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“The whole concept is just a joke. A right to food?”

A phenomenological study on state initiative in Vancouver’s food justice and sovereignty movement

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Abstract

This thesis is informed by a collection of discussions that highlight participant perspectives on Vancouver's food justice and food sovereignty movement, mainstream food discourse in the city, and how the state's institutional role is involved in prospects for the future. Vancouver, Canada constitutes an appropriate case as a dense, urban, and intensely commodified space with conspicuous pockets of concentrated food activism. A phenomenological approach is used on this food-based social movement, drawing on six semi-structured interviews with select participants stemming from a wide breadth of organisational expertise and knowledge in the movement.

In looking at this food-based social movement, participants reflected on several aspects of obstructions to actualising food justice and sovereignty rooted in the existing neoliberal and commodified food system. In conversation, participants interwove narratives of Canada's historic and ongoing processes of settler-colonialism and disempowerment, the dominant economic model, and contemporary social justice to further motivate the need for food systems change. This thesis concludes with potential paths forward in which participants hold optimism for the future of social solidarity and food systems transformation.

Key words: Food, Sovereignty, Justice, Indigeneity, Neoliberalism
Words: 21,946

Abbreviations:

BCFSN - British Columbia Food Systems Network
BIPOC – Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
CSA – Community Supported Agriculture
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation
FPC – Food Policy Council
NPIC – Non-Profit-Industrial Complex
NPM – New Public Management
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WGIFS - Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Explanations:

Italicised text – a decision based on context to create an emphasised effect on parts of the text as well as for terms coined in specific scholarship

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1 Introduction

Amid a global climate crisis, the position of food systems remains marred by instability rooted in, as just a few examples hyper-financialised and transnational agribusiness, destructive agricultural practices, the proliferation of biotechnological intellectual property, and inequitable development across regions and nations (Friedmann, 1982; Lang, 2010). These instabilities were exemplified in the 2008 food price crisis, which constituted not only an economic crisis, but also drove hunger, poverty, and civil unrest across continents (Rosset, 2008). Thirteen years later, there is little commentary on how today's food regime has actualised more equitable outcomes for those who face chronic hunger and social marginalisation. For cities in the Global North, as spaces of intense capital accumulation, hunger is the reality for an urban subsect of the most economically fringed, who face socially constructed food geographies of scarcity, food deserts, and networks of food charities (Guthman; 2008; Lang, 2010). Despite these issues, the existing neoliberal paradigm centres around a market-oriented socio-political ideology and has, according to Findley et al. (2012) and Riches (1997) not only successfully depoliticised urban hunger in the Global North, but has also privatised significant aspects of the modern social safety net. Absent of a concerted effort by the governments of wealthy nations and networks of transnational organisations they hold membership to, what remains is often grassroots movements of community resistance for food systems resilience and justice for the most vulnerable. In an attempt to address a research gap concerning how grassroots actors in Vancouver's food sovereignty and food justice movement conceptualise the realities of structural obstacles to food systems change, this thesis looks to explore participant perspectives on conventional food discourse as it exists today, barriers to meaningful change, paths forward, and the role of the state.

1.1 Context

This thesis is centred on hunger and food inequities in what is now known as Canada[1] as a wealthy nation entangled and well-situated within the dominant economic model of the Global North. Today, the demands of hunger and other food issues are mainly staked on networks of charities, food and Indigenous-centric organisations, and other associations all part of both the Non-profit-industrial complex (NPIC) and New Public Management (NPM) model. The reality for those who are the most food insecure is a regular reliance on these networks of food banks, family services, and other social programs. Unfortunately, issues of hunger remain a consistent concern across all nations and are routinely exacerbated by global crises such as financial recessions, international conflicts, and pandemics, seen in Canada by the jump in households experiencing some form of food insecurity from nine percent in 2018 to 15 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic (Polsky & Gilmour, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020). As Graham Riches (1999, p. 210) writes, "food is essential to life and is a social and cultural good, it is important that food is placed at the center of social policy research and action". A policy advocate, he further argues that food insecurity must be addressed through a coordinated effort to ensuring all the economic means to access healthy food (Riches 1999). This would mean a state commitment to income security and equalisation, environmental action, the meaningful realisation of Indigenous sovereignty, and other legislative guarantees to poverty eradication.

While the Canadian government extended a commitment to national food security at the 1996 World Food Summit and on other international occasions, efforts resulting in any form of real change have remained absent from both political and mainstream discourse. However, what is to be done if food remains neglected from the lenses of governance and policy? Who and what remains to shine a light on the food systems that enable hunger and unequal access to health outcomes? What is being done to actualise solutions to these intersecting issues from a community practice perspective and where is the state in this equation?

There are several trends of opposition in which to draw from based on Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) comparative and analytical framework on food movements in the arena of struggle that is the global food crisis. In response to today's neoliberal food regime, a reformist trend is known to many as a *food security* model, responsible for containing the worst of the

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[1] Using the phrase "what is now known as" is an intentional attempt to acknowledge the use of English names to replace Indigenous place names as part of larger efforts of colonial action against Indigenous peoples to threaten and extinguish their culture, language, and social systems (Barker, 2009; Parrott & Filice, 2007).

social, financial, and environmental externalities born out of unfettered commodification and financialization of food systems by advocating for mild mitigation instruments such as voluntary corporate responsibility mechanisms and residual social safety nets. The progressive trend is characterised by the *food justice* movement, which by and large functions within the existing food system coupled with calls to acknowledge a right to food and the racial and gendered underpinnings of inequality. The radical trend in Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) framework is most famous for the notion of *food sovereignty* born out of the La Vía Campesina peasant movement in 2007 which directly mobilises against the structure of the global food regime through demands for an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and land-based redistributive approach. These trends in the greater framework of today's food regime will be further explored in detail in section 2.4.

1.2 Purpose & Research Questions

Given this context, this thesis collects and examines perspectives from participants who work in the food justice and sovereignty movement in Vancouver, Canada. The accounts discussed are based on participant narratives on their frustrations, hopes, and experiences as a reflection of perceived barriers, the current movement, and potential paths forward. As such, the main foci of this thesis are guided by attention to the following research questions:

What are key barriers to the actualisation of community food justice and food sovereignty in Vancouver, Canada?

How do actors in the food movement perceive the involvement of the state in this movement?

In what ways do participants see potential for food systems change?

In what ways and how is the state involved in these avenues for possible change?

1.3 Thesis Structure

This study begins with a review of relevant literature and foundational theory. A review of Vancouver, Canada is provided to contextualise the case study used within this research. A review of informed researched methods follows, considering reflexivity, research approach,

sampling method, interview structure, and means of data analysis. The results are then examined, structured into clusters of themes, and analysed. Lastly, a concluding discussion is introduced followed by final remarks and suggestions for further research development based on the resulting narratives illustrated in this thesis.

2 Literature & Theoretical Underpinnings

2.1 Food Commodified

Extensively mechanised, monocultured, and blurred global supply chains, as well as the emergence of the market power of retail branding in consumer culture have characterised food markets in recent decades, as have normalised crises and shocks. While such volatility is predominantly felt most by those in developing countries, there remains much vulnerability in food security for those who occupy the economic fringes of the Global North (Clendenning et al., 2016; Friedmann, 1982, p. 3; Lang, 2010). Amidst economic growth and increasing common civic standards, the 1980s and 1990s saw a resurgence of poverty and hunger as a significant social issue in wealthy western nations (Riches, 1997). As Friedmann (1982) put in her historical analysis of the international post-war food order: "scarcity has taken a new form, affecting different groups of people with different intensities" (p. 249).

Through the development of wealthy western countries and their respective welfare regimes, hunger has hardly warranted attention from the state, with responsibilities to address said issues censured to the realms of charity, religious organisations, and others in the non-profit sector (Riches, 1997). In the context of hunger in the Global North, social, political, and economic inequality pose constraints not on the production of food per se, but to the access of food for the urban poor in affordable and equitable ways (Clendenning et al., 2016; Kloppenburg et al., 1996).

The complexity of systems predicated on a "triple burden of over-, under- and malconsumption, all coexisting, often within the same region and country" (Lang, 2010, p. 89) have been inherited from the previous productionist agriculture paradigm of *the more food the better*. In

this thesis, food systems defined will be drawn from the Food and Agriculture Organization (2018) as encompassing the entire range of actors, activities, processes, and sectors involved in food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal. This system involves interconnected subsystems of energy, trade, waste management, and input supply for example.

As Guthman (2008) summarises, the "foodie-ism" culture that emerged in the 1980s as a social phenomenon has transformed our social relations to food, as will be discussed in section 2.3.3. In foodie-ism culture, specialised health-oriented food habits reflecting cosmopolitan consumption habits, the ascent of celebrity chefs and food writing in popular culture ("yuppification"), and the proliferation of cheap, fast, and nutritionally deficient food ("McDonaldisation") are just three manifestations that have emerged in recent decades. For wage-earners, this reality has also meant "union busting activity and the concomitant decline in real wages, relaxed regulation of food, environment, and occupational health and safety, and unfettered commitment to local economic development in the form of retail strips – neoliberalism, that is, by another name" (Guthman, 2008, p. 1175). As a result, existing food systems are built upon the structural exploitation of resources, markets, and communities near and far, leading to the continual reproduction of racial disadvantages inherent to hierarchical social structures (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). Patel (2009) criticises these developments in global food systems that have taken food from institutions tasked with addressing hunger and giving them over to the market functions as being "guided by an altogether different calculus" (p. 664).

