (1997) for an overview of the historical context). This includes studies on alternative food networks, i.e. farmers markets, community

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supported agriculture, community gardens (see e.g. Allen et al. 2003; Macias 2008; Tregear 2011), civic agriculture (see e.g. Lyson 2000; DeLind 2002), post-productivism (see e.g. Wilson 2001; Kristensen et al. 2004; Mather et al. 2006), food miles and shortened supply chains (see e.g. Hinrichs 2003; Renting et al. 2003), the “quality turn” (see e.g. Murdoch et al. 2000; Goodman 2003) etc. The local food systems literature is varied and has benefited from contributions from various fields, i.e. sociology, philosophy, rural development, economics, geography, and agriculture sciences. This illustrates the diversity in the understanding of local food. The following briefly introduces some of the main discussions of the local food systems literature.

In recent years, the focus on local food systems has been quite strong. To some scholars, local food symbolizes a paradigm shift from the globalized and industrialized food system toward local or re-localized food systems (see e.g. McMichael 2009; Wilhelmina et al. 2010). Local food systems are generally viewed as a solution to the negative externalities associated with the globalized and industrialized food system, such as deforestation, land use change, biodiversity loss, greenhouse gas emissions, outbreaks of food scares (e.g. Salmonella, E. Coli, Foot and Mouth Disease), loss of cultural identity and traditional knowledge, etc. (see e.g. Schönhart et al. 2008; Blake et al. 2010; Edwards-Jones 2010; Kremer & Deliberty 2011). Correspondingly, consumers increasingly demand “information about the food’s origin and how it is handled and transported” (Bosona & Gebresenbet 2011, p. 293). Such demands can also be viewed as linked to a quest for authenticity (Sims 2009). Additionally, there are arguments for local food systems as a tool to facilitate the rise of new and more territorially based rural development paradigm in Western Europe (van der Ploeg et al. 2000; see also Hinrichs & Charles 2012). This is sometimes termed “the new rurality” (Kay 2008). Other researchers are more cautious about positing a connection between local food and the emergence of a new rurality.

Scholars, such as Winter (2003), question whether the turn to the local will challenge the dominance of the globalized food system. Others argue that it is a mistake to see “alternative” and “conventional” food systems as separate

spheres. As Coley et al. (2009) state: “The food consumer is not confronted simply with a choice between ‘local-good’ and ‘global-bad’” (p. 154). Purchasing the most local produce does not necessarily entail the lowest carbon impact. It is an assumption often made in the literature that local food □ compared to nonlocal food □ releases fewer greenhouse gases (see e.g. Morgan et al. 2006; Edwards-Jones 2010). Born and Purcell (2006) refer

to this as “the local trap.” That is, the assumption that the local is inherently good. This being said they stress that the local scale is not inherently bad either. Regardless of its scale, “the outcomes produced by a food system are contextual: they depend on the actors and agendas that are empowered by the particular social relations in a given food system” (Born & Purcell 2006, p. 1995□6). The local should not be seen as an end in itself but as a means to an end, such as sustainability.

Hinrichs (2000), among others (see e.g. Allen et al. 2003; DuPuis & Goodman 2005), argues that local food has a tendency to focus on “exclusive products and exclusive customers” (p. 301). Local food should be for all □ not only “the few who are wealthy, educated, and live in the correct regions. [. . .] the needs of all consumers (not just white, middle-class consumers) [. . .] must be considered” (Blake et al. 2010, p. 423). Selfa and Qazi (2005) suggest that “too often these ‘alternative’ initiatives have been shown to cater to wealthy consumers” (p. 452). Attention to such issues is needed, as local food has the potential to be more than elite niche markets. The following examines the theoretical understandings of local food and introduces a new taxonomy based on three domains of proximity.

