The political economy of food banks

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Abstract

The welfare state continues to be eroded in the Global North. In Canada and the U.S., food banks are now one of the only systems of relief available. But in both countries, critics have accused food banks of being apolitical and thus taking away government responsibility to address inequality. The rise of food banks has been linked to the decline of the welfare state, leading to an assumption that an increase in public assistance can end the need for food banks. Yet little research exists that examines how other institutions such as the food industry drove food bank growth, or how food banks are politically active. The history of food banks in Canada presents an informative case study because the state was not directly involved in establishing food banks, thus allowing greater insight into the role of industry in the institutionalization of food banks and their political activity. Using environmental institutions and political ecology frameworks we conducted a literature review and interviews of experts, as well as a case study of one food bank. Our findings suggest that the factors leading to the existence of food banks cannot only be linked to cuts in welfare; rather, the influence of industrial decline and centralization of the food industry must also be taken into account, as well as social movements and the policy gap around food waste. Food banks can be political, using available resources as 'fuel' to challenge government failure. The case of Canadian food banks indicates that, to address inequality and food insecurity in the Global North, researchers and policy-makers should not only focus on welfare but need to tackle the cost-shifting practices of the food industry and work toward joined-up and nested food policy institutions. Further, food banks, or organizations that look like them, can help address rising food insecurity if they are provided with sufficient legal, political, and financial support.

Key words: food security, food banks, Canada, welfare, public assistance, food policy, joined-up food policy, nested institutions, political economy, political ecology

Résumé

L'État-providence continue de s'éroder dans le Nord global. Au Canada et aux États-Unis, les banques alimentaires constituent aujourd'hui un des seuls systèmes d'aide disponibles. Mais dans les deux pays, les critiques accusent les banques alimentaires d'être apolitiques et, par cela, d'atténuer la responsabilité des gouvernements d'aborder l'inégalité. a prolifération des banques alimentaires a été reliée au déclin de l'État-providence, ce qui laisse supposer que l'accroissement de l'aide publique pourrait éliminer le besoin des banques alimentaires. Pourtant, il existe peu de recherches qui examinent le rôle des autres institutions – telles que l'industrie alimentaire – dans la croissance des banques alimentaires, ou les activités politiques de celles-ci. 'histoire des banques alimentaires au Canada forme une étude de cas informative : l'État n'a pas joué de rôle direct dans l'établissement des banques alimentaires, ce qui permet un meilleur aperçu du rôle de l'industrie dans l'institutionnalisation des banques alimentaires, et de leur activité politique. Employant des institutions environnementales et des cadres d'écologie politique, on a mené une analyse documentaire, des entrevues avec des experts, et une étude de cas sur une banque alimentaire. D'après nos constatations, l'existence des banques alimentaires ne s'explique pas uniquement par les coupures dans les prestations; il faut plutôt considérer l'influence du déclin industriel, de la centralisation de l'industrie alimentaire, des mouvements sociaux, et des lacunes sur le plan politique concernant le gaspillage alimentaire. es banques alimentaires peuvent être politisées, se servant des ressources disponibles comme 'fuel' pour aborder l'échec du gouvernement. e cas des banques alimentaires au Canada indique que, pour aborder l'inégalité et l'insécurité alimentaire dans le Nord global, les chercheurs et les responsables politiques ne devraient pas porter uniquement sur l'aide sociale, mais doivent aussi aborder les pratiques de transfert de couts de l'industrie alimentaire, et travailler en vue d'institutions intégrées et « nichées » de politique alimentaire. De plus, les banques alimentaires, ou les organismes qui leur ressemblent, peuvent aider à aborder le problème croissant de l'insécurité alimentaire, s'ils sont accordé assezd'appui légal, politique, et financier.

Mots-clés: sécurité alimentaire, banques alimentaires, Canada, aide sociale, politique alimentaire, politique alimentaire intégrée, instituions nichées, économie politique, écologie politique

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Contribution of authors

All work in this thesis is my own and all forthcoming publications coming from it will be submitted under my name with Nicolas Kosoy as co-author, who supervised and helped edit this study.

Introduction

If 2008 was the year of a global recession many will also remember it as a year of hunger. Spikes in food prices caused protests in 61 countries, with 23 of them violent (Von Braun 2008). By 2009 there were an estimated 1 billion hungry people, more than ever before (FAO 2009). Considering the threat of climate change and the uncertain future of oil, it is probable that food insecurity will remain prevalent in the coming decades (Hitz and Smith 2004; Schmidhuber and Tubiello 2007).

While hunger is often framed as a problem for the Global South it is also present in richer nations. In the United States, household food insecurity rates went from 15.8% in 2007 to 21% in 2008 (Beaulieu 2014). In Canada, this increase lagged a few years behind, with 450,000 more food insecure people between 2008 and 2011 (Tarasuk 2011). In both countries, the food insecure can be seen as a kind of "South" within the "North": families led by single mothers, blacks, migrants, and indigenous people disproportionately make up hungry households (Beaulieu 2014; Tarasuk 2011).

This increase in hunger in North America has long been linked to the stripping of the welfare state (Riches 1986; Poppendieck 1998). Like during the last Great Depression, charitable food aid has increased, bringing with it a return of "breadlines": places where the impoverished are forced to stand in line to receive food handouts (Poppendieck and Nestle 2014).

Yet, the non-governmental response to economic recession and hunger has been quite different from that of the past, and different from that in the Global South. In North America, it has largely taken the form of a vast network of 'food banks', non-profit agencies that funnel surplus food from distributors to smaller organizations, which then hand the supplies out to people in need. The first food bank was started in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1967, but more than 80% of organizations operating by 2004 in the US were started between 1980 and 2001 (O'Brien *et al.* 2004). Food banks are different from the breadlines in the Great Depression in that they function through nationwide non-profit networks, mostly funded by private corporate partners, sourcing most of their food from food waste, a byproduct from the industrial food system. Most labor in this system is volunteer-based, and these organizations often exist precariously, with not enough food to meet demand and not enough funding to step up their operations (O'Brien and Aldeen

2006).

What can explain the growth of food banks, 40 years after they have first appeared on these affluent nations' landscape? In the United States, researchers such as Poppendieck (1998a) and Daponte and Bade (2000; 2006) maintain that US policies such as Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, which started in 1981, institutionalized the private food distribution network. TEFAP redistributed surplus food from government warehouses to emergency food assistance providers such as food banks, while providing funding to help keep these organizations afloat. They argue that Good Samaritan laws—which safeguard companies from legal liability for donated food—and tax deductions for food donations were similarly crucial in establishing the network of food banks across the country.

However, while Canadian food banks also grew in number in the 1980s, there is no similar federal commodity distribution program in Canada, nor are there parallel tax deduction laws. Canadian researchers assert that the growth of food banks can be primarily attributed to the failure of welfare programs, which drove people to seek aid elsewhere (Riches 1986; Davis and Tarasuk 1994; Lightman and Riches 2000; Riches 2002; Goldberg and Green 2009).

Despite this divergence, both Canadian and US researchers propose one solution: strengthen welfare in the form of cash transfers rather than commodified food redistribution. From this perspective, if the need for public assistance were adequately addressed through welfare, there would be no more need for food banks.

However, it is important to study this issue further for several reasons. First, some observers have also linked the rise of food banks to changes in the food system (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994; Hawkes and Webster 2005; Wiebe and Wipf 2010). It has been argued that, to address the issue of rising food insecurity in wealthy nations, the government must go beyond welfare and support community initiatives, address the rising inaccessibility of the food system, and break down rifts between state departments in a 'joined-up' approach (Barling *et al.* 2002). This suggests that, even *with* significant state welfare programs, food banks would still exist, as they also are fueled by excessive food waste and people's need for breaking isolation and social support—neither of which cash transfers alone can address. However, little research exists to support this claim. This is likely due to the fact that most research on food banks has, up to now, come from social work, social policy, public health, and nutrition perspectives, rather than food systems, economics, and environmental fields. Thus, there is an increasing need to evaluate the

history of food banks from a material and economic perspective.

Second, as the food industry is now coming under the spotlight when discussing food security globally (e.g. Patel 2008; Bello 2009), it is crucial to re-examine their role in the history of food banks. Canada presents an informative case study because unlike in the U.S. and continental Europe, the state was not directly involved in establishing food banks, thus allowing greater insight into the role of industry in their institutionalization (Hawkes and Webster 2005).

Third, while there have been several studies documenting the rise of food banks in the 1980s and 1990s, there is little academic research reviewing the history of food banks in the 21st century. Those that have documented the history of food banks have noted that these organizations exhibit very little diversity, where they are either charitable and ultimately help to 'commodify' hunger (Poppendieck 1998b) or go beyond 'band-aid' solutions by attempting to empower recipients through diverse programs (Poppendieck 1998a; Thériault and Yadlowski 2000). Further case studies have noted some diversity in the types of food banks that exist (Rock 2006; Warshawsky 2010; Lambie-Mumford 2012; Wakefield *et al.* 2012), but it is not clear to what extent food banks are heterogeneous or homogenous. Now that the food banking system is becoming more entrenched, there is a need to reassess their origins and continuing evolution, and explore what policy options are available.

Finally, further knowledge about the role of food banks to address food security in Canada will be even more critical in the near future. Canadians rely more and more on imported food (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2009), global food prices continue to rise (FAO 2014), and with climate change, food prices are expected to become increasingly unstable (Von Braun 2008). This means that along with continuing cuts to welfare and rising unemployment , low-income Canadians' lives will likely be affected by global food crises. There is an urgent need for more up-to-date research on the role that food banks may have in addressing these problems.

As a response to these concerns, this study looks at the history of food banks in Canada through the lens of ecological economics, institutions theory, and political ecology (Vatn 2005; Robbins 2004; Healy *et al.* 2013). The strengths of these frameworks are that they take both a social and material approach to institutions and wealth distribution. They also acknowledge distributions of power within institutions and the importance of looking at multiple scales—global, national, and local. In addition, the food bank network is marked by a lack of data and information about the amount of food distributed and the role of various actors. Institutions

frameworks have been developed precisely to study appropriate economic and policy decisions where sufficient data is lacking.

More specifically, this study asks what the roles of state policy, industry, and the food system has been in the institutionalization of food banks, what types of food banks exist currently and whether they have become homogeneous, whether there is a role for food banks to address food insecurity in Canada in the context of a declining welfare state, and what policies could better address the issue.

In the first chapter, we present relevant background information, focusing on U.S. and Canadian perspectives, discussing existing definitions of food banks, their history as it has been presented in the literature, and what recommendations currently exist to address the issues of inequality, food insecurity, and dependency on food banks. We then identify the gaps in the literature. In our second chapter, we review ecological economics and institutions frameworks, discussing how they can address these gaps. We present our research objectives and our methodological framework.

The third chapter presents and describes the results of a more extensive literature review and a series of interviews of staff at food banks, prominent researchers, and politicians. The literature review incorporated findings on relevant policy changes, economic events, and food system changes. In the interviews, questions were asked about the role of state policies, the influence of the food industry, how food banks became institutionalized, and the typology of food banks. While the dependence on food banks can indeed be seen as a symptom of a welfare crisis, they are also correlated to the decline in industrial employment and a simultaneous rise in corporate food waste. These two factors have brought about the creation of a “second food system” maintained by an increasingly centralized food industry. In addition, our data suggests that the literature review’s typology of food banks is inexact: according to those interviewed, food banks are as diverse as there are many, varying from ones that work only on a charitable basis to those that are incredibly politically involved and often drive anti-poverty advocacy. As such, we propose that food banks have often been researched from a ‘welfare liberalism’ perspective, where the effects of the market are ignored while welfare distribution is advocated.

The fourth chapter describes a one-year case study of one food bank in Montréal.[1] Through surveys, interviews, a two-week time-budgeting analysis, and ethnographic participatory observation, we analyzed the material and financial flows of the food bank, as well as the social institutions that allowed it to operate. The food bank used their food supplies as 'fuel' to address and challenge state welfare policies, social isolation, and local food needs. In addition, the food bank staff viewed its main barriers to achieving their goals of addressing local food insecurity and social inequality to be poor policy and legal resources, as well as unstable financial support. Our case study suggests, first, that food banks can be seen as a cost-shifting success of the food industry, however, this resource can be used for political purposes. Second, this indicates that food banks are not necessarily apolitical, as claimed by the literature, and may help to challenge inadequate social policies. Third, in order to have a positive influence on their community, local food organizations require stable and coherent financial, legal, and policy resources.

The fifth and final chapter evaluates these findings in the context of the literature and our theoretical framework. The evidence collected in our research suggests that food banks are not just a symptom of a welfare crisis, but also of an over-productive food system. As a result, neither welfare nor market-oriented frameworks are sufficient in explaining the existence of food banks, or prescribing solutions to food security in Canada. We suggest that policy must take into account both the cost-shifting practices of the food industry and the effect of economic forces on welfare institutions. To this end, five scenarios are presented and weighed: reinstituting welfare, market-based solutions to address food waste, taxing and regulating food waste, a 'joined –up' food policy, and a 'nested' institutions approach. While the first three schemes have been shown throughout our study to be inadequate—welfare is only possible in times of economic stability and market solutions fail to redistribute wealth to those who have little purchasing power—the last two, one of which was initially proposed by the Toronto Food Policy Council (1994) and Barling *et al.* (2002), the other coming from environmental institutions literature (Yashiro *et al.* 2013), are the most promising. We propose that any policy addressing the issues of food insecurity, inequality, and food waste requires a 'joined-up' approach, coherently integrating agricultural, agri-food, health, and welfare state departments. Furthermore, policies must take into account the rent-seeking and cost-shifting practices of powerful players, working on both

[1] Due to privacy and political concerns, and after request of staff at the food bank, we decided not to disclose the name of the food bank in question, as well as any names of staff or interviewees. Throughout this paper, we refer to the case study site as "the food bank" or "the case study".

horizontal (diverse actors) and vertical (national, provincial, municipal, and local scales) levels.

Food access is a crucial issue of our time, and will become more and more important in an unpredictable climate (Schmidhuber and Tubiello 2007). In Canada, food banks have, in the past thirty years, taken over a primary role in ensuring food access for the most impoverished population. This study reframes the current understanding of the charity system, showing how the food industry externalizes waste disposal and processing to the increasingly precarious working class. As such, the study will have several direct impacts.

A first and most obvious impact is on the discussion of food security in Canada and the Global North. There is a clear need for local food distribution sites that take into account the social, cultural, and metabolic nature of food consumption. Our study suggests that community food insecurity cannot just be addressed through welfare or through the market—it requires a complex, dynamic approach that empowers local organizations and acknowledges the social cost of uneven development.

This study also has significance for politics. Researching the history of food banks in Canada means asking seriously about the role of the state, especially in an epoch where welfare continues to be undercut. As such, our study casts doubt on the ability of cash transfers to fully address inequality in Canada. Since a strong welfare system ensures that more people can become consumers of the corporate food industry, without addressing the unsustainability of the food system, it would only exacerbate the cost-shifting practices of corporate agribusinesses. As such, our study provides evidence for the need to pair wealth redistribution with support of autonomous food organizations and a joined-up and nested approach to inequality and hunger. As a result, it is expected that this research will have ramifications on Canadian policy, suggesting alternative strategies to address food insecurity that go beyond state or market solutions.

With regard to theory, this research is the first to apply institutional and political ecology frameworks to the institution of food banks. We hope that this serves to broaden the conversation around food banks, placing them in the context of, not just a welfare crisis, but also a high-extraction economy. In addition, integrating the concepts of ‘joined-up food policy,’ and ‘nested institutions’ may provide new angles with which to understand uneven development in the Global North, and the policies that can address it.

Chapter 1: Background information

In the following, we discuss the definition of food banks and the surplus food redistribution system, the way it functions, a brief sketch of its history, how food banks have been typified in the literature and the corresponding policy recommendations, and the gaps in the current literature.

Definition

The definition of food banks is both straightforward and requires some explanation. Riches, in one of the first academic works to appear on the subject, defined food banks as the following:

> …A centralized warehouse or clearing house registered as a non-profit organization for the purpose of collecting, storing, and distributing surplus food (donated/shared), free of charge, to front line agencies which provide supplementary food and meals to the hungry (Riches 1986, p. 16, citing food bank brochures).

According to Riches, food banks are *not* soup kitchens, school lunch programs, meals on wheels programs, nutrition projects, or homeless shelters, although they may provide food to all these programs. Riches also notes some exceptions: sometimes food banks buy food to supplement their donations, sometimes they are simply transport organizations, and sometimes they sell food directly to recipients. Regardless, as Riches notes, "the emphasis is on the coordinating or clearing-house function of the food bank, not the direct feeding of the hungry" (Riches 1986, p. 17).

In contrast, Tarasuk and Davis define food banks as "Centralized clearinghouses that coordinate the collection, storage, and distribution of donated foodstuffs from producers, retailers, and private donors to assistance program" (Tarasuk and Davis 1996, p. 73). Here the authors do not specify whether food banks distribute supplies free of charge.

In addition, from these definitions, it is not clear whether food banks will always deliver food to recipients directly or only through mediating organizations. There are also differences nationally in how the term food bank is used. In Canada, the term *food bank* often refers to any organization that acts as a 'clearing house', which may sometimes include organizations that have direct contact with recipients. However, in the U.S., this includes *food pantries*, a term which "is used to designate a program that distributes groceries for preparation at home"

(Poppendieck 1994, p. 69). As such, we use the Canadian definition, where food pantries are considered a subset of food banks, operating at a different scale than larger food banks.

The relationship of food banks to food waste is better elucidated when we consider the origins of the first known food bank in Phoenix, Arizona. In 1967, a local businessman, John Van Hengel, was told by a single mother (name unknown) that much of the food with which she fed her family came from a supermarket dumpster. When she showed the dumpster to Van Hengel, he was surprised at the amount of food available. She drew him a picture conceptualizing what she called a 'food bank': a storage space where surplus food could be 'deposited', and that food could then be 'withdrawn' by anyone who needed it. Van Hengel went on to start the St. Mary's Food Bank along with a local priest, Bob McCarthy, which eventually grew in size as donations grew, and ended up forming a food bank network, America's Second Harvest (Poppendieck 1998a). Thus, while food banks may rely on purchasing food, in this study we consider food waste as a crucial part of food bank operations.

Considering these alternating definitions, in this study, we define food banks as any organization that has access to a supply of food, mostly surplus, transport and/or storage, and volunteer labor to move, process, or distribute food supplies.

There are also some other terms often used in relationship to food banks. The term 'emergency food' "refers to programs that distribute food, either as prepared meals or as groceries, directly to people in need" (Poppendieck 1994, p. 69). Many who discuss food banks tend to refer to a system, or network, of organizations and institutions that are often called the 'emergency food system'. However, there are some variations in this term. Some refer to the 'emergency food assistance system' (Ohls and Saleem-Ismail 2002). Others prefer to use 'surplus food recovery system' (Hawkes and Webster 2005). Yet others argue that it is best seen as a private food assistance network:

> The term *private food assistance network* requires explanation. The term *network* (as opposed to *system*) stresses that independent actors rely on each other only when the relationship proves beneficial. The network's origins are essentially private rather than public, although governmental resources assisted in its creation. The network provides aid not only for emergencies but also on a chronic basis. Others (e.g., A2H, 2001, 2006; Tiehen, 2002) sometimes refer to this effort as *emergency food assistance*, a misnomer because the term suggests a short-term, acute reliance on the network (Daponte and Bade 2006, p. 669).

Accordingly, we use the term 'private food assistance network' or, at times simply 'surplus food redistribution'.

It is also important to outline how this network distributes food supplies. As Hawkes and Webster (2005) explain, the food industry generates food surplus in four ways: unprofitable agricultural crops or products withdrawn from market; non-perishable processed foods that are mislabeled, have packaging damage, are out-of-date promotions, cancelled orders, or close to use-by date; perishable fresh foods that are wrong shape or size or close to use-by date; and perishable prepared foods. In the U.S. and the E.U., food surplus is generated when the government holds goods from the market in order to regulate prices (*ibid.*). In the U.S., this food surplus accounted for up to 14% of the total donations to food banks in 2002 (Ohls and Saleem-Ismail 2002), while in the E.U. it accounts for one-third of food bank donations (Hawkes and Webster 2005). These goods are then shipped to food banks or overseas in the form of food aid. However, this system does not exist to the same extent in the U.K. and Canada. In the U.K. there is only one government program that redistributes surplus food, and in Canada there is none (*ibid.*). The redistribution of private surplus works differently at different scales. National or provincial food retailers and food packaging plants will make arrangements with large national or provincial food banks. In Canada, this includes a system set up by Food Banks Canada that allows corporations to enter their donations on an online form, which can then be distributed through donated transportation from companies such as CP Rail (Thériault and Yadlowski 2000). However, most provinces have central food banks—such as Feed Nova Scotia, Moisson Montreal, Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto, and Greater Vancouver Food Bank—that have direct and personal relationships with food retailers on a provincial or municipal level. Then there is a third tier of food donations, which often happens on a local level, and often involves smaller food surplus sources such as grocery stores, farmer's markets, hospitals, or restaurants. This system mirrors that of Feeding America, where donors provide food supplies to large food banks, which then redistribute their supplies to agencies such as emergency kitchens and food pantries, finally being picked up by recipients locally (See Figure 1).

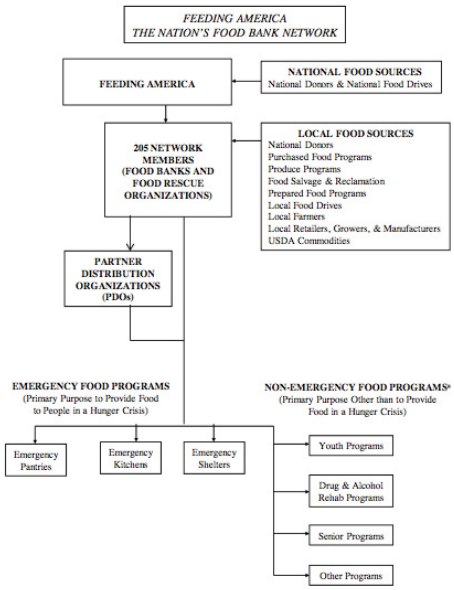

Figure 1: The material flow of Feeding America's (USA) supply. Source: Feeding America 2010

History and drivers

As discussed above, the first food banks in the United States were founded in the 1960s, which had particular emphasis on the food recovery aspect and initially treated hunger as secondary. However, it was not until the 1980s that most food banks and other surplus food redistribution organizations became the dominant source of emergency food aid in the United States. According to most observers, this institutionalization was largely due to direct policy changes. The United States had instituted a food stamp system along with other welfare programs in the 1960s, which was further expanded in the year 1970, and had also experimented with surplus food distribution schemes in the 1930s during the Great Depression. However, starting in the 1970s, an atmosphere of emergency following the 1971-1973 oil crisis suggested to many policy-makers that the government could no longer afford an extensive welfare regime. At the same time an anti-hunger lobby was increasing its pressure to further address the issue of hunger in the U.S. Another recession in the 1980s led many churches and charities to respond by

providing food, leading to the further development of the food bank network. As Poppendieck notes, “With increasing frequency, emergency providers sought and received help from government to keep the system operating” (Poppendieck 1994, p. 74). Finally, under Reagan’s presidency, eligibility for the food stamp program was tightened in 1981-1982. After significant backlash from the anti-hunger lobby, a commodity distribution program, called the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, was set in place. This program distributed food commodities that the government would take off the market in order to control prices—primarily butter and cheese but later expanded to include others—to charitable institutions or, in several cases, TEFAP set up its own distribution sites. It also provided funding for emergency food organizations. Later, as food surplus dwindled partly because it was also being used for foreign aid, the government also set up a food-purchasing plan, where certain goods were bought from retailers and then likewise distributed to emergency food organizations. TEFAP went through several phases: establishment (1983-1988), purchasing food (1989-1993), phase-out (1994-1996), partial resurgence (1997-2001), and stabilization from 2002-onwards (Daponte and Bade 2006). In the same time period, the amount of food banks in the Second Harvest food banking network went from 29 in 1980 to 185 in 1989. After TEFAP, many U.S. states also provided tax breaks to corporations and food retailers who donated surplus food and instituted what were called “Good Samaritan Laws”, protecting food retailers from liability for distributing surplus food. According to Poppendieck, Daponte, and Bade, these developments indicate that government involvement had a primary role in institutionalizing the surplus food redistribution system (Poppendieck 1998; Daponte and Bade 2000; Daponte and Bade 2006). Furthermore, Daponte and Bade argue that the fact that in 2005 36% of food assistance clients lived in households that participated in the Food Stamp Program indicates that this network of emergency food has become parallel to state programs.

Poppendieck also argues that a major driver in the institutionalization of the food distribution system in the U.S. was the shift in public perception of hunger, which has led to a ‘commodification’ of the issue. The idea of hunger has been consistently “discovered and rediscovered” in three discrete waves of public concern (Poppendieck 1995, p. 11). In the first era, during the Great Depression, widespread hunger was seen in the context of agricultural surplus, and therefore the dominant solution was for the government to redirect surplus to hungry citizens. In the second era, during the 1960s, hunger was seen as a failure of the state, and the

solution became to make hunger a legal right that guaranteed food to those who lacked access. Then, finally, in the wake of the 1973-74 oil crisis and waves of government cut-backs in the 1980s, hunger became characterized as an 'emergency' which the state could not address alone. Community-based organizations, sometimes already existing, sometimes set up *ad-hoc*, were charged with the duty of dealing with hunger, and the question of surplus food and 'want amidst plenty' once again became a solution. This kind of formulation of hunger has focused society's efforts on redistributing surplus food, rather than addressing the root causes of poverty and inequality in the United States. The result became what Poppendieck refers to as the "commodification of hunger", where hunger, posed as a private problem that could be addressed through citizen action, became an industry, a "product" in "a sort of social issues marketplace" (Poppendieck 1998b). In each of these shifts in conceptualizations of hunger, the solution also shifted, which then again obscured alternative solutions to the problem (Poppendieck 1995, p. 29-30).

In Canada the literature presents a slightly different story. Canada had been similarly impacted by the recessions of the 1970s and early 1980s. While in Canada many other programs such as soup kitchens, school lunches, and meals-on-wheels programs had existed previously, "food banks have become established both despite, and because of, this vast range of supplementary, and largely voluntary, emergency food services….[V]oluntary relief was itself unable to cope (Riches 1986, p. 14). Many food banks were then started to meet the demands of these smaller agencies. The first food bank was set up in Edmonton in 1981, and the majority of the first food banks were in western Canada. Riches argues that the institutionalization of food banks had several key drivers. First, the presence of NGOs, churches, labor unions, and civil society groups allowed for funding and cooperation on a local level, paired with donations and facilitation from the corporate sector. Media played a large part as it helped establish a discourse around rising hunger and framed the redistribution of surplus food as a solution. As America's Second Harvest had already been established, U.S. food banks often played a mentor role, where John Van Hengel even visited Canadian food banks and helped advise them. However, as with the first food banks in the United States, "many food bank staff first started because they were worried about corporate waste, and only then became aware of need of population…. On balance, it was apparently the need rather than the surplus that drove the food bank organizers" (Riches 1986, p. 19). Furthermore, massive layoffs in lumber and mining industries led to a crisis in small towns,

where many were looking for work and more and more relied on welfare. This was especially the case in western Canada, which also had the largest presence of food banks. However, as Riches documents, the government started cutting welfare benefits and reducing eligibility, especially in western Canada. By 1991, there were 1800 agencies in 300 communities, and in 1999 there were 698 food banks and 2000 agencies (Wilson 1999). By this time, it was clear that "food banks in Canada have become an institution, a non-profit extension of the welfare system..." (*ibid.*, p. 1) and the institutionalization of food banks was "linked to persistently high levels of poverty, unemployment, and underemployment over the past two decades and to the erosion of publicly funded social programs for the poor and unemployed" (Tarasuk 2001, p. 488).

Typology, recommendations, and gaps

As shown above, the history of the institutionalization of food banks has generally been linked to government activity, whether direct (TEFAP), or indirect (cuts to food stamp program and public assistance). Other drivers identified in the literature have been the economic recessions of 1970s and 1980s, the rise in unemployment due to industry collapse, as well as the shift in the public's understanding of hunger. Previously existing organizations such as churches and NGOs were integral to the initial development of food banks. In the following, we discuss how food banks themselves have been typified in the literature, how food banks have been deemed inadequate by researchers, what policy recommendations have been put forward to address the issue, and what the current gaps are in the literature.

As already noted above, food banks are generally considered to be volunteer-driven organizations distributing surplus food to other organizations or to people directly. Data from U.S. food banks supports these claims: in 2006, 75% of pantries function without any paid staff, and 90% use at least some volunteer workers (Ohls and Saleem-Ismail 2002). In the same year, food banks provided 74% of the food distributed by food pantries and were also the primary distributor of TEFAP supplies. Smaller organizations such as food pantries, however, also maintain their supplies by occasionally or regularly buying their own food. On average, the total number of volunteer hours per week for food pantries was 35, and the total equivalent 'wage' for volunteer hours in the U.S. per week in 2006 was $12.5 million (O'brien and Aldeen 2006). Food banks are often considered to be linked to religious institutions (50% of surplus food distribution agencies in the U.S. in 1999; The Aspen Institute 1999). On average, agencies in the U.S. operate on $5,700, with five paid staff members and 60 volunteers who contribute 2,595

volunteer hours per year (*ibid.*). However, while many were started by churches or with their help, currently, in the United States at least, food banks "became fully secular once they developed into a network" (O'brien *et al.* 2004). Little comparative data exists about food banks in Canada.

Recipients of food banks, in both Canada and the U.S., tend to be low income, food insecure, have low access to other resources (such as a car), are dominated by single parent households (primarily mothers), and, compared to national demographics, disproportionately consist of minority groups such as blacks, recent migrants, and indigenous groups (The Aspen Institute 1999; America's Second Harvest 2006; Food Banks Canada 2011; Goldberg and Green 2009). They are also often under 18 (38% in the U.S. in 1999; 40% in Canada in 1999). Canadian food banks are also considered to be more decentralized than those in the U.S.; the Canadian Food Bank Association (now Food Banks Canada) stresses the independence of their members, and sees itself as more of a research and data aggregator and national policy lobbyist than a coordinator of individual food banks (Tarasuk 2001).

By considering the data, it is possible to conceive of a more general picture of food banks and who attends them. However, this does not give us an idea of how food banks are structured and what values they tend to strive toward. According to Poppendieck, there are two general types of food banks: charitable and 'beyond band-aids'. Charity-driven food banks often have a top-down approach to food redistribution, determining who gets what and how much, and often end up being demeaning forms of food aid. Food distribution schemes that are 'beyond band-aids' often are more responsible to the community, provide services beyond just surplus food, and may even help recipients with other needs such as tax forms, medical advice, or advising for welfare paperwork. They may also provide employment and skills training (Poppendieck 1998a).

Tarasuk, writing from a Canadian perspective, has noted a similar dichotomy, where food banks are largely band-aid solutions but that alternative responses do exist that seek to empower recipients, provide mutual support, and promote health practices. These are often participatory and community-based projects that enhance knowledge about food. These projects can be community kitchens, community gardens, food-buying clubs, farmers markets, or alternative food supply initiatives. While these programs are similar to food banks as they are ad-hoc, community-based, and focus on food, they differ in that their primary focus is not on hunger but instead they emphasize social cohesion, community building, autonomy, and may have origins in

social service or public health (Tarasuk 2001). These alternatives may often be linked to or work alongside food banks. Thériault and Yadlowsky agree with this assertion, noting that "many food banks offer a variety of proactive services and programs that aim to empower their clients" (2000, p. 212).