Riches (1997) laments that the inability for citizens to adequately access food and meet nutritional needs is not only economically inefficient, but a stark indicator of the erosion of socio-economic rights, a transgression of societal decency and morality on a structural level, and a pathway for vastly unacknowledged social consequences. Efforts to depoliticise food poverty has led governments in the Global North to deny the inadequacy of welfare benefits, centre policy discourse in terms of welfare fraud and abuse, and blame the most vulnerable for their social positions. He (1997) uses the widespread normalisation of food banks as a key symbol of welfare state crisis, as they occupy positions of broad and high degrees of legitimacy from governments, media, the corporate sector, and greater public consciousness. Indeed, the emergence of food banks in the first world as an institutionalised response to hunger has explicitly made them part of a greater public welfare provisioning safety net that has fallen apart (Riches, 2002). For Finley et al. (2012), this structural emergence erodes the participatory spirit,

sense of community responsibility, and discourse of collective and solidarity necessary for the health of civil society. While widely accepted as a necessary aspect of coping with structural hunger, food banks and charities at large have modest evidence that what they distribute alleviates hunger, poverty, or malnutrition. Rather, they do little else beyond preventing death by starvation in the most extreme cases and enable governments and society at large to abandon structural welfare obligations (Finley et al., 2012; Riches, 1997).

In recent decades, the environmental justice movement has cast a large shadow on issues of food justice, owing to the more ubiquitous nature of topics such as air pollution, rising sea levels, and climate catastrophe. Building on environmental justice, scholarship argues that food justice can also bring together social movements, sustainability literature, and contemporary social science approaches as the reality of food today also circle around what Cadieux and Slocum (2015) describe as "the gathering storm of finance capitalism, environments threatened by climate change and accumulation, and rising inequality" (p. 3). As Alkon and Agyeman (2011) write, food is not only a physiological necessity but something intimate imbued with heightened significance once taken inside the body, alongside practices that are especially intertwined with manifestations and symbols of cultural histories and proclivities. Extensive scholarship advocates for the concept of alternative food systems as furthering social justice, which is linked to healthier civil society through more equitable and democratic production, distribution, and consumption (DuPuis et al., 2011; Kloppenburg et al., 1996). Food systems equitability has the capacity to make romanticised connections to ideals such as progressive participatory democracy, justice, healthy ecologies, and social connectedness. Certainly, the inability for a household to access adequate food as a symptom of food injustice remains a consistent issue in the Global North, with higher rates of insecurity concentrated in urban areas, albeit with more extensive social safety nets available (Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2011).

Riches (1997) uses a Canadian example to highlight the ideological and structural underpinnings of rights in liberal market economies applied to food in several Global North contexts. Restructuring of public services in the 1980s driven by both neoliberal and globalising pressure clawed back support for those in need. These demands trickled down from the state into public consciousness, creating a normative orthodox that favoured highly efficient deficit reductionism, minimised state capacities, and an individualist market-oriented mindset that obfuscated responsibility for those in need (Riches, 1997).

2.2 In Thinking of Food Systems: Foodsheds and Food Regimes

The foodshed derives from the parent concept of the watershed, a complex system by which water (and now food) flows to a particular place through streams mediated by features of both natural and social geography. In their seminal work, Kloppenburg et al. (1996) depict the idea of the foodshed with connecting the cultural *food* with the natural *shed*, resulting in the linking of place and people, or nature and society. Foodshed analysis looks to understand this system and how food transforms through space and time towards a population. In this, they bring forth a foodshed framework to conceptualise the "physical, biological, social, and intellectual components of the multidimensional space in which we live and eat" (Kloppenburg, 1996, p. 41). Foodshed analysis provides value by tracking the flows of food from point of inception to consumption, which measures the plethora of costs as it relates to energy consumed, carbon emissions, and price in production and transportation (Peters et al., 2009). This framework helps bring to light the importance of the *how*s and *where*s in food systems planning, especially as cities remain key points of social and ecological metabolism, a process by which nature and labour is transformed (Bowness & Wittman, 2020). Originally coined by Marx (1909) and furthered in environmental sociology by Foster (1999), socio-ecological metabolism is a one-directional flow of nature and labour from the country to cities, compelled by industrialisation and urbanisation. In this flow of nature and people, food transported to cities ends up as waste in landfills and waterways instead of returning to the originating foodshed where the food was grown. This broken *rift* is also seen through a human and social capital lens, as people and their labour continue to migrate to cities and are severed from their former land, roots, and knowledge (Bowness & Wittman, 2020).

Existing literature has also brought forth the framework of a *food regime theory*, deriving from Friedmann and McMichael's (1989) foundational work, which provided conceptual tools and a historical approach to linking global food systems and periods of capitalist accumulation through distinctive regimes that have successively transitioned with what is seen today as constituting the third *corporate* regime. Their framework depicts three relatively stable yet historically contingent periods of economic and political relationships with identifiable attributes, as well as the contradictions of crisis, transformation, and transition that underwrite

them (Friedmann & McMichael (1989). For the purposes of this thesis, only the third regime bares relevance. In this, food regimes can be conceptualised as a structure of rules and standards that dictate production, consumption, and distribution. The third regime beginning in the 1980s has been characterised by the increased influence of global finance on the restructured agri-food system and related sectors that have intensified inequalities between not only the Global North and South, but also between the privileged and dispossessed (Burch & Lawrence, 2009; McMichael, 2009). For consumers in the Global North, this regime has been underpinned by the manifestations of concern for choice, wellness, cleanliness, convenience, and fresh food. In-between each food regime have been transitions articulated by crisis, which open up space for the structural transformation of power, property, and norms (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; McMichael, 2009). A food regime can be articulated as "a cluster of global-scale food relationships that [contribute] to stabilising and underwriting a period of growth in global capitalism" (Campbell & Dixon, 2009, p. 263). This framework involves key processes in institutionalised rulemaking, trade policy, consumption relations, labour relations, the institutional reshaping of physical ecologies, and commodity complexes. In this, Burch and Lawrence (2009) echo: the third food regime "can only be adequately understood in terms of the operations and development of the wider capitalist system – of which the food system is but one component" (p. 269). This systemic shift in power has seen control over supply chains transfer from producers to retailers, driving land and labour relations to assume a more mobilised and yet precarious and fragile state, like that of the flexibility of transnational capital (Burch & Lawrence, 2009; Friedland, 2004; McMichael, 2009). Like other class-based projects such as liberalism and reformism, the current food regime has been characterised as neoliberal and depicted as ultimately driven by class interests (Burch & Lawrence, 2009; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Holt-Giménez, 2010). Friedmann (1982) posits that the intensification of capitalist relations in the world economy has "[shifted] vastly more of the world's population away from direct access to food and incorporated it instead into food markets" (p. 255). The realities of this regime have also seen the power of transnational finance weaken the ability for states and their policy regimes to actualise national goals such as food security. In short, today's current food systems have rapidly redistributed land, seeds, and agricultural inputs into concentrated forms of ownership (Clendenning et al., 2016; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). While harsh, Patel (2009) elicits that under the conclusiveness of a US-backed neoliberal capitalist model, institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) that were initially tasked with guiding international food production and consumption priorities to fight

hunger have become increasingly irrelevant and cosmetic in their roles in shaping hunger policy.

2.3 Neoliberal Space

Indeed, it is impossible to reflect on the rise of today's food regime without adequate consideration for how it has come to be under the political economic philosophy that underpins it. Neoliberalism can be approached from myriad viewpoints, including theoretical frameworks of an existing reality, ongoing process, economic project, and uneven spatial, temporal, and scalar developments. As the reality of food today remains commodified in nature, neoliberalism is a key point of relevance for critically evaluating the consequences of commodification on aspects of distribution, consumption, access, and ecological systems. Drawing on scholarship from the fields of geography, urban studies, history, and sociology, this subsection will look to provide a strong definition for neoliberalism and how it manifests. This conceptual understanding will then be applied to today's food systems, alternative food institutions, and food movements that provide context for the rest of this thesis.

2.3.1 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is, according to Harvey (2007), a political economic theory that philosophises human wellbeing as best equated under the guise of individual freedoms, facilitated through a framework grounded in private property rights, free markets, and free trade. By extension, neoliberal theory exerts that people must be enabled to maximise their individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills by the state and this responsibility means that the state must act to create and maintain such institutional frameworks. Exemplar of these charges include the assurance of the integrity and quality of money and currency, the securing of private property rights, and the guaranteeing of market functions. These responsibilities primarily fall to legal structures and functions, though if necessary, they are compelled by means of force through a military or police institution (Harvey, 2007). Based in the idea of the supremacy of markets and beyond maintaining these three arrangements, states should not act to intervene by any measure beyond creating the conditions for new markets in areas where none existed prior. Since the rise to prominence of figures such as Paul Volcker (US Federal Reserve Chair), Ronald Reagan

(US President), and Margaret Thatcher (UK Prime Minister) between 1979 and 1980, industry privatisation, deregulation, and state withdrawal from social and welfare provisioning have touched almost every country to some degree or another (Kivel, 2017).