## Defining local food □ constructing a new taxonomy

Despite evolving local food research, there is no consistent definition of “local food” (see e.g. Blake et al. 2010; Martinez et al. 2010; Pearson et al. 2011). The result is a diverse landscape of meaning. It appears that local food to some extent is idiosyncratic and by definition not universal. On some level, this point, e.g. that the understanding of local food varies with the location of the consumer may be part of its appeal. The term local “does not specify whether it refers to the site where the raw food product is grown, the site where it is processed, or the site where it is prepared for home or commercial consumption” (Futamura 2007, p. 220). Local food means different things to different people in different contexts. Hence, the aim here is not to suggest a fixed definition. But, by explicating the different meanings of local food, it may be possible to enrich our ability to understand the complexity of the term and to stimulate conceptual debate. Table 1 sets out some of the many explicit and implicit definitions of local food.

When examining the various definitions presented in Table 1, it becomes clear that certain characteristics identifies food as local. When looking more closely, it

appears that local food can be understood in terms of three domains of proximity:  
geographical

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50 S.N. Eriksen Table 1. Explicit and implicit definitions of local food.

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Source

Blake et al. 2010

Bosona & Gebresenbet 2011 Brown & Geldard 2008

Dunne et al. 2010

Edwards-Jones 2010

Hinrichs 2003

Futamura 2007

Kremer & DeLiberty 2011

Martinez et al. 2010 Morris & Buller 2003

Ostrom 2006

Pearson et al. 2011 Rose et al. 2008

Definition: local food

“Local not only connotes a local supplier, local producer, or local commodity chain but also involves understandings of convenience, health, and status. Local is a relative concept produced by both consumers and producers” (p. 422). “In the present study, from a geographical perspective, local food refers to food produced, retailed and consumed mainly in the specific area” (p. 294).

“By ‘local food’ we mean fresh and processed British food from farmers and local food processors which is sold in or close to the area of production. The essence of ‘localness’ is that it hasn’t travelled far from producer to consumer, and that it is considered by the consumer to be local at the point of consumption” (p. 14). “Local or community food systems are complex networks of relationships between actors including producers, distributors, retailers and consumers grounded in a particular place” (p. 46). “The criteria that food retailers use for defining local food [is] geographic distances” (p. 55).

“Throughout the analysis it is assumed that the definition of local food is spatial, and relates to the distance between the point of production and processing of the food items



and their final consumption. No strict definitions are provided on the scale at which a food system is local or not, but the general assumption is that a 'locality' would include a region in a large country (i.e. a State in the USA or several counties in UK) or a small country (e.g. Wales, Estonia or Slovenia)" (p. 583)

"Demographic and agricultural histories are drawn on to understand recent food system localization practice that has come to emphasize a definition of "local" that coincides with sub-national state boundaries" (p. 33). "In Iowa, [. . .] a definition of "local" as Iowa itself has been particularly salient" (p. 43).

"The idea of the "local" scale in food production requires critical examination. First, the term "local" is relative; it does not specify whether it refers to the site where the raw food product is grown, the site where it is processed, or the site where it is prepared for home or commercial consumption. Second, [. . .] people associate "local" with different geographical scales: the particular name of a community, city or town, county, or state. Some, for example, consider "local" as the space within a state boundary. Others consider "local" as the county of the producers' or consumers' residence, or their home. In short, compared with a city or state where a boundary is politically delineated, "local" is a social construct: unfixed, and usually defined contextually rather than on an explicit scale" (p. 220).

"Efforts to define local food systems are widespread. [. . .] Thus, local food systems are not merely a delineated geography or a flow of consumer goods from production to consumption, they are natural and social networks formed through common knowledge and understanding of particular places, embedded in their localities." (p. 1252).

"In addition to geographic proximity of producer and consumer, however, local food can also be defined in terms of social and supply chain characteristics" (p. 3) "[I]n the British context "local food" is more often defined simply by reference either to the existing socio-administrative area, such as a county, in which it is generally produced or to an unspecified distance factor (where, for example, under 50 miles might constitute "local" whereas 100 miles might not). [. . .] for this study the county of Gloucestershire was taken as the defining territorial focus with participants in the local food sector being identified as those who sold a proportion of their output to local retailers or directly to consumers within the county; though, as we show below, this definition was on occasion contested by respondents" (p. 561).