Riches, who wrote during the earlier stages of food bank development, also noted a dichotomy, but at the time this took a different form. Riches suggests that, in 1986, two types of food banks existed in Canada: the union model and the voluntary/charitable model. In Western Canada especially, unions were involved in setting up food banks, and these often provided support that went beyond 'charity' but was rather focused on mutual support, alternative services, stress participation, and have political goals like organizing unemployed workers. In contrast, the voluntary/charitable model is often apolitical and supported by volunteers who are largely middle class.

Since Riches published his research in 1986, there has been little further discussion of the union model, which suggests that it no longer exists. However, in that it was participatory and often sought to go beyond the 'charity' model through various other programs it may be a precursor to 'alternative' food banks. In any case, there is a general agreement that food banks and food recovery schemes conform to two types: those that are charity-focused and those that seek to go beyond charity strategies. This suggests homogeneity in the types of food banks that exist.

However, some have instead stressed the heterogeneity of food banks, arguing that food banks cannot be categorized into two separate types. In a comparative case study, Daponte and Bade (2000) note that each food bank studied differed in services and structure depending on local political dynamics, suggesting that private food assistance in the U.S. remains heterogeneous. Ohls and Saleem-Ismail note that most emergency food assistance system sites are locally-based and have a wide diversity (2000). Later, O'brien *et al.* observe that "by the end of 1996, old notions of emergency food providers as collaborators and "band-aids" to the problem of hunger in America had largely ceased" (2004, p. 12). More recent case studies have examined this in detail, showing that there is a wide diversity in the types of food banks and food surplus redistribution schemes (Wakefield *et al.* 2012). Thus, it remains a question whether food banks differ widely or should be categorized according to two opposing models, and whether shifts to the food banking model have happened recently.

Putting aside questions of heterogeneity or homogeneity, researchers nevertheless argue that food banks have been unsuccessful in adequately addressing hunger and, on the whole, even help entrench continuing inequality and government inaction. According to Tarasuk, it is unclear whether food banks succeed in providing an adequate supply of food: "while charitable food assistance may have alleviated some of the absolute food deprivation in the households studied, it clearly did not prevent members from going hungry. Given the supply-driven (i.e. donor-driven) nature of this system and the fact that demand for food assistance has long surpassed supply, food banks cannot be expected to resolve the kinds of food problems described here" (Tarasuk 1999, p. 112). Food banks can be seen as an ad hoc form of food aid, largely dependent on unpredictable supplies (Hawkes and Webster 2005). In fact, there have been some signs of food supplies leveling off, as donors are becoming more efficient or experiencing "donor fatigue" (*ibid.*, Toronto Food Policy Council 1994). There is also some question of whether food banks try to address policy issues. Riches has noted that, often, food bank staff, volunteers, and funders do not consider food banking to be a political activity, and do not want to get involved with politics (Riches 1986). This is corroborated by Poppendieck's research, in which she argues that food banks, because they are so busy distributing food, rarely have the time or resources to address deeper policy issues such as rising inequality (1998a). In addition, their dependence on donors for both food supplies and finances often leads them to avoid making overtly political statements (Poppendieck 1998a). Because of these factors (inability to address hunger, unreliable food supply, and lack of advocacy work) these researchers have argued that food banks are inadequate in addressing the deeper issues such as inequality.

But their argument goes further. It is argued that despite the good intentions of volunteers, food banks actually exacerbate the issue of hunger in the Global North. To Riches, providing surplus food "plays into the hands of governments wishing to cut payrolls and services to privatize social welfare" (Hawkes and Webster 2005; citing Riches 1997, p. 63). Similarly, Poppendieck argues that food banks legitimize conservative discourse for cutting welfare and minimizing the state: "the same fund-raising appeals that reassure the public that no one will starve, even if public assistance is destroyed, convince many that substitution of charitable food programs for public entitlements might be a good idea" (Poppendieck 1998b, p. 133). She further argues that food banks have helped shift the discourse of hunger from one of rights and entitlements to a more commodified version, relying on private donations rather than state support (Poppendieck 1995).

The result is that food banks give the illusion that society is addressing hunger, while they end up facilitating the erosion of income support and create further dependency on charitable food assistance. In short, food banks, because they have helped to depoliticize hunger and draw attention away from entitlements, are inadequate, and should even be closed (Power 2011).

Consequentially, these researchers have argued that welfare should be reinstated. Since food banks have been shown to inadequately address hunger in recipients, a more reliable, stable source of income support is needed for precarious populations. In particular, researchers have highlighted the need for social housing, facilitating eligible for unemployment benefits, raising minimum wage levels, developing child-care, and in the U.S., strengthening and simplifying the food stamp system and linking state food surplus donations with the food stamp program. Furthermore, from this perspective, it is argued that if a strong welfare system were to be reinstated, there would be no more need for food banks. As Allen notes, "If public assistance benefits were sufficient or incomes were sufficiently high, there would be no need for food pantries" (1999, p. 126).

In the essay discussed above, Poppendieck shows how the typification of hunger has led to corresponding 'solutions.' The same mechanism holds true for food banks: since they have been largely typified as ad-hoc charitable agencies, this has allowed researchers to argue that they are largely ineffective in addressing hunger, in turn recommending that the issue of hunger and poverty would be better addressed through welfare programs.

However, this argument has also seen some push-back. Some appear more optimistic about the role of food banks in addressing society's issues, arguing that many have indeed become more politically involved (Thériault and Yadlowski 2000; Wakefield *et al.* 2012; Lambie-Mumford 2012; Levkoe and Wakefield 2011). Food bank organizations such as Feeding America and Food Banks Canada have noted that food banks have often been on the forefront of anti-poverty campaigns, using their increased power to lobby for welfare programs (Feeding America 2010; Food Banks Canada 2012). Even well-known food bank researchers have suggested that food banks, while ineffective in addressing hunger, do have potential role in public education and policy advocacy (Poppendieck 1998a; Riches 2002). In either case, the fact that food banks take away government responsibility is not supported with evidence and remains difficult to prove empirically. Further, there are no exhaustive surveys that document the political activity of food banks on the whole, or even locally.

Similarly, those that have shifted their focus on the issue of the food system have also suggested different 'solutions'. The Toronto Food Policy Council takes a more moderate stance and suggests that instead of closing food banks, they should be supported to shift to community-oriented models (1994). Barling *et al.* (2002) echo this sentiment, arguing that to address poverty also requires addressing the food industry, and therefore 'joining up' agricultural, social, and health policy. Wiebe and Wipf (2010) suggest that, to address rising inequality and food insecurity, agricultural policy must be integrated with a national food policy and be inclusive toward local communities' needs. This is later echoed by Riches (2011), who also advocates for a 'joined-up' national food policy, which connects food distribution with healthcare, income, childcare, and housing needs. Further, Feeding America (at the time called America's Second Harvest) has suggested that food banks could be linked up with food stamp programs, as well as TEFAP, in order to gain stability and actually be able to address needs of recipients (O'brien *et al.* 2004).

While the role of the food industry in driving the institutionalization of food banks has been mentioned in most studies, it is often seen as a separate question, and rarely are the relationships between the increase in amount of surplus food available and the increase of food bank attendees explored. For example, while Daponte and Bade argue that TEFAP had a primary role in institutionalizing the emergency food surplus network, the magnitude of TEFAP donations, both in terms of food supplies and financial donations, remains comparatively low to those of the private sector (Daponte and Bade 2006; Ohls and Saleem-Ismail 2002). Yet, Daponte and Bade do not explore the role of the rise in food waste as a contributing factor to the institutionalization of food banks. Difficult questions need to be asked as to how the food industry profits from the food bank system, and why millions of volunteers donate their free time to help maintain high corporate profits. As Poppendieck notes,

> The giver of surplus food benefits far more in the long-term, than does the recipient in the short-term. The givers almost always claim tax deduction, or charity status. So the poor have the added indignity of receiving hand outs via a mechanism which even helps retain the superior purchasing power of the affluent. (Poppendieck 1997 p. 139-141; quoted in Hawkes and Webster 2005).

Tarasuk has also made similar remarks:

> I think that [the question of surplus food] should be considered separately from the question of how poor people should meet their food needs when they cannot afford to participate in the market place. To

> entrench a two-tiered food system with the 'good' food going to those with money and the other stuff ('leftovers') going to the poor is, I think, undesirable… (Tarasuk, quoted in Hawkes and Webster 2005, p. 31).

Tarasuk goes on to recommend different retail practices, such as improving efficiency and encouraging the sale of undesirable products. However, the policies that encourage the profitability of a high-waste and centralized food system, which then profits from donating (or dumping) surplus food are rarely discussed in the context of food banks. It's clear that the food industry has been viewed as one of the drivers of the institutionalization of food banks, and yet waste and food bank attendance are seen as separate issues.

Furthermore, while programs like TEFAP may have been a major cause for the growth of the emergency food network in the U.S., no such programs exist in Canada, and the food bank system has seen a similar rise. While the effects of welfare cuts on the growth of food bank attendance has been empirically tested in Canada (Goldberg and Green 2009), it is difficult to know whether other drivers weren't also responsible, such as the increase in food surplus. Were cuts to public assistance the primary drivers to explain this rise? It may be, but there has to date not been adequate research exploring the comparative role that the collapse of industry or the growth of food surplus has had in increasing the use of and reliance on food banks.

It also remains unclear to what extent food banks are homogenous or heterogeneous. This is an important question because the diversity of food banks can provide an indicator to whether they are able to shift models from charitable toward more community-involved organizations. Factors that lead food banks to become more homogenous or to diversify can lead to an understanding of why they are not involved with advocacy and what the role of government and industry has been in the growth of food banks.

On the whole, it may be beneficial to tease apart the different concerns around food banks. 'Do they address hunger?' is a different question than 'do they address inequality?' and 'do they hold the state accountable?' To all three of these questions, researchers have answered that they do not, or at least do not do so adequately. However, dismissing food banks on the basis of answers to these questions alone serves to deemphasize the role that they may play in addressing social needs or the issue of food waste. It is clear that food banks need to be considered from political, social, nutritional, *and* material perspectives. However, there is a paucity of research that explores the role of food banks in the context of a material economy.

This study seeks to address these gaps in the literature through an exhaustive literature review paired with a series of snowball interviews of Canadian food bank researchers and staff, as well as a case study of one food bank in Montreal. Studying the case of Canadian food banks in detail can be insightful in documenting what variables have driven the rise of food banks and whether they do indeed correspond to the current typology. The case of Canadian food banks is unique in that they became institutionalized despite having no publicly-funded surplus food redistribution programs. The lack of state involvement may allow for the role of the food industry to be more apparent.

A quantitative analysis of the comparative role of different drivers remains outside of the scope of current research. This is because, first of all, much of the data available is collected by Food Banks Canada, which does not gather information on the diversity of their food banks, nor on the amount of food surplus that has been donated by food banks in the past decades. Second of all, collecting this data independently would be an impossible task, as individual food banks do not have records of changes in attendance or amount of donations. As such, it remains very difficult to adequately test claims in the literature of whether decrease in public assistance was the primary driver, or that food banks, on the whole, take away government responsibility, as there is little comparative data. Instead, we seek here to simply identify what the *various* different drivers have been and whether they conform to the typology identified. This requires an analytic framework that is able to integrate social, political, economic, and material drivers.

Chapter 2: Objectives and methodology

The drivers leading to the growth of the surplus food redistribution system are many and diverse. Furthermore, their individual effects cannot be quantified, as there is inadequate data available. These two factors indicate that a type of analysis is needed that can account for social, material, and political variables. In the following, we discuss the fields of ecological economics, institutional economics, and political ecology and relate them to the phenomenon of food banks. This informs the objectives of this research, which leads to a presentation of our methodology.

Theoretical framework

Ecological economics, from its inception, has dealt with linking human economic activity to the material and energetic resources that we rely on. In short, human economy is conceived as, first and foremost, dependent on a flow of energy (from the sun) and a flow of materials (largely found on the earth's crust). This assumption is called social metabolism (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl 1993). Consequentially, analyses have focused on reframing history as determined by environmental and resource pressures (Ponting 1993). Anthropologists similarly have examined social practices in the context of caloric intake and food supply (Rappaport 1967). Many studies based on this assumption have the tendency to suffer from environmental determinism, that is, the attempt of reducing social and historical phenomena to objective, material grounds. Such frameworks have the negative side-effect of obfuscating multiple social and political drivers of socio-environmental events. As an alternative, researchers have suggested to "take proper account of both these levels of reality: the idiosyncrasies of human meanings in particular contexts, and the material repercussions of such cultural systems" (Hornborg 2007, p. 3). As such, rather than assuming that material and energetic forces determine cultural events, it is suggested that " cultural behavior takes place within a material world whose properties constrain what is possible and determine the environmental consequences of that behavior" (*ibid.*). One way to avoid this determinist tendency is to develop formulations of wealth—and therefore decision-making—that are not only reliant on monetary valuation or material goods. For example, multi-criteria valuation seeks to include the many values that may guide decision-making, such as labor time or cultural value of a natural resource. As such, ecological economics analyses may measure economic systems, not just on the basis of their financial worth, but will

also calculate the material and energetic flows of that system, and how wealth is determined by these flows.

Institutional economics, on the other hand, stresses the role that institutions have in shaping economies and market transactions. This also helps to avoid environmental determinism, as it seeks to take into account multiple drivers of social change. For institutional economists, the word 'institution' does not signify, as it does in everyday use of the term, 'organization', which suggests a kind of agent. Rather, it refers to the social, political, and economic relationships that shape agents.

There are two distinct schools of institutional economics: the 'classical', originating in the early 20th century as a response to orthodox economics, and the new, which reformulated the older field in the 1980s with a neoclassical twist. According to North, a leading figure in 'new' institutionalism, institutions are "the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (1990, p.3). To North and other new institutionalists, institutions are seen as external, while the standard economic theory of the 'autonomous' and 'rational' individual persists. For the older tradition of institutionalists, institutions *form* individual behavior, and rather suggest a form of 'bounded' rationality (Rutherford 2001). In contrast, environmental institutionalists will use a definition emphasizing different institutions and the way they might enable as well as restrict choices: "Institutions are the conventions, norms, and formally sanctioned rules of a society. They provide expectations, stability, and meaning essential to human existence and coordination. Institutions regularize life, supoort values and produce and protect interests." (Vatn 2005, p. 60).

In this study, we use an environmental institutions framework, as presented by Vatn (2005). Institutions have been sub-categorized between economic (such as property rights, contracts) and political (forms of government), formal (laws and policies) and informal (social norms and conventions). Actors in institutions are organizations (states, non-profits, and corporations, churches and clubs) and individuals (North 1990). In environmental institutions theory, goods refer to material resources, such as coal or diamonds, while services refer to the benefits of a particular environmental system, such as how clean air facilitates good health, or a geological structure facilitates tourism. Environmental goods and services are considered to fit under varying degrees of *excludability* and *rivalry*. Excludability refers to the extent to which access to a good or service can be limited, while rivalry refers to the quality of the good itself, where some

goods, by virtue of their limited stock, can only be used for a limited time or amount (Brown 2007). For example, the health benefits of clean air is *non-excludable* because it is difficult to control; a garden is *excludable* because the owner can place a wall around it; an apple is *rivalrous* because you can only eat it once, and watching the sunset is *non-rivalrous* because doing so does not limit anyone else's use of it (Yashiro *et al.* 2013).

This categorization into *rivalry* and *excludability* is useful because it allows environmental institutionalists to describe systems of resource management and recommend alternative options. In this way, a system based on excludability (private property) may not be optimal for the management of a public park that local peasants also rely on for sustenance (Yashiro *et al.* 2013). Similarly, monetizing ecosystem services through contingent valuation schemes and therefore making them *excludable* may serve to erode other benefits of those services that are cultural, aesthetic, or simply immeasurable, and therefore not pecuniary (Bromley and Vatn 1994; Sagoff 1998; Sagoff 2008; Kosoy & Corbera 2010). Furthermore, analyzing a resource on the basis of whether it is rivalrous (it is limited) or excludable (there are institutions limiting access) can help in suggesting alternative schemes of management that take into account access concerns at different scales.

A related field to ecological economics is that of political ecology. The field can be best conceived as an alternative to what people call "apolitical ecology", that is, understanding human-environment relationships only in terms of demographics, population pressures, or 'natural' relationships (Forsyth 2008; Robbins 2004). While these perspectives are important, they fail to take into account the unequal relationships that often drive environmental degradation. With its roots in political economy frameworks, political ecology takes as its primary assumption that the costs and benefits of human-environment relationships are unevenly distributed. This is not dissimilar to the term "cost-shifting" mentioned above. This dynamic affects power relationships and who has the ability to make decisions. The result of this is that looking at power relationships will help researchers better understand the choices that communities make with respect to managing resources or degrading them.

One recent development in environmental institutions theory has been the discussion of New Commons and nested institutions frameworks, as presented by Yashiro *et al.* (2013), which seek to confront concerns that an institutions framework alone cannot address complex management issues that are vertical (scale: local, municipal, provincial, national, international) and horizontal

(household, private, public, non-profit, collective). Specifically, the nature of ecosystem services is such that different institutions often have different claims on these resources, which leads to differences in power and access. In this way, while a local community might have legal access to a river, the national government can block that access through coercion; similarly, a corporation can claim access to this river by having more legitimacy than the community. Most ecosystem management frameworks have been, thus far, unable to address these power imbalances. Furthermore, nature of contemporary issues such as climate change require more than just private property institutions, which manage common goods through the market and would be inaccessible to many, or communal ownership, which would be difficult to implement on a large scale (Vatn 2007). This implies the need to create novel policies that can take into account private, public, and communal resource management institutions (*ibid.*). Yashiro *et al.* (2013) propose the following:

> Contrary to the past where public and communal institutions managed public and collective goods and services and contrary to the new fashion with markets as the single most prevalent institution to manage all kinds of goods and services, we argue that an arrangement of various institutions comprising private, communal and public institutions is needed to produce the necessary conditions to maintain and deliver those goods and services that vary in degrees of *rivalry* and *excludability* but are however provided within a landscape. This approach will therefore lead to the maintenance of critical natural capital that is necessary for the sustainable supply of these services across temporal and spatial scales.

Some other terms that may contribute to the discussion around food banks are: social cost, externalities, and cost-shifting. *Social costs*, as promoted by 'new' institutionalists, refers to the sum of the costs that an actor (organization or individual) bears for a transaction and the externalized costs that it does not (Coase 1960). An *externality*, then, is the cost that is not paid in a market transaction, the burden of which often falls on society. The solution would be to internalize this cost back into the market. One example may be waste: an industry might bear municipal waste costs, but may not bear the costs not included in this tax of soil contamination or health impacts to near-by residents of the landfill site. As a result, Ronald Coase would recommend a form of 'bargaining', where government places a price on the negative effects of waste disposal. However, in environmental theory, the term 'externalities' has been criticized because in many cases costs cannot simply be internalized back into the market structure. As Martinez-Alier and O'Connor point out (2002), externalities should instead be viewed as cost-shifting successes, where industries can 'get away' with shifting costs onto society, first of all,

since some costs are not monetizable (Bromley and Vatn 1993), and second, many people are unable to participate in market transactions and can thus not benefit from them, i.e., "the poor sell cheap" (Martinez-Alier and O'Connor 2002, p. 382). They are forced to live with the pollution or do activism beyond the market. As Vatn notes, certain property regimes will define what type of cost-shifting is allowed (2005, p. 270). Thus, the 'social cost' of waste disposal cannot be addressed through market mechanisms alone, and requires power-aware and multi-criteria decision-making (Munda 2004), as well as policy institutions that leave the 'burden of proof' on those who are benefited by existing property regimes (Vatn 2005, p. 275).

Research objectives

What do all these methodological tools and definitions mean for analyzing food banks? An institutions framework has been argued to have more of an explanatory power than economic or political explanations alone. That is to say, analyzing a system based on the institutions and actors at play has benefits when it comes to explaining the mechanisms of econo-socio-politico-environmental processes.

In fact, as discussed above, the existing food bank literature, while presenting an exhaustive analysis on the role of state policies and welfare cuts on the rise in food banks, has often considered the role of industry and social movements to be secondary. An institutions perspective may be able to address this gap by analyzing the legal, policy, industry, social, and economic drivers of food bank history. In the following, we briefly discuss the implications of some of the above terms and definitions for the food bank literature, and how they will be applied in our methodology.

First, it would be interesting to know both how food banks are reliant on material resources, but also how they can be evaluated beyond just financial measures and to what extent their participants take on costs that have been shifted upon them by other institutions. An ecological economics framework, then, allows the 'food bank question' to be framed in a slightly different way, emphasizing the material base of food banks, the costs that participants pay that remain invisible, and which values guide activities.

Second, the food bank system might be considered especially appropriate to examine from an institutions perspective. The surplus food economy requires the decommodification of retail food, and therefore exists as a two-tier material economy, where financial resources are only used to maintain infrastructure, but rarely to exchange the primary commodity. Relationships

between retailers and food banks remain informal, and in Canada, there is a lack of formal policies controlling food surplus. In this way, the food surplus system cannot be measured on the basis of monetary exchange alone, nor can monetary flows explain its development. Thus, defining the formal and informal institutions at play, as well as the political and economic institutions relevant to food banks, can be helpful in delineating the limitations and rules by which food banks, corporations, and anti-hunger activists must act. The institutionalization of food banks, then, can be seen as a result of diverse actors bound and driven by certain rules, which we here call 'drivers.'

Third, understanding food surplus in terms of excludability and rivalry can also be helpful. As discussed above, food bank donations can be divided into private and public, national, provincial, and local scales, and are distributed on the basis of legitimacy. Food surplus, because it is limited in supply, can be seen as rivalrous. However, the types of food surplus vary at different scales; different organizations at different vertical levels may need to negotiate their access to it. In this way, local food banks might compete for access to a restaurant's extra food, but provincial-level food banks may compete for agreements with large food retailers. The food bank network manages these competing claims on an informal basis—often by need or level of legitimacy in the eyes of the suppliers. Thus, in Canada, with the absence of significant tax reductions and Good Samaritan laws, food surplus can also be considered *excludable* only on an informal level, that is, agreements between different actors are negotiated on the basis of informal relationships, and donations of surplus food occur through these relationships, often with little legal interference. Thus, it would be useful to observe the institutions such as policies and relationships that determine access to and distribution of surplus goods.

Fourth, even though food banks are not commonly considered part of ecosystems or human-environment relationships, a political ecology perspective can provide an analysis of power relations that may be lacking in ecological economics and institutions frameworks. First and foremost, food banks have often been seen as a result of a "demographic shift", namely, the growth of unemployment and the decrease in eligible welfare recipients. Furthermore, food bank volunteers are often characterized as simply driven by 'charitable' impulses and recipients are nothing more than 'vulnerable' populations, victims of poor policy. Political ecology might, instead, look at the regulations, power dynamics, and unequal access to resources that make the current state of affairs possible. It would also seek to understand the historical context that drove

a food bank to institutionalize, and why it has changed its practices. Such a framework would not conceptualize food banks as unwitting pawns or simply 'moral safety valves'. Instead, it would seek to understand the choices that food bank workers make, and why they are forced to manage and subsist off of food waste. A political ecology of food banks would seek to examine who wins and who loses in the social service sector, and what strategies are taken up by those who are losing. In addition, it would see food surplus as a site of uneven power relationships, observe how those relationships are managed, and how they are contested.

Fifth, a nested institutions framework can be helpful in describing the food banking system in Canada. Local food banks' access to provincial-level food surplus will be mediated by a provincial-level food bank or the government. However, they may have more access to smaller and diverse sources of food surplus such as from restaurants, public institutions, and small groceries, which may give them more leeway to engage politically, since they are not bound to satisfying large corporate donors. As such, different scales and types of food surplus distribution may have an impact on how food surplus is used and what demands food banks make. At the same time, distributions of power in any decision-making process would need to be accounted for, where both local and provincial-level food banks will have different needs and demands vis-à-vis the government. Thus it would be important to observe to power relations between food banks and between donors, and the difference in conformity to donors' demands that food banks display.

Sixth, food banks can also be considered an externality or a cost-shifting success of the food industry, which saves money on waste disposal through a wide network of volunteers that sort, process, and transport food waste (see Chapter 2 in this document). Following Vatn (2005), it is important to note that the property laws for food surplus favor the food industry, but the food industry is not charged with paying for the costs of disposing food, rather, these costs are carried by society, private donors, and recipients who are unable to take part in the commodified food system. What policies and developments in the food industry have led to this situation, how do food banks negotiate and contest this unequal power dynamic, and how should policies address this cost-shifting practice?

Finally, as discussed above, researchers have emphasized the increased institutionalization of food banks and as a result their increased homogeneity. If food banks are indeed becoming more homogenous, then it may be useful to study what mechanisms decreased diversity, and what

policies may help address this lack of diversity. If, on the contrary, new models of food banking are emerging, then it will be important to identify what institutions have caused this.

In sum, an institutions perspective leads us to ask some specific questions in relation to food banks, which enable us to address the gaps, identified above, in the current food bank literature:

- What drivers, as influenced by formal and informal institutions and diverse agents, led to the institutionalization of food banks in Canada?
- What institutions determine and manage access to food surplus?
- How do power dynamics determine unequal access to resources? How do food banks negotiate these power dynamics?
- What institutions enable the cost-shifting practice of the food industry, how is it contested by food banks, and how can policy-makers address this?
- Do food banks tend toward homogeneity, and what mechanisms have led to their isomorphism or heterogeneity?

Methodology

In order to address the above research questions, this research was comprised of two parts: an evaluation of the history of food banks and a case study of one food bank. The historical analysis was comprised of a literature review and a series of snowball interviews, while the case study was an in-depth analysis of one food bank in Montreal, Quebec, analyzing it from social, material, and financial perspectives. In the following, we first discuss how we operationalized variables and then we discuss both methodologies in detail.

Historical analysis

In the historical analysis, our main units of analysis were typology of food banks and formal and informal institutions driving the institutionalization of food banks. The typology of food banks is defined as the types of food banks existing as contrasted to the typology identified in the literature (centralized vs. alternative, ability to address root issues of inadequate government aid). The validity of this typology is measured through political activity of food banks and food bank programs. Political activity, and the types of political activity food banks engage in, can be seen as an indicator for how food banks address poor governance, and whether they are mostly apolitical, as defined by the literature. Political activity is defined as the (national or local)

advocacy programs food banks participate in, relationships with politicians, and participation in community events that challenge governance. A politically-involved food bank is defined as one that seeks to address issues beyond attaining food donations, such as calling for public assistance reforms, participating in protests, supporting certain political platforms, engaging with politicians, providing programs that seek to do more than provide charity and instead attempt to address wider issues such as isolation and community food insecurity, and encouraging members and recipients to become involved in political issues. An apolitical food bank is one that does not seek to address policy issues beyond securing food donations (e.g. corporate tax deductions for surplus food), does not engage with local or national policy with regard to food policy or public assistance, and limits itself to a charitable structure. As such, the diversity of food bank programs are also a variable measured to determine the type of food banks that currently exist. Formal institutions driving the institutionalization of food banks include policies, legal structures, contracts, incorporated organizations, formal networks (such as coalitions between food banks), and financial and material supplies managed by these organizations and networks. Informal institutions include affiliations, agreements, and relationships between organizations; social movements; social norms; cultural practices and traditions; and general market patterns that are not only driven by formal institutions, such as economic restructuring, trade liberalization, recessions, corporate practices (e.g. corporate social responsibility).

To measure these variables, literature was first collected by searching *Google Scholar* and *ScienceDirect* with the following key terms: "food banks", "emergency food aid", "food pantries", "Canada", "food assistance." Some articles were also identified through the snowball interview process, as described below. Articles and books were then cross-referenced in order to find others that did not appear in the initial search. Review of articles stopped when no further articles were found that corresponded to the research questions. A total of 67 useful articles were found (see Appendix A).[2] 35 of the 67 articles focused on Canada, 28 focused on the United States, and 4 focused on the UK. In this article, we focus mostly on the Canadian

[2] It is important to note here that there is a significant amount of literature that deals specifically with the nutritional content of food donations received from food banks. Because these articles do not address the questions of this study—the typology of food banks and their history—they were not included in the literature review. In addition, literature that dealt primarily with questions of food access and food insecurity—e.g. where food insecure households were obtaining their food—were similarly discarded, because, while important, they also did not to engage with our own research questions.

situation, but also discuss the United States and the UK where relevant.

Each document was then reviewed with the following questions in mind, as derived from the variables identified in our objectives:

- **Definition.** What constitutes a food bank?
- **History.** How can we describe the history of food banks? What were some key events? How has the discussion around food banks changed?
- **Typology.** What kinds of food banks exist? How are they typified?
- **Policy.** What policies helped drive the creation and institutionalization of food banks?
- **Food industry.** What was the role of the food industry in the history of food banks?
- **Other drivers.** Are there any other variables that drove the growth of food banks?

A table was then created to classify this information.

The second section of this research was undertaken only when the literature review did not yield adequate results on some of the research questions. More precisely, the literature found did not discuss many of the specific policies that had led to the institutionalization of food banks, often made weak or unclear causal claims, and had little to no information about the relationships between food banks and the food industry. For example, while it was claimed by many researchers that food banking allowed government to "turn a blind eye" to the rising issue of hunger (Riches 2011; Poppendieck 1998), the exact mechanism by which this happened was not specified. A snowball sampling interview process (see Biernacki and Waldorf 1981; Small 2009) was chosen to address this gap. To do this, we first drew up a list of prominent researchers, food bank organizations, and politicians, as gathered from the literature review. Then, we established a set of questions for respondents (see Appendix B). These questions were meant to test hypotheses in the literature review and gather information about the history of food banks that was not initially available. After receiving approval from our institution's ethics committee (Appendix D), we contacted those on our initial list by email, and scheduled interviews. Each interview was conducted by phone, about an hour in length, semi-structured, and notes were taken throughout the interview. We also asked for any documents that could help in addressing our research questions. The interviews led to a second list of contacts, and as more interviews were completed, the list of future contacts diminished, as did new information about the history of food banks. By this time, some small gaps in our data did appear. For example, it was found that there was little information about the early history of food banks in British Columbia. To

address this, previous interviewees were asked specifically if they could recommend any contacts. In total, 22 respondents were identified, 20 were contacted, and 14 were interviewed (see Appendix C). Only 14 interviews were conducted because by this time 'saturation' was reached, which is in accordance with standard snowball sampling methodologies (Small 2009). Each interviewee had a prominent role in the history of food banks or still was highly involved in the food banking network. As such, they can be considered to be 'keystone' informants with highly specialized and nuanced knowledge of food banks and their history. Since several interviewees were also academics, interviews also informed selection of literature reviewed, as some interviewees had access to or were knowledgeable about documents not initially found in the literature review. In order to protect the anonymity of the interviewees who participated in the research while maintaining clarity of the background of each interviewee, quotes were identified by the interviewees´ roles. These roles were listed as researcher, food bank staff, food bank network staff, and food bank expert, and this information is qualified where possible. Finally, notes from each interview were added to a table, similar in structure to the one developed for the literature review.