Brenner, Theodore (2002), Peck, and Tickell (2002) put forth neoliberalism as a complex multifaceted project of sociopatial transformation of both an *actually existing neoliberalism* and a continual *neoliberalisation* process. The hegemony of neoliberal discourse also called supply-side economic theory and politicised through what is known as the Washington Consensus has through the decades permeated much of society, influencing how many interpret, live in, and understand the world (Peck & Tickell, 2002). As an "ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs" (Harvey, 2007, p. 3), neoliberal values and it's consequential effect on views of maximised social good have had deep implications from welfare provisioning, divisions of labour, technological development, to food systems and beyond. For Kivel (2017), the cutbacks to social services have resulted today in the corporatised and professionalised modern non-profit institution that spends "inordinate amounts of time writing proposals, designing programs to meet foundation guidelines, or soliciting private donations […] and other fundraising techniques" (p. 139).

The practice of neoliberalism is linked to a dramatic escalation of intervention by the state to coercively or forcefully impose market logics upon all aspects of social life, intensification of uneven development on all spatial levels, and new forms of social polarisation (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Even more so, adherents of neoliberalism inhabit positions of immense influential importance, occupying corporate boardrooms and financial institutions, media conglomerates, heading universities, governing political parties, and transnational institutions that have far-reaching abilities to shape global trade and policy. Ultimately, neoliberalism has a particular interest in bringing all human action and interaction under the domain of market transactions and McCarthy and Prudham (2004) tactfully write that "the hegemony of neoliberalism is made most evident by the ways in which profoundly political and ideological projects have successfully masqueraded as a set of objective, natural, and technocratic truisms" (p. 276). The implications for these projects in the food justice and sovereignty movement is further developed in section 2.3.3.

2.3.2 Cities & Urban Space

In hand, Brenner and Theodore (2002) propose a supplementary analysis of the city as a pronounced space critical to the articulation and realisation of neoliberalism. For the urban scale, cities throughout the Global North have become an important arena for contemporary processes of neoliberalisation with particular intensity whereby policy experiments, institutional innovations, and politico-ideological projects occur (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Succinctly, Tornaghi (2017) describes the capitalist city as a *dis-abling environment*, deeply involved in the reproduction of food injustice, with its "land markets, development and planning priorities, circulation of pollutants and nutrients, pockets of food deserts and obesogenic environments" (p. 793). The urban space is increasingly a strategic incubation site for the production, metamorphosis, and reconstitution of neoliberalism across wider scales of networks. Through interurban competition, the reformation of city governance and the coercion of the "lowest common denominator of social responsibility and welfare provision" (Harvey, 1989, p. 12) have produced intensified social polarisation. For example, Peck and Tickell (2002) articulate this logic of pressures, routines, coercive relations, rules, and penalties manifested through cultural spectacles, enterprise zones, waterfront developments, and privatised forms of governance. Mechanisms of policy institutionalisation are then channeled through facilitators such as technocratic think tanks, consultant networks, and other policy advisory institutions lubricated by financial elites entrenched in cities outward internationally and to other interlocal spaces (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Harvey (1989) posits that given the durability of neoliberalism to effectively maintain its own incorporation and reproduction, "even the most resolute and avantgarde municipal socialists will find themselves, in the end, playing the capitalist game and performing as agents of discipline for the very processes they are trying to resist" (p. 5).

Indeed, cities carry an *urban bias* over the rural as spaces where class privilege, flows of capital, and the transformation of nature into commodities are most concentrated (Bowness & Wittman, 2020). Regarding its consumption of natural materials and outputs of waste, industrial cities *consume* land and labour to support its populations to at least an order of magnitude greater than what can be drawn from the typical built up and political boundaries of the area: "every city is an ecological black hole drawing on the material resources and productivity of a vast and scattered hinterland many times the size of the city itself" (Rees, 1992, p. 125). This in itself

can be a precarity, as people living in urban spaces are increasingly susceptible to potential insecurity as they are reliant solely on food produced elsewhere (Laidlaw & Magee, 2016).

2.3.3 Neoliberalising Food

Echoing Harvey (1989) though in pertinence to food systems, Guthman (2008) questions: "How is it that current arenas of activism around food and agriculture seem to produce and reproduce neoliberal forms and spaces of governance, at the same time [opposing] neoliberalism writ large?" (p. 1172). There are several avenues in which the project of neoliberalism has not only contributed to the establishment of the existing food regime. but also reflects itself in attempts of resistance to reproduce neoliberal forms, spaces, governance, and mentalities. Regulations surrounding food in nations in the Global North – from safety or quality standards to programs that provide resources to those who are unable to meet a certain level of needs – have been subject to intense attempts to neoliberalise and defund. The resulting emergence of volunteer and community-based organisations in response to state rollback from essential civic responsibilities has also helped cement the notion of self-help and personal responsibility to further justify and tolerate the marginalisation of certain people in place of criticism of the structural causes of hunger (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Finley et al., 2012; Guthman, 2008). In the Global South, farmers have for decades been devastated by privatisation of land and water rights consolidated by transnational corporations, as well as competition with highly subsidised surplus staple grains from the Global North (much of it part of American food aid, a Cold War geo-political weapon and key aspect of foreign policy to temper the threat of communism) – both due to trade liberalisation efforts facilitated by international institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989; Holt-Giménez, 2010; McMichael, 2009). In supplement, the attitudes towards citizenship in neoliberal discourse have shaped subjectivities that uphold individualistic tendencies, equating health as a measure of personal responsibilities that undermine calls for a robust public healthcare system or mandate for equitable food distribution. The emergence of personal responsibility in hand with market mechanisms has positioned the individual as the centre of change rather than the state as collective civil society, marking a shift in the application of market logic to human wellbeing and social life (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008).

To reiterate, many typical organisations in the urban Global North, where food justice movements have primarily coalesced, have fallen short to meaningful resistance to the neoliberal corporate food regime and have ended up *playing the game* (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Finley et al., 2012; Guthman, 2008; Hinrichs, 2000; Mares & Alkon, 2012; Pudup, 2008; Schiavoni, 2009). For Findley et al. (2012), the model of neoliberalism that the NPIC follows "creates competition where there should be collaboration, favors bureaucracy over democratic structures, and fails to promote long-term change" (p. 6). Pudup (2008) also posits that the contemporary trend of program deployments that establish community gardens is in itself another form of neoliberal governmentality. Exemplar of this is how garden spaces are argued to be sites in which individuals are charged with their own agency for self-improvement and moral responsibility through connection to nature in response to the withdrawal of state policy (Pudup, 2008).

While most organisations and programs consider racial and gendered facets inherent in inequitable social-economic outcomes, when it comes to their reliance to market mechanisms, individualised consumer-based functions, and a need for a coherent critique of the constraints of capitalism, there remains much to be desired (Kivel, 2017). The utilisation of market exchange frameworks to address social problems inherently includes the haves and excludes the have-nots, ignores economic privilege, and reduces human beings down to potential consumers and customers: "many direct agricultural markets involve social relations where the balance of power and privilege ultimately rests with well-to-do consumers. Struggling farmers and poor consumers, in contrast, must weigh concerns with income and price against the supposed benefits of direct, social ties" (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 301).

While looking to the intersections of race and gender is undeniably progressive, a system that is inaccessible for the least fortunate can never be radical nor enough. Certainly, food movements in the Global North have done much in recent years to educate residents in hyper specific pockets of marginalised communities about issues of systemic racism, gentrification, social determinants of health, and food deserts. However, this has done more to alter food habits in an individualistic or personally transformative manner, accentuating gardening, local organic food, and other avenues centred on consumption and lifestyle habits, than to provide all with tangible political tools to collectively demand transformative change to an economic system that has done so much to marginalise people and their communities (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). In this way, "neoliberalisation limits the conceivable because it

limits the arguable, the fundable, the organisable, the scale of effective action, and compels activists to focus on putting out fires" (Guthman, 2008, p. 1180). These shortfalls can also be articulated through a lens of path dependency by understanding the pre-existing political economic arrangements as providing significant limitation to future reformation's scope and trajectory: "in this sense, the evolution of any politico-institutional configuration following the imposition of neoliberal policy reforms is likely to demonstrate strong properties of path-dependency, in which established institutional arrangements significantly constrain the scope and trajectory of reform" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p. 361). This inherence of institutional landscapes and power configurations has significant relevance in looking to how future policy and structural arrangements can be realised.

2.4 Frameworks for Food Movements Under the Current Regime

Building on Friedmann and McMichael's (1989) food regime scholarship, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) provide an analytic framework for comparing four different food movement trends and their discourse. This framework names and explains the *neoliberal*, *reformist*, *progressive*, and *radical* food trends. The neoliberal trend is one of food enterprise, one that is wholly concerned with its self-reproduction on a systematic level. This neoliberal trend seeks to reproduce regime conditions through calls to manage social and environmental externalities with mild reforms grounded in free-market based economic liberalism that ultimately maintains the viability of "G-8 governments, monopoly corporations and big philanthropy – essentially the ruling, corporate classes" (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p. 115). The centering of *change through consumption* decoupled from political organising in this trend stands in contrast to what is labelled as *progressive* and *radical* trends. The *reformist* typification is known by the food security mode of discourse, one that is content with incrementalist approaches to hunger. The *progressive* trend manifests most widely in the food justice movement and works to address the current regime centred on sustainable, organic, and local community networks and relationships, though these remain largely within existing capitalist economic and political frameworks. The *radical* food sovereignty movement focuses more heavily on responses that advocate for restructuring class-based markets and property regimes based on rights and in the name of anti-imperialist, anti-corporate, and anti-capitalist sentiments (Holt-Giménez &

Shattuck, 2011). Indeed, both food justice and sovereignty movements have potential in challenging existing problems.