"Interestingly, while most consumers chose to define "local" in terms of a distance or a geographical scale, a significant subset associated it with the characteristics of the food such as "fresh" or "pesticide free" or simply "better." Another group associated it with the characteristics of the farmer or a relationship with a farmer, using adjectives such as small, independent, trustworthy, or known. Finally, some responses emphasized the socio-economic benefits of local purchasing for communities" (p. 69).

"The most commonly used approach defines local food on the basis of the distance that the food travels from production to consumption" (p. 887). "For this study, a local food was defined as a food produced within 100 miles of an individual's residence. [. . .] A

local food could be defined as a food that was grown, raised, or produced within relatively short distances from the place where the food was purchased by a consumer; however, there is no definition of exactly what distance from the farm to the local market constitutes a food that can be considered 'local'' (p. 271).

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Table I. (Continued ).

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Source

Schoenhart et al. 2008

Selfa & Qazi 2005

Definition: local food

“There is no single definition of LFS [Local Food Systems] in the scientific literature, but in most cases, spatial distances and personal relationships between the various stages of the food supply chain as well as restrictions to a geographical region are the relevant issues. For the purpose of this analysis, we follow a narrow definition, in which all activities of the food supply chain □ from agricultural food production to consumption □ are located within the same geographic region” (p. 244).

“This study highlights that for some food network actors across rural and urban locales, local food systems are defined by social relationships that may or may not be geographically proximate, while for others, local food systems are defined by a politically constructed boundary like a county or a bioregion (e.g., the Columbia Basin). Producers and consumers in the urban areas of our study identified more closely with face-to-face, direct markets that are physically proximate when they conceptualize their local markets or local food system. Yet in places where there are fewer consumers and markets, “local” is not necessarily defined as being physically proximate at all” (p. 462).

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proximity, relational proximity, and values of proximity. See Table 2 for a clarification of the conceptualization.

The notion of proximity offers a way to enhance clarity to the various meanings of local food. Proximity refers to “being close to something measured on a certain dimension” (Knoben & Oerlemans 2006). The proximity concept most

frequently denotes geographical proximity (Knoben & Oerlemans 2006). However, the understanding of local food cannot be based on geographical proximity alone (Futamura 2007; Dunne et al. 2010). Therefore, other forms of proximity are used to cover these different circumstances. According to Oxford Dictionaries, proximity can be defined as “nearness in space, time, or relationship”. This clearly relates to geographical and relational proximity. Additionally, it seems relevant to include the notion of values of proximity in the understanding of local food, as various nonmonetary values influence the meanings different actors attribute to local food. As DeLind (2006) notes, “[a]ffective or qualitative aspects of local food (e.g., trust, pride, mutuality, respect) must also be acknowledged” (p. 126). In her US-based study, Ostrom (2006) found that definitions of local

Table 2. Local food as proximity.

food despite primarily being spatial- or distance- related, frequently were framed in relational or qualitative terms. As such, local food is here argued to draw on three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relational proximity, and/or values of proximity.

Each proximity domain comprehends local food within particular conceptual frameworks and with some different emphasis. This said local food can be understood by drawing on relevant elements from any of the three domains. However, it is typically defined by making reference to one or two of the domains. Consistent with the definitions laid out in Table 1 above, local food is primarily defined as geographical proximity □ frequently in combination with relational proximity and less often in combination with values of proximity. The taxonomy proposed does not suggest that one domain takes precedence over the others. In some ways, the domains compete, as they can substitute each other, but perhaps in more important ways they complement each other. In other words, each domain adds significant elements to the understanding of local food. Overall, the understanding of local food, based on these three domains of proximity, seems to be

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Domains of proximity

Geographical proximity

Relational proximity Values of proximity

The domains of proximity refers to:

The explicit spatial/geographical locality, (e.g. area, community, place or geographical boundary) distance and/or radius (e.g. food miles), within which food is produced,

retailed, consumed and/or distributed. The direct relations between local actors (e.g. such as producers, distributors, retailers and consumers) reconnected through alternative production and distribution practices such as farmers markets, farm shops, cooperatives, box schemes, food networks, etc.

The different values (e.g. place of origin, traceability, authentic, freshness, quality, etc.) that different actors attribute to local food.