Case study

Literature review and snowball interview methodologies still left some gaps in our knowledge of food banks. We wanted to know in more detail the role of the food industry and various governmental bodies in the functioning of a food bank. This also involved observing the power relationships that a food bank must navigate, as well as limits and barriers to achieving their own goals.

Following our research objectives, the case study was designed to measure aspects of food banks that were not possible to evaluate through a literature review snowball interviews alone. This included formal and informal institutions, the material and financial flow, labor, social cost, and measurable and immeasurable benefits for volunteers. Formal institutions involved in the maintenance of the food bank included policies and laws, organizational structure, official relationships with other groups (such as suppliers and wider coalitions), donors, and funders. Informal institutions included historical context, neighborhood demographics, social norms, attitudes of staff, recipients, and volunteers, activities of the food bank, and political strategies. Material flow is defined as the amount of supplies, by weight, that a food bank receives, donates,

and disposes of. Financial flow, similarly, is defined as the amount of finances, measured in $CAD, that a food bank receives, uses, and loses. Labor is measured according to time spent on tasks in hours. Social costs are defined as the total costs of food banking activity, including health effects, monetary remuneration, and food distributed. Measurable benefits are defined as those benefits volunteers and recipients receive from the food bank that can be quantified, e.g., food access. Immeasurable benefits are defined as those that cannot be quantified, e.g., social support, addressing loneliness. 'Total measurable unpaid costs' are measured in monetary equivalent, namely, minimum wage multiplied by total hours worked by volunteers, subtracted by total remuneration in the form of welfare and food (where amount of food received is translated into monetary value).

To understand how these processes function in our case study, we needed to use a variety of methodologies. Over the span of one year, we frequented the food bank at multiple times per month and took note of and participated in activities. Prior to starting this process, the staff of the food bank was contacted and they gave us permission to complete the study (Appendix D). After some time of contact and discussion with the food bank staff and growing familiarity with the operations, we decided on the following methodologies, based on both the food bank's needs and our own research questions:

- Participatory ethnographic observation research (LeCompte & Schensul 2010), in which activities, observations, and discussions were recorded and evaluated. This included attending meetings between the food bank and other organizations or local politicians, helping to run collective kitchens, helping to pick up donations from the centralized food bank warehouse, Moisson Montreal, and attending the annual general meeting of the organization. As with other participatory studies, we found that our own familiarity and on-going rapport with the staff and volunteers benefited the study greatly, as it allowed more in-depth questions to be asked and led to more accurate observations. The time spent doing ethnographic research also included a two-week time budgeting analysis (Andorka 1987; Pentland *et al.* 2002) from June 23rd to July 5th, 2014. This was important to understand the distribution of tasks at the food bank and the hours spent by volunteers and staff.
- Surveys of recipients, volunteers, for which a series of questions was developed that would be valuable to both the food bank and our own research. These surveys were

completed during the month of June 2014. Surveys were then entered into a spreadsheet and analyzed using simple data analysis.

- Personal interviews with food bank staff, until saturation was reached and no new information was available. Interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Questions reflected both our own research questions and the needs of the food bank (Appendix F). Personal interviews were recorded, transcribed, and, if need be, translated by an assistant. Important information from interviews was coded according to our research questions. Names were coded according to the staff's position.
- Analysis of archival documents and publications of the food bank, such as annual reports and minutes of meetings.

After developing these methodologies, we submitted them for ethics approval, which was accepted in September 2013 (Appendix D).

There are some limitations to our methodology. First, as with any case study, there is no way to know that this food bank is representative of other food banks in Canada. Our data presented below is structured with this in mind. Yet, following Small (2009), case studies can be relevant because they reveal social mechanisms and, through in-depth analysis, can provide a counter-example to accepted claims in the literature. Our analysis shows that this was indeed a valuable methodology: this food bank does present an alternative picture to the existing typology of food banks and a comprehensive evaluation of its institutions reveals mechanisms that have, until now, not been accounted for in the literature. Second, the time during which we did our study was, as is expected at a food bank, a very unstable period, with several new staff replacing old staff and a lot of new services being developed. This greatly affected our ability to measure with consistency any of our variables, and we have sought to adjust our analysis accordingly. Yet, as will be seen further, this shows how food banks may address their own barriers and shift their activities according to need. Third, while staff had suggested this two-week period for the time budgeting analysis as it fell on one of the more stable times of the year, it so happened that there was construction on the street, severely affecting how many clientele came to the food bank. Nevertheless, our data does bring to light some key insights on the distribution of labor at the food bank. Furthermore, these insights are separate from any "normal" time period at the food bank, as they concern the mechanism by which the food bank functions, regardless of unpredictable variables.

Chapter 3: A historical analysis of food banks in Canada

Here we explore the history, drivers, and typology of food banks in Canada, presenting results from a literature review of relevant data and snowball interviews of key food bank researchers and professionals. First we outline the context of the changing Canadian welfare state and economy. After this, we discuss relevant changes to the food industry and food consumption trends. This is then followed by a discussion of the history of food banks in detail, along with the typologies found in the literature and discussed in the interviews. All interviewees are cited anonymously, for further information on their background refer to Appendix C. Using an environmental institutions perspective (Vatn 2005), we determine the formal and informal institutions, such as governmental policies, cultural norms, and relationships between food banks and other organizations that had a role in driving the institutionalization and continuing growth of food banks in Canada. Finally, we analyze our findings through a detailed timeline and a conceptual map of the drivers that have influenced the history of food banks in Canada.

Our results lead us to present several key conclusions. First, snowball interviews were helpful in filling some of the gaps in the literature. Many interviewees asserted that public assistance through cash transfers would not fully address the food bank issue, as they are fueled by corporate donations and a high-waste economy. The research suggests that many food banks are quite politically involved, often challenging local governments to address inequality and poverty. In addition food banks remain quite heterogeneous and often do not fit within the centralized/community-oriented typology in the literature. These findings emphasize the need to acknowledge the benefits of food banks while holding the food industry accountable for its cost-shifting practices. Finally, we suggest that academic literature on food banks has largely taken a blanket non-acceptance stance on food banks, grounded in a 'welfare liberalism' ideology, which runs the risk of missing the complexities of the relationship between the welfare state, the food industry, and the food recovery system. Finally, our study casts doubt on the ability of cash transfers to fully address inequality in Canada. Since a strong welfare system ensures that more people can become consumers of the corporate food industry, without addressing the unsustainability of the food system, it would only exacerbate the cost-shifting practices of corporate agribusinesses. As such, our study provides evidence for the need to pair wealth

redistribution with support of autonomous food organizations and a joined-up approach to inequality and hunger (Barling *et al.* 2002; Toronto Food Policy Council 1994).

Welfare and the economy

Like the U.S., Canada had started instituting a state-provisioned social safety net in the 1940s. By 1971, Canada had a complex array of programs, including the Unemployment Insurance Act (1940), the National Housing Act (1944), Family Allowances (1945), Old Age Security (1952), Canadian Pension Plan (1965), the Canada Assistance Plan (1966), Medicare (1966) (Lightman and Riches 2000). These programs, while not perfect, took the form of entitlements, where Canadians had the right to access benefits if they were eligible. In-so-doing, Canadian policy-makers followed the steps of Keynesian welfare economics; where support of unemployed citizens was seen as a way to pacify an increasingly unhappy working class while creating a class of consumers able to participate in the market, further driving growth (Piven and Cloward 2012). This had the secondary benefit of addressing labor demands, inequality, and low living standards. It is important to note that these programs also came with, and were primarily possible because of, unprecedented economic growth in Canada (Esping-Andersen 1989).

In 1971 the government expanded the unemployment program. However, later that year the first oil crisis starting having its effect. This crisis, which was supposedly caused by oil scarcity, initiated discourse about limits to oil. This fed into the environmental movement, where it was eventually argued that there were natural 'limits to growth' to the economy (Meadows *et al.* 1972; Mitchell 2011). In 1974, the first World Food Conference indicated rising attention to the issue of hunger (Maxwell & Smith 1992). The result was a general increase in public concern over the issues of food waste and poverty (Poppendieck 1995).

In 1976, the Trudeau government initiated a process of decentralization of government responsibility, giving provinces certain sovereignty over their budgets and therefore welfare programs. In 1978, the Canadian dollar declined against the U.S., increasing food exports and increasing costs for farmers, leading to a rise in rural poverty and a rise in migration to cities (Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

A second economic crisis affected Canada in 1982-1983. During the years of 1981-1984, those receiving unemployment benefits rose by 67% (Chaulk 1986). This was due to a sudden decline in industry, particularly mining and lumber in western Canada. The rise of rural poverty led to rural flight and migration toward cities (Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

In 1988 a new government was elected that was committed to establishing free trade agreements with the U.S., in the hope that it would speed Canada towards recovery. The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was ratified in 1988. The year 1989 seemed more hopeful, since the Canadian House of Commons had voted unanimously to end child poverty by the year 2000. Yet, from 1989-1996, child poverty rates jumped from 14.5% to 20.9% (Lightman and Riches 2000).

In addition, the 1980s saw a series of cuts to provincial public assistance programs and the start of extensive economic and employment restructuring. In Edmonton, shelter allowance received cuts in 1983. In Saskatchewan provincial welfare programs were cut in 1984, and in B.C., eligibility criteria for the GAIN program was tightened (Riches 1986).

On the whole, the 1970s and 1980s saw a sudden shift in the Canadian policy landscape. Unexpected economic crises, industrial decline, and mass lay-offs decreased confidence in the welfare system, while increasing neoconservative discourse where cutbacks to state programs were advocated, to be replaced by reliance on the market (Chaulk 1986; Riches 1986). These decades also saw a rise in government deficit, which resulted in rising discourse about a 'battle' against government debt (Lightman and Riches 2000).

Despite optimism near the end of the 1980s, 1991-1992 saw another recession. This recession has been viewed as having more of an impact on the Canadian labor market than its predecessor, as it also involved losses in the service sector, possibly caused by the FTA (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994). This was followed by extensive cuts to federal spending as initiated by the liberal government. Federal transfer payments to provinces were primarily targeted (Lightman and Riches 2000). The number of unemployed workers in Canada eligible for employment insurance benefits fell from 83% to about 36% during the years of 1990-1996. Yet, in 1993, almost 3 million Canadians (10% of the population) used social assistance programs, double the number of those who relied on these programs in 1980 (Lightman and Riches 2000). This meant that a significant part of Canadians who were unable to find work were also unable to access public assistance, since eligibility restrictions had been put in place in many provinces. By 1994, 1.5 million people were out of work (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994).

Despite visible effects of the FTA on the labor market, Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. The intention of both policies was to facilitate trade and deregulate national protections on trade. The result was that Canadian manufacturers and

agricultural workers were more and more exposed to international prices, lowering protections in case of rising costs. The direct effects of this on the agricultural and food service sectors will be further discussed below.

As a continuation of government cuts on spending, the federal government repealed the Canada Assistance Plan in 1996, to be replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). The former functioned as a basic entitlement according to need alone, discouraging 'workfare' (entitlements tied to seeking employment), while the latter was tied to employment (Lightman and Riches 2000).

By 1998, cuts in government spending had resulted in net positive government income. Partly as a result of this, in 1998, the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) was introduced, a significant event in that it was the first major public assistance program at the federal level since 1971. This program increased benefits to families with children; however, it was tied to employment and was therefore unfavorable toward single mothers. It is argued that this program, while a positive development, exemplified the 'commodification' of the welfare system, where public assistance came to be seen, not as an right, but as tied to the market (Lightman and Riches 2000).

Since this time there was a restructuring of welfare programs in late 1990-early 2000s, and a minor phase of economic growth in 2001-2005, which included the increasing development of oil extraction from the Tar Sands in Alberta (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2008; Timilsina 2005). In 2004 CHST was divided into Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer. However, in 2007-2008, another global economic crisis led to further rise in unemployment to pre-2001 levels (Trading Economics 2014).

Food industry and food consumption trends

In the following, we discuss changes to the agro-food industry in Canada in the past four decades. This is made difficult by the fact that little data exists about pre-1980s agricultural sector. However, the wider extent of changes can be seen when noticing some basic facts: in 2006, 80% of Canada's population lived in cities, compared to 62% in 1951 and 76% in 1981 (Statistics Canada 2011a). The total number of farms has declined by 56% from 1951 to 1996 (Simard *et al.* 2000). Total rural-to-urban migration has steadily increased during this time, with the highest increases of migration during the years of 1966-1977 and 1981-1986 (Rothwell *et al.* 2002). This indicates that Canada, like many other countries, has seen a large demographic shift,

which has sped up in the past few decades.

Important changes in policies are numerous. The Two-price Wheat Program, which had been established in 1967 to protect Canada's wheat farmers, was terminated in 1988 due to its being incompatible with the then-under-negotiation of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA). As a result, bread prices increased and farmer income decreased, eventually resulting in another wave of rural poverty (Qualman and Wiebe 2002).

In 1989, the FTA was signed. Part of the U.S. policy at the time was to deregulate protected foreign agricultural markets so that its own agricultural sector was better able to compete, and Canada's agricultural sector had been heavily supported by the state (*ibid.*). The FTA was one tool to speed up this process, while Canadian politicians argued that it would increase agricultural exports, thereby addressing the recession. As a result, the FTA brought Canadian agriculture into competition with that of the U.S. while further stripping protections to farmers. Beyond the agricultural sector, the FTA also had the effect of further exacerbating Canadian industry decline, since Canada had a relatively regulated labor market (Lightman and Riches 2000). As a result of these changes to agricultural policy, in 1988, farm leaders complained that Canada had no agricultural policy; rather, it had a "trade policy that masquerades as farm policy" (*ibid.*). The sentiment was that since food was a unique good distinct from other consumer commodities, it required special protections and regulations, rather than being subject to free trade policy.

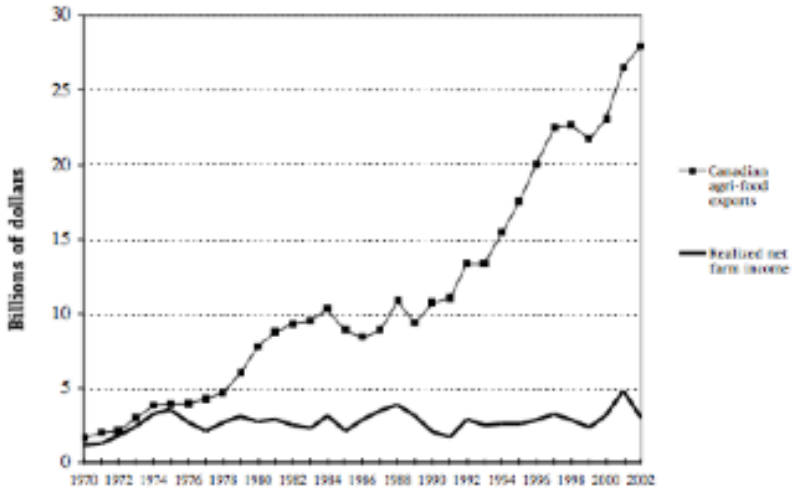

Figure 1: Canadian agri-food exports and realized net farm income: 1970-2002. (Source: Qualman and Wiebe 2002)

As can be seen in Figure 1, a drastic rise of food exports was already initiated before the FTA, but continued to increase immediately after the free trade agreement was in place. This was further buffered by the signing of NAFTA in 1994. Yet, as exports increased, farm income did not. The proceeds in the agricultural sector further declined and farmers increasingly suffered from high debts.

In fact, starting in the 1990s there were further significant changes to the Canadian agri-food landscape. By 1996 food exports reached $20 billion, rising to almost $30 billion in 2006, with imports seeing a similar rise with $8 billion in 1990, $13 billion in 1996, and about $24 billion in 2006 (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2008). The general trend seems toward an agricultural sector that has increased the amounts of imports and exports, is more and more owned by large corporations, where smaller farmers became forced to seek supplemental work, the total agricultural workforce is declining, and total amount of farms are declining (*ibid.*, Qualman and Wiebe 2002). This is highlighted by Figures 3(a)-3(c) below.

The centralization of the agricultural sector, leading to the loss of wealth in farming communities and 'rural flight', was also paired with cuts in federal farm spending. From 1991-1998, total spending on agriculture was cut by half, from roughly $10 billion in 1991-1992 to $5 billion in 1997-1998 (figures before 1991 are not available). By 2002, farm debt reached $40.8 billion, which was a 50% increase since 1998 (Qualman and Wiebe 2002). While total public

spending on agriculture has increased since then, with the largest share in programs to support farmers, it has decreased as a share of GDP (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2008).

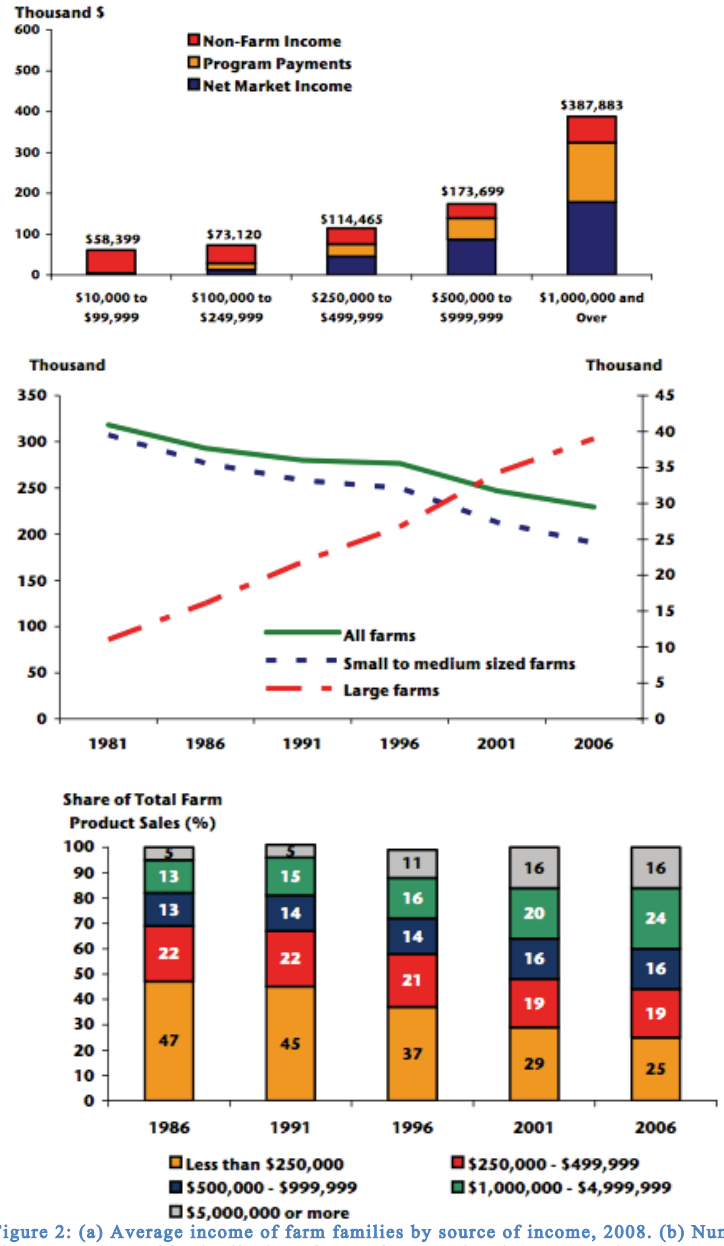

Figure 2: (a) Average income of farm families by source of income, 2008. (b) Number of farms by revenue class, 1981-2006. (c) Distribution of gross farm receipts by revenue class (2005 constant $), 1986-2006. (Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2008).

These patterns also had an effect on the food processing and retail sectors, which became increasingly centralized and foreign-owned. By 2002, 79% of Canadian wheat flour mills, 90% of pasta plants, 88% of malt plants, and 74% of beef-packing plants were foreign-owned. As an example, Archer Daniels Midland, a U.S. firm, owned 47% of Canada's milling capacity in 2002, 30% in 1995, and 0% in 1985 (Qualman and Wiebe 2002). Food retail became dominated by mega-distributors such as Loblaws, Sobeys, and Metro, while foreign-owned retailers such as Walmart and Costco have recently challenged their monopoly. In addition, the number of retail stores has seen a steady decline (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada 2008, see Figure 4). The increasing centralization of the food industry also suggests a centralization of transport, storage, and therefore disposal of food. The Canadian food industry has seen a growth of 2.4% per year in GDP since 1990, however, this growth is largely concentrated in the food processing sectors (called food, beverage, and tobacco, or FBT), while the production of bulk foods has remained almost entirely stable (*ibid.*). This indicates that the Canadian food system has seen an increase in processed foods and new food products, which are more wasteful in terms of packaging and often see a higher failure rate.

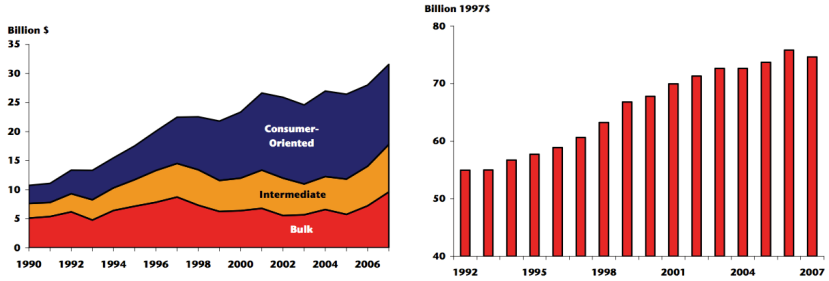

Figure 3: (a) Canadian agriculture and agri-food exports, 1990-2007. (b) Value of FBT processing shipments, 1992-2007. (Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2008)

In addition, the retail sector, as with other consumer-oriented industries, has seen an increase in the use of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. CSR, as it is practiced now, has its roots in responses to consumer boycotts of corporate products, particularly around issues of health, environmentalism, and corporate support of unjust regimes in the 1960s and 1970s (Klein 2000; cited in Healy *et al.* 2013, p.457). It is an acknowledgement by corporations that they have responsibility to society as well as their shareholders. As such, it is a voluntary commitment taken on by corporations themselves to limit their negative impacts. Yet, CSR often will also be driven by concern over risk management, becoming a tool for buying 'social license to operate'.

Often, CSR campaigns will even be outsourced to third parties such as consultancies, advertising, and media corporations. As such, many have accused CSR of leading to 'greenwashing', where it can easily become a tool to advertise corporate goodwill while not making any fundamental changes to their 'bottom line' (Healy *et al.* 2013, p. 457-459). In the case of Canadian companies, researchers have commented on the role that Purolator, the CBC, Kraft, Procter and Gamble, Heinz, and Campbell Soup have played in advertising themselves as concerned about hunger in Canada, either through sponsoring food bank activities or initiating their own well-advertised food drives or fundraisers (Hawkes and Webster 2005; Riches 2011; Robinson 2014). Despite advertised concern about hunger, there has to date been little documented activity by food retailers to lower food prices to be more accessible to low-income users despite wide profit margins, or to work with policy-makers to address the issue of surplus food.

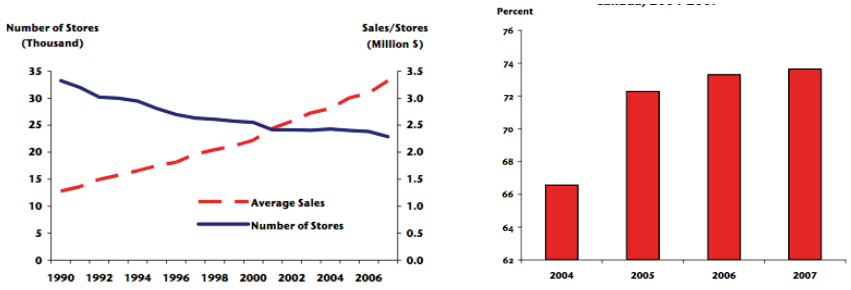

Figure 4: (a) Number of Canadian stores and average sales, 1990-2007. (b) Market share of top 4 food retailers in Canada, 2004-2007. (Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2008)

There have also been changes in consumption habits. Average individual expenditures on food increased from $2,500 in 1982 to $3,200 in 2007 (in 2002 $CAD). According to Statistics Canada, "The 1.9% increase in food expenditures [from 1992-1996] did not keep pace with the inflation rate for food as measured by the Consumer Price Index, which went up 6% during the same period. This indicates that Canadians have been literally tightening their belts when it comes to food" (2001, p. C-6). Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada notes that while expenditure on food has increased, the share of total individual expenditure has been declining, with 17% of expenditures spent on food in 1982 and 13% in 2007. However, the same does not hold for low-income populations, who spent 15.6% of income on food in 2006 (2008).

Changes in food available at retailers, and the centralization of retail stores, has led to consumer deskilling, which most negatively affects women, who, despite increasing expectations

to find employment, are still forced into unpaid care-giving roles in Western society and tend to provide food for households. It also can have drastic effects on marginalized populations such as First Nations or migrants, who may not afford more expensive and healthier foods while being unable to access foods appropriate to their own culture and food preparation skills (Jaffe and Gertler 2006).

In sum, while both agriculture and retail sectors have been increasingly centralized, with a rising reliance on food imports and exports, as well as a centralization of food transport and waste sources, there has been a parallel trend where consumers, especially low-income consumers, spend more on food and are unable to make adequate food choices.

Food banks

In the following, we discuss the drivers of food bank history as informed by our interviews. To preserve anonymity, when quoting we refer to coded titles (see Appendix C). Otherwise, we give basic details in order to contextualize the information. Any facts included herein were collected from the interviews unless stated otherwise.

In 1981, in Edmonton, Alberta, churches and community groups were overwhelmed with increasing need for food and increasing donations from the private sector. Churches then decided that they would sponsor one organization that distributed food. The first food bank was formed, now called the Edmonton Food Bank, through a coalition between private businesses, churches, and community groups, in an effort to centralize the food they were receiving and at the same time redirect individuals in need to a specific location. From the start, this food bank was politically active, often engaging with local politicians and advocating the need for increase in welfare benefits. Early organizers were often primarily concerned with the rise of food waste.

The founding of the first food bank was closely followed by another depression in Canada in the years of 1982 and 1983. From 1981-1984, those receiving unemployment benefits rose by 67% (Chaulk 1986). At this time, the number of food banks started increasing, with 75 in 1984 and 94 in 1985 (Riches 1986). Looking closer, this included 47 food banks in British Columbia and 53 in 1985. The tremendous rise in the amount of food banks in B.C. can be explained by two factors: the collapse of mining and lumber industries and the strength of unions in the area. At the time, whole towns became unemployed, and union-affiliated organizations, with the help of union and government funding, responded by instituting food banks for their members, which

were often also set up as stores. The goals of these food banks were to address the emergency situation and increase union participation, with the final goals of worker solidarity and increasing pressure on government to address rising precarity.

By 1988, the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB; later Food Banks Canada (FBC)) was formed, with the goal of becoming a network for food banks that could exchange strategies between food banks and gather information about hunger in Canada in order to address policy. While CAFB was partly modeled after Second Harvest, the U.S. food bank network, it differed in several aspects. First, it did not receive any funding from the government, and relied on corporate donors. Second, it was less preoccupied with food distribution, and at first had no staff—the board, consisting of directors from different food banks, did most of the work. Third, since food banks in Canada were quite diverse, CAFB shied away from being too bureaucratic and imposing certain operating models on its members, as had been the case with Second Harvest. As such, the network may have further institutionalized food banks in Canada, but it also sought to keep food banks decentralized and autonomous. One interviewee noted, "For many years, Food Banks Canada was one staff or a few staff. From 1988-2001 it was a very limited organization. In 2003-4-5 it started growing". The organization also had a 'sunset clause' in its original constitution, meaning that they would strive to close operations in the future. Yet, instead, this clause was eventually removed once they realized they had become a permanent organization.

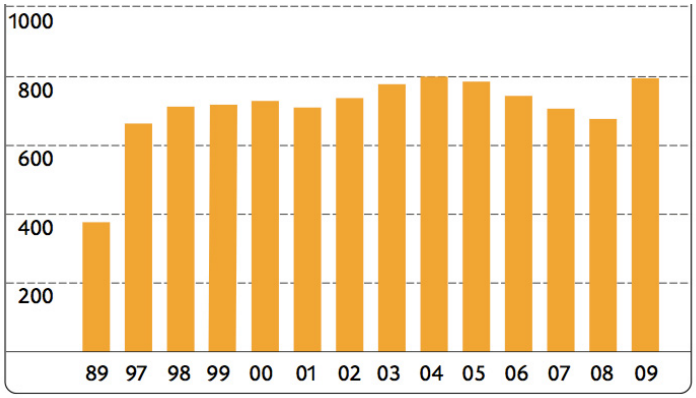

Figure 5: Number of people assisted by food banks in Canada: 1989-2009 (March of each year, in thousands, data unavailable for 1989-1997). (Source: Food Banks Canada 2009)

In 1991 there were 1800 food programs in 300 communities in Canada, most concentrated in

large cities (Wilson 1999). By 1994 there were 450 food banks, which distributed approximately 22,700 tons of food. In 1995, CAFB set up a National Food Sharing System, supported by Kraft, Heinz, Procter and Gamble, and Campbell that distributed food across the country, often through donated transport from food retail companies or Canadian Rail (Thériault and Yadlowski 1999; Hawkes and Webster 2005). By 1999, there were 698 food banks. In 1998-1999, 10% of Canadians, or 3 million people, were living in what can be considered food insecure households. By this time, CAFB had started performing yearly surveys of food banks in Canada. According to this data, from 1989-2009, 400,000 to 800,000 Canadians accessed food banks, an increase occurring simultaneously to increases in employment rates and decreases in welfare recipients at the time (Wilson 1999). In 2003, there were now 639 food banks with 2,648 affiliated agencies. This number remained relatively stable for a while, with 615 food banks in 2008 and about 670,000 people served (Food Banks Canada 2008). However, this number shot up in 2008-2009, with an 18% increase in people served, and by 2011 there were 900 food banks feeding 867,000 people per month, a rise of 26% from 2008 (Food Banks Canada 2011). By this time, Food Banks Canada distributed 7,700 tons of food in Canada, while an estimated total of 90,000 tons of food were distributed by food banks throughout the country (Food bank expert 3). The amount of people attending food banks is linked to but not representative of food insecurity in Canada. In 2008, 11.3% of households and 3.4 million Canadians were food insecure, with 450,000 more in 2011 (Tarasuk *et al.* 2011).

The amount of food available at food banks also seems to be changing. Food banks saw a steady rise in use from 1989-2004, with a short decline in 2005-2008. However, one interviewee who worked at a food bank network organization noted that the decline or increase of recipients often had little bearings on the total amount of food distributed; food banks simply limited the size of baskets or imposed limits on the amount of visits allowed for each user. Furthermore, he noted that food banks had been buying more and more of their supplies to account for the lack of food they receive. Yet, it was also observed that there has been an increase in the amount of local organizations switching to the food bank model, at least in the Toronto area, because access to food surplus is becoming easier and more centralized. Staff at a Quebec food bank network noted a similar trend, where "More and more products are at the end of their life. There is less quantity. Regulations are changing, and distributers hesitate to donate. Distributors are far more efficient, and there is less waste". One interviewee who had helped start the first food bank in Edmonton

and continued to be involved with the food banking movement until recently, noted that "food banks have not grown exponentially, they don't reflect the real need. They give out food according to rationing". He also noted that currently there is less supply for food banks because "inefficiency has gone down… because of the food industry, there's less and less surplus". This reflects reports from the literature as early as 1994 in which food bank donations have decreased, as there is a limit to the amount of commercial food waste available, while they are not an adequate indicator for food insecurity itself (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994; Tarasuk *et al* 2011).