2.4.1 Food Security

Defined by the FAO, food security has been internationally understood as the four pillars of availability, access, utilisation, and stability in which rests the ability for "all people, at all times, [to] have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996). In contrast, food insecurity represents "a situation [where] people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996). Food security is the dominant discourse of the *reformist* trend within Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) comparative framework for food regimes, as it is rooted in maintaining marginally less environmentally and socially detrimental paths while remaining committed to reproducing existing global institutions and structures. In light of this, it is important to highlight that the definitional understanding of food security and the reformist discourse described by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) are not equated as the former is a situational status and the latter is a narrative (Jarosz, 2014). For example, food sovereignty and other movements are often seen as a means to achieve the goal of food security. Patel et al. (2007), Jarosz (2014), Silvasti, and Riches (2014) describe the food security narrative as apathetic to the social and economic conditions of food production as they embrace charitable food aid models and increasing supply through expanded agricultural production as responses to hunger. For Guthman (2008), a food security framework occurs through four central themes: consumer choice, localism, entrepreneurialism, and self-improvement. This approach remains in symbiosis with the neoliberal regime and favours looking to food production and acquisition over structural inequality in questioning the shortfalls of the existing system (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011). Reformism is actualised under periods of financial and social crisis and is provoked to reign in and restore regime stability. As such, Holt-Giménez (2010) concludes that because reformism mitigates the worst externalities and crises of a system with inevitable cycles of financial busts, reformism and the dominant food regime share identical purposes: the reproduction of the corporate and liberalised food system. The mainstream narrative of *voting with your fork* coined by food journalism celebrities like writer Michael Pollan champions an

ideal of white middle-class consumerism grounded on the erasure of the histories and realities of low-income and marginalised people of colour (Guthman, 2011; Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011). This model is seen to champion means such as voluntary corporate self-regulation and incentive-based certification to temper unfettered industrial capitalism, while veering away from directly challenging global market hegemony (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). Critically, alternative food networks which are depicted as carving out spaces of capitalist activity that are slightly more caring, and as reiterated in the previous section on neoliberalism, have often reproduced rather than opposed the socially inequitable conditions and relations it claims to seek to address (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Guthman, 2008; McCarthy, 2006). This is also echoed in King and Osayande's (2017) depiction of the racialised aspects of progressive philanthropy. Funds in the NPIC are controlled primarily by white affluent families and are staffed primarily by white and privileged people who act as brokers between capital and marginalised groups. At its core, food security discourse frames food crises as rooted in market failures and shortages which can adequately be addressed through further liberalisation of state intervention in markets and technological innovations (Wittman et al., 2010).

2.4.2 Food Justice

Food sovereignty, as the more radical sibling of the Global South to food justice, has been observed by scholarship as having difficulty resonating with urban communities in the Global North. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) define food justice, as with other *justice*-based movements such as environmental, economic, and social justice, as a response to existing and perpetuated injustices that disproportionately impact people based on race, class, gender, and other such experiences. This is extended to link food concepts to other spheres of social justice activism and advocacy through common goals, such as transformation and access, labour justice, and immigrant rights (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010). In looking to constitute a more concrete understanding of practice, Cadieux and Slocum (2015) describe more successful food justice interventions as processes that "enable people to affect systemic change while dealing with power relations across relevant scales" (p. 2). Grassroots and community-based food justice has remained one of the most prominent and fastest growing movements in North America, with scholars (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Clendenning et al., 2016; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; etc.) citing the Black Panther Party's 1969 breakfast program for school children as one of the most successful and well-known examples. Food justice exists to bring to light health and

nutritional disparities that fall in line with racial divides, with low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities bearing much of the burdens of hunger and health-related disparities (Patel, 2009; Schiavoni, 2009). This discourse has developed strength amongst middle- and working-class youth in the Global North in recent years, emerging from racial justice and labour movements, and more recently environmental justice movements (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). For Cadieux and Slocum (2015), food justice means to scholarship transformative change at four key points: trauma/inequality, exchange, land, and labour. This approach is critical of structural inequality, is most prominently found in urban underserved and marginalised communities, and is modeled by feminist, antiracist, and anti-colonial principles. Scholars such as Clendenning et al. (2016) emphasise that the racial and social aspects of food justice and its connections to class-based injustice is more effective and may help bridge the gap in understanding the larger politics of food systems inequality. While reformist food security movements temper expectations for change, food justice maintains the need to transcend the individual and realise food as a social construct that necessitates scrutiny and intersectional organising (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). Indeed, the origins of activism in food justice and food sovereignty have parallels in both the Global North versus Global South and urban versus rural (Alkon & Mares, 2012).

In relation to the mild reformism of food security and more radical food sovereignty models, food justice lays somewhere in-between while both justice and sovereignty movements invite structural analyses into the multitude of ways class, racial, and gendered inequalities are embedded in food production, distribution, and consumption (Alkon & Mares, 2012). Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) warn of the pitfalls of localised but ultimately market-based solutions akin to strategies that "may bring about positive changes regarding access to fresh food with reduced food miles [while failing] to address the bigger, structural and political issues that define who has the power over access to food" (Clendenning et al., 2016, p. 170). Food justice manifests in urban communities commonly through programs such as farm-to-school partnerships and neighbourhood gardens. As a decentralised and grassroots-based response to the current food regime, one of the most glaring limits to viability remains the inability for disconnected pockets of urban communities to fully challenge structural inequality and hunger.

Exemplar of these pitfalls are various case studies in North America primarily focused on alternative community programs such as farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs, urban farms, and alternative or cooperative model businesses. Numerous

scholars have argued that any form of food activism less radical than a food sovereignty approach in the Global North has proven not only insufficient to resist or address neoliberal political economy, but in reality, problematically reproduces the same conditions in which these constraints originate (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Guthman, 2008; Mares & Alkon, 2012). The precarity of urban agriculture also makes it susceptible to co-optation by neoliberal relations. A residual practice that occurs in marginal cracks in the capitalist system, urban agriculture almost always depends on hyper self-exploitation, volunteerism, and a patchwork of grant funding with little hope for long-term stability or continuity which scholarship argues cannot hope to constitute an adequate answer to systemic injustices and failures as large as they exist today (Bowness & Wittman, 2020; Noll, 2017; Tornaghi, 2017). Urban agriculture is often only accommodated by cities as a form of leisure as opposed to an approach to actual agricultural provisioning. For some, it is an opportunity to build social cohesion and a contribution to upgrading public space, which is a far cry from institutional consent for the pursuit of urban agriculture for food production; which is to say, for its own sake: “Small urban greens are occasionally given in temporary concession to community groups for the purpose of short-term beautification with an ethnic touch” (Tornaghi, 2017, p. 785).

Gottlieb, Joshi (2010), Holt-Giménez, and Wang (2011) assess that food justice constitutes a key political trend within North America. With a more popular backing in the Global North than the food sovereignty movements of the Global South, the food justice trend occupies a pivotal position, which may determine how well the more radical food sovereignty movement may develop. So then, how can the politics of food justice in the urban Global North be actualised in the field? Holt-Giménez and Wang (2011) see this through the potential alliance building of food justice movements. If food justice organisations build reformist alliances, the existing corporate food regime will remain resilient. If food justice organisations build alliances with its more radical interpretations, food movements will be strengthened. Sbicca and Myers (2017) define food justice as a movement of polyculture of antiracist projects that organise the prioritisation of Indigenous, low-income, and communities of colour to have equitable distribution of all resources and burdens, while also holding stakes in the decision-making over food systems control. In this, food justice draws on the link between environmental justice movements articulated in hand with racial and civil rights and inherently challenge cultural, political, social, and economic marginalisation. In many ways, the racial burdens borne by inequal food distribution mirror environmental inequalities (Sbicca & Myers, 2017).

2.4.3 Food Sovereignty

While food security is an issue of supply, food sovereignty is an issue of control (Condon et al., 2010). Food sovereignty as a political demand, is understood in food systems literature as both complementary and a direct challenge to the conceptual weight of food security, though ultimately, food sovereignty itself is a precondition for true food security (Patel, 2009). Derived from the struggle for food security to address the global nature of the current food regime, food sovereignty emerged from rural farmers in the Global South tasked with stating demands to the world that highlight the unequal power relations between trade and institutional agreements in food systems (Clendenning et al., 2016). The La Vía Campesina movement first formed in 1993. At the 2007 Nyéléni International Forum on Food Sovereignty, over 500 representatives behalf of farmers, artisan fishers, Indigenous peoples, rural workers, environmental movements, and forest communities from over 80 countries were brought together to bring to light and challenge the neoliberal and global capitalist underpinnings of today's food regime reality:

> Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations (Campesina, 2007, p. 1).

Today, this movement has become one of the most vocal and unified counterforces to the existing food regime. As a radical step forward from the relative concept of food security, food sovereignty posits that commodification is a direct cause of systemic hunger and the racial inequalities alongside it (Heynen et al., 2012; Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011). This looks towards a rights-based approach explicitly opposed to "imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-

colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and eco-systems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples" (Campesina, 2007, pp. 2-3). The farmers recognised that actualising food security without consideration for the social control of food systems required much more than what governments or markets could provide (Patel, 2009). Critics argue that considering the Declaration of Nyéléni, food security discourse falls "in line with neoliberal doctrine, emphasising market and trade orientation over the rights to self-determine food systems" (Clendenning et al., 2016, p. 169). Patel (2009) also asserts that rights-based language in shaping food policy is vital, since current systems designed by a privileged few is asserted as illegitimate given the universal nature of rights for all. Given this language, food sovereignty explicitly emphasises the need to respect, protect, and fulfill this rights-based approach (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011; Patel, 2009). For Patel et al. (2007), this approach is a means but not an end to desired outcomes. The fight for *a right to a right* looks to repoliticise food production and consumption by directing attention to the existing food regime and its processes that support the hegemony of capital without consideration for the contexts, communities, and peoples it affects.