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central defining characteristics of local food. The following examines local food in terms of the three domains of proximity further.

#### Local food as geographical proximity

Proximity is here understood in terms of the specific physical (territorial) locality, distance and/or radius within which food is produced (originates), retailed, consumed, and/or distributed. Despite the lack of a single definition of local food, the idea of a link between food and place seems strong. It is claimed that food and place “are intertwined in robust ways in the geographic imagination” (Feagan 2007, p. 23), however, “distances recognizable as “local” are neither precise nor constant, but contextual” (Hinrichs & Allen 2008, p. 342). Along these lines, Born and Purcell (2006) argue that any given scale, i.e. the local, the regional, the national, or the global, is socially produced. The particular qualities of a given scale are never fixed and can be described in many ways. Bosona and Gebresenbet (2011) and Pearson et al. (2011), for example, state that local food includes food produced, retailed, and consumed within a specific area. Others indicate that local means food grown within a region. Regional borders “may range from the municipal to the country level or even beyond, and can vary for different types of products” (Schoenhart et al. 2008, p. 244). Morris and Buller (2003) differentiates between local in terms of regions within which products are produced and sold, or in terms of “specialty” or “locality” foods which are intended as value-added products for export to other countries or regions. The latter places more emphasis on food products that are distinguished as coming from a defined geographical area but may not necessarily be purchased and consumed in that place. This can be referred to as glocalism or global localization (Robertson 1995). Glocal food refers to local-based food characteristic to a specific locality that has been improved for acceptance outside the place of origin (Wilhelmina et al. 2010). The specialty of locality ties food to place via the French term “terroir” and adds another element to the geographical proximity domain. Terroir refers “to an area or terrain, usually

rather small, whose soil and microclimate impact distinctive qualities to food products” (Barham 2003, p. 131).

In terms of defining geographical proximity as distance or radius options are quite varied. However, there is a tendency to equate local food with food miles. That is, the distance that food travels from farm to market (see e.g. Blake et al. 2010; Pearson et al. 2011). For the purpose of their study, Rose et al. (2008) define local food as food grown, raised, or

processed within 100 miles of an individual’s residence (p. 273). Smith and MacKinnon (2007) claim that “a 100-mile radius is large enough to reach beyond a big city and small enough to feel truly local”. The study of Blake et al. (2010) showed that the “distinction of thirty miles is not particularly meaningful and no different from fifty or one hundred miles; instead local was only a recognizable concept when referring to a much smaller geographical area” (p. 422). In their case, it was just one mile. Blake et al. (2010) conclude that local food “defined in terms of miles is arbitrary and for some inadequate, as to achieve a healthy varied diet might be impossible given the climatic and physical characteristics of an area” (p. 423). According to Coley et al. (2009), food miles have been linked to carbon emissions and the climate change debate. To some extent, this has “served to radically shift the food miles argument away from sustainable agriculture production systems per se to food distribution and retailing and, in particular, the use of carbon in transport” (p. 150). A problem with this shift, Edwards-Jones (2010) claims, is that transport is only one part of the food system responsible for emitting greenhouse gasses. Other parts of the food system, i.e. farming methods, are also responsible for emitting greenhouse gasses.

#### Local food as relational proximity

Proximity is here understood in terms of (market) relations between actors. Local food constitutes complex networks of relationships between actors, such as producers, distributors, retailers, and consumers, e.g. locavores<sup>1</sup> (Dunne et al. 2010). Local food is often presented as reconnecting the food system through the direct exchange between producer and consumer (Mount 2012). Local food implies that it has been provided from alternative production routes, direct market venues, or alternative food networks, such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and other means of cooperative distribution and delivery (see e.g. Feagan 2007; Edwards-Jones 2010). Relational proximity between producers and consumers is often presented as “immediate, personal and enacted in shared space” (Hinrichs 2000, p. 295) and as creating “responsibility, communication, and care for each other and the land” (Kloppenburger et al. 2000, p. 184). This “relational” experience is not available to consumers shopping at supermarkets or to farmers selling through conventional commodity markets

(Hinrichs 2000). Besides bringing consumers closer to the origins of their food via direct-to-consumer markets, farmers also engage in direct-to-retail sales with a “variety of venues including restaurants, retail stores,

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and institutions such as hospitals and schools” (Cunningham 2011, p. 1094). The face-to-face links between producers, consumers and others, present a counterpoint to large scale, industrialized systems of food production and distribution (Hinrichs 2000).