The above data suggests that the rise in food bank use and the resources available to food banks are linked, however, it is difficult to determine exactly what this relationship is. As more resources become available, more organizations may shift to food distribution, but as recipients increase, these organizations are often more and more forced to buy extra supplies or staff and volunteers may work longer hours. Furthermore, the confluence of the rise in food banks and economic restructuring suggest that a rise in precarious employment seemed to have more of a direct influence on food bank use than changes in welfare did. As such, it is not so easy to measure the link between welfare rolls, unemployment, and food bank use, since there are many confounding variables such as amount of food available, amount of volunteers, financial resources, and rise in part-time or low-income employment.

Further examples from our interviews, however, supported the notion that economic changes, not welfare changes, were the primary drivers. In 1989 (not 1984, as stated by Hawkes and Webster 2005), the Metro Food Bank Halifax, now Feed Nova Scotia, vowed to close its doors by 1994. The announcement was intended as an action to force the government to pay attention to the issue of hunger and poverty, while signaling to other food banks to step back and ask where their efforts should really be going. Their goals were achieved, as they initiated discussions with the current government of Nova Scotia and food banks throughout Canada did become more involved in anti-poverty advocacy. The prime minister of Nova Scotia set up a committee to study the issue. However, by 1994 the food bank was still operating, and still operates today. Hawkes and Webster note that this was due to 'the moral imperative' of feeding those in need. However, a staff member at the food bank did suggest that while they were partly unable to close because people needed their service, to her a key reason was that another recession had struck and the government, even though it did have the intention of addressing the

issue, did not have the funds to support welfare. As the interviewee noted, “it was through no fault through ours or theirs, the economy changed then”.

To one food bank expert, the rise of food banks is endemic to an economy with less employment.

> The availability of well-paying jobs for people who don’t have education is just so different now. People are working jobs that just don’t pay enough. The east coast is a culture that was based on resource extraction. If you look west and you think about forestry. These are the big things, people just aren’t able to access jobs and enough money to pay the bills. And welfare *was* more generous. But I don’t think the decrease in welfare explains the rise of food banks necessarily.

One food bank director argued that the rise of food banks was directly linked to economic conditions and inequality: “There’s three modern recessions. 80s, 90s, 2008-2009. If you follow that graph, you look at food bank movement, look at rich and poor and see that trending and you follow the money."

Similarly, one example from Food Banks Canada’s yearly reports confirms the link between food bank attendance and the economy. Alberta saw a growing economy in the first years of the 21st century, however, as oil prices went down there were many layoffs, sharply increasing the reliance of former oil workers on food banks. In Alberta, the number of employed people using food banks is twice the national average, suggesting that many people migrating to work at the Tar Sands do receive work but do not receive adequate wages (Food Banks Canada 2009). This was corroborated by another interviewee:

> In Alberta there are more working poor using food banks. We have the lowest minimum wage of the rest of Canada. Because it’s a hot economy people are coming to Edmonton and Alberta looking for work because they haven’t been able to secure work in their own communities.

Importantly, this example indicates that a growing economy in one province may not in itself address poor wages. As rural and industrial employment declined in the rest of Canada, workers migrated to Alberta looking for work. The high attendance of food banks in Alberta, and the spike in attendance since the 2008 recession, suggests that this province has an increasingly itinerant and precarious working class, despite employment opportunities.

One interviewee who had been involved with starting CAFB, noted that food banks were primarily an emergency response to the fact that people were lacking adequate food “quietly”, and the notion that they should be shut down “was a little naïve”. From the start there was an

agreement that the emergency response aspect should be time-limited. The earliest food banks, he noted, did not rely on corporate funding alone, rather, "the food banks were sustained mainly by volunteers and in-kind services and goods." Yet, to him, "the thing that changed that was the recession that hit in 1990." During this time, food banks were forced to further institutionalize and look for alternative, more reliable sources of funding, shifting away from an ad-hoc model. This suggests that while the lack of public assistance was an important factor in growing attendance, economic restructuring was the primary cause, which was then enabled by food supplies from food retailers and made worse by a lack of government response.

In conclusion, the history of food banks links closely with the history of Canadian recessions and changes in the food industry. Food banks, which had been more ad-hoc in structure in the 1980s, were forced to seek stable sources of funding and food supplies during the recession of the early 1990s. With the lack of coherent government support, food banks turned to an increasingly centralized food industry, enabled by free trade policies and the decrease in agricultural labor, as well as economic restructuring due to industrial decline. As such, the history and institutionalization of food banks can be seen as primarily linked to economic changes and the food industry, rather than changes in welfare policy.

Typology of food banks

In the following, we discuss the typology of food banks as informed by our snowball interviews. This includes the sources of funding that food banks receive; their political involvement and how they are affected by policies and economic shifts; their relationship to politicians, the food industry, and the media; and other relevant institutions that affect food banks. We then summarize the type of food banks that exist, and compare this to the literature.

Most food bank staff we interviewed noted that almost all of their funding came from corporations, while a part of their funding came from individuals and the government. In addition, several staff noted that they do apply for government funding on many occasions, but often will not receive it or receive unpredictable quantities for specific small projects. One respondent noted that erratic government funding was an impediment for their operations, since they did not want to rely on corporate financing, which was unpredictable. As a result, one of their main demands was stable government funding so that they could pursue their operations more efficiently and reliably. Yet one interviewee, a food bank director, noted that from the start

their food bank had been advised by U.S. food bank organizers to not rely on government funding, and therefore they avoided dependency on public funds. One interviewee involved in union organizing in the 1980s, when discussing the initial growth of food banks in B.C., noted that the government did not want to fund them because they didn't want to "enter into that debate [about whether food banks take away government responsibility]". Yet, according to one researcher, there is an increasing amount of public funds available to food banks, mostly from the public health sector. When asked about corporate funding, other food bank staff were hesitant in discussing how this limited their operations. One interviewee who worked at an alternative food organization suggested that corporate funding had an impact on the activities of food banks, noted, "They seem to be moving away from things like minimum wage because I think that alienates big corporate donors".

Interviewees also noted the political activity of food banks. Several, especially provincial and national organizations, were involved with pushing for tax deductions to farmers and corporations for donating their food waste. However, all staff of food banks interviewed noted that they also advocated for other policies, such as minimum wage, social housing, basic or guaranteed income, family tax benefits, child welfare, senior benefits, and wider poverty reduction initiatives. Several interviewees insisted that food banks had had a significant role in pushing for welfare legislations. As one long-time food bank activist noted, "If you look at any newspaper archive, food banks are the leading voice on hunger and poverty. Most gains that have happened were where food banks have been involved". Several food bank staff mentioned their involvement with various anti-poverty initiatives on several levels. One interviewee, who was otherwise critical of food bank´s political activity, noted that big food banks "have been some of the loudest voices on [income security] policy". One food bank director was positive about the role of Food Banks Canada, noting that in recent years they had become more active in pushing for federal policies. This was confirmed by staff at Food Banks Canada, who noted that the organization has been involved with federal advocacy—having a major role in ensuring that $1.9 billion was allocated for affordable housing programs—is currently working on senior assistance, and has for a long time pushed for policies to create more blue-collar employment. Yet, it was also noted that a lot of smaller food banks are not involved politically, it depended on the area they were located and the staff. One food bank director lamented that there were not as many large activist groups working for anti-poverty issues, and that many food banks had also

become less actively politically involved.

It was also noted that food banks that operated at different scales also were politically active in different ways. In this way, Food Banks Canada was involved in federal policy, while provincial networks were involved with provincial policy, city-level food banks were primarily involved with municipal policy, and smaller, local food banks would often be engaged with community groups or different coalitions such as the *Table de concertation sur la faim et le développement social du Montréal Métropolitain* (see Chapter 4).

At several instances, food bank staff remarked that they viewed themselves as 'apolitical.' When asked what this meant, one interviewer noted that it didn't mean they were not involved with political issues, rather, they would not choose a particular side in elections. Another interviewee confirmed this, describing their food bank network organization as bipartisan: "The problem is that when there's a new party, we begin at zero again." This sentiment was echoed by another food bank director, who noted,

> [Food bank involvement with political parties] does vary over time, it depends if the agenda is something that fits with what they'd like to see happening. I think it also depends if the politician is in power or a critic. Local politicians are much more engaged with us as an organization. All levels have been supportive at one time or another. They support the work but are not as engaged with making policy changes.

In this way, food banks' political involvement can be seen as practical rather than partisan.

When asked what policies affected food banks specifically, interviewees pointed to free trade as having a large effect on the food available. However, it was also noted that Good Samaritan legislation, which had been put into effect provincially throughout Canada in the past decades, had had very little impact on the way food banks operated. One researcher stated that the food surplus network in Canada was so ad-hoc because there was very little legislation on the handling of surplus food, making Good Samaritan acts almost ineffective.

Interviewees also commented on the relationships that food banks have with specific politicians. On a local level, many people in municipal government had direct relationships with certain food banks, or would sometimes use them for their own campaigns. As one interviewee pointed out, "politicians watch the food network very carefully". Another interviewee noted, "You'll have the mayor of an area who will connect with the main people running the food bank on a monthly basis. It's kind of a natural connection for local leaders to show their leadership

through charities. It's a glad-handing thing that local leaders are very good at". Yet another interviewee was more direct, stating, "Money talks and bullshit walks. If you're a politician, you can get exposure by getting in line and spending an hour a year dishing out hot turkey dinner. But when it comes to showing everyone how bad the situation is, politicians are the first ones to duck out. When the politician is in opposition, they're trying everything to target the government, but when they get in, they don't want to talk to you anymore". In short, food banks can both make use of local politicians while staff was often wary of them. One researcher noted that, while food banks may sometimes receive funding from smaller government programs, on the whole, they receive 'tacit' support from local governments and local politicians.

The relationship that food banks had with the food industry was a site of contestation. All food banks whose staff we interviewed had direct relations with the food industry. All food banks relied mostly on large retailers for their food supply, although local farmers, grocery stores, and individual consumers also supplied food. On the whole, food banks did not rely on food drives for food, except for Saskatoon Food Bank, which received much of its food from individuals donating to corporate entities organizing food drives. As such, even when food banks relied on individual donors, it was mediated by CSR schemes. Food banks often modified their practices and facilities to make corporate food donations easier and more attractive. One food bank network staff member noted that "our food banks are really dependent on grocery store partners. They will really build those relationships one on one with the store managers." Another food bank network staff member noted that the food industry "makes sense to partner with" because there were little other avenues for support. One interviewee claimed that food banks must constantly navigate these relationships, "Food banks can never really reject corporate food donations, that's not going to be their main focus. They're going to more or less tweak what they give out". One food bank director noted that because of their relationship with the business community, they "now have to define advocacy very carefully", indicating that this often did limit the organization's ability to pursue certain demands. Another food bank director explained that their food bank became their city´s primary food bank when "the corporate community [after struggling with distributing to 12-15 food banks] suggested that they look at a different model, because they were looking at too many organizations". Staff at food banks often suggested that community values and concern about food going to waste were drivers for supplies from the food industry.

The monetary benefit for food retailers was also often discussed. One researcher noted that the food industry had created a "secondary food system" because there was "financial incentive to donate surplus food, free of charge, with volunteers doing the work". This mirrors surveys carried out in the U.S., where donors to Second Harvest consistently reported that their primary reasons for donating food were tax benefits, reduction of disposal costs, and the ease of the system (Poppendieck 1998a).

However, one long-time food bank activist argued against the notion that food banks were controlled by the food industry. While they had been approached by the industry to centralize the network, they decided against it, choosing instead to preserve the autonomy of individual food banks, making the role of the food industry "effectively neutralized in Canada". According to this interviewee, food supply sources were largely due to personal decisions from store managers, rather than a coherent organized strategy. He explained that food banks, in order to receive more supplies in the 1990s, had put pressure on individual managers. In one case, food banks even put public pressure on Loblaws, shaming them into donating their food. The informal nature of food donations therefore suggests that the growth of food supplies was not initially a coherent food industry strategy but rather separate, local decisions, facilitated by a lack of regulation and policy on food surplus, that later allowed food surplus donations to become institutionalized at a higher level.

But others suggested that it wasn't just financial benefits of saving on food disposal costs that were of concern. As one interviewee working for an alternative food organization noted,

> What are the actual costs of the food bank system, and who bears those costs? Part of the problem with all of these food donations from corporations is it's just externalizing their disposal costs to places where it's less visible, passing it down the line to different charities and volunteer functions that disappear the actual costs of distributing old food. Government policy on that issue is very important.

One researcher also stressed that financial benefits appeared elsewhere as well: "There are unbelievable levels of food waste in the system. There are all kinds of perverse incentives in the food system that make that reality possible." To him, two factors contributed to this. On the one hand, the food industry releases many new products to create "the illusion of choice", selling more and more processed foods that look different but use the same basic ingredients. This perpetuates a system with a lot of failed products, generating a large amount of food waste. It also drives a 'de-skilling' of consumers, where the idea of eating only processed food has

become normalized. On the other hand, the increasing centralization of the food industry meant that retailers were able to drive down prices for suppliers while increasing the price of food. One result of this kind of cost-cutting is that many workers become under-employed, further exacerbating the precarity of labor in Canada. The researcher echoed the above interviewee's sentiment, noting that

> [Food banks] are an externality. If food companies were required to pay the real cost of waste, if they were required to pay the real costs of health consequences, if they required to pay the real costs of lowering employment, you'd want to believe that they'd be reformulating their products.

In our own case study, we found that the food bank would also often receive new products directly from food retailers as a way to test their desirability amongst low-income populations. This information indicates that the increase in food surplus has economic benefits for food retailers, and that relying on food banks may not only be beneficial as a way to avoid food waste processing costs, but also as a way to enable a high selection of choice and drive consumer spending on food. Further, it is important to note that centralized food banking systems only became institutionalized in the early 1990s, when the Canadians also saw a change toward more processed products and centralized suppliers (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada 2008).

Interviewees also discussed the relationship of food banks with the media. While in the literature the media was identified as being key in the establishment and support of food banks, further hiding the issue of decreasing government responsibility (Riches 2011; Robinson 2014), many interviewees looked favorably on their relationship with the media and did not think they had a negative. In particular, they noted that the media would often cover stories on food banks, allowing the issue of rising poverty to be heard. As one food bank director noted, when there was a rise in poverty in the early 1990s and subsequent welfare cuts, CBC was able to draw attention to the issue, otherwise it would not have been heard. This interviewee observed that "we have a really good relationship with the media, they're not afraid to ask hard questions, they're very supportive of many of our initiatives. They report on things that we're doing". Yet, the role of the media was seen as problematic by others because it meant that there was "no national conversation on the limits of food banks and their ability to actually address food insecurity".

There were several informal institutions that were also regularly mentioned. First, several interviewees noted that corporations would often use food banks as places for team-building and volunteering activities. One food bank director observed that their food bank's funders included

these companies included the province´s electricity company, Nowcor, ExxonMobil Investors Group, and ScotiaBank. Part of this trend was due the rise of CSR as a common practice. In fact, CSR was identified as a main driver of both financial and food donations by several food bank directors. Interviewees also mentioned that many high school students would volunteer to receive community service hours.

Several social movements and cultural norms were also identified. The first was charity, however, several of those interviewed often claimed their organization avoided being limited to strictly charitable work. Surprisingly, not many interviewees discussed the role of faith in driving food bank growth. Rather, many observed the fact that churches had traditionally been the places in communities that provided food, and when churches became less frequented and this role was taken on by food banks, people would seek to fulfill their desire to participate in community elsewhere, often at food banks. Another cultural norm was the wish to save wasted food, which drew a lot of young people to volunteer at the one food bank. In addition, interviewees remarked that there was currently a common trend for food banks to shift toward community-oriented practices, noting that the food movement was having a large effect on food bank's activities.

Finally, it is important to discuss how the typification of food banks from our interviews compared to the literature. In the literature three scales of food bank operations have been identified: local, municipal, and provincial/national. This was corroborated in our interviews; food banks largely operate at different scales and will tend not to compete for resources at the same scale, or have historically conglomerated efforts when they did compete. As a staff member at a food bank network organization noted,

> 40% of food banks are really quite small and they're completely run by volunteers. Then you have a layer of food banks that are in mid-sized cities. They have some paid staff. They provide service directly, and in many cases they also provide food to other agencies in their region. Then you have a third tier on large agencies that might have 10-40 staff. They are among the most professionalized and business-focused. They are financed from individual fund-raising, business in the community, and community groups like resident associations or rotary clubs.

However, previous researchers have also typified food banks as fitting in two general models, voluntary/union and centralized/alternative (Chaulk 1986; Riches 1986; Davis and Tarasuk 1994). In the following, we consider whether these models are still present in food banks today, and the significance of changes in food bank models.

In 1986, Riches identified the voluntary/charitable model and the labor/union model. Since

then, there has been no mention in the literature of the labor/union model. Data from our snowball interviews sheds light on what had happened.

According to a long-time union organizer, the union model was started by a network of Unemployment Action Centers (UACs), which were set up by unions to address rising unemployment in the early 1980s. At the time, official unemployment in B.C. was 17-18%, and these centers decided to set up food banks, through grants from the provincial government, that could supply emergency food to out-of-work and underemployed union members. However, unions such as United Way or the provincial government did not want to directly fund these food banks, because they did not want to shift the discussion away from inequality and welfare. As this interviewee noted, many food bank users are still union members since there remains a high prevalence of under-employment in industry. For him, food banks were started and remain institutionalized because of inadequate employment, rather than primarily the lack of adequate welfare.

While UACs ended up shifting away from running these food banks, they did continue to fund them "with the backdrop of activism". This led to union-affiliated food banks to join the wider food bank network and continuing to function despite decreased support from unions. Currently, there were no food banks in B.C. that were still closely related to unions, although they may receive supplies from them. Staff at a provincial food bank organization noted that many of these food banks did not just provide emergency food, but may have become hubs for other activities such as cooking classes, workshops, community gardens, and so on. "They are long way away from when unions started up. Currently emergency food hampers is a tiny, tiny part". In addition, food banks currently receive most supplies and financial donations from the private sector. "Our food banks are really dependent on grocery store partners. They will really build those relationships one on one with the store managers." This organization receives some government funding but this was perceived as unreliable. So while this suggests that there is less stress on the emergency aspect of food banking and more orientation toward the local community, there is also no broad-scale backdrop of union organizing and concerted advocacy. At the same time, the organization limits its political activity to advocating for a tax deduction for farmers and distributors when they donate surplus food.

The shift away from the union model provides three important, perhaps conflicting, lessons. On first sight, it may suggest that food banks have a tendency toward homogeneity, once they are

incorporated in a wider food bank distribution network. This model of food banking will be politically involved, but may focus its efforts on attempting to strategize toward access to more funding and donations, as it has little support from government or other organizations such as unions. Second, it suggests that food banks will continue to exist despite withdrawal of support from larger organizations. Third, and in contrast to first appearances, it suggests that the types of organizational support will determine their political advocacy. Given stable funding, they will tend toward participatory models, focusing their attention to political issues. Given unreliable funding, they will focus their energy on acquiring donations wherever they can, often building relationships with the food industry.

Davis and Tarasuk (1994), on the other hand, present the centralized/alternative dichotomy, where the majority of food banks are highly centralized and are mainly charitable in their operations, while there are a minority of alternative schemes that focus on participation, community engagement, addressing isolation, and the social aspects of food distribution.

In our interviews, this view was both validated and challenged. To further discuss this, it may help to introduce a new type of food bank that has recently emerged. The Stop, a food bank in Toronto, for a long time provided only food hampers and no other services. When Nick Saul, a community organizer, became director, the food bank started moving toward other activities, such as developing a community garden, services for young mothers, cooking classes, markets, and even a greenhouse. The Stop received much of its funding from large philanthropic foundations. Saul later co-wrote a book about his experience, and then started another organization, Community Food Centres (CFC)—where one interviewee, Kathryn Scharf, was a staff member—which has the goal of providing resources to shift other food banks toward the CFC model, which is based on The Stop. In this way, both The Stop and CFC can be seen as an example of the 'alternative' model (Levkoe and Wakefield 2011). Furthermore, from the media attention that The Stop has received, there is a sense that they have helped shift the discourse about the community role that food banks can play.

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However, other interviewees challenged the notion that The Stop really provided an alternative. According to one interviewee, such models had always existed; food banks have often run community gardens. However, he did note that there does seem to be a shift in the types of services food banks do provide toward more community-involved activities. One researcher, on the other hand, noted that CFC itself also had limitations, as it relied on

foundation grants and depended on the same sources of food donations, which, he said, still "compromises their scope and scale, their ability to reach the audience that is most at need is constrained". A similar sentiment was echoed by another interviewee, who noted that "A lot of people who put a lot of emphasis on food, but I do think that's a bit of a distraction." According to him, food banks needed to focus on the issues of inequality and poverty, and turning to a local, food-based model would not address these problems. A similar predicament has been described by Allen (1999), where the community food security movement, in focusing on local and community-based solutions to food insecurity, were not able to address the larger scale; fundamentally, addressing food insecurity is the responsibility of the government. This was further discussed by Barling *et al.*, where they noted that local food initiatives, while helpful and important, could not replace government and international regulations and will often lack strategic approaches (2002).

Regardless of the viability of The Stop, the question remains: are there two general types of food banks? While a quantitative response to this question is not possible here, our interviews did suggest some key insights. First, many interviewees noted that food bank activities were widely varying according to place, resources, and scale of operation. As one researcher noted in our interview, "There are as many different models of food banking as there are food banks". A staff member at a food bank network noted that "Food banks are intensely, intensely local. Whatever the make-up of the community is, the food bank, if it's successful, has evolved to grow on the unique resources of the community". Food banks, it was found, are extremely heterogeneous, both in their on-site activities and their political involvement.

Yet, there was a sense that the discourse of the food movement and community food security was having an impact on food banks' operations. One food bank director indicated that their food bank was actively trying to move away from a charity model and be more participatory in all their activities. Another director argued that "In many cases, a food bank is a hub of all kinds of services. Community gardening, cooking, baking classes, gleaning projects. Canning, processing, preserving food. Food banks are supplying all kinds of programs to the community. They address loneliness, health, and work with farmers markets." Another director noted that, while food banks are very different in each community, "we see emerging trends that calls on the food bank to do work differently. Over time and more recently we've seen more movement around working with other food organizations".

Finally, in our interviews, we asked food bank staff if public assistance would address the need for food banks. Their answers were quite firm. One food bank director responded,

> It wouldn't be a food bank, it would be some sort of food cooperative or food sharing system. Food banks put two issues together: citizens who can't get enough money to live on, and food. If you take one of those issues away, it's not going to be a food bank anymore. It could be a community centred place where you combine food and learning. [At our food bank] a whole bunch of stuff takes place that's way beyond, you know, 'here's your hamper.' We would transition out of giving out food to a cooperative sharing of food.

Similarly, another director noted that

> If people had a livable income, wherever they live, if that was all set up, I think that food banks should fade into the woodwork, but there would be another question to be raised, but what about all, what would you do with the product that you're getting?

This was echoed by staff at another food bank:

> I think [with increased public assistance] there probably will be a need for food banks. I don't think food banks are a bad thing to have in our community. Community-based social programs like food literacy probably need to exist. I don't think that a change in the welfare system is going to create sustainable systems for people, I think that there are way bigger pieces of the puzzle that will need to be addressed.

As such, our data indicates that public assistance alone may not entirely do away with the need for food banks; instead, the role of food waste remains a key driver and the need for community food spaces continues to be important.

From our data we can draw several conclusions about the typology of food banks. Food banks remain extremely diverse, many of them differing widely according to place, history, and circumstance. In this way, it may be more appropriate to talk about they *types* of activities that food banks provide, rather than the *types* of food banks that exist. However, food banks are often political, and most national and provincial-level food bank networks are politically involved on many issues, going beyond simply advocating for tax reductions for food suppliers. Furthermore, our data suggests that, on the whole, food banks have shifted toward more food-and community-based services, directly influenced by the growing food and community food security movements. In addition, we found that food banks did have the potential to incorporate more community-based strategies *and* political advocacy in their activities when they had more stable sources of funding. Finally, food banks can address other issues besides the need for public assistance alone, such as food waste or the need for community food spaces.

Figure 6: Key events in food bank history. (Sources: Daponte and Bade 2006; Lightman and Riches 2000; Hawkes and Webster 2005; Qualman and Wiebe 2002; Chaulk 1986; Thériault and Yadlowski 2000; Ohls and Saleem-Ismail 2002; Food Banks Canada 2012)

Analysis

In this section, we further discuss the history of food banks, noting how it compares to the literature, what drivers impacted the institutionalization of food banks, and how food banks can by typified.

History of food banks

While initially food banks were more concerned with the growth of food waste, related to the burgeoning food movement and the rise of a centralized food industry, attention started shifting to the issue of hunger and poverty. Up to this point, food banks were largely reliant on ad hoc resources from diverse community groups, and many vowed to shut down their services when the state satisfactorily addressed poverty. Yet, another recession and lack of alternative sources of funding in the early 1990s caused food banks to shift their operations, institutionalizing relationships with food retail managers. At the same time free trade further centralized food supplies and made food more inaccessible to the low-income population. Throughout this period, food banks remained political institutions, often engaging in advocacy issues. However, their ability to diverge their practices became limited as they relied more and more on food industry donors. While food bank attendance rose steadily from the early 1980s to the early 2000s, it slowly decreased from 2005-2008 as supplies become more and more limited and the availability of employment was stabilizing. Yet, another recession caused reliance on food banks to increase, leading food bank volunteers to work longer hours, rely on purchased supplies, and further ration their donations. While welfare cuts had a significant role, our data suggests that economic restructuring was often the primary driver for food bank attendance growth. The availability of food surplus, in turn made possible by a centralizing food industry, both allowed food banks to become institutionalized and limited their operations. This availability was facilitated by the lack of legal institutions around food surplus, informal relationships with local supermarkets, and the ease of donating food waste rather than paying for waste disposal costs. Surprisingly, ‘Good Samaritan’ legislation had little effect on the availability of surplus food, as the food donation network was already primarily based on informal relationships. Later, corporations were able to take advantage of their relationships with food banks and use it as part of CSR campaigns. Yet, when food banks did receive stable funding and did not have to rely on the food industry, many were able to be more politically involved and go beyond only redistributing food waste. We further identify these shifting drivers in Figures 7 and 8.

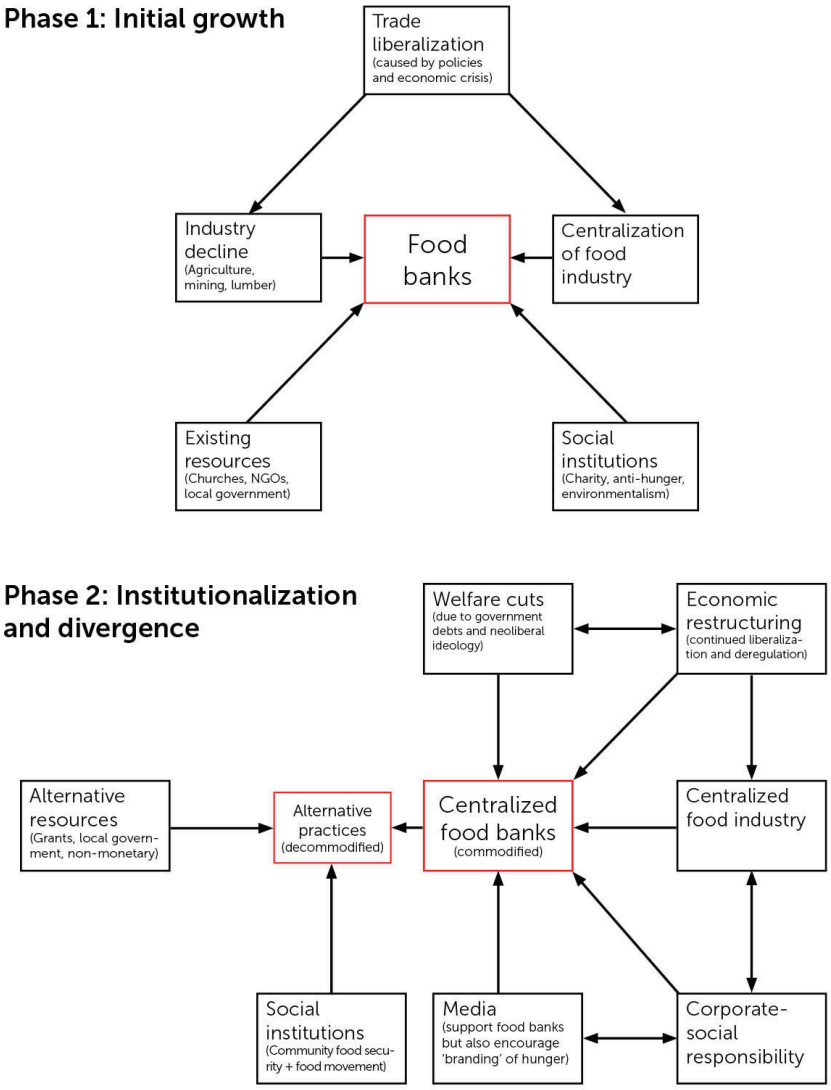

Figure 7: Two phases of the growth and institutionalization of food banks in Canada

It is important to note the differences between Canadian food banks and those in the U.S. In the U.S., the rise of food banks has been linked to direct government support through TEFAP, legal

institutions such as tax deductions and Good Samaritan laws, and cuts in the Food Stamp program. In contrast, similar laws and cut-backs had little effect on the growth of food banks, rather, economic restructuring and centralization of the food industry can be said to have a more primary role. In addition, the total *lack* of policies around food waste and regulation of the food industry, as well as "tacit support" of food banks by politicians [Researcher 4], led informal institutions to emerge that could manage a "second food system" [Researcher 2]. This suggests that more research is needed in the U.S. on the connection between food bank growth, free trade, and centralization of the food industry. We further explore the relationship between different key events, comparing the U.S. and Canadian food bank system in Figure 8. Our data also suggests that welfare institutions should not be seen as separate from market institutions; rather, there may be feedback loops where market failure will lead to welfare failure, or the growth of certain sectors may lead to externalized costs not accounted for by a welfare state.

These issues are not unique to Canada or the U.S. The global food system has undergone significant changes in the previous decades, from one where national markets were often protected to one where international corporations were more and more able to compete against local markets, driving down prices and destabilizing rural livelihoods. This has been noted by others as part of the 'neolibarization' of the food system (Goodman 1999; Sodano 2012; Guthman 2008; McMichael 2005; Regmi 2001; Nally 2010). Beyond cash transfer programs such as welfare, this requires looking at the institutions that perpetuate food insecurity globally.

> To think seriously about global hunger means addressing the legal, institutional, and biotechnical mechanisms—including trade tariffs, agricultural subsidies, enforcement of intellectual property rights and the privatization of public provisioning systems—that directly restrict certain people's ability to subsist. (Nally 2010, p. 49).