Food sovereignty discourse falls under Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) radical model, seeking to transform existing agricultural and food systems through a complete transformation of society. Food sovereignty directly challenges the existing food regime and embedded power relationships (Clendenning et al., 2016). This model champions identifying inequities in production, reproduction, and distribution extending into existing relations of exchange and modes of production as causes of hunger beyond individualised shortcomings or choices. Like the progressive trend, there is also an acknowledgement to uphold traditional knowledge, community-based systems, and regional or local democratic control over agricultural food systems (Jarosz, 2014). However, the radical model views the dismantling and redistribution of agri-food and land monopolies as necessary to make way for these alternatives. Ultimately, this model challenges the legitimacy of states that have been predisposed to the whims of transnational and corporate capital to enact policy. While sovereignty implies power within the political community of *the people*, it is also legitimately and often described as the right for a state to invoke national control over supply and productive resources from external financial actors and institutions. Shattuck et al. (2015) highlight the difficulties in navigating this duality. Since La Vía Campesina in 2007, people and communities practicing contemporary food

sovereignty have adapted to shifting and malleable terrains, negotiating, creating, seizing, opposing, and reshaping states, cities, corporations, and other actors: "food sovereignty [changes] the ways in which power is structured and experienced in people's everyday lives […] these differences [in the definition of food sovereignty] are the product of local history, identity, cultural memory, and political moments" (Shattuck et al., 2015, p. 427). Food sovereignty born from the International Peasant Movements has seen many attempts for adoption in the Global North. However, as the most radical form of resistance to the existing food regime, attempts to actualise food sovereignty has naturally faced the most stringent forms of neoliberal constraint and pushback.

2.5 Social Justice and Management Models

Burch and Lawrence (2009) have argued that a central feature of the current third food regime is the "[exhibition of] a central tension between the corporate imperative for global agri-food expansion and the desire of marginalised peoples for food sovereignty" (p. 268). Indeed, the construction of a redefined global food system has been predicated on the ubiquity of biotechnology, efficient agriculture, the limiting of national food regulation. This system is also characterized by forms of resistance and food alternatives such as community garden projects, eco-feminist trends, vegetarianism principals, and community-supported agriculture programs. These two camps constitute two opposing but basic manifestations of consent and resistance in the inherent *crisis of development* in today's food regime (Campbell, 2009; Clendenning et al., 2016; McMichael, 2000). It is within this neoliberal urban space that Brenner and Theodore (2002) observe that food justice exists most prominently.

In the face of the corporate food regime, Campbell (2009) and McMichael (2000) highlight that a response to the global scale of today's food regime can be found re-embedded in localised and ecologically appropriate food systems. As previously alluded to, the extent to which progressive food actors engage in reformist or neoliberal projects will deepen the existing rift between existing structures and more radical models. This will likely strengthen the corporate food regime while also weakening the ability for food movements to both inspire people and coerce governments into action. It is unlikely that substantial change will occur without strong and imaginative social movements, which distinguish superficial reform from structural change

and draw on an understanding of history that has seen change driven not by reformists, but through intense pressure and the threat of unrest and ungovernability (Clendenning et al., 2016; Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011).

For Rodriguez (2007), the NPIC can be defined as “the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements” (p. 21-22) underwritten by today’s dominant neoliberal discourse. The idea of the NPIC is drawn originally from historical wariness of industrial complexes such as the military-industrial complex or prison-industrial complex, describing a system of former state functions outsourced to privatised structures of funding entities which in turn further influence policy and intensify a for-profit economy for these systems. Today, organisations that fall under the umbrella of the NPIC continue to provide a substantial bulk of social provisioning (Findley et al., 2012). Critiques of the NPIC model posit that these organisations overtly disseminate narratives of privileged, white, elitist viewpoints through their institutional structure and the individuals who staff them, thereby working to defuse the more radical aspects of social justice and provisioning work. As a reflection of today’s economic mode of production, organisations uphold frameworks that prize solutions based on quantifiable measures of efficiency and goals.

In a similar vein, the NPM model is defined by Diefenbach (2009) as “a set of assumptions and value statements about how public sector organisations should be designed, organized, managed and how, in a quasi-business manner, they should function” (p. 893). NPM is subject to the five core elements of innovative strategic orientation, standardised management processes, performance measurement and control systems, a culture of managerialism, and the development of staff innovative or entrepreneurial attitudes (Diefenbach, 2009). In this, the NPM model’s vision and values reflect a drive to make organisations more business and market-oriented through constant auditing and evaluation of performance, cost, and efficiency. The ways in which the NPM model is oriented devalues the qualitative and aspects of social services that are difficult to measure which i) change the very understanding of public service, ii) oversimplify the multi-dimensional aspects of the concept of citizenship, and iii) impose upon the public sector an *alien* parallel vision of artificial markets and performance reports (Diefenbach, 2009). For many organisations, the realities of the NPM mean that organisations

and their staff allocate more and more of their time and resources away from frontline work and instead towards administrative formalities.

2.6 Critique of Food Justice

While it has done much to shift discourse, there remains extensive critique of current modes of food justice in the Global North. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) describe the heterogenous and fragmented nature of progressive and radical trends considering the congruent nature of the existing reformist and neoliberal political agenda - little surprise given one's understanding of the state of leftist politics. Indeed, Peck and Tickell (2002) coin *re-regulation* or *roll-out neoliberalism* to conceive of our current economic mode as "increasingly voluntarist, neo-corporatist regulatory frameworks involving non-binding standards and rules, public–private cooperation, self-regulation, and greater participation from citizen coalitions, all with varying degrees of capacity and accountability" (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004, p. 276). With this form of *re-regulation* governance, participants in food politics have come to presuppose and even abandon the idea of the state as an entity capable of meeting people's needs, regulating industry externalities, or provide subsidies (Guthman, 2008).

Critically, the white coding of cultural politics and space of alternative food has dampened resonance amongst communities of colour. In cultural politics, Guthman (2011) defines it as "the relationship between signifying practices and power" (p. 264) in relation to farmers markets, CSA models, vegan diets, and other community food movements. Guthman (2011) further argues that alternative food institutions often exist in spaces of colourblindness (a refusal to see race differences for fear of being deemed racist) and universalism (the assumed centering of white values as normative and widely shared) which predicates and romanticises North American history of agricultural land and labour relations amidst white privilege. As a result, existing space, rhetoric, and broader alternative food projects continue to be defined by cultural politics that continue to reproduce despite positive intentions.

While food justice work includes a wide breadth of scholars, advocates, activists and other stakeholders, Born and Purcell (2006) aptly shed light on the tendency to assume something inherent about the local scale. In the case of food justice literature, the local is deemed more

desirable to the point where *locavore* was selected as the Oxford word of the year in 2007 (Oxford University Press, 2007). The local is linked to covets such as sustainability, nutrition, and quality, more so than what would be possible in a national or global scale. Despite the validity of these posits being a matter of continued debate, local food movements are generally viewed in an affirmative light (Peters et al., 2009). In this, Born and Purcell (2006) argue that what they call the *local trap* poses danger to food systems thought and research with academic and political consequences. Matters of scale are socially constructed and therefore what is important is not the inherent associations with each scale, but who and which agendas are empowered in the pursuit of strategy in each scale: "just because the current global food system is capitalist, industrial, and unsustainable does not mean that all global systems exhibit these failings or that the current food system always will be so" (Born & Purcell, 2006, p. 197). In the way that the current food regime has developed in the past several decades, it seems natural that when linking capitalism and globalisation, the logical assumption for resistance lays in the alternative food networks of the local. However, what is actually necessary is to view scale as a reflexive strategy that does not lose sight of a specific and normative end goal, whether it is social equity, democratic decision-making, economic development or equitable redistribution of environmental outcomes (DuPuis et al., 2011). For Guthman (2011), agrarian sentiments of the local suggested by authorities in mainstream food discourse like Michael Pollan are far less easily idealised by racialised minorities and constitute a *food fantasy* that obscures the complex power relations, explicit and implicit racism, and exclusionary material realities that perforate all aspects of our food systems. While not to say that existing localising movements or projects are without well thought out reasoning, an argument on the non-attributes inherent to a scale means that strategies must constantly be contextualised to avoid unintended consequences.

2.7 Food Justice & Policy Councils

For Wekerle (2004), a food justice movement is necessarily predicated on engaging policy processes in addition to mobilised movement-based strategies. Even in progressive cities, urban policy and planning actors have so far failed to engage with food justice movements as a whole, allotting concerns narrowly with food service locations, community gardens design, and farmers markets. Accordingly, the swell of grassroots participation in food movements, in addition to the ability for networked movements to engage in everyday political opposition and

active resistance on multiple scales, should be of great interest and relevance to municipal planners (Coulson & Milbourne, 2021; Wekerle, 2004). The role of civil society emerging from the margins to actively shape urban spaces through alternative ways of living, governance, and sustainability continues to be a bottom-up approach, raising questions about the role of the state.