### Local food as values of proximity

Proximity is here understood in terms of the different values that different actors attribute to local food. Values of proximity are about the positive associations, symbolic or qualitative meanings of local food. Research has found that consumer constructions of local food are “closely intertwined with positive perceptions about product freshness and quality and idealized images of “local” farmers” (Ostrom 2006, p. 76). The term “values” is here understood as conceptions of the desirable that guide the way social actors (e.g. producers, distributors, retailers, consumers) select and explain their actions (Schwartz 1999, p. 24).<sup>2</sup> Values of proximity are the vocabulary “used to motivate action, and to express and justify the solutions chosen” (Schwartz 1999, p. 26). Values associated with local food “typically include environmental sustainability, social justice, organic production, support of local and regional farmers, as well as eating seasonally” (Duram & Oberholtzer 2010, p. 100). Additional values of proximity could be: “convenience, health, and status” (Blake et al. 2010); “embeddedness, trust, care” (DuPuis & Goodman 2005); “social equity and democracy” (Tregear 2011); “‘pesticide free’ or simply ‘better’” (Ostrom 2006). The literature on local food systems frequently turns to a set of shared values related to sustainability (see e.g. Allen et al. 2003; Blake et al. 2010; Hinrichs 2003; Rose et al. 2008.). So, by making reference to some notion of values, involving anything the conventional food system is not, local food becomes part of the explanation for the rise of an alternative and more sustainable food system. Values of local food emerge as a counterpoint to industrial agriculture.

From this, it becomes clear that values of proximity range across a number (often combined) perspectives including environment, social, ethical, health, and safety. Borrowing from Barham (2002), “there is one unifying characteristic that ties them all together. They all carry explicit messages about a product’s value in registers that are usually considered to be non-market by economists” (p. 350). The nonmonetary value of place itself, the pleasures of eating, the sense of

community, etc. are integral and essential to defining a people in place and, therefore, food in place (DeLind 2006). In this sense, the local tends to be framed as the context

where values can flourish (DuPuis & Goodman 2005).

## Conclusion

Building on existing research within the local food systems literature, this paper has examined how local food is defined, and how these definitions can be used as a starting point to identify a new taxonomy of local food based on three domains of proximity: geographical proximity, relational proximity, and values of proximity. The aim here has not been to suggest a fixed definition. Local is inherently idiosyncratic and by definition not universal. However, explicating the different meanings of local food enriches our ability to understand the complexity of the term. Enhanced clarity could minimize risks of misunderstandings between different actors and help further local food system development and respond efficiently to consumer desires. This said the three domains of proximity have important implications for our attempts to conceptualize local food. Thus, it is not so much about suggesting a fixed, universal definition of local food, as about how local food is socially constructed in a specific context. The new taxonomy can be used as a good starting point to identify a new research agenda on local food.

Taken as a whole, the findings indicate that considerable research on local food is still needed. Researchers need to continue to refine their investigations in order to uncover the meaning nuances in the constructions of local food. More research is needed to test and evaluate the taxonomy presented here. Future research could give more weight to and elaborating on the definitions discerned by distinguishing between the actors (i.e. consumer, producer, etc.) to which the definition is attributed. Empirical research could also investigate what domains of proximity influence the meanings that consumers attribute to local food. This could be useful for producers. It could also be useful for consumers to know more about how food retailers are drawing on the discourses of local food as part of their marketing strategies.

## Notes

1. “The term “locavore” has emerged recently and refers to individuals who intentionally select locally produced food, to the fullest extent possible” (Rose et al. 2008, p. 272). Local food systems also intersects with debates related to “political consumerism” (Micheletti 2003) and “ethical consumption” (Barnett et al. 2005).
2. Other definitions can be found from e.g. Kluckhohn (1951); Rokeach (1973).

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