In this case, addressing hunger in Canada also means addressing the corporate control over charitable institutions, which our study suggests is the result of both the increase in food waste and the poor supervision of the food system by duty-bearers such as the Canadian government. It requires interventions at multiple scales, involving multiple actors and policies that address the system as a whole, rather than focusing on specific public assistance policies, as has been done by most food bank analysts, or facilitating the corporate donation of food surplus, as is being pursued by many food banks. The fact that the role of the food industry and the restructuring of the Canadian economy has been under-examined in the literature relating to food banks leads us

to examine some of the main assumptions in the food bank literature in the next section.

To summarize our data, it may be helpful to return to our initial research questions. The drivers leading to the institutionalization of food banks were, economic recessions and restructuring, failure of the welfare state to account for this, the growth of free trade and centralization of the food industry, the growth of CSR, the decline of churches and unions, and shifts in public attention from charity and food waste to the growth of the food movement and community food security discourse. The lack of policy institutions to manage food surplus or curb it caused informal relationships to emerge to regulate access. The institutions that enable the cost-shifting strategy of the food industry are CSR, the 'tacit support' from politicians, and the lack of institutions regulating the food industry's increasing supply of processed foods. While our data suggests that food banks have, on the whole, tried to resist unequal power relationships between their users and the food industry, they have become increasingly dependent on corporate donors and have had to modify their political advocacy accordingly. This unequal power relationship is also partly due to the lack of institutional support from other sectors, such as foundations, governments, unions, or NGOs. In those cases where food banks did have different institutional support, they were able to change their advocacy strategies. Finally, while food banks could be differentiated according to scale (local, municipal, and provincial/national), the diversity of food banks and their practices reflects the fact that they have not become homogenous and do not conform to a dichotomy of community-oriented/centralized, as proposed by Tarasuk (1994). Instead, it might be more appropriate to talk about individual 'strategies' that food banks adopted according to local needs and pressures. Yet, on the whole, the continuing influence of the food movement and community food security discourse has led many food banks to shift their practices away from being primarily providers of emergency food aid to using food as a tool for addressing social issues.

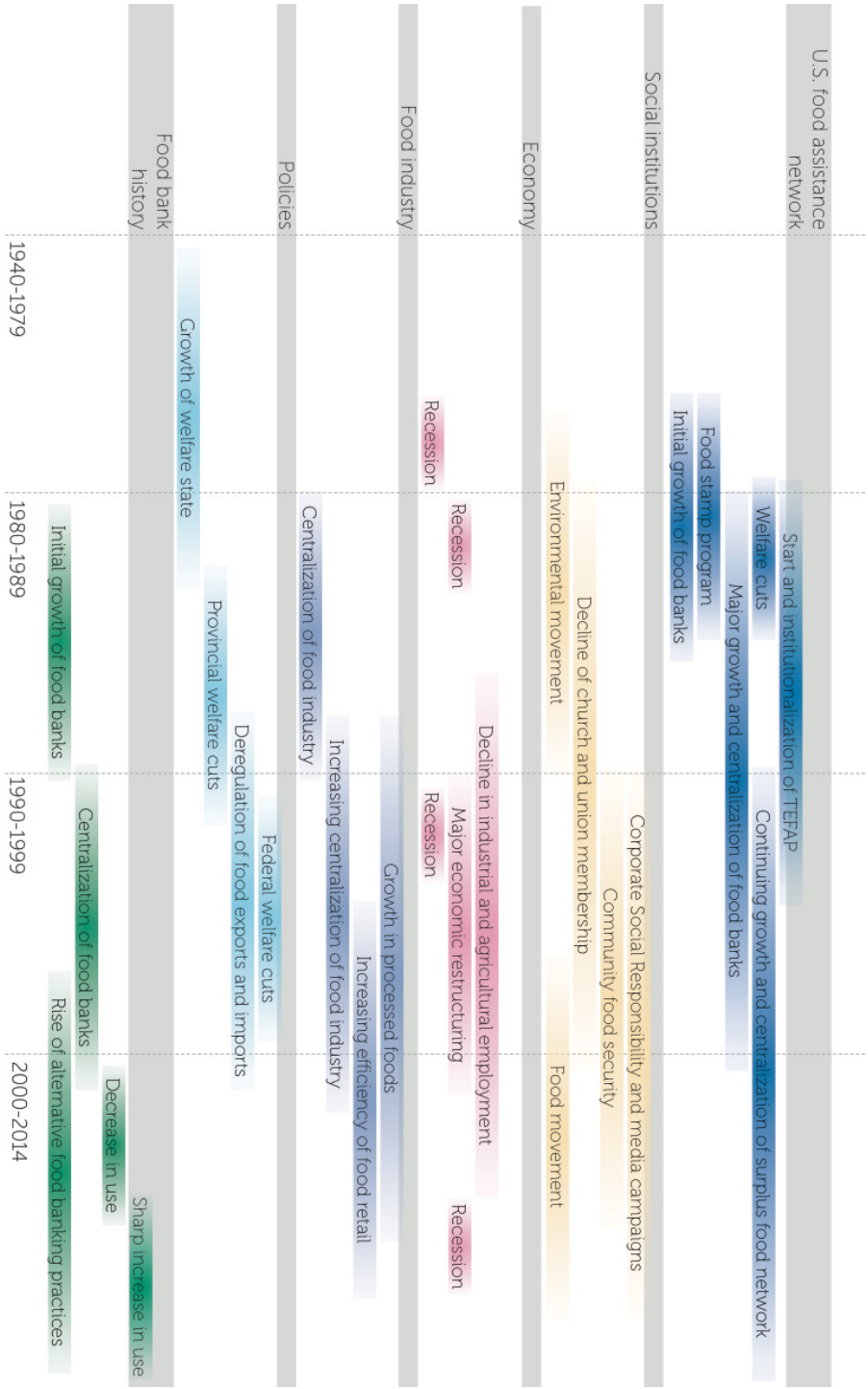

Figure 8: Timeline of relevant institutions for food bank history

Welfare liberalism vs. institutions framework

In this section, we identify several assumptions embedded within the existing literature on food banks. The focus here is on the primary texts: Chaulk (1986), Riches (1986), Poppendieck (1998a), Tarasuk and Davis (Davis and Tarasuk 1994; Tarasuk and Davis 1996; Tarasuk 2001), and Daponte and Bade (2000; 2006). In each case, we discuss some evidence from our research that problematizes these statements. Doing so is necessary to typify the ideology that drives existing research on food banks, and determining alternative frameworks that can more accurately describe how food banks became institutionalized. After identifying some key assumptions in existing research, we outline what we call the 'welfare liberalism' framework, which is a state-oriented, market-blind ideology that idealizes the impact and role of welfare in addressing inequality while subscribing to the belief that everyone has the right to being a consumer. In contrast, we outline the institutions framework, which argues that welfare and the market cannot, and should not, be separated. It is important to note here that this framework, while prominent in the literature, is itself not entirely representative. Some author's statements were often at odds. However, on the whole, we found that the current discussion around food banks rests on four related assumptions.

One of the most prominent recurring themes in the literature was that everyone should have an equal right to healthy, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. While this assumption is important and is an essential part of the concept of food security, it also has as its consequence that the only acceptable form of food intake is commodified food. For example, Poppendieck decries Great Depression-era breadlines as demeaning "in part because they deprived recipients of the consumer choice that had already become a hallmark of American life" (1998a, p. 14) and celebrates food stamps as a policy solution "because they "mainstreamed" participants, or at least their grocery shopping trips" (p. 12). Thus, "culturally appropriate food" becomes defined as "commodified food", and the right to food is put in terms of whether people are able to shop at supermarkets. In this way food security itself becomes primarily a function of the market, without questioning the way by which that market, despite the "right to food for all" makes itself accessible to those with wealth and itself relies on externalizing its costs. In our research, this was found to be problematic, as starting in the 1980s, food prices rose while the Canadian agricultural sector became more and more precarious and unsustainable, meaning that adequate

access to food was only possible at a certain level of income and simultaneously any increase in the amount of consumers would result in further entrenching reliance on an increasingly centralized and high-input agricultural sector.

Another assertion amongst food bank researchers was that the state should take on all social responsibilities. In this way, one researcher we interviewed hailed the early 1970s as the high point of the Canadian welfare state, and advocates for a contemporary re-mantling of that state (Riches 1986, personal interview 2014). Similarly, Poppendieck says that food banks could possibly have a role for those "who are ineligible for public programs" (1998, p. 6). One must ask, if food banks are inappropriate for welfare recipients, why would they be more appropriate for those unable to meet the state's stringent welfare criteria? Of particular concern here is the way that the state has historically benefitted already-privileged populations and systemically excluded indigenous, migrants, and people of color from the welfare apparatus in the United States, Europe, and Canada (Piven and Cloward 2012). Thus, the belief that the state ought to have a monopoly on social welfare should not preclude any criticism of state welfare policies. It may also excuse the role that the food industry has had in unloading its food waste on the voluntary sector.

Another assumption is that neo-liberalism emerged as a choice, following economic crises in the 1970s and 1990s. If only we were to put a stop to neoliberal ideology, we would see a return to entitlements and welfare for all. This is best seen in Chaulk's and Riches' (1986; 1986) discussion of the "neoconservative" tendencies of politicians following the oil crisis. While it is clear that such an ideology has been a driving force in global policy since Reaganism and Thatcherism, as seen by the dogmatic policies of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO (Harvey 2003) food banks themselves arose before the advent of these policies; they directly followed industrial collapse and high rates of unemployment (as shown in Riches' own work). In this way, the growth of food banks and neoliberalism can be seen as parallel responses to market crises, neither of them simply a 'choice' but often driven by perceived necessity. Focusing on neoliberalism alone risks obscuring some of the more systemic issues with the market system as a whole—which has always depended on high rates of unemployment (an "industrial reserve army" that outweighs the "industrial army proper") and "creative destruction" to keep functioning (Engels 1845, cited by Polanyi 1944; Schumpeter 1942). In other words, government inadequacy cannot be blamed on neoliberal ideology alone; rather, it is necessary to address the

way by which state policies have always facilitated high flux of available employment (Polanyi 1944). This process, as we have seen, has had a significant role on the history of food banks, which can be seen as a social response to the failure of the market-society, grounded in the institutions of redistribution and reciprocation (*ibid.*)

Finally, one of the most prominent attitudes in current food bank literature was the assertion that food banks always, because of their charity nature, obscure the real need of the impoverished population and take responsibility away from the government. Behind this attitude is the belief that mutual aid is preferable over charity. As our research indicates, this assertion is not quite as clear-cut. We found that most food banks were very aware of wider policy issues, were directly involved in local and national anti-poverty advocacy, and were incredibly heterogeneous in their approaches to "charitable giving." Most food banks we surveyed can be seen to have other functions that belie their charitable façade: they make networks with other community groups, empower volunteers and recipients to speak up against hunger, and take a non-partisan but highly politicized approach to poverty. Furthermore, they often provide local employment and training. These factors show that while food banks are formally charity organizations, their actual operations often go beyond this caricature; in Canada they often pressure the state to address poverty. Furthermore, the argument that charity always fails to address root causes often relies on the assumption that the state can only do this. Yet, our research shows that welfare alone cannot address the cost-shifting practices of the food industry.

All in all, these assumptions are part of what one could call a 'welfare liberal' framework. In this framework, the government is seen as primarily responsible for income redistribution while the market is excused for its excesses, or simply ignored. This is in continuation with welfare economics, which sees distribution (equality) and efficiency (the market) to be two separate issues (Vatn 2005; this is further discussed below). Neoliberalism is seen as the cause of the rise of food banks and current inequality while the failures of the previous welfare state largely go unexamined. In this view, food banks, because of their charitable status, are not seen as a legitimate political project for holding the government accountable. Finally, the welfare liberal stresses equality, rights, and entitlement while leaving the mechanisms and power monopoly of the state and market unchallenged.

Table 1: The welfare liberalism framework

Assumption	*Description*	*Manifestation*	*Corresponding solution*	*Contrary evidence*	*Wider issues*
Right to choose	Everyone has a right to choose whatever goods they need to survive.	In a just society, everyone should be able to choose what food they eat. Food banks are false solutions to hunger as they limit people's choice of food.	Right to food, welfare so people can shop at supermarkets	Food banks are a byproduct of a high-input profit-oriented food system that emphasizes choice and diversity.	A society driven by unlimited wants will inevitably lead to greater environmental and social costs.
State responsibility	It is the role and responsibility of the state to address social issues.	Food banks indicate a failure of state responsibility.	A stronger welfare system that supports the unemployed.	State welfare alone would not address rising food waste and community food insecurity.	Market-driven welfare does not solve uneven development, as it relies on continuous economic growth and displacing costs spatially and temporally.
Neo-liberalism as choice	Starting in the 1970s, the advent of neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideologies led to the increase in austerity	Welfare cuts in Canada are due to the rise of neo-liberal ideologies and have led to outsourcing state responsibility to the social sector.	Re-institute welfare, stop cuts to state funding	Institutionalization of food banks was driven by more variables than the rise of neoliberal ideology.	Blaming neo-liberalism alone remains disconnected from the wider effects of market economy and idealizes the era of the welfare state.
Mutual aid vs. charity	Charity, while well meaning, is in the end deleterious to society because it takes away state responsibility.	All food banks are charities, and therefore they are not a solution to poverty. Even though they are well meaning they end up taking away responsibility from the state.	Re-institute welfare Right to food	Many food banks are politically engaged and go beyond charity by providing services to the community.	While the state should be held accountable to its population, it alone cannot and should not provide social benefits; this requires a multi-scale and multi-actor approach.

According to Vatn, modern welfare theory, based on neoclassical economics, considers distribution (e.g. inequality) to be a separate matter from efficiency (e.g. the functioning of markets). In contrast, an institutions perspective takes the position that "efficiency cannot be defined independently of the chosen institutional structures. Actually, these structures play a crucial role in what becomes efficient…First, the institutional structure [of a society] defines who must carry which costs, including transaction costs. It defines which costs or losses go uncompensated. Second, the distribution of rights defines what is the optimal level of involved goods" (Vatn 2005, p. 214-217). Because of this situation, without proper institutions, special interests can take advantage by unloading their costs on those unable to participate in the market or distorting the market to their advantage (called rent-seeking). In other words, a welfare economy standpoint assumes that markets and distribution work separately, but they do not; to protect right-holders (citizens), there must be policies in place that limit duty-bearers

(corporations) as well as regulate distribution.

This was seen in the case of the United States, where policies such as the Food Stamp Program and TEFAP were initiated primarily to address concerns of the food retail and agriculture sector; according to Allen, "the USDA food stamp program was originally developed largely through the self-interested rent seeking behavior of economic agents rather than social welfare" (1999, p. 118). It can be further argued that the TEFAP program was an extension of corporate rent-seeking behavior, where the state was enlisted to fund and institutionalize a network that could deal with corporate food waste with very little monetary cost to corporations, thus facilitating cost-shifting onto society.

An institutions perspective shows that while the Canadian state did not directly fund food banks, corporations did take advantage of the lack of policy and the 'tacit' approval of food bank programs by politicians [Researcher 4]. The liberalization of the Canadian economy through free trade agreements, the deregulation of agricultural sector protections, and the rise in unemployment, paired with centralization of the food system and a rise in food imports and exports—all of these led to an increase in the availability and need to dispose of food waste, while creating a more precarious labor market that could not participate in the consumer economy. In Canada, the *lack* of government policy around food access, food waste disposal, and employment led to a situation where the food industry was able to shift their food waste processing costs onto society with minimal costs in the long run (e.g., funding local and national food banks). As such, the Canadian situation can also be seen as a failure of welfare economics, where distribution and efficiency, inequality and the market, are seen as separate issues. Food banks represent a clear example of corporations taking advantage of this gap, allowing them to unload their costs onto food bank volunteers and citizens concerned about poverty and inequality.

In the beginning of this study, we noted that Tarasuk separates the need to address poverty and the need to address corporate food waste. However, our research shows that these two issues are not distinct; on the contrary, they are part of a self-perpetuating cycle, where welfare and the market, seen as separate systems, actually are interconnected. As will be seen in the final chapter, this requires policies that address the food industry's cost-shifting methods as well as the political, financial, and legal barriers that food banks and community food organizations face.

Chapter 4: Case study

Overview of food bank (Box 1)

Location: Verdun, South-West Montréal, Quebec, Canada
Relevant neighbourhood demographics: 65,000 people, 25% low-income (23% Montreal average), 78% average social deprivation (67% Montreal average)
Structure of food bank: 3-4 paid staff, 20-30 volunteers, non-profit
Distribution: 1753 individuals served a year, 7140 separate donations a year, ~60 tonnes of food distributed.
Activities and services: Discount food store, emergency baskets, collective kitchen, recycling recovery, solidarity donations to other organizations, monthly delivery to elderly, baskets for volunteers, public meals, discount glasses, diapers, workshops
Relationships: Local community organizations, activists, local politicians, businesses, other food banks, and city-level advocacy groups
Proceeds and expenses:
Funding: Federal, municipal, charitable grants, services
Sources of food: Moisson Montréal, Douglas Hospital, local food stores
Labour time: ~1000 hours a month, 29% packing/food moving, 25% administrative, 18% cooking, 28% other (cleaning, waste processing, transport).
Financial equivalent of volunteer labour time: $124,000/year
Reimbursement for volunteer labour time including food: $94,936/year

Introduction

In this chapter, we take an in-depth look at one single food bank in Montréal, Canada.[3] Informed by ecological economics and multi-criteria analysis we analyze the labor, finances, and material resources that allow the food bank to keep going. In addition, we use an environmental institutions framework to understand the formal and informal institutions that are integral to the food bank's functioning, and their relations to other organizations. This was done through a series of interviews and surveys with staff, volunteers, and recipients. Finally, political ecology, which takes a political and power-aware approach to environmental issues, helps frame our data

[3] Due to privacy and political concerns, and after request of staff at the food bank, we decided not to disclose the name of the food bank in question, as well as any names of staff or interviewees. Throughout this paper, we refer to the case study site as "the food bank" or "the case study".

in the context of wider systems such as cost-shifting practices of corporations.

In the following, we present our data, in three categories: social institutions, material resources, and financial resources. In our analysis, we evaluate this data, calculating the 'true cost' of the free lunch at the food bank, compared to the benefits. We link these findings to insights from political ecology and ecological economics, revealing that food banks can be both politically motivated institutions and are a result of cost-shifting practices. We also suggest some lessons learned from the case study for other community food security groups, as well as limitations. In conclusion, we link our research back to the food bank and food security literature, stressing that the role of the food industry is pivotal in understanding the current charitable food regime, and identifying strategies to address this.

Comparison: Moisson Montreal (Box 2)
Location: Saint-Laurent, Montréal
Structure of food bank: 50 full-time staff, 7,595 volunteers, non-profit.
Distribution: 135,347 individuals served, 13.2 million kg of food, to 230 community organizations
Activities and services: Receive, store, and distribute food surplus, organize food drives, Good Food Box program, volunteering programs, summer day camp lunch programs, bulk food purchasing program
Relationship to case study: Provides food supplies
Proceeds and expenses: +$79,351,758, -$79,744,454
Funding: Foundation and non-profit grants (34.9%), individuals (20.4%), events (15.5%), government (13.6%), private businesses (11.3%), other (4.2%)
Sources of food: 235 agri-food businesses, with the primary contribution of a couple of large supermarkets
Labour time: 82,577 hours by 7,595 volunteers
Financial equivalent of volunteer labour time: $845,672 (1% of year-end proceeds, 215% of year-end revenue)
Actual reimbursement for volunteer labour time: Meals
Other relevant statistics: Every dollar the organization receives translates to 17 dollars of food equivalence

Social institutions

In the following section, we discuss some of the social institutions, both formal and informal, that were at play in the food bank. This includes background information about the food bank, its history, the organizations it has relationships with, as well as the attitudes of staff.

Background information

In Montreal, 23% of the population was found to be low income in 2011 (Statistics Canada 2011b). One study shows that 54.81% of Montréal inhabitants live in spaces with very low accessibility to food markets, 17.18% of which can be considered food deserts. However, it also found that low-income people tend to have better access to supermarkets than the majority of the population (Apparicio *et al.* 2007). In a 1998 study, it was found that 42% of recipients of food banks live alone, while 84% receive some form of social assistance, and are often well-educated (39% completed technical school or had a university education) (Starkey *et al.* 1998).

Despite this relative poverty, Montreal is also a city with a strong culture of social activism and community work. In the 20th century, Quebec society has had a strong focus on the values of mutual aid, autonomy, union organizing, and solidarity, which resulted in the bottom-up creation of networks of support and advocacy (Lamoureux 2008; Mills 2010). By the 1960s, this wave of community-based organizing climaxed in what is now called the "Quiet Revolution", of which the primary demands were for a secular society and against the dominance of Catholicism in Quebec, the creation of a welfare state, and the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada (Mills 2010). Many of the institutions created by activists at this time are still key to the third sector landscape of Montreal. One example is the Local Community Service Centers (CLSCs), a network of clinics that have their root in providing emergency health services to people outside of the state healthcare system, that has since been absorbed into the state. These clinics are part of a wider network of social and health services, the Centres de Santé et de services sociaux (CSSS), also amalgamated into the state healthcare system. The first CLSC was started in Pointe Sainte Charles, a borough adjacent to our own study site (CCPSC 2014), and still exists today, although it remains the only CLSC that is autonomous from the state. In sum, social values of solidarity and mutual aid has led to the formation of institutions that eventually formed the basis of both Montreal's third sector landscape and the welfare system as it exists now. This has led to a strong, robust network of community organizations that often exist in tandem with, are challenging to, and work together with the state. In addition, the shift from a faith-based society to a secular one has meant that charity and compassion are less visible values and are less supported by state or activist organizations (Lamoureux 2008).

Food banks in Montreal have existed since the 1980s. Moisson Montreal, Canada's largest food bank, was started in 1984 and in 2013 it served 214 organizations and indirectly provided

food to 142,142 people per month (Moisson Montreal 2014). It now acts as the central distribution site for both all of Montreal's smaller food banks and food banks in Quebec.

Moisson Montreal is itself an interesting case study (see Box 2). Importantly, the organization established itself as Montreal's primary emergency food distributor during the *crise de verglas*, a succession of storms in January 1998 that paralyzed the city's infrastructure and caused many residents to be stuck in their homes. As a result, they grew in size and formalized their relationships with both food donors and the city. Since then, they have become increasingly corporatized in structure, and most of the directors on their board have a corporate background. Furthermore, their funding is mostly from private donors. Food is mostly sourced from supermarket chains such as Metro, and individual donations from food drives make up a very little part of the food they receive. In addition, most volunteers are sent through other institutions such as schools, businesses, court-martialed community service programs, and internships. While they state the percentage of hours different groups of volunteers worked, they do not provide an estimate of how many hours are spent by volunteers in total per year. The organization boasts that "thanks to everybody's hard work, every dollar Moisson Montreal receives translates to 17 dollars of redistributed foodstuffs" (Moisson Montreal 2014). Their warehouse features equipment on par with agri-food supplier standards, such as several walk-in refrigerators, trucks, and loading docks. In 2012-2013, they supplied 12,868,439kg of foods from 233 agri-food suppliers, which they valued at $71,557,147.

Verdun, the neighborhood in which our case study is situated, is comprised mostly of Francophones (63%), has a high proportion of renters (67% compared to 62%), and a low population of migrants (19% compared to 31%). 16,000 of the 65,000 people are low-income, while 10,000 of the 30,000 inhabitants of the Wellington-d'Eglise area—where the food bank is located—are considered low-income. Many of these low-income residents are young workers and students (Centraide of Greater Montreal 2011). Verdun, as part of the South-West also has higher rates of social and material deprivation, as well as food insecurity, compared to other districts (Apparicio 2007).

Yet, like Montreal as a whole, Verdun has had a long history of social justice and activism. As a result, there is a coherent network of like-minded community groups that often work together on issues that concern them. Pointe Sainte Charles, adjacent to Verdun, is particularly known for its militant working-class-based organizing and its community groups often work in concert with

those of the surrounding areas on issues surrounding gentrification, women's rights, social inequality, and migrant rights (Kruzynski *et al.* 2006). Many of these values were noticeable in the attitudes of staff and volunteers at the food bank, as will be discussed later.

However, now the neighborhood is seeing some "épanouissement" (blooming) as some put it, in other words, gentrification. Despite high poverty rates in the neighborhood, there has been a lot of "renewal" and "mass arrival of new residents" (Centraide du Grand Montréal 2011, p. 2; Twigge-Molecey 2009). Many young residents are moving in and new condominiums are being built. This has been shown to be partly related to the new hospital being built nearby (Twigge-Molecey 2009). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, many aid organizations in the neighborhood are closing their doors, making the food bank one of the most well-established and "rooted" in the needs of the neighborhood's low-income population (personal interview, director).

History of food bank

The food bank was started in 1979 as a neighborhood initiative by the CLSC of Verdun. Originally, it was an inter-neighborhood network between other boroughs in South-West Montreal, where services and resources were exchanged, "to develop the culture of mutual aid" [Director]. Originally there was a center in each neighborhood, now there remains only one. Slowly more and more requests came in for food-related activities, and "as time went by, it became a food aid organization. Less about promoting mutual aid, and more about food action" (*ibid.).*

The food bank finally changed completely during what is known as the *crise de verglas*, a succession of storms in January 1998 that paralyzed the city's infrastructure. Again, quoting the director,

> Verdun had problems: a lot of houses without electricity, and a lot of people needed food. The city realized there was no food reserve in Verdun, and that there were no volunteers to be the first responders. The association […] assumed the leadership to develop the project. Then there was a more formal agreement with the municipality. That was the beginning of the beginning of the [food bank], and its food aid counter.

Like Moisson Montreal, the food bank established itself and its formal relationships with the city after a crisis that forced recognition of their services from the authorities, but simultaneously changed the types of services toward emergency food distribution.

In the past six years, the food bank has undergone another rapid transformation. The organization was on the verge of bankruptcy because volunteers were no longer present; staff became overworked, and had little time to find funding. While previously most of its staff was older, there was a complete change in management and the new staff hired was largely younger, recent graduates, and activists that grew up in the neighborhood. Since then, there has been a cycling of new staff every couple of years, so that the time between the start of our project and then end saw three long-time staff members leave and three new staff get hired.

This recent change has had a large effect on the operations of the food bank. With younger, more activist-oriented staff, the activities have changed slowly away from focusing primarily on food aid and have scaled back to more manageable workloads, where the staff have more time to pursue other projects, such as facilitating collective kitchens, running an at-cost depanneur (grocery store), beautifying the space, applying for funding, starting a composting project, and "trying to turn the *depannage* [emergency food basket distribution] into a social activity" [Director]. This has been partnered with the increase in regular volunteers, who in turn receive benefits through *Emploi Quebec*, the province's unemployment service.

Over the past six years, the food bank has had two general shifts in priorities, which they hope to continue in the future. First, their attitude and mission has shifted away from one of charity and compassion toward one of solidarity, mutual aid, and encouraging users to participate in the organization, rather than be receivers of it. Second, they are attempting to distribute the food they receive and their services to other organizations, while becoming Verdun's primary source of food surplus. According to the director, "We want to decentralize the service and the costs, and to share the expertise of food security around the neighborhood, so that [this organization] is not the only expert on food matters. To make the issue more accessible, which is not as simple as it seems." This has meant consolidating supplies received from Moisson Montreal in their warehouse, but using it as a way to make connections with other organizations that might need it. This is in contrast to previous years, where both services and food supplies were not shared between other organizations. We will further discuss these two shifts below.

Organizational structure

The food bank corresponds to the broad definition of food banks identified in our literature review. However, it does not exactly fit into the category of food recovery organizer, community meal provider, or food pantry, as it provides all of these services. In this way, it seems to

combine the different types of emergency food organizations listed by Feeding America (O'Brien 2004).

The food bank fits within three different legal structures. First, it is a registered non-profit corporation, with a board of directors, constitution, and yearly annual general meetings and audits. Second, it is registered as a charitable organization, which gives them tax benefits and allows donations to be tax-deductible, but also restricts them to in terms of their activities, where political advocacy can result in the loss of charity status, as will be further discussed later. Third, they are a member of the Quebec network, *La Coalition des Tables Régionales d'Organismes Communautaires* (Coalition of regional community organizations, CTROC), and function as an "autonomous community organization." According to CTROC's website, there are four requirements to having autonomous status: being a non-profit organization, rooted in ("*enraciné*") the community, maintaining community-involved and democratic work, and being free to determine their own mission, strategy, and activities (CTROC 2014). As such, the food bank can be considered neither totally a charity nor an NGO. They are bound to both federal and provincial legal institutions. These different legal statuses have an impact on how they operate and navigate other institutions, as will be further explored below.

The food bank has four tiers of workers. First, there's the board of directors, which meets irregularly, decides financial issues, and organizes annual general meetings. Second, there's the staff. Each staff member has a specific set of tasks: the director is in charge with outside relationships, yearly reports, and engaging with the board; other staff are in charge of volunteers and the depanneur, transportation, the kitchen, or the emergency basket. However, as with any community organization, these roles shift depending on the day and the activities. During our study, there was 3-5 full-time and part-time staff. Third, there is a core of eight regular volunteers who are part of an Emploi Quebec program and who are required to work up to 20 hours a week in exchange for a monthly welfare cheque. Fourth, there is a less permanent group of 'members' who may be part of the organization but who are nevertheless not always present. This includes people facilitating workshops, summer interns, or irregular volunteers. The food bank is also part of a program where community service hours are completed as part of a court sentence. This brings in a regular contingent of volunteers who may be at the organization full-time or part-time for several weeks. In total, there are about 40-50 people directly involved with the organization, with 20-30 working there per week, and 5-15 present at any given time.

Activities and services

Despite its small staff and volunteer base, the food bank has a wide diversity of programs. During operating hours it runs a discount food store, or *depanneur*. This *depanneur* conducts about 6,000 transactions a year, with 800-900 people a year, and about 15 people a day. Every Thursday the food bank offers emergency baskets, and social workers also provide discount eyewear to users of the baskets. Every week there are two collective kitchens that meet, and the food bank hopes to scale up this activity further. Volunteers often will be sent to cook at other centers, and every week there is a meal organized together with another local organization. The food bank also organizes "solidarity donations", i.e., deliveries of food supplies to nearby community groups. Every month, it delivers food baskets to about 10-20 elderly with limited autonomy. The food bank also organizes the supply of discount diapers and baby formula, which are very popular. There are weekly baskets available to volunteers at the food bank, as well as lunch every day. The food bank also makes some extra money by picking up recycling from a local pharmacy, organizing it along with cartons from donations from Moisson Montreal, and then transporting it to a recycling center. Finally, the food bank often organizes cooking workshops and social events like community meals, about twice a month.

It is important to note here the extent of the constant changes to the programming at the food bank. During the two years of our study, the food bank stopped providing meals during the emergency food basket donations, stopped charging for emergency food baskets, stopped a program of monthly food baskets, greatly reduced the amounts of baskets they provided, changed many of its relationships with local groups, shifted its strategies significantly, and had an almost complete staff turn-over.