Beginning in 1982 in Knoxville, Tennessee, Food Policy Councils (FPC) were born out of both an emergency response to anti-hunger initiatives and a need to serve as a forum to coordinate on food issues. Given the sprawling nature of food issues in policy concerns, FPCs were created at the behest of community actors that perceived policy barriers to help coordinate and advise on everything from linking local production to school districts, organising the means for public transport systems to address urban sprawl (Harper et al., 2009). For Mendes (2008), urban food policy encompasses "decisions that affect the ways that people in cities produce, obtain, consume, and dispose of their food" (p. 943). FPCs are represented by a range of stakeholders from all aspects of a food system, often consisting of advocates, educators, and other community members to mainly "identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state food systems, spurring local economic development and making food systems more environmentally sustainable and socially just" (Harper et al., 2009, p. 2). For example, Wekerle (2004) uses the city of Toronto as a case study to understand food justice with a dense network of agencies and initiatives both developed and linked together over time to work on policies and programs. Toronto is known to have the only FPC in North America that is explicitly part of a municipality department and not an advisory body - providing the city with opportunities on an institutional level that are often unafforded to other municipalities in the realm of food justice, health planning, and urban agriculture. The Toronto FPC has also been known to provide stability and a sustained focus on food justice-related goals for a range of other local state agencies (Wekerle, 2004). While it seems as though FPCs have potential to serve as a forum for discussing food issues, foster coordination between sectors in the food system, evaluate and influence policy, and support programs that meet such certain aims, such content matter appears to remain straddled between the reformist food security and progressive food justice movements typified in Friedmann and McMichael's (1989) food regime framework. An awareness of institutionalised racist policies but not capitalism trails what Guthman (2008), Alkon, and Mares (2012) might characterise as the dampening limits of neoliberalism on the nature of food justice movements in cities in the Global North.

FPCs occupy an advocacy role with little to no capacity to directly influence policy change. Nonetheless, they hold informal authority by proxy due to their adjacency to governing bodies. In this way, policy councils are an interesting case in the scope of food movements as a situated advisory vehicle serving as a focused forum on coordinated efforts to advise on food systems planning, while simultaneously holding direct relations to local organisations, the community stakeholders who make up the council, policy strategy, and the governing agencies they are attached to.

3 The Case for Vancouver Food Movements

Canada has been described as a nation of cities with 80 percent of Canadians now living in urban areas and two thirds living in metropolitan centres of over 100,000 people (Mendes, 2008). While Canadians spend an average of ten percent of their income on food, household food insecurity has increased in recent years with a growing number of Canadians accessing food banks each month (UNHRC, 2012). For Canadians, the barrier to food is often a lack of necessary income to access through regular means (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). In 2012, Olivier De Schutter, the Special Rapporteur on behalf of the UN conducted a report in Canada, the first to ever do so in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member nation. His report drew attention to the growing domestic food insecurity, systemic precarity of Indigenous peoples, especially in the North, and an absence of a national food policy (UNHRC, 2012). Reflecting upon the neglect for a right to food, Riches (1999) remarks: “This is perhaps surprising in that Canadians constantly re-affirm their right to health care, and understand this as a key ingredient in their cultural identity, setting them apart from their neighbors to the south” (p. 7).

In recent years, aspects of food systems discourse have shifted from a food security framework towards that of food sovereignty, likely due to the increased inclusion of Indigenous movements and the addition of Canadians who participated in the original Nyéléni Forum (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014). This convergence has helped shape the People’s Food Policy Project (PFPP), a development that works towards defining a collectively agreed upon food sovereignty policy for Canada. Simultaneously, the topic of food sovereignty gained rapid prominence within the discourse of local and regional non-profit and charitable organisations throughout the country, highlighting hyper local ethics of food systems. However strongly food sovereignty language is incorporated into local organising, the consumer-citizen-based nature of many urban food networks has fallen short of structural critiques or collective action and is instead sidelined in favour of an ethical consumption principle that “tends to celebrate local food, rather than

criticising food injustice" (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014, p. 1164). Geographically, Vancouver is situated on the stolen land of three First Nations, just one aspect of the difficult history with Europeans on Turtle Island or what is otherwise known as North America. This following section discusses the social and institutional dynamics that contextualize the city of Vancouver and Canada and why it represents an interesting and quite possibly unique case study.

3.1 Food Justice in Canada

Prominent Canadian social work scholar Riches (1999) uses the right to food as a focal point for Canadian human welfare. While the Canadian government has ratified a right for all "to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996) and has extended commitments to this right on several international occasions, Riches (1999) asserts that the state has continually failed to implement a coordinated food policy to address this domestically. Canada's welfare paradigm is classified in the *liberal* cluster as illustrated in Esping-Andersen's (1990) seminal typology on welfare regimes, characterised by modest yet means-tested entitlements for state dependents. This has meant that Canadian welfare has followed the overarching tenet of a liberal work-ethic, one that guarantees a residually minimum standard and nothing more. For Canadians, hunger is not an issue of adequate domestic food supply but of one's financial means to acquire and access healthy food in normal and customary ways (Riches & Tarasuk, 2014). This paradigm that has guided Canadian welfare development since at least World War II has been a considerable challenge for protecting people's basic needs. In tandem with the hegemonic agenda of neoliberal political philosophy following the 1980s, "any pretense to a right to food has been abandoned and there have been deliberate attempts to depoliticise hunger as a social rights issue" (Riches, 1999, p. 205). The ethos of the Canadian liberal paradigm echoes itself in the spheres of food policy as well. In this way, entitlement to welfare (and thereby food security) is directly associated with one's ability to sell their labour, while there exists no political commitment to full employment policy. A welfare structure that is incapable of decommodifying (which is to say making something accessible outside the confines of a marketplace) the rights of its citizens ensures only risk and vulnerability (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

Echoing progressive social policy analysists, Riches (1999) argues strongly for state assurances for providing all with the economic means to obtain food. This can play out in a variety of ways, such as through efforts to achieve full employment, more extensive social benefits and services, and further redistributive income transfers. In essence, this would mean an expansion of the scope of the Canadian welfare state that would put Canada's liberal typology more in line with those of the contemporary social democracy cluster, which stipulates an inclusive and solidaristic ethic of universalism. For Esping-Andersen (1990), the welfare state is in itself a power resource in which wage-earners use to build upon their social rights. Because the vast majority of Canadians are employees whom "are inherently atomized and stratified – compelled to compete, insure, and dependent on decision and forces beyond their control" (p. 16), income security and equalisation are paths state institutions can take to further alleviate the poverty conditions that inhibit them from food. Beyond this, Riches (1999) also advocates for an *integrated* approach expressed through public education on food insecurity, federal and provincial agricultural legislation, a commitment to environmental action, comprehensive poverty eradication goals, and the continued ability for civil society to publicly critique and hold government action accountable. This, in tandem with the further decentralised control of community food networks, Riches (1999) argues is the way forward to advancing a human right to food in Canada. While important, these calls for action remain broad and vague. Given that food insecurity should be thought of as myriad of welfare, public health, environmental, Indigenous, agricultural, and equity policy problems, how does what scholars like Riches (1997; 1999) argue for actually look like in community practice?

3.2 Indigeneity

Explicitly so, what is known as Canada is a settler colonial state "whose sovereignty and political economy is premised on the dispossession of Indigenous people and exploitation of their land base" (Barker, 2015, p. 44). As such, the importance of Indigeneity features heavily when looking to understand any aspect of contextual Canadian history. Undeniably so, the geopolitics of Canada is rooted in violent land appropriation driven by European settler-colonialism that is echoed today in contemporary politics through "concerted colonial action against Indigenous peoples whose claims to land and self-determination continue to undermine the legitimacy of Canadian authority and hegemony" (Barker, 2009, p. 325). Like many other

settler-colonial states, settlers displaced existing people under "the presumption of European superiority and the belief that Cartesian dualism, Enlightenment values and industrial capitalism were the hallmarks of a civilised society" (Kluttz et al., 2020, p. 50). What is known as British Columbia is also situated on land traditionally occupied by dozens of Indigenous groups that overlap both in the United States to the South, and other provinces to the East and North. Historically, British Columbian land was largely settled but remained unceded according to the British Royal Proclamation of 1763, a mandate that sought to check the encroachment of settlers west of the Appalachian Mountains, nor was this matter ever concluded in treaty like other provinces. Today, this has meant that Indigenous peoples face a different set of food and health-related challenges (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014). For example, Indigenous people have disproportionately shorter life expectancies, higher poverty rates, and experience ill-health at higher rates. Nearly half of all Indigenous households are food insecure and in remote Northern communities, rates of food insecurity can reach up to 75 percent, compared to a pre-COVID-19 national average of nine percent (Chan et al., 2019; Desmarais & Wittman, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2020). Not only has historic and ongoing settler-colonialism displaced rights and access to traditional lands, it has also subsequently led to the widespread loss of relationship to the land and the traditions that underpin cultural and social meaning and identity (Coté, 2016; Desmarais & Wittman, 2014). Similar to Indigenous peoples in Australia and New Zealand, certain populations in rural and Northern Canada experience third world conditions stemming from issues such as high costs for basic foodstuffs, crises in clean water, and loss of sovereignty of traditional food traditions and environments (Silvasti & Riches, 2014). For the past several decades, several dozen Indigenous communities throughout Canada have and continue to face clean water crises in "one of the wealthiest countries in the world and home to 20 percent of the planet's freshwater resources" (Morin, 2020).

Beginning in 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was instrumental in bringing greater public attention and knowledge of the legacy of the structural violence perpetuated by the state against Indigenous people by means of the Canadian Indian Residential School system (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Commission detailed the extent to which for over a century, generations of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their communities and had their land, culture, language, and knowledge networks stripped from them - harms carried out explicitly as a form of cultural genocide, with intergenerational trauma manifesting as just one of the existing consequences today (Coté, 2016).

3.3 Indigenous Food Sovereignty

For Indigenous people in Canada, a decolonial lens features heavily in food sovereignty perspectives. Indigenous communities approach food sovereignty critically, asserting that Canadian definitions of food sovereignty reflect yet another Eurocentric conviction and form of assimilation in which to infringe upon their autonomy (Desmarais & Wittman, 2014). While food sovereignty itself is an alternative to the current food regime, indigenising food sovereignty offers a restorative framework of reclamation for self-determination of land, food systems, and traditional practices amidst the modern Canadian state (Coté, 2016).

As the food sovereignty movement is depicted as an alternative to today's food regime, Indigenous food sovereignty as such is an alternative step further to that. Indigenous perspectives stress that decolonial praxis in revitalising food systems already and actively shape, nurture, and foster healthy and sustainable communities. Decolonising or indigenising food sovereignty is ultimately positioned to restore what is seen as the reciprocal respect and obligatory postures people have with their environments that have been denigrated by colonialism, globalisation, and neoliberalism (Coté, 2016; Taiaiake, 2005). As such, food sovereignty discourse and its accompanying meanings, perspectives, and identities cannot fully be translated through notions such as law and governance that countries like Canada and the United States possess (Taiaiake, 2005). For example, the British Columbia Food Systems Network (BCFSN) Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) produced a four pillar guide on Indigenous food sovereignty: *Food is sacred* in the sense that it cannot be constrained by colonial laws, policies, or institutions; continued *participation* in the practice of culture and food traditions on individual, familial, community, and regional levels; *self-determination* from industrialised economies and corporate controlled food; and *policy* to reconcile Indigenous food and cultural values within mainstream colonial laws, policies, and economic activities (Morrison, 2008). Though only seen in scholarship in recent decades, Indigenous food sovereignty has been described as a "living reality" since time immemorial (Martens et al., 2016). This framework highlights the need to work in restoring environments weakened by colonialism, globalisation, and neoliberal policies through processes of decolonialisation and Indigenous self-determination (Coté, 2016).

3.4 Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver, encapsulating the city itself and 20 other municipalities and suburbs, constitutes the third largest urban area in Canada and is home to 2.4 million people (2016). Like other major urban centres, Vancouver is exemplary of Canada's depiction as a multicultural *mosaic* society with immigrants comprising 43 percent of all residents (Statistics Canada, 2019). There is prominent attention to food in the collective and cultural mind, manifested in much of the city's extensive *green boosterism* sustainability posture and seen in the establishment of the Vancouver FPC in 2004, 2007 Food Charter, 2013 Food Strategy, and the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (Affolderbach & Schulz, 2017; City of Vancouver, 2007; 2012; 2013; Lim, 2015). In recent years, it has also become a conventional cultural practice before formal meetings or events to conduct an acknowledgement to the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and sə̓lílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations on which the city is situated upon (University of British Columbia Library, n.d.). Vancouver also boasts some of the most expensive property in the country and was named the second most unaffordable city in the world in 2020 for the second year in a row, boasting an average detached home valued of CAD $1,700,000, with some neighbourhoods almost doubled that at over CAD $3,000,000 (Demographia, 2021; Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, 2021). The story of Vancouver's real estate market is one characterised by gentrification, the flooding of international investment capital, intense development of luxury property, and economic precarity for many locals feeling the squeeze, all underwritten by settler-colonial land displacement.

The commodification of land in Vancouver boasting substantial economic value has progressed unabated even in light of several severe social issues the city currently grapples with, just one of which is an overdose crisis occurring primarily in the Downtown Eastside (DTES). The DTES is a neighbourhood adjacent to several highly expensive communities and lays just east of the city's financial downtown core. It is home to a high concentration of marginalised, transient, and vulnerable people from across the country and for several decades (although not true in recent years) had held the moniker as the "poorest postal code in Canada". The community has the highest rate of homeless and underhoused people in the city, has historically struggled with an HIV/AIDS epidemic (which at one point held an HIV rate equal to that of Botswana's), and has high incidences of mental illness and crime (Linden et al., 2013). Though

the current overdose crisis has been exacerbated by the proliferation of fentanyl and fentanyl-laced drugs, this crisis has structural roots decades in the making, with entrenched poverty and homelessness, spatial segregation, and the degradation of state mental health infrastructure (Collins et al., 2019). As such, the DTES also has a high concentration of police, non-profit organisations, low-income single-room occupancy rental units (SROs), and addiction services (Linden et al., 2013). As living costs continue to slip out of the grasp of the city and highly valuable and coveted land dispossessed from Indigenous people remains unsettled in BC courts, the complexities of food sovereignty in Vancouver become even more constrained (Bowness & Wittman, 2020).

Food issues in light of municipal governance point to "tensions between the apparent pervasiveness of food in many cities, and unanswered questions about how, by whom and in whose interest food is governed" (Mendes, 2008, p. 947). Local food institutions, such as farmers markets throughout the city, continue to boast prices beyond the reach of the vast majority of agricultural labourers, a group comprised overwhelmingly of temporary South Asian and Mexican migrant workers hired from the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) (Lim, 2015).

Vancouver scholars Bowness and Wittman (2020) use urban agrarianism, the idea of an ethic of responsibility and solidarity with those who cultivate food, to further agrarian citizenship. A concept driven by Wittman (2009a, 2009b), agrarian citizenship refers to the collective rights and responsibilities for stewardship of global food sovereignty. Agrarian citizenship is a form of social responsibility, rooted in one's relationship within socio-ecological metabolism that draws upon communitarian ideals of people's reciprocal rights and responsibilities towards environmental stewardship inherent in nature-society relations. Urban agriculture has come to mean many things, from gardens in private homes, school gardening initiatives, to public community farms of varying sizes and capacities. In this sense, agrarian citizenship goes beyond what are known as property rights and extends to cultural and place-based rights to land for the cultivation of food and socio-ecological justice. Bowness and Wittman (2020) suggest that privilege plays an influential part in driving what can be done. While all urbanites have responsibilities towards the stewardship of their foodshed due to the nature of inequality in rural-urban relations, differences in access to class-based resources and benefits mean that those with even greater privilege also have greater responsibility to act not only on the individual but collective level as well.

4 Methods

This thesis looks at the food sovereignty and justice movement in Vancouver and primarily explores its relationship to state initiative. As such, Vancouver's food movement constitutes a phenomenon in which participant experiences and perceptions can be studied through their expertise and involvement. In this, *what* ways and *how* state initiatives exist in relation to food justice and sovereignty approaches can be explored through descriptions from the actor's own perspectives. The goal of this thesis is not to suppose an objective reality or convey generalisability in its findings, rather, the primary emphasis is on the nature of the relationship between the City of Vancouver and this food-based movement through the eyes of those who are in unique leadership and organisational positionalities. The epistemological perspective of this thesis remains constructivist and views the world as a complex construct formed through subjective experiences and meanings directed at specific objects, phenomena, contexts, and interactive processes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To explore this topic, six semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide a reconstruction of reality through participant's lived experiences. This section will begin with an acknowledgement of reflexivity followed by a discussion on the suitability of a phenomenological analysis approach for this thesis goal. Then, sampling selection, interview design, and potential study limitations are examined. Through these subsections, methodological (research approach), ontological (how nature is perceived), axiological (roles of beliefs), and epistemological (how reality is known) considerations taken in conducting this thesis are knitted in and will be reflected upon.

4.1 Reflexivity

In practice of contextual reflexivity and acknowledgement of situated knowledge, I conduct this project as a second-generation Chinese-Canadian man born, raised, and educated on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples; Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), səl̓ílwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) in what is known today as Vancouver, Canada (Haraway, 1988). I identify as an ethnically visible minority in

addition to an uninvited settler as an explicit and relative product, beneficiary, and perpetuator of the ongoing settler-colonial project that is the Canadian state. As such, my inclinations, judgements, experiences and interpretations may be influenced through personal, class, racial, cultural, academic, and other socio-economic privileges accrued through my positionality centered amidst the Western narrative (Kluttz et al., 2020).