Relationships with other groups

The food bank has many partners in the neighborhood. Some partnerships are formal and some are informal. Formally, the organization has relationships with 23 local groups, including businesses, community centers, governmental organizations, and NGOs. This includes five local CLSCs, two CSSSs, McGill University's Douglas Hospital, which specializes in mental health issues, a center for Montreal's Inuit community, an elementary school, a technical school, a local church, youth centers, a women's centre, and a crisis intervention center.

The type of relationship varies depending on the partner. For example, the food bank often helps run cooking events for the women's centre. But with the hospital, the relationship does not go beyond receiving the remains of their cafeteria's lunch menu and freezing it. Similarly, a local pharmacy is identified as a partner but this entails little more than receiving and processing their cardboard boxes. Members from the Inuit Center sometimes volunteer for the food bank, and sometimes receive supplies for their own activities.

Worth mentioning here is the food bank's special relationship with the local CLSC. During the time of our case study, especially the last months, this relationship was a large part of the discussions with staff, and we were invited to several meetings between the food bank and the clinic. As the one governmental organization in the neighborhood that has the mandate to deal with health, it occupies a special position in terms of how the food bank will try to leverage political willpower around the problems of poverty, inequality, and hunger in the neighborhood. As such, the food bank has pressured the CLSC—through various tactics that will be discussed later—to take responsibility for the needs of Verdun's residents, arguing that food security is actually a health issue. The CLSC had been forced, despite their director's will, to meet with the food bank, in order to come to agreements about sharing these responsibilities and supporting each other. In this sense, the food bank's relationship with the CLSC mirrors that of its relationships with other governmental institutions: applying pressure when necessary, and otherwise cooperating when possible. But it was also inherently asymmetrical: the CLSC, being a governmental organization, had the power to arbitrarily provide or withdraw support, while it itself was subject to government mandates. To negotiate this power asymmetry, the food bank was forced to confront the CLSC staff and burden them with work until their demands were met. As the director of the food bank noted, had the CLSC had a mandate to address food insecurity in the neighborhood, this relationship might have been more cooperative than uneven.

Comparison: Neighboring food bank (Box 3)

Location: Verdun
Structure of food bank: charity-based, run by retired elderly, food basket donations twice a week. No staff, only volunteer-run.
Distribution: 702 individuals served per year, 277 households per year.
Activities and services: Food basket distribution
Relationship to case study: Receives food, competitive for resources
Funding: Ad-hoc donations, no stable source of income.
Sources of food: Case study, Moisson Montreal, purchasing.
Labour time: Unknown
Financial equivalent of labour time: Unknown
Actual reimbursement for labour time: None
Other relevant statistics: Source of income of adult users: 92% social assistance, 6.8% pensioned, 0.3% employed, 0.3% employment insurance.

One specific relationship worth mentioning was that with another local food bank in the area. Compared to our case study, this food bank supplies emergency baskets to more people but, when taking into account other activities, it has a much smaller distribution, volunteer base, and storage capacity. There was no staff, although there was a large group of long-time, mostly retired, volunteers. This other food bank, from an interview we conducted with their coordinator, had a negative attitude to our case study. They expressed the worry that the food bank was trying to monopolize resources in the area. In fact, this was true: our case study had been lobbying Moisson Montreal to send them larger deliveries, which they then could distribute to smaller food banks and services throughout the borough. But the volunteers at the smaller food bank resented this, stating that they wanted to remain independent. Because it was able to prove a wider recipient base to Moisson Montreal, had more financial resources, and had a large truck at their disposal, our case study had the upper hand. Indeed, Moisson Montreal had tentatively agreed, and plans were being made to make our case study the central food bank of Verdun. In this case, the unequal power relationship was reversed: our case study, because it had more resources at its disposal, was better able to monopolize the flow of food surplus.

There are many other local groups that have more ad-hoc and informal relationships with the food bank. As with many other food banks, businesses will sometimes donate leftovers after catered events. During our study period, the food bank partnered with a migrant justice coalition

and hosted their event, and previously had run a workshop about “the food aid sector in solidarity with migrant struggles”. They also cooked food for the student protests that happened in summer 2011. Sometimes volunteers at the food bank will be encouraged to attend a protest, and the organization pays transportation.

The food bank also has formal relationships with advocacy groups. One such group is *la Table de concertation sur la faim et le développement social du Montréal metropolitan* (Taskforce on Hunger and Social Development for Metropolitan Montréal). This is a coalition of anti-hunger and anti-poverty organizations in Montreal that push for policies on a municipal and provincial level, as well as being a kind of think tank on social justice organizing in the city (see Rock 2006). Staff from the food bank attend meetings of the coalition, write articles for their bulletin, receives strategic advice and consultation by the coalition, and the director of the coalition chairs the food bank’s annual general assembly. Another organization that the food bank is a part of is the *Regroupement des Cuisines Collectives de Quebec* (RCCQ), a network of collective kitchen groups that has helped build Quebec’s thriving communal cooking movement. Staff at the food bank have attended collective kitchen workshops and the food bank attends the RCCQ-organized national day of collective kitchens.

The food bank’s relationship with commercial partners is often limited to material relationships, such as picking up frozen meat from a butcher, or picking up cardboard from a nearby pharmacy. The food bank has limited the amount of individual food donations they receive because they take up too much time and resources to pick up and process. However, staff at the food bank did state that these relationships do help them gain recognition from local officials, leverage their impact in the neighborhood, and look good on paper when applying to grants and foundations.

The food bank’s relationship with the municipality was more complicated. Previously elected politicians for the borough were mostly part of the same coalition, and staff at the food bank noted that there were a lot of issues in their relationships to municipal politics: “There was a whole network of political favoritism, and we were not among the favorites" [Director]. During our study, there had been a citywide election, and in Verdun, the older political party had been almost totally replaced by a younger party called *Projet Montréal*, which is known for supporting community groups, social justice issues, and urban sustainability. The two new councilors were invited on a tour of the food bank, after which they expressed their interest in helping the

organization gain legitimacy and resources, and attempted to secure a better rent agreement. Since then, the councilors have attended the food bank's annual general meetings and are available to the food bank for support. Again, according to the director, "I had adopted a strategy of dealing with representatives that I had to *force*. Now I find myself working with representatives who are actually interested, so it makes my job easier. It's very positive." Other governmental groups have, in the past, turned a deaf ear to the food bank, depending on their own vision of what constitutes social change. On the whole, the food bank will sometimes try to work with politicians when the opportunity seems favorable, or mobilize against political decisions when the need arises. In this way, the food bank's relationship with governmental institutions can be seen as non-partisan, but sometimes opportunistic, and always political. This will be further discussed in the section below, on the political strategies of the food bank.

The city of Verdun provides the food bank with free rent and utilities. Without this, the food bank would not exist, as the director remarked in a meeting with the Projet Montreal representatives. This also resulted in an unequal power relationship, where their space could be revoked if the food bank was seen to be too political, or too confrontational toward the municipality. In one case, a flood caused the sewage system of the building to overflow, and the food bank was out of commission for several weeks, with staff, volunteers, and neighbors cleaning up the mess. The municipality offered no help, even though the building was city property. This moment helped many at the food bank realize how little the state was willing to intervene; as one staff remarked in an email to volunteers: "Time to pressure the city to get us a better space. Come down if you want to do political organizing."

Attitudes of staff

It was mentioned above that Quebec and Montreal have strong cultural institutions emphasizing social justice, collective action, solidarity, and activism. These same social institutions had been shown to be present in the way the food bank related to other organizations, as they stressed their partnerships with other activist groups. They were also present legally, as they defined themselves as a community-oriented autonomous organization under Quebec law. In our interviews, we found that these institutions were also present in the attitudes of the staff.

First, the staff interviewed often referenced the fact that they were trying to move away from feeling like a charity to locals: "We want to be seen by local residents, not as a place where

people come as a last resort, but rather as a welcoming, tolerant, pleasant place to come and find support or food aid" [Administrator 1]. The food bank's functioning was often discussed in contrast to the institution of religion:

> We've always made a point of *not* being a charity. Of stepping away. Of making sure we maintain that clear line between a traditional charity in the food sector. You're obviously aware that the food sector is kind of distinct and separate from the other areas of community organizing in that it's traditionally run by churches. And the influence of churches is quite overwhelming. And that's why we're the only place in Verdun that deals in food issues that's not framed or controlled or advised by church-related structures. [Administrator 2]

As an alternative to being a charity, the staff often embraced values of mutual aid and working together with others. When the director was asked of the food bank's plan of action, he responded: The first project is food recovery, with an approach emphasizing partnership in the community. The second project is a network of collective action for food issues. The third is a *structure d'économie communautaire [community economy]"* [Director]. We further explain what was meant by *économie communautaire* below. One staff member in charge of the collective kitchens noted that "it's not only about food. It's mostly not about food. If Verdun changes the way it works and its vision, that's a big thing. It's very political. We're constantly playing the game, trying to push the neighborhood to change. If you don't play the game, you're not doing more than keeping people alive" [Administrator 3].

Another way that the institutions of collective action and social justice manifested themselves was in the efforts of the staff to steer away from becoming a business.

> A very difficult obstacle is ensuring that the food bank remains a community organization. It's very tempting to say, "Oh, I'll just run a food warehouse." That's useful, it's nice, it's good for people, but it's not a community organization. So you need a plan to control what you do with the food. I came up with some indicators to check that my work is still community-based. Sometimes, I have no choice but to make compromises. We no longer have membership here: people are customers, users. I don't like that – it's not for me. But there was nothing at the beginning. There was membership, but it was a total shambles… We're trying to return to membership, but we've had to go through this customer-based approach. So there's an example of a compromise. It's hard, so you can use a set of indicators: is there a democratic process? Is there a recognition of competencies? Is participation possible? And so on and so forth. [Director]

As the director noted, there was a constant tension in how they dealt with users. Were they customers, or participants? In this way, the institutions of participation rather than profit, or

collective action rather than individualization, were valued but were felt as difficult to accomplish. For example, the food bank, during our study period had shifted from a policy of charging for baskets to making them free. Their justification for this was that even though the food was received for free from Moisson Montreal, they had many other fees: "There are a lot of fees, when it comes to transport… Paying truck drivers, truck repairs, gas… The truck is broken, so we have to pay $1500 to fix it, and rent another one…. While food security activities are not subsidized by the government, we have to charge a certain fee" [Administrator 1]. As another staff member remarked, "it's not a free lunch. We have many costs, but the government won't pay for them" [Administrator 4]. As a result, the food bank was forced to individually charge users for their baskets.

A common theme in all of our interviews was that of "food autonomy", which in Quebec refers to, on the individual level, the ability of people to make dignified food choices and have sufficient access to clearly labeled food, the ability of communities to take charge of their own food system, and on a wider level, a food system that is sustainable (RCCQ 2014). Thus, it is a kind of amalgamation of the concepts of food security, community food security, the right to food, and food sovereignty. In our interviews, staff, when referring to local food insecurity, often used this term interchangeably with others.

Finally, one surprising theme was that of nutrition. Often, in fliers and call-outs for collective kitchen or community meal participation, there was a reference to healthy food and its importance. But unlike many other food banks, there was an attitude that it was not the food bank's role to decide what was healthy or unhealthy food, and reject certain products: "…You fall into the trap of moralizing, 'We have to teach these poor people how to eat; they eat crap.' The idea is to reduce the budget. We don't want to say "this is healthy, this isn't." If we don't offer those things, the products are cheaper. People will buy things elsewhere, anyway" [Administrator 1]. While this seems at first at odds with their strategy for community food security, it did correspond to their attempts of not appearing like a charity and taking on a less patronizing, condescending stance.

On the whole, the staff's attitude was always oriented toward the goal of addressing people's needs in the community. For them, this required addressing the state and challenging state institutions. As one staff member said, "It's always political. We're always trying to push the state to make exceptions. To take exception" [Administrator 1].

Limitations of policy and legal institutions

The food bank perceived its greatest challenges to be pertaining to policy and legal institutions. On one occasion, they had had their charity status revoked by the federal government because their activities did not correspond to the federal definition of a charity, even though it did correspond to the provincial definition of an autonomous organization. According to several staff, this had been caused by a change in federal policy, initiated by the Harper Government.

> The thing is that, given this, we do have a charity number, we are registered with the federal government, and given that we are dealing right now with a conservative administration, we've had to modify our mission statement, so that it matches political expectations…. So that while operationally we're trying to stay away from the pitfalls of a charity-oriented organization, we do have to maintain a façade, an exterior. I wouldn't call it a façade because that isn't really what we're doing. A façade would be kind of a hoax, which is not the case. But any opportunity given to us we have to put forth the fact that we are in the business of helping out those least fortunate. We have to adopt that language, unfortunately. [Administrator 1]

Another example given by the staff was the regulation around surplus food and what they called the *économie communautaire* (community resources):

> In simple terms, it's making use of the *fuel* of the community resource. We try to develop this, because it would allow the food bank in Verdun to have some autonomy, to have public funds, private funds… To have its own form of financial support, maintaining a link with the community. Except it's illegal to do commerce for a [non-profit] organization, so we have donations, subscriptions, memberships, things like that. So we have to adapt that to the structure of food recovery, and respect its legal values. [Director]

In other words, there are legal limitations to what a food bank can do to bring in money and function politically. The food bank staff is forced to negotiate these limitations by calling their 'customers' 'members', calling their commercial activity 'community economy', and their political mobilizing 'charity.' As a result of resource limitations, they use food surplus as 'fuel' for achieving their aims, rather than monetary contributions or political legitimacy alone. These legal institutions—decided by the state on a federal and provincial level—were then implemented (sometimes arbitrarily) by bureaucrats who had little knowledge of local needs or conflicting regulations. This, as well, resulted in an unequal relationship, where the food bank was often powerless with respect to the decision made.

When asked what they would ideally want from the state, the director responded that first and foremost they needed legal support from policy-makers.

> The laws and standards are designed for companies and for associations, but not for something in between, which is what a food bank is. I think that's the source of the issue. [Food banks] always have to ask for political favors, and things like that, to function. There should be an operation status that corresponds to food banks, including its volunteers and its employees. Then, a building occupation status that isn't for a restaurant, or another type of food organization. Every day we have a problem related to that.

In sum, the food bank found that its primary stumbling block to achieving their goals of social justice, community food security, and autonomy was policy-related and legal. To them, food banks occupied a legal marginal zone, where the laws were unclear and they were at the mercy of arbitrary changes in policy. In their conversations with politicians, the local clinic, and City government, it was never clear who had what role, and which body was responsible for relationships with the food bank. To account for this, they had to constantly seek favors with bureaucrats, display a 'façade', and rely on non-monetary resources as 'fuel' to achieve their goals. This uneven power relationship, where they had to fight for legitimacy constantly, was a large drain on their capacities as a community organization.

Political strategies

We have already mentioned the context of the institutions of mutual aid, horizontal organizing, and autonomy that are present in Quebec society and also were present in the attitudes of staff and volunteers. Here, we note how some of these attitudes were present in the food bank's day-to-day activities, and how the food bank succeeded, despite political, legal, and financial barriers, to be a 'political' organization.

First, the food bank's political mission was directly apparent in its own documents. For example, it's 2013-2014 report stated,

> The organization acts to ensure that food aid in Verdun is not a hidden [*clandestine*] operation. That those who run it respond to known political views, and those who benefit from it are treated in a just manner. For [the food bank], mutual aid [*entraide*] also means giving citizens the possibility of participating in our activities to ensure collective responsibility in face of our problems.

From this statement, it is clear that the food bank sees their role as going beyond food aid, but also to promote political activity and collective action.

Informally, the way the food bank presented itself and the way it negotiated interpersonal relationships was often quite political. We have already mentioned the community-oriented and politically motivated attitudes of the staff. To them, moving away from a charity model meant

not being a patronizing space, but instead presenting as a “welcoming, tolerant, pleasant place” [Administrator 1] and providing a “festive ambiance… A more cooperative base as opposed to a more paternalistic, Dickensian atmosphere that make people hesitate to come in. ” [Administrator 2]. This was achieved, according to the staff, by organizing a diversity of activities, like barbecues, workshops, and community meals, and by working with diverse partners, like primary schools. It was also accomplished by not demanding paperwork. Many food banks request welfare documents, proof of residence, or income cheques. But, as one staff member put it, this paperwork is often demeaning “We don't insist on registering people because we believe that people have been micromanaged sufficiently. We don't want to add to that stigma. Because people have to do it constantly when you're in a certain class” [Administrator 1]. A side-benefit of this was that the food bank was able to serve undocumented migrants, people without status, or people with mental health issues who could not do their own paperwork. In this way, providing food became a way of addressing the needs of people that would not even be helped by the welfare state.

Furthermore, the food bank staff acknowledged that food-related activities could themselves be political. In one case, a collective kitchen organized by the food bank became a place for participants to discuss the Quebec student strike. Later, the food bank staff helped organize a field trip to a protest for accessible education, which the collective kitchen participants attended. Similarly, the food bank often organized meals for protests, which they saw as political actions themselves: "Our people are not young and they might not see the point in demonstrating. However, they prefer making food for other people and that makes sense for them” [Administrator 1].

The food bank’s outreach material also framed food access as a political, inter-personal issue. One flier for their community meal read “The goal is to produce a tasty and healthy meal for approximately 50 people while keeping in mind that the process (cooking together) is just as important as the product.” A call-out for volunteers reflected the known communist slogan, “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”: “We take into account for each volunteer: Their abilities and talents: everyone in their own way, can do extraordinary things!” A flier for the collective kitchen advertised that cooking together could “break isolation”, and “lower food costs.”

In fact, breaking isolation was a major theme in interviews with volunteers. One volunteer

noted that working at the food bank beat sitting in front of the television. Another explained that he attended the food bank because he was socio-phobic. One volunteer, who was previously an undocumented migrant and later received Quebec citizenship, noted that the food bank was the only place where he could build relationships with people in his community. Even the volunteer, mentioned above, who thought the food bank was no different than other food banks expressed his belief it helped him do useful something rather than "just sitting at home [expletive] off and doing coke."

To the food bank staff, politics happened inter-personally as well as in their activities, through organizing collectively. According to one staff member, "Having a perspective of social transformation, this is what differentiates us from other projects: by the individual and the collective dimensions" [Administrator 1]. They did this by focusing on access to basic resources first, and organizing from there afterward: "if you cannot respond to basic needs of the population, you cannot build flower boxes in the streets." To the staff, social transformation started with what people need most, not issues that are not part of their day-to-day experience. In effect, they saw their activities as *explicitly* political:

> I think it's important to set up places for people to come together over specific themes. I think community kitchens are a very nice example, where people can have social experiences, cook together, and *live* transformative experiences as individuals and as groups. And I think collective organization can have an impact on us and those around us. [Director]

Second, the food bank was politically involved despite the fact that they had charity status. In their operations, they had to toe the line between achieving their aims of social justice and community food security and appearing like a charity organization. To do this, they refrained from making any explicit political statements in their constitution, advertising themselves as political in any way, or, in our own case, having their name mentioned in a study about the political involvement of food banks. Their strategy to overcome this barrier and remain political was through the groups that they formed partnerships with: migrant justice groups, a women's centre, an Inuit centre, a Montreal-wide anti-hunger group, and student movements. To them, they could satisfy the demands of charity status while being political through providing resources such as food and space to hold meetings. In this way, as noted above, food surplus became a kind of 'fuel' for their political activities, where more obvious resources, such as money and political statements, were less possible.

Staff noted that the strategy of working with other organizations was directly related to their desire not to be a charity:

> We rely on other organizations to shape up a broad front of activities or a certain approach or certain ways to expect the state or various donators to meet up to their responsibilities in terms of putting a stop to the eradication of the welfare state. Obviously as workers in the community sector we're ... filling that gap that the state's removal has left in its wake. So it's kind of a paradox right there, but we have to make sure that we kind of skim on that dilemma without relinquishing too much in terms of what we aim to do, because the state expects us to fill that voice, and always has for the past 25 years. So it's an easy trap to fall into. Which kind of leads you to what we call a dynamic where the only thing you settle in to is providing services on a daily basis now. You don't want to get involved into that dynamic because then it kind moves you away from the work that needs to be done to sustain that political front. To make sure that the state keeps up, meets its responsibilities in terms of the welfare state. So we need the full support and cooperation of other organizations in the area to maintain that front to ensure that the level of funding is not decreased. [Administrator 2]

On the one hand, this quote shows that the food bank staff were well aware that food banks can have the tendency to "fill in the gap" of state responsibility. On the other hand, it shows that, in partnering with a "broad political front" of organizations, the food bank tried to push back on that tendency, and make political demands and alliances that pressured the state, be it on a local or on a federal level.

To this end, the food bank employs a very unique strategy. They request that everyone who wants a food basket bring a letter of reference from a partner organization, specifically, the local CLSC:

> So we made it obligatory to see a psychosocial professional at the CLSC to get a food basket. At first, the CLSC would say, 'You can't force people, in exchange for a basket, to go to the service.' We inverted it: now, you, as responder, should know this person who's in danger in your community, so now you are able to offer them this service here. [Director]

In effect, the food bank forced the local clinic, the only governmental organization in Verdun responsible for health in the neighborhood, to deal with food security as a health issue. At first this strategy seemed to go against their policy of avoiding paperwork, but it later became clear that it was actually their most important political strategy of insuring state cooperation.

> Because what it does is that it kind of *forces* partners, it *forces* the organizations that stem from the state, from the broad welfare apparatus such as the CLSCs to kind of not be able to sweep the bomb under the carpet. It kind of forces them to take note of the sheer amount of people who are in need. So that then,

> in that broad political front I was referring to earlier, you can then point to the CLSC, and say that, well, the CLSC will vouch for the fact that you do need this mass influx of resources because of the sheer amount of people in need. So we do need that, it's kind of our insurance policy that kind of instills a general, it kind of guarantees that the issue cannot go away, that it remains on the front burner. That's our way to do it. [Administrator 2]

During our study time, this strategy came to fruition in a direct way. When the CLSC director started noticing that more and more people came to the clinic for the sole purpose of receiving referrals, they were forced to start engaging with the food bank. This led to a meeting, where the food bank challenged the clinic, saying that food security was also a matter of health, and therefore their responsibility. At the end of the meeting, the CLSC promised to continue providing referrals and start dealing with food security as a psychological issue. However, the CLSC maintained that they did not want to include poverty and hunger in their own mandate, "It's too broad. They need to have a clinical name for it, for them to take on poverty and hunger as health issues" [Director]. Yet the director viewed their strategy as a success, as they had forced the issue of hunger to be taken on by state institutions.

In this section we discussed some of the social institutions that we had observed at the food bank. These included formal institutions like relationships with other organizations at different scales (local to national) and relations to policy-makers and legal institutions. We also discussed more informal institutions, such as the attitudes the staff had, particularly with regard to the institutions of charity and compassionate giving, historical and cultural contexts, power relationships between the actors, and the political strategy that the food bank staff used to work toward their goals of addressing poverty and hunger. It was found that both formal (e.g. legal, partnerships, and relations to government) and informal (e.g. history of activism in the neighborhood, cultural norms of community values) were important in determining the structure and activities of the food bank. In the following sections, we discuss some of the other variables at play in the food bank, some of which have already been mentioned: the attitudes and demographics of volunteers and users, material resources, financial resources, and labor.

Survey results

Our study involved two surveys, one of volunteers and other of food bank recipients. It took place during one month of the food bank's operation. This month, June 2014, was chosen as the staff informed us that this would be an average month of activity, right before people took a

summer break. In the following, we discuss the results of both surveys and their relevance to our research questions.

Volunteers

According to the director, during any given month, the food bank has 20-25 volunteers, with a total of 57 volunteers in 2013-2014. Our volunteer survey included 16 respondents, which represents 64% of the volunteers in that month. At a 95% confidence interval, there is a 16% error in the sample size.

Since many questions were qualitative and open-ended in structure, responses were coded to fit different categories. When respondents provided a range of months, for example, that they had been working at the food bank, this was transformed into a range of days. Reasons given for volunteering at the food bank were divided in to two categories: measurable benefits (such as community service hours, regular meals, or welfare), and immeasurable benefits (such as charity values, community values, feeling isolated, or social).

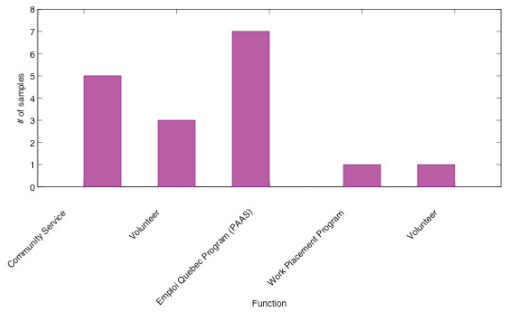

Figure 8. Types of volunteers working at food bank

Type of volunteer	*Measurable benefits*	*Immeasurable benefits and other reasons*
Community service (5)	Community service hours (5)	Court order (5), atmosphere (1), social (1)
Volunteer (3)	Community service hours (1), weekly meal (1)	Community values (2), social (2), charity (2), political (1), feeling isolated (1), experience (1)
Emploi Quebec Program (PAAS) (7)	Monthly welfare stipend (7), $37 transport money (7), volunteer basket (6), daily meal (6), weekly meal (1)	Social (5), community values (4), feeling isolated (3), experience (1), mental health (1), political (1).

Table 2: Types of volunteers and benefits received

Results from the volunteer survey showed that there is a clear typology of volunteers. Table 1 shows the type of volunteers present at the food bank. As can be seen, the majority of volunteers were enrolled in the welfare program and the community service program. Lastly there were regular volunteers, who were not affiliated with any program. This is consistent with the reports of staff of the distribution of types of volunteers at the food bank.

It is helpful to break down our survey results even further. It appeared that volunteers who were part of the welfare program met more people at the food bank, spent longer hours at the food bank, and spent less on food per month. It was unclear whether type of volunteer made a difference in how far they travelled to get to the food bank.

The surveys also revealed some attitudes held by volunteers. When asked how this food bank compared to others, most volunteers (9/15) responded positively, suggesting that the food bank was different from others. Otherwise, volunteers had no opinion (3/15) or thought that the food bank was no different from others (2/15). Volunteers also expressed a worry that there was less activity, and that requesting the CLSC references was leading to less accessibility of the food bank. Almost all volunteers had a positive opinion about the relationships between staff, users, and volunteers (12/15) and the rest expressed no opinion.

The survey suggests that those that had been given a court order and regular volunteers expressed that their reasons for attending were largely for community service hours or for political or charitable convictions. On the other hand, volunteers registered in the PAAS program gave far more reasons for attending the food bank, such as receiving food, feeling isolated, having mental health issues, or needing to be social.

When compared with other figures, it seems that volunteers under the PAAS program both spent the least on food per month and spent the most time at the food bank. From this, we can make several assumptions:

- Volunteers enrolled in the welfare program relied much more on the food bank for subsistence than other groups
- Volunteers in the welfare program worked longer hours at the food bank, due to stipulations of their program.
- Volunteers in the welfare program also were more affected by issues of isolation, mental health, and lack of social connections, and sought to address these at the food bank

This suggests that volunteers in the welfare program were both socially isolated and had unstable or insufficient income, compared to other groups of volunteers. Nevertheless, it also suggests that this group of volunteers benefit in ways that go beyond a monetary sum—the food bank provided food security, a social place to gather, and a place to get to know people in their neighborhood, none of which would have been achievable through a welfare check alone.

Recipients

The survey of recipients was less statistically representative. During our month of surveying, unexpected construction caused the street in front of the food bank to be blocked, leading to fewer users attending the monthly basket. In addition, the food bank was just in a process of renegotiation with the CLSC, meaning that there was much confusion for recipients about whether they should get reference letters or not. The staff accounted these factors for the low recipient turnout. On any given month in 2013-2014, there were an average of 99 food basket donations and an average of 37 non-replicated users. Our survey collected data from 18 users, which is 48.6% of the sample size for the average users per month. At a 95% confidence interval, this gives an error level of 16.6%. If measured in terms of a whole year, our survey results give 22.6 % error at the 95% confidence level, as there are 441 participants per year. As such, we were not able to use the survey as representative of the food bank user population, and our observations can only be considered to be anecdotal. The construction and confusion around reference letters may also be a confounding factor as to the representativeness of this survey.

13 out of 18 users walked to the food bank, while four took the metro or bus. On average it took users 15.4 minutes to get to the food bank. All users had met less than five people at the food bank, and on average users spent $54.5 per week on food. Two users did not cite a number and instead noted that their welfare was simply not enough, one user noted, “I get $535 from welfare and spend $560 on rent.” Six users supported children, three of who were single and/or divorced, and two of who were single mothers. For four users, it was their first time at the food bank. When users were asked how many meals the food basket provided, their responses were too varied to give an accurate number.

Perspectives on the quality of food delivered were mixed. Eight out of 18 users were favorable toward the food, ranging from enthusiastic to satisfied. Three users were dissatisfied with the food. These users were primarily concerned with the expiry date of the food donations; one even

reported food poisoning from one of the frozen meals. Seven users had no opinion.

When asked for their reasons for attending, all users noted that it was they didn't have enough money. Four users specified that welfare was not enough. One user came because they had significant health concerns, resulting from construction work place injuries. Another user was a migrant single mother with four children. Another user was in political asylum from Iran, where he had been imprisoned. One user did, however, state that they came to this particular food bank because "I don't feel bad coming here because people are nice."

When asked if they engage with any other activities, twelve users responded that they did not and two of those users noted that they were interested in going. When asked their reasons for not attending, users cited "not enough time" and "not enough money." Six users responded that they did use the food bank's services, four of these used the grocery store, two attended the collective kitchen, and one used the low-cost eyewear service. One user responded that she did not attend the collective kitchen anymore since she didn't have time due to having children.

When asked if the food bank was different from others, eight noted that it was. The reasons given were that it was fast, closer than others, more organized, more choice, easier, didn't have to wait, "doesn't look like anything is hidden", sympathetic staff and volunteers. Four users did not think the food bank was different, one noting that "they're all basically the same", and six users didn't provide a reason.

Three users complained about the frustration of getting CLSC forms. One user, when asked if he wanted to do a survey, exploded in anger, saying, "People come because they need money, not to run around getting letters. Why can't the CLSC come here?" However, users also expressed appreciation that they didn't need to bring personal identification or proof of income to the food bank.

While there was a wide diversity in opinions on the food bank, in general, users were favorable but did not seem interested in participating in other activities. Most users lived nearby but also had little choice in attending this food bank in particular. There was palpable frustration with having to get reference letters, which reflected the staff's remark that people in this demographic already have so much paperwork to do. Our surveys, from a user-experience viewpoint, affirm that the food bank is different and engaging its users, however, work could be done to make the food bank's other services more accessible.

Labor

Here we present the results of our time budgeting analysis. Time budgeting took place over two weeks in June-July 2014, which staff had informed us was a time of average activities. For two weeks, the researcher was present during all of the food bank's operating hours, and noted the activities of each volunteer and staff member at the food bank. Leisure time such as eating together or smoke breaks was not counted. During the two weeks there were two holidays that fell on weekdays. In addition, like with the surveys, less users attended the food bank likely because of construction, however, there were an average amount of volunteers present, and the food bank's regular activities continued undisrupted. For this reason the distribution of time worked per day and the total average time worked per day can be considered representative for the rest of the year.

On any given day, 10-15 volunteers, staff, or interns worked at the food bank. An average total of 52 hours of work was done per day. Work included packing, moving, and distributing food (29%), administrative work (25%), cooking (18%), cleaning (12%), transportation or purchasing (10%), and waste processing, which mostly constituted organizing the cardboard boxes picked up from the pharmacy (6%) (See Figure 9).

Accordingly, we can distinguish three types of labor: administrative, household (cooking, cleaning), and processing (packing and moving food, transportation, waste processing). These respectively constitute 25%, 30%, and 45% of the labor at the food bank.

In turn, we can note that the majority of work involved the organizing and transformation of waste externalized by the food industry and pharmacies. While staff specialized in administrative work, comparatively it took much less time than other types of work at the food bank, as executed by volunteers. Thus, most labor involved what can be called "externalized" work, work that needed to be done by someone to process wasted goods, but no one was paid (or willing) to do it except for volunteers. As we noted in our analysis of the surveys, the reasons volunteers provided for working at the food bank were largely as ways to meet their financial and food needs.

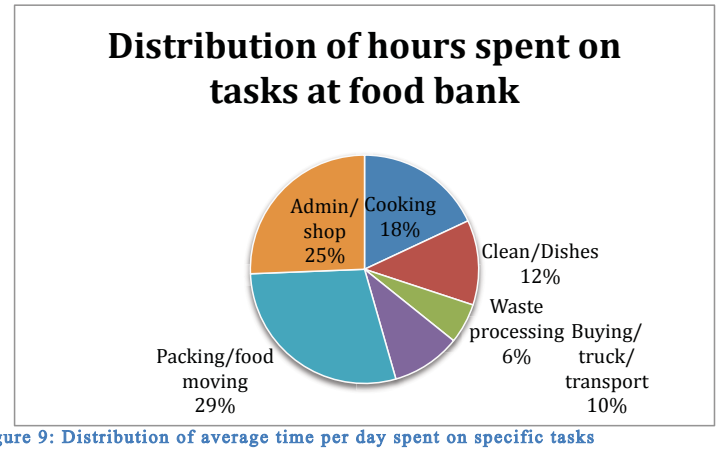

Figure 9: Distribution of average time per day spent on specific tasks

It is useful to discuss the breakdown of labor according to position, class, and gender, as seen in our ethnographic observations. Staff was found to do mostly administrative work and often took charge of coordinating activities. Short-term volunteers often did tasks that required less knowledge of the facilities and the day-to-day. Long-term volunteers often had developed tasks that they specifically were in charge of: one volunteer would always, without being asked, hose down and mop the floor at the end of the day, another would regularly be in charge of asking for a small donation from non-volunteers for joining the daily meal.

The gendered division of labor at the food bank is also worth noting. While during the activities men and women often participated in exactly the same types of tasks, when heavy lifting needed to be done, such as loading or unloading the truck, men were often asked first. According to our time budgeting, women most often were doing cooking or dishes. However, this was largely due to the presence of four interns, all women, who happened to be at the food bank during the two-week period, and whose primary task it was to facilitate cooking workshops and collective kitchen activities. On the other hand, staff members were consciously hired to break gendered roles: a woman was hired to drive the truck while a man was the collective kitchen facilitator. This led to some problems, according to one staff member: "The fact that I am a girl who is coordinating a bunch of men doing manual work is not easy. And when [a male staff member] is taking care of the kitchen, it's the same unusual situation. There often bad comments from people" (personal interview, administrator 1). As such, while it was difficult to measure how gendered labor played out in our surveys and time budgeting analysis, the staff did

discuss and try to address it.

Material resources

We have already discussed some ways through which the food bank's operations were linked to material resources. This included the use of food surplus as 'fuel' for their community organizing and relationships with other groups, and the vision of food provision as being more than just addressing hunger but addressing social isolation as well. Here we further discuss the way that material resources determined the operations of the food bank.

Waste

First of all, waste was a big part of the food bank's day-to-day activities. Not only are the food supplies they receive from diverse organizations on a daily basis technically already waste, the food bank itself had a significant amount of waste of their own.

Measuring the amount of waste the food bank produces was beyond the scope of this project, however, some things can be said about the way waste was handled and staff estimations of food waste.

One day near the end of our study we noticed that volunteers were folding boxes that had just been delivered from the truck. When we asked about what was going on, we were told, to our surprise, that the food bank also makes a deal with a local pharmacy where they pick up the recycling for free, organize it with their own recycling, and then deliver it to a municipal recycling center. The pharmacy benefited because it would not have to pay for waste processing costs, and the food bank, we were told, made enough money to pay cover gas costs each month—about $500—from this scheme. It is important to note, then, that the food bank, to make ends meet, doesn't only rely on surplus food supplies, but also on other forms of waste management.

Staff estimated that, while their total food distributed yearly was ±60,000kg, input was ±62,000kg, which makes 2,000kg of food waste per year. Several years ago the food bank had started a composting project along with the city of Verdun. The idea was that, since the food bank processed so much food waste, they also had an exceptional amount of organic matter to deal with, which would eventually be unloaded on the city's waste processing companies and landfills. The organization asked for funding from a municipal granting agency to start a project where they would compost their organic waste and the city would house the composter. After receiving funding, the project lasted about a year, until the city no longer supported access to the

composter. This example is important as it highlights that the food bank was aware of how its own activities could be made more sustainable, however, the political institutions and funding just were not available for them to support a long-term waste management project. The irony is that while food distributors unload food waste on food banks and are able to cut costs, a food bank itself will have difficulty to properly process that waste without the necessary state infrastructure supporting them. In addition, from our time budgeting analysis (see above), we found that waste processing (sorting through recycling, organizing trash bins, putting out the trash each day) took an estimated 6% of time on average per day.

Food

Here we discuss the sources of food, the types of food received, the distribution of food, and the effect that food distribution had on activities. Like waste, it was difficult to measure the flow of food within the food bank.

The food bank had very diverse sources of food, even though it did not rely on food drives, as many food banks do. Instead, it had a specific set of partners, from whom they would pick up food twice a week (Moisson Montreal), once a day (a hospital cafeteria), or once a month (a butcher). Food distribution was equally irregular, including daily meals, weekly baskets for volunteers, cooking activities in other organizations, deliveries to other organizations, deliveries to seniors, weekly baskets for users that were quite varied in their composition, both individually and per week, frozen meals and packaged foods from the low-cost shop, and collective kitchens twice per week. Keeping track of the amount of calories, meals, or even just servings distributed was an impossible task. However, the food bank's own data as supplied to Moisson Montreal and Food Banks Canada, while an estimate, can be used as a proxy. In Table 2 we note the amount of food distributed by the food bank, as derived from staff estimations and their 2013-2014 annual report.

Table 3 Food distributed. Calculations (red) are based on staff estimates (green) and annual report (blue)

Food distributed	*Participations*	*Participants*	*Servings*	*Weight (kg)*
Activities	5952	1312	20,000	48,120
Emergency food basket	188	441	4904	11880
Total	7140	1753	24,904	60,000

Financial resources and unpaid costs

Monetary flows were easier to calculate, as all non-profits in Canada are required to publish their annual finances and have them audited independently. In the following, we discuss the

sources of funding, the largest expenses, and some other things to note from the annual financial statement. We used the latest report, 2013-2014, and compared it to the previous year where necessary. We also present the estimated remuneration volunteers received for their work, both in actual payments and in-kind. We also calculate the total unpaid cost of the food bank activity.

According to the food bank's 2013-2014 annual report, their financial situation is far more stable than previous years, which, they claimed, better allowed them to realize their mission. Currently, the food bank receives funding from 9 different organizations (Table 3). The food bank adds, in their yearly report, that the material resources it relies on have a re-sale value that are triple the cost of current sale prices, and that "the volunteer participation in our operations constitutes a large quantity of hours worked that are not remunerated and are not visible in our accounting" (Annual report 2013-2014, author's translation).

Table 3: Funding sources and description

Funding type	*Target of funding*	*Percentage of total funding*
Public donations (6 grants)	Core program, collective kitchen, summer internships, senior food baskets	73%
Private donations (3 grants)	Young parent's and senior's aid project, collective kitchen, core program	4%
Other private donations	n/a	8%
Activities	Collective kitchen, food baskets, grocery store	14%

Table 4: Expenses

Expense	*Percentage of total expenditures*
Salaries and honoraria	67%
Maintenance	8%
Activities	7%
Rent	5%
Transport (gas)	4%
Other	4%
Public relations (meetings, outreach, reports, advertising)	3%
Administrative	1%

In the following, we attempt to calculate the 'invisible' costs; counting labor time spent at the

food bank, the total remuneration for time spent working at the food bank, and the average payment, calculated from both monetary and in-kind benefits received, that volunteers received for their work.

In the section on volunteer surveys, we highlighted the fact that it is possible to calculate the benefits and costs associated with working at the food bank for volunteers in the Emploi Quebec program. Accordingly, we calculated that, given the median expenditure on food for the average Montreal household ($525/month; Statistics Canada 2009), and the average spent by this group of volunteers on food ($128/month), volunteers saved an average of $397 a month on food. Then, to calculate the total measurable benefits the volunteer receives, we add to this the total income received from welfare ($520) and transportation funds from the food bank ($74). This gives us $991, which is $221 above the minimum wage in Quebec for the average number of hours worked at the food bank ($10.35/hour; average hours 75/month = $780/month). A confounding factor to this calculation is that volunteers likely fall in a lower percentile of income than the average Montreal household; however, income-specific data on food expenditure is currently not available. Furthermore, considering the fact that a total of $557 was in monetary form, $434 was in in-kind payments of food, and the average rent for a single apartment in Verdun was $538 (CMHC 2014) we do not consider this an appropriate amount of food received for the labor input.

Regardless, the long hours volunteers spend at the food bank with more measureable return than minimum wage suggests that this category of volunteers do not attend the food bank because of their beliefs, rather, they do it as a survival strategy to receive enough food and income per month.

Extending this calculation to other volunteers, we can calculate the total unpaid costs of labor at the food bank. If, from our survey, the average hours volunteered per month per volunteer is 40, and there are an average of 25 volunteers per month, this makes 1000 hours, multiplied by minimum wage gives $10,350. Per year, the food bank and its volunteers generate a total of $124,000 in monetary equivalent of labor costs. Subtract this by the total benefits of the eight volunteers in the Emploi Quebec program, and this gives us a hidden unpaid cost of $29,064 per year in labor expenses which is not paid by the food bank, the government, or agri-food companies. Thus, using data detailing yearly distribution of the food bank, for every 1,000kg distributed by the food bank, it has $484 in hidden costs, or, for every serving provided, it is just

over $1 short.

	Time unit	Calculation	Symbol	Result	Source
Median food expenditure in Montreal	Month	n/a		$525	Statistics Canada
PAAS volunteers		n/a	Na	8	Staff interviews
Average expenditure on food	Week	(N1+…+N7)/7	A1	$32.14	Volunteer surveys
Average expenditure on food	Month	A1*4	A2	$128.56	
Transportation funds received from food bank	Month	n/a	T	$74	Volunteer surveys
Emploi Quebec	Month	n/a	E	$520	Volunteer surveys
Average hours worked at the food bank	Month	n/a	H1	75	Volunteer surveys
Minimum wage in Quebec	Hour	n/a	M1	$10.35	Statistics Canada
Expected remuneration for minimum wage	Month	M1*H	M2	$780	
Total measurable remuneration per volunteer	Month	A2+T+E	R1	$991	
Difference between minimum wage	Month	R-M2		$221	
Total measurable remuneration	Month	Na*R	R2	$7,928	
Total measurable remuneration	Year	R2*12	R4	$95,136	
Average hours volunteered	Month	(n1+…+n16)/16	H2	40	Volunteer surveys
Average amount of volunteers	Month	n/a	V	25	Staff interviews
Total amount of hours volunteered	Month	H2*V	H3	$1,000	
Total amount of hours volunteered in minimum wage	Month	H3*M1	H4	$10,350	
Total amount of hours volunteered in minimum wage	Year	H4*12	H5	$124,200	

Hidden measurable costs of food bank	Year	H5-R4	$29,064

Analysis

The combined use of ecological economics, institutions theory, and political ecology frameworks has been successful in determining the political, social, and material dynamics at play in the activities of our case study. Looking at both informal and formal institutions showed that social norms, history, legal structures, and partnerships were important in the operations of the food bank. A political ecology analysis revealed how formal partnerships were tinged with unequal power relationships, but it also revealed how actors navigated and resisted them. A material and financial analysis allowed us to observe how these resources determined the food bank's activities. In the following, we further explore the ramifications of our findings in the context of the broader literature and current understanding of food banks.

The politics of food banks

The history of the food bank corresponded to and was slightly different from the history of food banks in the literature. Even though they started as a community-based mutual aid network, they shifted more and more toward a food bank role in the 1990s, and after a severe storm indicated that they were essential to the municipality as an emergency food distribution center, they became institutionalized as a charitable operation. This is similar to other food banks, which often started as other types of groups and then shifted toward providing food aid. Mirroring recent developments noted in Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario (Wakefield *et al.* 2012), and the UK (Lambie-Mumford 2012), the food bank turned away from a charity structure and toward a more horizontal community food security model. In addition, it should be noted that the process institutionalizing them as a food bank was not, according to the staff, the lack of welfare. Instead, drivers such as the availability of surplus food, the need for emergency food storage in times of crisis, and the demand for an autonomous food organization by the community all helped to shift what was previously a community network toward a food bank structure. In this way, the food bank's activities cannot be said to have been only a result of a failing welfare state, but could equally be linked to the increase of food surplus and the need for autonomous, community-oriented food spaces in Verdun.

Values of staff and activities showed that the food bank was indeed politically engaged and did

not correspond to the standard typology of food banks in the literature as charity-oriented and apolitical. However, data from our surveys indicated that some volunteers and recipients felt that this food bank was no different than any other. Most volunteers and recipients surveyed, however, did perceive the food bank as being less patronizing and more accessible than other food banks.

It is important to note how access to material resources both determined and made possible the food bank's activities. As the director pointed out, the surplus food was the "fuel" that made possible their strategy of community economy. More concretely, the food bank made use of non-monetary services such as cooking, workshops, providing food supplies to other groups, and food baskets to leverage their legitimacy in the neighborhood and establish a 'broad front' of community organizations. Unlike studies of other food banks (Poppendieck 1998a; Wakefield *et al* 2012), the case study was able to limit their supplies and amounts of recipients so that their services became manageable. As a result, access to industrial food and waste supplies was seen, not as a never-ending burden, but as a tool by the organization to take advantage of, which allowed them to achieve broader goals of pressuring the state and doing community work. In this way, we can say that food waste both confined the food bank to a role as marginalized emergency-provider with little funding and allowed for creative forms of organizing. But in either case, the food bank can be seen as an emergent property of the availability of food waste. Staff at the food bank had no illusions that their food baskets addressed the roots of food insecurity, instead, they consistently stressed that distributing baskets allowed other kinds of organizing to happen which would.

Political activity was done in several ways that are relevant to the literature. First, the food bank's practice of asking for letters of reference was very similar to the strategy of the Trussel Trust Food Bank, where food banks were able to remain accountable and hold governmental institutions accountable by requesting vouchers from welfare institutions (Lambie-Mumford 2012). The success of this tactic in this case study suggests that it could be replicated in North America and can be a tool for neighborhood-based anti-poverty activists to force the state to pay attention to the needs of its population. The food bank combined this tactic with alliances with other groups, ensuring that they had a 'broad front' of advocates that could vouch for them when necessary, and mobilize together if certain issues arose. In addition, the food bank could rely on scaled-up anti-poverty organizations to make demands at different levels and receive advice from

other organizations. Finally, the food bank was political in the way staff stressed collective action at the organization itself, and attempting to move away from a paternalizing, charity-driven attitude.

However, survey results of volunteers and users indicated some tension resulting from these strategies. Several volunteers indicated that the food bank was not especially different from other food banks in Montreal. About half of the users surveyed indicated similarly that the food bank was not different than others. Furthermore, many users and even volunteers expressed frustration at the food bank's strategy of requiring a voucher from another organization. This, to them, was unnecessary paperwork, and negatively impacted their experience of the food bank. Users and volunteers did indicate, however, an appreciation for the participatory and accessible atmosphere of the organization. With regard to the literature, this reveals that a more political stance taken by a food bank can have negative effects on its immediate target population and, when at odds with the cultural norms of volunteers, might further alienate them.

Throughout our study, the power dynamics between different actors with different access to food supplies also became apparent. In its relationships to a smaller local food bank, for example, our case study had the upper hand, effectively being able to define how much food surplus reached the borough and who could access it. But in its relationships to a larger regional food bank, Moisson Montreal, it had to agree to other requirements such as documenting recipients for statistical purposes, refraining from direct political involvement, and paying the costs of transportation and labor. These dynamics are represented in Figure 10.

The figure also illustrates how some governmental groups may be quite cooperative with the food bank but others, such as the CLSC and the federal government, are not. In effect, the food bank is both supported and limited by the state apparatus in achieving its aims of community food security. This further indicates the importance of a "joined-up" food policy where groups at different scales collaborate and facilitate food policy to minimize food security (Barling *et al.* 2002). It also suggests that it is not so easy to claim that the government is able to turn a "blind eye" to hunger and poverty, when there is so much collaboration with the government to address these issues, and the food bank is able to engage the government on these issues quite actively.

Lastly, the figure indicates how the food bank relies on both private and public institutions for non-monetary resources such as food waste and labor.

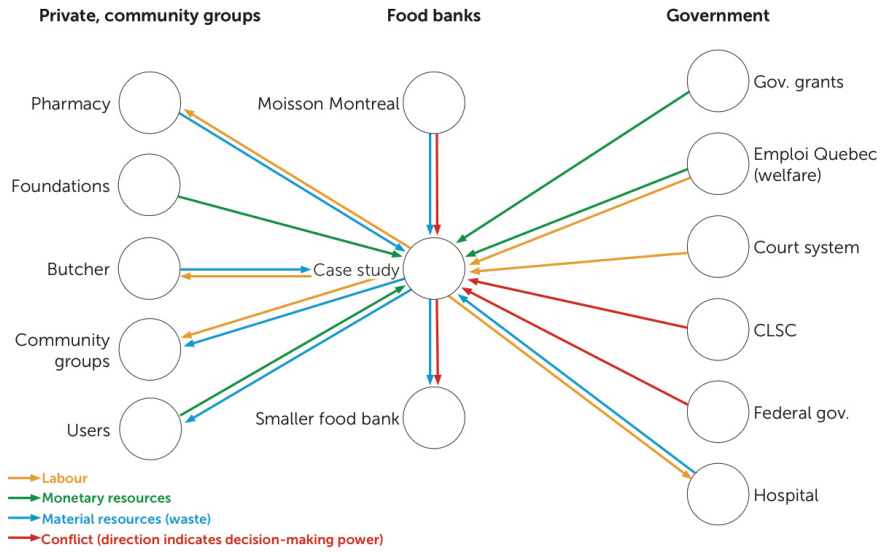

Figure 10: Mapping the food bank's relationships to other groups

On a broader level, our observations modify and confirm several recent findings with regard to food banks, the wider alternative food movement, and their relationship to the state. Recent research has suggested that food banks have helped create and maintain the "shadow state", arguing that they are "linked to state goals through funding agreements and service contracts, but without mechanisms for ensuring democratic governance" (Mitchell 2001:77 cited in Warshawsky 2010). Furthermore, others have argued that "this new institutionalized voluntary bureaucracy closely parallels the bureaucracy, the rigidity, and the depersonalization of government agencies" (Curtis 1997, p. 222), suggesting that even though food banks may take on the government's role, they are no more efficient in addressing inequality. Our research complicates this picture, where the food bank functioned both as part of the state by receiving funding from them, helped in the dismantling of state resources by providing food to welfare recipients, but also used their available resources to challenge—at local, municipal, provincial, and national scales—the increased neoliberalization of the government apparatus. Furthermore, the food bank did exhibit a concern for participatory and democratic decision-making, where they attempted to involve users, volunteers, and wider community members in their activities and member structure. They function as an "autonomous community organization" under Quebec law, and through this legal structure they are able to incorporate horizontal and

participatory values into the structure of their organization, as well as ensuring a degree of autonomy from state influence in their activities. Finally, the food bank attempted to, in every possible instance, diminish the amount of bureaucracy needed for recipients, trying to make their service more accessible to others, especially undocumented migrants. In short, the food bank can be seen as both benefitting from and resisting the neoliberalization of the state.

Likewise, Trudeau (2008), in a case study of non-profits in Minneapolis, has found that these organizations are not totally subservient to state demands when receiving funding, rather, they constantly attempt to negotiate their funding obligations and their responsibility to empower communities and play an active, political role in them. Our research both confirms this dynamic—the food bank was constantly negotiating its diverse obligations to funders and the community—and suggests that a non-monetary resource such as food supplies allowed this particular non-profit food bank to have an extra degree of freedom from its obligations toward funding agencies.

Following Amanda Wilson, the food bank can be seen as a kind of "autonomous food space". According to the author, "A lens of autonomy looks for the potential to forge new relationships and collective identities beyond the typical categories under capitalism of workers, producer, consumer, and owner" (2012, p.12). Wilson provides a tri-partite rubric that indicates to what extent an organization can be deemed autonomous: territorial, "the physical space to produce and exchange food and the social and cultural space to engage in a community and interact with one another"; material, "the creation of new economies and exchanges outside the formal capitalist economy"; and social, "a daily practice of forming and reforming new social relations and identities to recreate 'the collective, autonomous self'" (p. 10-11; quoting Chatterton 2005:556). In our research, we observed ways that these indicators manifested themselves at the food bank, for example: it was place where volunteers and users alike could use food, workshops, and cooking to have social interactions and break isolation, an informal economy was created around food waste, and the orientation toward collective action and transforming community relationships. However, there was a constant tension where the food bank also had to rely on the commodification of food through the *depanneur* and charging for baskets, and often dealt with users, not as participants, but as customers. In addition, one must ask whether it can really be an alternative space if it relied on corporate food industry surplus by way of the centralized food bank, Moisson Montreal.

The food bank's political activities and limitations also lead us to make some suggestions with regard to food policy. Municipal-level political engagement of the food bank showed that the food bank would adjust their strategy depending on what politicians were elected. In this sense, they were non-partisan, opportunistic, but still politically motivated. Their main limitations when dealing with the governmental apparatus was that roles, laws, and responsibility between different levels of government were not clearly defined, and actually served to make the food bank's operations more difficult to maintain. It becomes clear that the limitation for achieving urban food security is not just a failing welfare state, but also requires what Lang and Caraher call a "joined-up food policy": linking all institutions at multiple scales to develop a robust, interlocking system that supports community food groups, food insecure citizens, anti-poverty groups, and regional food policy councils (Lang and Caraher 2002; see also McCullum *et al.* 2005). As suggested by an often-cited discussion paper by the Toronto Food Policy Council, any attempt to "eliminate the need for food banks" cannot be based solely in a top-down welfare policy; it requires a scaled-up process of first reforming food bank operations, then supporting community food security projects legally and financially, and finally integrating different policy fields such as agriculture, health, and economic policies (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994). We would add that, from our study, a joined-up food policy would also require a coherent analysis of and engaged set of policies paying attention to uneven power distributions and who is given legitimacy in decision-making. Without this, policies will favor groups that already have the most social and economic capital, while not necessarily taking into account the needs of the most marginalized groups, or the special needs of precarious organizations like food banks. In practice, this could look very much like what Yashiro *et al.* suggest as a system of "nested institutions", where local resources are managed at different scales while taking into account power hierarchies (2013).

In summary, our research suggests, first, that a food bank can be political through the relationships it establishes with different groups, through which it can put pressure on governmental agencies. It follows that a food bank does not, by virtue of it being legally a charity, necessarily allow the state to turn a blind eye to poverty. On the contrary, our research shows that a food bank has the potential to be successful in demanding state services for marginalized populations, especially when it operates under cultural norms of mutual aid, collective benefit, and solidarity. Second, it suggests that a food bank can also provide a service

that is firmly beyond the purview of the state: harnessing what some would consider waste for the benefit of a neighborhood's marginalized population. As a result, it can be deduced that a food bank, or something that looks like it, has innate value for a neighborhood, and there needs to be a corresponding policy response to address the barriers and limitations that such organizations face on a day-to-day basis. Third, we suggest a combination of "joined-up food policy" and "nested institutions" models to account for both the scaled, mutli-stakeholder nature of food insecurity and the uneven power relationships that determine decision-making (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994; Lang and Caraher 2002; Yashiro *et al.* 2013).

Food banks: a cost-shifting success?

In the food bank literature, several authors have argued that there are many unpaid costs that cause food banks to constantly struggle to make ends meet. In one study, the cost of the US food bank network was estimated to be $12 billion, one-twelfth of the cost of the food stamp program at the time (Daponte and Bade 2000). Poppendieck (1998a) explored how emphasis on surplus food redistribution has significantly impacted US anti-hunger activists' ability to make political demands, while state-implemented food distribution programs were largely due to pressure from the food industry. It is clear that, in the context of the current socio-economic system, food banks have very little leverage, partly because they are dependent on donations from the food industry, and partly because their services are, in a sense, de-commodified.

What became clear throughout the study was how legitimacy in political decision-making diminishes as scale and profits decrease. This leads to unequal power dynamics and a structure of dependency, where food bank volunteers and staff are forced to absorb the costs of the food industry's waste, while having very little say in food policy decisions or support from governmental institutions. We visualize these wider relationships in Figure 11.

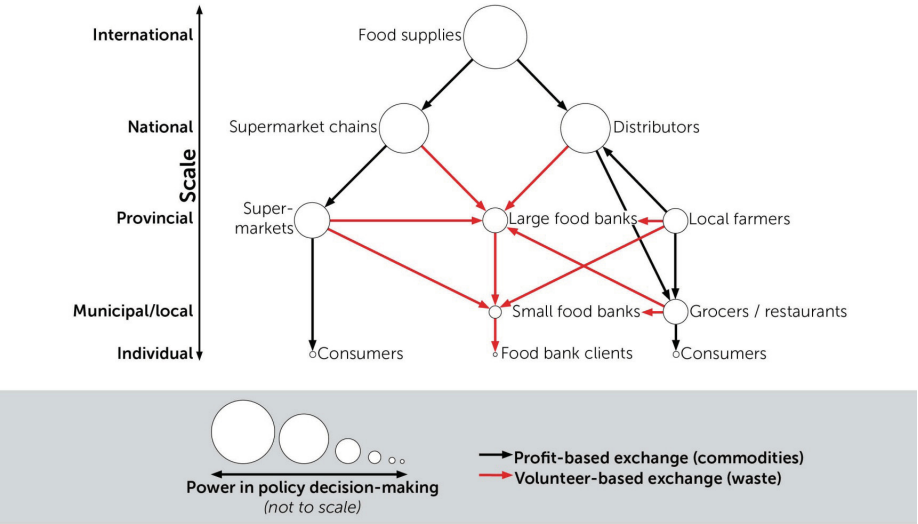

Figure 11: Mapping food sources, scale, and power in the food system

In one way, the food bank also profits from other governmental institutions, such as the legal and welfare system. As the court system sentences criminalized youth to community service, and as the social aid system fails to fully support those who remain unemployed and are unable to find work in the current economy, these people are forced to work at the food bank for little or no pay. But despite the immediate advantage of low-cost labor, these systems end up burdening the food bank in the end, leading more and more people to depend on its services, and forcing the food bank to do the state's work of providing institutionalized support, while constantly having to find, maintain, and fight for adequate funding. In this way, the food bank can be seen to be a product of cost-shifting of certain state institutions.

This is better illustrated when we account for the 'unpaid costs' that the food bank volunteers absorb through their labor. While volunteers under the Emploi Quebec PAAS program received a net benefit of working at the food bank through relying on food donations, there was still a total hidden labor cost of $29,064. Our research confirms that food banking has significant costs that remain unpaid, even if welfare and access to food was considered payment for volunteer hours. In effect, as the staff complained, the food bank does not provide a free lunch, and it constantly struggles to navigate ways to stay afloat financially. These findings, together, indicate

that there is an uneven power relationship between food banks, food suppliers, and the state.

In a socio-economic system that values monetary wealth as the primary tool for decision-making (Sagoff 2008), costs are shifted to those that have less power to compete financially. As Martinez-Allier and O'Connor (2002) point out, "the poor sell cheap", meaning, with a lack of financial security, those who are unable to participate in a for-profit market structure will sell their labor for the smallest offer. When it comes to market externalities like environmental pollution, those without access to financial resources are likewise priced out of schemes such as Coasian bargaining (Coase 1960). As a result, it becomes cheaper for companies to unload their waste on impoverished communities, as these communities have very little power within the market system. In this way, Martinez-Alier and O'Connor argue that we should "view externalities not so much as 'market failures' as *'cost-shifting* successes'" (*ibid.*, p. 382, with reference to Kapp 1983). It's not that pollution is an externality that must be internalized back into the market system; it's that the unloading of waste products on poor communities is a success in terms of the market structure, which cannot be solved through monetary claims. Those unable to participate in the market are instead forced to engage in mobilization, militant actions, and community organizing to make their voices heard.

This mechanism is reflected in our own case study. Users of the food bank, as well as most volunteers, were forced to attend the organization because they had nowhere else to turn. The labor hours spent working at the food bank was for many a last resort to get more access to essential resources. In total, the food bank was kept afloat through 1000 hours of unpaid labor per month. Unable to buy food, volunteers were forced to process food waste to make ends meet. This food waste, in turn, came directly from the industry that could keep prices high while off-loading waste processing costs on Montreal's food bank network.

In other words, we can conceive of food banks as a result of a cost-shifting success by the food industry and state. The government shifts its social work and healthcare costs onto community groups while relying on it for community service programs and emergency situations. Food waste processing costs are offloaded onto volunteers, who work long hours with inadequate remuneration. In this case, however, the polluting product itself becomes both a tool for survival and one for social mobilization against government failure. The equivalent of this would be if environmental justice activists could somehow use nuclear waste as 'fuel' for organizing. Or if we could tap into the carbon footprint and use it both as a means for survival and to fund social

movements against climate change. We know that this is not possible, we use these examples merely to stress how food banks present an unusual example of cost-shifting. It is the social character of food that makes food waste, and food banks such as our case study, a unique site for political involvement.

Chapter 5: The political economy of food banks

In this chapter we review some of the key findings of our research. We then discuss various policies that may address the issue of food banks. We present some of the limitations and gaps in our research, as well as future research avenues. Finally we present some concluding remarks on the nature of food banks.

When discussing food banks, four key questions come up again and again: Do they address hunger? Do they take away state responsibility? Do they address society's needs? and Can public assistance end the use of food banks? In the following, we address each of these questions as a way to summarize the results of this study.

While it is clear that food banks do not adequately address hunger, interviewees were well aware of this fact, even remarking that food banks were not at all designed to replace state services. This reflects Riches' own remarks, where he notes that "food banks would agree that it is not their role to 'subsidize welfare'…" (Riches 1986, p. 17). Despite this, many food banks remained quite political, constantly emphasizing the need for the state to address hunger, often even challenging the state to do so. In this way, our study suggests that food banks may have helped to commodify the issue of hunger, leading the way for massive corporate social responsibility campaigns to divert public attention from welfare policy toward food donations, but food banks themselves were often quite vocal and did challenge the state to take up responsibility. In other words, while the corporate sector has successfully depoliticized a political issue, food banks cannot be said to have been the cause of this. Rather, the decrease in support by the state or unions of food banks itself had, in many cases, led food banks to turn to the private sector for aid.

Further, our interviews and case study do suggest that food banks are not only designed to address hunger. Food bank staff described their operations as tools for solidarity, mutual aid, participation, breaking isolation, social cohesion, and empowering users, while avoiding charity discourse of looking down on users. In fact, while food banks in Canada can be said to have become more and more centralized, they do still appear to remain quite heterogeneous; each food bank differed in structure, and responded to specific needs in their community. While some food banks were less politically active, limiting themselves to advocacy toward tax breaks for

corporate food donations, on the whole, there was a wide diversity in political involvement and approaches of each food bank, not neatly fitting in the typology of 'centralized' vs. 'community-development' oriented food banks (Tarasuk 1996). Instead, one might better distinguish *practices* of 'commodification' vs. 'decommodification', where food banks employed diverse strategies to challenge the depoliticization of hunger, which differed locally and according to the resources available. In addition, food bank staff spoke to the role of their organization as being an essential food provider in their community, providing decommodified supplies to a population that cannot afford being consumers. One may ask if the role of accessible food provider and social gathering space might not be necessary in any situation, even in a welfare state. Indeed, these kinds of services are not included in welfare provisions and are still seen as being outside of state responsibility. In this way, food banks may address needs that go beyond addressing hunger.

This leads us to the last question. In much of the literature on food banks, these organizations have been characterized as a stop-gap to hunger, even making it more difficult to address the root causes of hunger by taking away state responsibility. The solution, to these commentators, would be to re-institutionalize public assistance. If a state safety net were sufficiently adequate, they argue, there would be no need for food banks. However, our interviews suggested that even if the state provided adequate public assistance, there would still be a need to address corporate food surplus, on the one hand, and to support organizations that address both food access and social isolation, on the other. Food bank staff, despite participating in welfare advocacy, did not think that welfare itself would solve the need for food banks. As such, while public assistance may address poverty, it would not necessarily address the need for food banks, which also provide social benefits and take on the burden of redistributing corporate food surplus. In fact, as one interviewee pointed out, food banks have become so good at redistributing surplus food, that they are far more efficient at it than the state could ever be [Researcher 4].

In sum, this research suggests two key lessons. First, it indicates that current typology of food banks in Canada is inadequate: they often provide more than just food, but also a space to break isolation, process food waste, and hold local and national government accountable, and have the potential to do more of this work if they were provided with adequate institutional support, beyond corporate donations. Second, it emphasizes that so far, there has been a paucity of strategic and coherent government policies in Canada to buttress these efforts. In fact, the complex, multi-scale, and multi-actor character of the food system will require more than just a

welfare system or basic income to make the need for food banks go away. We further discuss such policy recommendations in the next section.

Recommendations

From our case study we can draw some clear recommendations for other food banks and community food organizations. Being an autonomous food organization helped the case study food bank go beyond the never-ending cycle of charity while making sure that its material resources could act as a kind of "fuel" to develop a material economy. It was also able to engage politically by using these material resources to develop a "broad front" of other organizations that would vouch for it. In addition, it was able to force state organizations to pay attention to hunger and poverty locally through a reference program that forced staff at a local clinic to deal with hunger as a health issue. We suggest that similar strategies may be effective in other locations. Finally, food banks may be more powerful vis-à-vis the state when they form coalitions such as the *Table de concertation de la Faim*, which can both provide support and help develop broader anti-poverty strategies. These recommendations may likewise be helpful for community food security organizations in general.

Findings from our case study are also relevant for policy-makers, food policy councils, anti-hunger and anti-poverty activists, and those interested in developing strategies to address the current food system. Our observations suggest that, while there were several government bodies that did pay attention to the issues of inequality and hunger, there were others that were more of a limitation and barrier to success for the food bank, which led to conflict. The case study was at the center of issues of inadequate welfare, a high-waste food industry, and poor integration of health and food security in government policies. These issues might appear to be disparate but they require coherent, scaled, bottom-up, and top-down action. As such, our study supports the call for a "joined-up food policy" and a "nested institutions" perspective where federal, public health, food policy, welfare, and community organizations work together to address inequality and community food insecurity. There is a great opportunity to coordinate policies that take into account unequal power dynamics within the food system, community groups, and government institutions. The unloading of excessive waste of the food industry onto community groups needs to be addressed through strict regulation. It also requires that autonomous food organizations be given the necessary legal and financial resources to continue doing their work without having to rely on corporate food waste and free labor.

This dual nature of the food bank issue was initially identified by the Toronto Food Policy Council in 1994, when they claimed that addressing current food insecurity in Ontario requires more than just entitlements, it necessitates specific government policies to help food banks shift toward community food centers, supporting community food projects, and shifting food distribution away from privatized spaces toward community-owned public spaces. They also identify the biggest need: that governmental departments be broken down to integrate agricultural, health, economic, and social policies.

This was echoed in Barling *et al.* (2002), where they argue that in the UK, a "joined-up" food policy is needed to address both the poor governance of public and private institutions with regard to food sustainability, and the lacuna between state departments in terms of policy. It would also provide strategic support to local initiatives—such as stable funding and providing autonomy and guidance to grass-roots projects—which often serve to link the social, material, and need-based dimensions of food. To them, "a sustainable food supply chain should deliver social benefits as well as economic and environmental" (*ibid.*, p. 16). Thus, any policy that addresses food insecurity and inequality must also take into account the social needs of citizens by supporting local initiatives legally, financially, and with stability.

Our research supports these claims. Food banks emerged from an environment of increasing trade liberalization, deregulation, and centralization of the food industry. As rural, mining, and lumber communities became more impoverished, food banks were set up to address this, but eventually many of these populations moved to cities and other provinces to look for work. Economic restructuring and globalization led to a rise in precarious employment, leading to a huge increase in unemployment welfare recipients, which the state could no longer afford. Then, as pre-existing organizations such as local governments and unions withdrew their support of food banks, they turned to the private sector for help. Corporations seized on the opportunity to shift their food processing costs, now made easier by a monopoly on the food sector and concurrent centralization of the food transportation networks. Corporate social responsibility allowed corporations to 'brand' their efforts as addressing hunger. Yet, many food banks remained politically active, pushing local and national governments to be accountable to their population while providing spaces for their communities to address social and food needs. As such, food banks can be seen to exist at a nexus of food, agriculture, and public assistance policy, as well as the commodification of the safety net by corporations, the increasing power of the

food industry, and globalization. Public assistance alone cannot address this issue; it requires a joined-up approach, coming from multiple levels of government, communities, and private actors. In fact, if public assistance were to be instituted, while the issue of food waste was not dealt with, this could lead to further cost-shifting practices by the food industry, as there would be more consumers able to participate in the food system. Such a policy may lead to what existed in the U.S.: a state-controlled food surplus system, which holds certain products to control prices and distributes them overseas as food aid.

However, a 'joined-up' policy framework may also meet some stumbling blocks. First of all, with the recommendations outlined by the Toronto Food Policy Council, it remains unclear as to how food waste will be addressed. In other words, food waste currently exists in a space where there is little policy that applies to it; ownership is unclear and it already has become decommodified. This has allowed food banks to take advantage of the food surplus system by operating in a kind of legal blind spot, sometimes charging for services and sometimes not. This may at times benefit food banks, and sometimes it may become a barrier (see Chapter 4 of this study). Food banks are currently advocating for a formalization of food waste policies in their own favor, indicating the need to formalize the issue (see Chapter 5). In any case, the nature of decommodified food surplus allows those unable to participate in the food marketplace to have access to food. What would the policy design be in this scenario? Would there be a need for better addressing these legal blind spots with regard to food waste, and if so, how would they affect food bank activity? Thus, a 'joined-up' food policy would need to better define property rights surrounding food waste. A second barrier may be the nature of the uneven distribution of power that currently defines the food system. Given that food retailers have already successfully orchestrated a private food assistance system, there would be significant push-back if this system was at risk, and they may even spend significant resources in perpetuating it. Rent-seeking may also occur at other levels, and a 'joined-up', or more centralized, food policy may allow the food industry to define policies in their favor. This may have further negative effects on low-income citizens. There would clearly be a need to address these power-relationships to avoid corporate rent-seeking and hijacking of long-term policies. These barriers, we argue, can be addressed using different frameworks.

Contributions from institutions theory are once again applicable here. Economists like Arthur Pigou (1920) or new institutionalists such as Robert Coase (1960), would suggest that the case of

food waste simply requires internalizing the externality of the costs incurred by society caused by the food industry. A Pigouvian tax, conceptualized as the price of the social cost subtracted by the profit made by the private business, could be in the form of a fine per ton of food waste, while increasing the price of dumping food waste in municipal waste sites. Funds from this could go toward a Community Food Security fund, which would give stable support to local projects addressing food insecurity and social isolation, which may also repurpose food waste. Alternatively, Coasian bargaining conceives externalities as problems of property rights. If property rights were better defined, then victims of pollution could simply pay polluters not to pollute, or polluters could pay victims for unloading their pollution, whatever victims may demand. In this way, the role of government would not be to fine or regulate polluters but to simply more adequately define property rights. Following this scheme, institutions of ownership over food waste could be better defined, enabling food banks to demand payment for processing food waste, or consumers to pay extra for their food if the food industry internalizes costs.

However, according to this study's results, both these schemes would be lacking. Relying on a Pigouvian tax may lead to increases in food costs, which would negatively affect consumers. It would also not address the issue of inequality, nor would it resolve the issue of uneven power distribution, where food retailers are able to manipulate policy to their own ends. Finally, it would be difficult to calculate, as the social cost itself remains non-monetary.

Second, Coasian bargaining is inadequate because many consumers are already unable to participate in the market, as seen by their reliance on food banks. Coasian bargaining requires a limited population that can participate in bargaining, such as one community affected by one company. Yet, the issue of food surplus pervades all levels of Canadian society. Victims of cost-shifting by food retailers include both food bank volunteers and recipients of food aid. Often, volunteers are involved because they are food insecure themselves (see Chapter 2; Riches 1986). As such, bargaining would be inaccessible to those who are already most affected by corporate cost-shifting, and may not lead to internalization of these costs. Furthermore, Coasian bargaining has been shown to enable rent-seeking behavior, since it does not address fundamental uneven power relationships (Healy *et al.* 2013, p. 394).

An environmental institutions approach acknowledges that problems of externalities are fundamentally problems of cost-shifting, where often the market cannot internalize these costs. Environmental degradation is impossible to quantify monetarily, since ecosystems exist beyond

and despite of monetary valuation (Kosoy & Corbera 2009). In addition, cost-shifting is seen as a product of unequal power relations, where property rights favor polluters instead of victims, who most often lack resources to affect policy.

Similarly, food banks have been shown to be a product of corporate cost-shifting, as facilitated by increasing neoliberalization of state services and economic restructuring. Food retailers are able to guide government decision-making and charge high rates for food commodities, while consumers are more and more unable to access commodified food or demand that government act to curtail food waste. The reliance by food banks on food waste and corporate sponsorship, as necessitated by unstable or nonexistent public or non-corporate funding, has complicated the situation, meaning that food banks remain unable to voice concerns over food waste while volunteers pay the costs in working hours. Yet sometimes food bank workers and recipients are able to use food surplus as a tool for addressing social and economic inequities (see chapter 2 in this study). All in all, food waste has engendered a situation where those in power are able to pay off those who do not have power, in a sort of ad-hoc Coasian bargaining situation favoring polluters in the long-term.

A 'nested institutions' approach provides another recommendation closer to the 'joined-up' food policy approach, while being able to address some of its barriers. As discussed, food surplus can be seen as a rivalrous good with informal institutions regulating its excludability. Food banks were able to access surplus food despite, or perhaps because of, the lack of regulations around food waste. To do so, they established informal relationships with specific food retailers locally. However, lacking alternative resources, food banks were at times limited by their relationship with the food industry, the lack of stability in supplies, the need to supplement supplies with store-bought food, and the necessity of rationing when there was more demand. The lack of appropriate formal institutions both enabled the food industry to shift its costs onto society and limited food banks in their ability to respond to pressures and remain stable in their services. Further, any full-scale welfare system would only exacerbate this situation. More consumers would mean the need for more access to food, driving consumption and driving food waste. This may happen at a local level or an international one, where food waste may be externalized to nations.

This indicates that any solution to the predicament will require policies at different scales, involving many actors, and addressing unequal power relations. A nested institution perspective

provides such a framework, as it requires "an arrangement of various institutions comprising private, communal, and public institutions" to manage "goods and services that vary in degrees of *rivalry* and *excludability*".

What, exactly, would this look like? In addition to recommendations from the Toronto Food Policy Council, we recommend the following:

- Participatory discussion; facilitated by a non-partisan group but with guaranteed buy-in from duty-bearers such as the state and corporations; involving actors at different scales; identifying inequities, needs, limitations, and barriers in the food system.
- Formalizing policy for food waste, with disincentives for corporate 'dumping' onto society.
- Formalize management of food waste at different scales, from local to national, taking into account the needs of community food organizations.
- Providing financial, policy, and especially legal support that gives stability to food banks, allowing them to shift toward more autonomous models, while requiring that they offer specific services that the state cannot, such as addressing social isolation, participatory activities like collective kitchens or communal gardening, or redirecting users to appropriate resources.
- Encouraging bottom-up approach to management of local food resources.
- Encourage and provide support for migrants, indigenous, single mothers, and otherwise disenfranchised groups to participate in these processes.

Table 4: Different policy approaches to the issue of food banks

Approach	*Description*	*Benefits*	*Problems*
Welfare	Increase entitlements for low-income and precarious individuals, either through guaranteed annual income or diverse smaller programs.	Address issue of poverty and food insecurity for eligible Canadians.	Does not address root causes of poverty such as economic restructuring, cost-shifting practices, or centralized food system. More consumption will shift costs elsewhere.
Pigouvian tax (Pigou 1920)	Fine corporations for food surplus, increase tax on municipal waste disposal, use funds to address inequality and community food insecurity.	Acknowledge government role in cost-shifting. May provide funding for community food projects. Addresses rent-seeking.	Does not address power relations. May increase food costs for consumers. Does not address wider issue of inequality. Difficult to calculate. Does not take into account property rights. Requires government regulation.
Coasian bargaining (Coase 1960)	Define food surplus property rights; enable 'bargaining' for food surplus between corporations, consumers, and food banks.	Does not require government regulation, relies on market forces. Takes into account property rights.	Does not address power relations. Not applicable to food waste, as it requires the participation of all consumers. Extremely vulnerable to rent-seeking. Does not address wider issue of inequality.
'Joined up' food policy (Toronto Food Policy Council 1994; Barling *et al.* 2002)	A multi-stage program, starting with shifting food banks to community food security models and with the final goal of integrating various policy fields such as food, agriculture, health, social, and economic policy.	Democratic, bottom-up and top-down approach, involving diverse actors, addressing both food access and inequality issues.	Requires government regulation. Requires concerted effort and long-term planning by multiple actors. Does not address power relations. Does not take into account property rights. Vulnerable to rent-seeking.
'Joined-up' nested institutions (Yashiro *et al.* 2013)	'Joined up' approach, as well as: define food surplus property rights in favor of community groups. Include marginalized groups in decision-making. Institutionalize just management of food at different scales and across actors.	Democratic, bottom-up and top-down approach, involving diverse actors, addressing both food access and inequality issues. Takes into account property rights. Less vulnerable to rent-seeking. Addresses power relations.	Requires government regulation. Requires concerted effort and long-term planning by multiple actors.

Discussion

This research has some limitations that are worth noting. First, there were assumptions in and limitations to the snowball interview method. The first and most important assumption is related to the snowball sampling methodology. It is true that our sample size does not reflect the population of food bank directors; this means no claim could be made as to the representativeness of our data. However, since a wide diversity of food bank experts were interviewed, we assume that claims drawn from our data can be made about the history of food banks, especially when compared and contrasted to the data that emerged from the literature review. Furthermore, a snowball sampling methodology should not be measured by its representativeness; it can instead be seen as a series of case studies, each of which test a hypothesis or challenge claims in the literature (Small 2009). It is possible that a more exhaustive survey of food bank experts could lead to more robust and generalizable results, however, this would have its own limitations (e.g., response rates of surveys, inability to dig deeper into certain subjects). A second limitation is that snowball sampling can often lead to similar voices being heard, since referrals are made through personal contacts. However, we believe that the extensive literature review was a useful tool to test claims of interviewees, and vice versa. In fact, we found that the snowball sampling methodology proved particularly useful in this case study. Food banks have become a loaded topic for both researchers and staff, with widely varying opinions on both sides. Semi-structured conversation helped to tease out some of the complexity of the topic, led to in-depth (and sometimes difficult) discussions, and allowed interviewees to respond to criticisms. In short, while the snowball sampling interview process has some drawbacks, paired with the literature review, it provided robust and complex data that provided original information on the history of food banks in Canada.

With regard to the case study, it is clear the food bank is, of course, not representative of food banks as a whole, and may even deviate from the standard food bank model. Yet, regardless of whether food banks such as this case study are anomalies or more common, it indicates, first of all, that the typology of food banks must be adjusted since it presents a case that contradicts the accepted theory, and second of all, that it is possible for a food bank to be both reliant on food surplus *and* pressure the state to fulfill its responsibility vis-à-vis social needs. Consequentially, the study is relevant for anyone interested in addressing inequality and food insecurity on a local level by providing an in-depth example of how this can be achieved. Furthermore, the study

clarifies the mechanism by which food banks rely on material resources to support their activities and by which unequal power-relationships create dependency on food surplus by marginalized populations. We suggest that the methodological tools used in this study could be applied to other food banks, further testing the relationship between food surplus, food security, volunteer labor, the food industry, and the state.

In addition, some gaps do remain unexplored in our research such as the history of food banks from the perspective of involved food retailers and the experience of food banks of varying size, age, and those operating at different scales. An account of the amount of food waste in the system, comparative to the amount of food distributed over time, is necessary to adequately quantify the role of food waste in driving food bank attendance. Further comparative knowledge of other countries with prominent food banking networks was also lacking in this study.

Following these gaps, there are many avenues for future studies. An extensive survey of food banks, collecting information about their structure and material flow, and what barriers they face politically and legally, would further define policies and test our own observations. In addition, studies specifically documenting the role of industry actors, such as directors on the boards of food banks, or large food retailers such as Loblaws, would identify how the food industry has assimilated itself into the food network. A survey of Canadian food industry actors of why they engage in the food bank system may further refine these findings. In addition, it may be useful to compare and contrast the surplus food redistribution networks in different countries, to better determine how the role of the food industry and the restructuring of the economy have varied and what policies have helped to limit or alter the growth of food banks. Our case study methodology—evaluating social, material, and financial variables—could be further tested with other food banks, especially in areas that have very different formal and informal institutions. Comparative case studies between US, Canadian, and UK food banks, for example, would help illustrate the role that social institutions and local policies have in making food banks more or less politically-oriented, and what strategies other food banks use to challenge neoliberal policies.

Conclusions

Our literature review and series of snowball interviews suggests that in Canada, the social norms of reciprocation and redistribution and the sharp increase in precarious employment drove recuperation of food waste, which then likely increased through food trade liberalization and de-

localization of the food system. In addition, the rise of corporate social responsibility led corporations to seek strategic donation opportunities that would not challenge their own political position and could simultaneously cut waste processing costs. This in turn required larger food recuperation organizations, going beyond church basements and food pantries. The resulting institutions were food banks, which, as they institutionalized due to the increasing state cuts to social welfare and further economic shocks, often shifted from emergency providers to spaces that could provide social, economic, and political benefits to their communities. These organizations are as diverse as they are many, responding to local needs and resources.

A case study of one single food bank has shown that food banks exist at a nexus of waste, politics, and culture. The interactions between social institutions and the flow of material and financial resources emphasize that the practice of food banking can also be seen as a power struggle. Volunteers, staff, users, healthcare providers, politicians, bureaucrats, all interact in an assemblage, each using their own resources and legitimacy as playing cards to achieve their own needs. Our case study indicates that is not so easy to make claims as to the political inefficacy of food banks. Food banks can use food supplies at their disposal as a leverage point to achieve their aims of pushing for state action and community food security. This suggests that it is possible for emergency food aid organizations to be political, but only if certain social, cultural, and historical conditions are met. What's more, it indicates that there is a need for community-based autonomous food organizations to have more access to stable resources and receive more legitimacy from other institutions, which better enable them to address their goals.

Food banking can be seen as an emergent property of food surplus coming from the food and service industry. In our case study, activists made use of this resource to challenge the state to address hunger and poverty. But as a food recovery organization, the food bank also was forced to absorb the hidden costs of a high-waste economy. Volunteers worked long unpaid hours at the food bank to make ends meet. Thus, what may seem like a free lunch to politicians and food companies actually becomes quite expensive for society, since these costs are absorbed by those already marginalized and unable to engage in a consumer economy. A cost-shifting success by the food industry, then, also becomes a tool for survival. And in the case of this food bank, it became the 'fuel' for addressing community food insecurity and the neglect of the neoliberal state.

While food banks are unable to address hunger adequately, or hold the state fully accountable

for inequality and the rights of its population, our research suggests that they are, in many cases, strong political actors and go beyond their charitable, apolitical typification. Indeed, even if food insecurity were addressed through basic income or public assistance, there could be a role for something that looks like a food bank, providing both social and material benefits that the state is unable to provide. Addressing food insecurity cannot, therefore, be limited to closing food banks or re-instituting state entitlements; it must involve joined-up, multi-actor and multi-scale approach, keeping intact and supporting community-oriented efforts like food banks while addressing the liberalization of the food system and the cost-shifting practices of corporations.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table of literature reviewed

The growth of food banks in Canada	Vitullo	1999	Canada	Thesis
Private food assistance in a small metropolis and the welfare state	Molnar et al.	2001	USA	Journal Article
Food Banks and the Welfare Crisis	Riches	1986	Canada	Book
Feeding the Hungry with Surplus and rural needs	Lipsky and Thibodeau	1988	USA	Journal Article
A critical examination of community-based responses to household food insecurity in Canada	Tarasuk	2001	Canada	Journal Article
Benefits and barriers associated with participation in food programs in three low-income Ontario Communities	Edward and Eyres	2001	Canada	Journal Article
The need for emergency food: Poverty problems and policy responses	Clancy and Bowering	1992	USA	Journal Article
Hunger in Canada	Davis and Tarasuk	1994	Canada	Journal Article
Joined-up food policy? The trieals of governance, public policy and the food system	Barling et al.	2002	UK	Journal Article
Food insecurity and public assistance	Borgas	2002	US	
The structural adjustment of Canadian agriculture	Qualman and Wiebe	2002	Canada	Report
A guide for the perplexed	Edlefsen and Olson	2002	USA	Journal Article
Perspectives of volunteers in Canada: Implications and Response	Poppendieck	1995	USA	Book Chapter
Emergency feeding programs on hunger, its causes, and solutions				
Food banks and food security: Welfare reform, human rights, and social policy. Lessons from Canada?	Riches	2002	Canada	Journal Article
The consequences of privatized food assistance:	Ohls and Saleem-Ismail	2002	USA	Report
The Emergency Food Assistance System: Findings from the provider survey				
Hunger, food security and welfare policies: issues and debates in First World societies	Riches	1997	Canada	Journal Article
Want amid plenty: from hunger to inequality	Poppendieck	1998	USA	Journal Article
Food banking in the 21st century: much more than a canned handout	Cotugna and Beebe	2002	USA	Journal Article
Food security and food assistance programs	Barrett	2002	USA	Journal Article
Hunger for change	Food Banks			
Reducing the food security safety net	Allen	1999	USA	Journal Article
Charitable food assistance as symbolic gesture: an ethnography of food banks in Ontario	Tarasuk and Eakin	2003	Canada	Journal Article
Concentrated poverty in urban Canada: health issues for consideration	Ford	2003	Canada	Discussion paper
The evolution, cost, and operation of the private food assistance network	Daponte and Bade	2000	USA	Discussion paper
Right to food case study: Canada	Riches	2004	Canada	Report
Hunger in contemporary Canada: a welfare state	Berner and O'Brien	2004	USA	Journal Article
The Shifting Pattern of Food Security Support: Food Stamp and Food Bank Usage in North Carolina				
Revisiting the food bank issues in Canada	Thériault and Yadlowski	2000	Canada	Journal Article
The charitable food assistance system: the sector's role in ending hunger in America	O'brien et al.	2004	USA	Report
Too much and too little? Debates on surplus food redistribution	Hawkes and Webster	2005	UK	Report
Evidence-based strategies to build community food security	McCullum et al.	2005	USA	Journal Article
private versus public relief: use of food pantries versus food stamps among poor households	Daponte	2000	USA	Journal Article
We don't want to manage poverty': community groups politicise food insecurity and charitable food donations	Rock	2000	Canada	Journal Article
Food consumption in Canada, Part II	Statistics Canada	2001	Canada	Report
Anti-racist practice and the work of	Slocum	2006	USA	Journal Article

Anti-racist practice and the work of community food organisations	Slocum	2006	USA	Journal Article
How the private food assistance network evolved: Interactions between public and private responses to hunger	Daponte and Bade	2006	USA	Journal Article
Hunger in America 2006: Executive Summary	America's Second Harvest	2006	USA	Report
Ontario hunger report 2006: Hungry for change	Ontario Association of Food Banks	2006	Canada	Report
Hunger in Our Own Backyard: The Face of Hunger in the United States	Costello	2007	USA	Journal Article
An overview of the Canadian agriculture and agri-food system	Agriculture and agri-food Canada	2008	Canada	Report
HungerCount 2009	Food Banks Canada	2009	Canada	Report
Understanding the link between welfare policy and the use of food banks	Goldberg and Green	2009	Canada	Report
Hunger in America 2010	Feeding America	2010	USA	Report
Nurturing food sovereignty in Canada	Wiebe and Wipf	2010	Canada	Book Chapter
New power relations served here: the growth of food banking in Chicago	Warshawsky	2010	USA	Journal Article
Who's Hungry: 2010 profile of hunger in the GTA	Daily Bread Food Bank	2010	Canada	Report
Why governments can safely ignore hunger	Riches	2011	Canada	Online article
Thinking and acting outside the charitable food box: hunger and the right to food in rich societies	Riches	2011	Canada	Journal Article
Household food insecurity in Canada	Tarasuk and Dachner	2011	Canada	Report
HungerCount 2011	Food Banks Canada	2011	Canada	Report
The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network: Exploring the growth of foodbanks across the UK	Lambie	2011	UK	Report
HungerCount 2012	Food Banks Canada	2012	Canada	Report
Beyond alternative: exploring the potential for autonomous food spaces	Wilson	2012	Canada	Journal Article
Every town should have one': Emergency food banking in the UK	Lambie-Mumford	2012	UK	Journal Article
Who's Hungry: 2012 profile of hunger in the GTA	Daily Bread Food Bank	2012	Canada	Report
Sweet charity, revisited: organizational responses to food insecurity in Hamilton and Toronto, Canada	Wakefield et al.	2012	Canada	Journal Article
Bilan-Faim Quebec 2013	Les Banques Alimentaires du Québec	2013	Canada	Report
Current and Prospective Scope of Hunger and Food Security in America: A Review of Current Research	Beaulieu	2014	USA	Report
Putting money where your mouth is: hunger, cause-related marketing and the politics of corporate food bank	Robinson	2014	Canada	Thesis

Appendix B: Questions for snowball interview respondents

McGill

This research is for a study on the history of food banks in Canada and their use in addressing community food security. This study is being conducted by Aaron Vansintjan, MSc candidate, Natural Resources Sciences at McGill University. He can be contacted at aaron.vansintjan@mail.mcgill.ca. My supervisor is Nicolas Kosoy, who can be contacted at nicolas.kosoy@mcgill.ca. Agreeing to be interviewed means consent to participate in this study. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to not answer any question. This interview will not be recorded, but notes will be taken. Please indicate if you would like to remain anonymous in this research.

Questions for interviewees

What do you think were the main reasons for the appearance of food banks?
How has the recipient population changed over time?
How have their financial sources changed over time?
How has the diet changed over time?
What new foods have been introduced in the past five years?
When food banks started, what foods were initially supplied?
-With attention to goods that are overproduced
Who volunteers at food banks?
Who goes to food banks? Are migrants, indigenous people, seniors, single mothers, and people affected by the criminal system a significant portion of the users?
What are the main sources of food they distribute,
Have they changed since its beginnings?
What changes in government or local policy have affected food banks over time?
What changes in the food system have affected food banks?
Are there any other factors that have affected the way food banks evolved?
Are food banks linked to other organizations? Which ones?
Would you recommend me to get in touch with someone to gather information about the history of food banks in Canada?

Appendix C: List of snowball interview contacts and respondents

	Position	*Contacted (Y/N)*	*Interviewed (Y/N)*
Researcher 1	Professor	Y	Y
Researcher 2	Professor	Y	Y
Food bank staff 1	Urban agriculture coordinator	Y	N
Food bank expert 1	Food Banks Canada	Y	N
Food bank expert 2	Director of food bank network	Y	Y
Food bank staff 2	Director of food bank	Y	N
Food bank expert 3	Director of food bank network	Y	Y
Researcher 3	Professor	Y	N
Food bank expert 4	Alternative food organization staff	Y	N
Researcher 4	Professor	Y	Y
Food bank expert 5	Former food bank director	Y	Y
Researcher 5	Professor	Y	N
Food bank staff 3	Director of food bank	Y	Y
Food bank staff 4	Director of food bank	Y	Y
Food bank staff 5	Director of food bank	Y	Y
Food bank staff 6	Director of food bank	Y	Y
Food bank staff 7	Staff of food bank	Y	N
Food bank expert 6	Former food bank director	N	N
Food bank staff 8	Director of food bank	Y	Y
Food bank expert 7	Director of food bank network	Y	Y
Food bank expert 8	Alternative food organization staff	Y	Y
Food bank expert 9	Labor union organizer	Y	Y
Researcher 6	Professor	Y	N
TOTAL	*22 (6 professors, 13 food bank professionals, 3 other)*	*20*	*14*

Appendix D: Questions for case study interviews

Interview guide

1. Explain project to interviewee, and what will be done with the interview.
2. Explain consent form. Inform interviewee that not all questions need to be answered.
3. Ask if they want to sign consent form and agree with being recorded.
4. Begin interview.

Questions for interviews of staff and volunteers

What are the formal and informal connections between the Réseau and other organizations?
How are jobs and tasks differentiated at the Réseau? Who decides?
Do you distribute non-food assets like pamphlets, books, and workshops?
How does the food bank work?
What are your motivations for working here?
What are the relationships between the Réseau and the rest of the community?
How many people do you meet a week?
What is your organization's stance on welfare?
What benefits do you receive working at the food bank?
What makes this food bank different from others?
How do you get here?
How do you address / deal with diversity in staff and volunteers? Do you pay attention to these issues as an organization?
Where does the food come from? How much food do you receive per month?
Costs of transportation of food?
How many meals do you serve a month?
How many baskets do you distribute a month?
How much food do volunteers take home?
Where does your waste go to?
How gendered is the work that happens in the food bank?
Where does your funding come from?
What are your expenditures?
How much do collective kitchens spend on food?
How much of your food is purchased?
How has the neighbourhood changed? How have things like gentrification affected neighbourhood?
How have migrants changed the neighbourhood and how the food bank functions? Who pays rent?
Who owns the space?