4.2 Phenomenology

The experience of working in what is known as the NPIC and NPM models is characterised by administrative hoop-jumping and bureaucratic formalities manifested through requirements for rigorous and quantitatively oriented approaches to funding application, evaluation, and monitoring (Barkan, 2013; Morvaridi, 2012; Rodriguez, 2017). Given this quantitatively centred reality, qualitative methods bring to light meaningful explanations, identify context, and enhance peripheral vision into inquiry of this and related phenomena (Sofaer, 1999). A qualitative approach is most relevant for a holistic benefit of developing a larger picture of intersecting factors in an attempt to mirror real-world conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Considering reliability and validity critiques, qualitative methods give significant contributions to the development of "meaningful quantities" (p. 1102) of which quantification is built upon (Sofaer, 1999). To clarify values, language, and meanings attributed to stakeholders who engage in varying roles in organisations, communities, and movements, qualitative research methods are also well suited for topics related to social and health services as well as policy inquiry. (Sofaer, 1999). As such, a qualitative approach is adopted for this thesis. More specifically, a phenomenological approach is most appropriate to present descriptions of social relations within the real-world spatial and temporal conditions of Vancouver's food justice and sovereignty movements. A phenomenological study looks to inquire into several lived experiences of a specific phenomenon or concept (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Kvale, 1994). A qualitative approach must utilise appropriate methods to elicit data with both depth and clarity and as such, this approach is well suited for attempts to glean not only a whole picture but also its gaps (Dinkins, 2005; Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002). A key aspect of this thesis is therefore the experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of a range of actors and stakeholders; mainly those with present and past engagement in food movement activism, organisational management roles, and scholarship. It can then be argued that participants who fit this mold would have the

closest familiarity with and possess insights into food sovereignty and justice issues in Vancouver. In some cases, such as in policy spheres, Sofaer (1999) argues that qualitative methods are well utilised where dependent variables are inherently normative in the sense that certain outcomes are desired in advance. The capacity for qualitative methods to yield richer and more complete depictions for the articulation of findings is also a compelling boon. The nature of food movements in Vancouver constitutes a vast web of formal and informal networks, community and social justice advocates, provincial and municipal administrators, public and private funding sources, and of course the people and communities themselves. The participants in this study also have a unique position in which they are connected not only to immediate and in-field management work, but also the city in the form of policy councils and other avenues of politics and relationships. In this way, they are connected in both an upward and downwards orientation. A key aspect of phenomenological research is *what* individuals experience and *how* they experience it in relation to a specific phenomenon in their own terms (Groenewald, 2004).

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 Sampling

In all, six participants were interviewed. All participants are residents of and conduct their work in Vancouver. A broad criterion for participants was constructed based on a capacity to inform and speak on aspects of the food justice and sovereignty in Vancouver from a range of different perspectives, capacities, and roles (Creswell & Poth, 2016). For example, all participants interviewed in their professional and organisational roles had institutional constraints such as demands from organisational board of directors, financial constraints from conditional grant funding applications, or structural limitations instituted by the city itself. Contact with the first three participants was established through prior association with past work and organisation. While there is cause for concern regarding "studying one's own backyard" (p. 219), all association between participants and researcher were based on past activity in common organisations that had concluded at least two years prior and as such, did not allow for significant ethical issues such as power imbalances or the disclosure of unfavourable

information (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The remainder of participants were snowball sampled, a sampling method which involved asking interviewees for others whom they know and might recommend to participate. Snowball sampling was an important part of participant acquisition as a phenomenological approach rests on carefully chosen participants who have all experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Participants were first contacted through an initial email with a background summary of this thesis project, details concerning consent and anonymity protection, and an invitation to meet for an interview.[2] Remaining snowball sample participants were then forwarded another email by previous interviewees. The data gathering began with contact and agreement from three persons known from previous experience to participate through an initial inquiry email. Following this first round of interviews, between 25 and 30 potential participants were contacted via snowball sampling, resulting in two additional participants. Following this second round, two more potential participants were contacted via snowball sampling, resulting in one final participant. In all, between 31 to 36 participants were contacted for this thesis.

In total, six participants of which two represented experience on the Vancouver Food Policy Council, and four represented experiences in non-profit and related institutions were interviewed.[3] Participants sought after had a wide range of experiences, with involvement in food-based community organisations, academia, and Indigenous civil service.

4.3.2 Interviews

Data was collected through informal and semi-structured interviews with key informants. During the interviews, prompts from reviewed literature were combined with other inquiring questions to *probe* participants into speaking to expertise, knowledge, and thoughts on specific topics (Dinkins, 2005; Kvale, 1994; Roulston, 2010). Examples of these literature-informed prompts include Indigeneity, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) food movement framework, localism and the local trap, alternative food initiatives, and neoliberalism.[4] As phenomenology examines experiences in relation to a concept in question, studying food justice and sovereignty in Vancouver necessitate data acquisition from those who work, study, and live amongst these

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[2] See Appendix 1 for full initial email.
[3] See Appendix 2 for descriptions of cumulative experiences.
[4] See Appendix 3 for full interview guide.

movements and spatial circles. To allow for more free-flowing discussion and for participants to dictate conversation while still allowing the conversation to remain open-ended, not every question in the interview guide was asked to every participant nor were the questions asked in the same order each time. Open-end questions fare better in a constructivist perspective, to better elucidate and focus upon the contexts, interactive processes, and subjective meanings behind participants and their understanding of the subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Kvale, 1994). Both interview themes and questions were fluid, as they shifted and expanded during the ongoing process of literature review, as well as during the participant interview process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Interview questions were designed in a way to foster a Socratic-Hermeneutic styled phenomenological interview, as coined by Dinkins (2005). This form of interview allows both interviewer and interviewee to be *co-inquirers* that engage in question-and-answer dialogue (Dinkins, 2005). Building on but diverging from classic phenomenological interviews, Socratic-Hermeneutic interviews use a back-and-forth conversational style premised on continued reflection, clarification, and interpretation from both co-inquirers to land upon relevant insights (Dinkins, 2005; Roulston, 2010). This style holds value in the specific research topic of food justice and sovereignty to explore participant experiences and thoughts on both *ideals* in comparison with the *reality* (Dinkins, 2005). Additionally, van Manen (1990) depicts the co-inquirer nature of the conversation as a *triad* model where the conversational structure binds not only the co-inquirers to each other, but each co-inquirer to the mutual interest in the conversation that keeps the "personal relation of the conversation intact" (p. 98). This hermeneutic interview structure compels a collaborative conversation and in turn can activate participant reflections on their experiences to determine deeper meanings or themes (van Manen, 1990). Part of the Socratic-Hermeneutic interview is the *interpre-view*, a notion that posits that the interview and data analysis do not have to be conceptualised as separate processes and that dialogue can be in itself an interpretive process (Dinkins, 2005). The utility of several interviews with a wide range of participants, in addition to the co-inquirer aspect of this interview approach, help build validity in results (Creswell & Poth, 2016). All interviews were conducted online via the video meeting platform Zoom with audio recorded and transcribed electronically.

4.4 Phenomenological Analysis

"The meaning or essence of a phenomenon is never simple or one dimensional. Meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered" (van Manen, 1990, p. 78). In considering the data that was collected from the interviews, analysis was first conducted through the electronic transcribing of audio recordings to allow for a more organised and systematic method of review. Of importance in this stage is the initial perspective that all statements should be recognised as equal of value, prior to data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Following audio transcription, data analysis was conducted through a systematic process of theme *horizontalisation* as coined by Moustakas (1994). Horizontalisation is the highlighting of phrases, sentences, or quotes that convey significance to the phenomenon and how participants experience and perceive it. Following horizontalisation, significant subthemes were then organised into *clusters of meaning*. These thematic clusters are subsequently considered to describe further significance in participant perspectives, context, and the phenomena itself. Themes in literature comprise of specific motifs, formula, or devices which occur frequently in text. For qualitative data analysis, phenomenological themes may be understood as structures of experience which give control and order to research and writing (van Manen, 1990). Relevant for this thesis, themes mean participant perspectives of, for example, what food justice and sovereignty means to them, the salience of these movements as they see it in relation to conventional public discourse, and how they view the nature of the state's position in relation to the movement.[5] For van Manen (1990), a method of data analysis called *phenomenological reflection* is to see the meaning of a phenomenon; "something everyone does constantly in everyday life" (p. 77). To discern meaning, a holistic approach is necessary for transcript analysis. This holistic approach can be conducted by attending to the entire interview text as a whole (wholistic or sententious approach), considering statements and phrases (selective or highlighting approach), in addition to examining sentences, lines, and other details (detailed or line-by-line approach) (van Manen, 1990). While themes are not generalisations and cannot depict the fullness of a phenomenon, it holds value in serving to point to an aspect of a phenomenon as knots of lived experiences which can then be used to proceed to phenomenological description. (van Manen, 1990).

4.5 Limitations

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[5] See Appendix 4 for detailed coding scheme

One challenge with this thesis, as with any research project, is the trade-off of weighing the depth (contextual data) versus breadth (sample size) of data collected (Goodwin & Horowitz, 2002). While ten interviews ranging from 30 to 45 minutes were planned, during the interviewing process, six interviews of longer duration were conducted with each averaging 67 minutes each. However, the six interviews still fall in line with the two to ten that is recommended as sufficient to reach saturation from a phenomenological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Groenewald, 2004). It would have been beneficial if a larger number of potential participants were snowballed as it would have allowed for a more discerning process of participant selection. Unfortunately, this network limitation was exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in unforeseen demands in work obligations and beyond for many. Thematic analysis, research findings, and response to the research questions are illustrated below.

5 Thematic Results & Analysis

This section outlines and explores the subsequent thematic clusters and subthemes that resulted from the coded interview data. To reiterate, the main aim of this phenomenological study is to shed light on i) the perceived barriers, ii) current state of food discourse in the city, iii) potential ways forward in actualising food justice and sovereignty, and iv) how the state is involved in these processes. This is predicated by how certain actors and stakeholders in Vancouver's food movement experience and understand these issues within the phenomena of the food justice and sovereignty. Presented first is how participants experience working in the existing food regime characterised by neoliberalism, alternative food organisations, and their constraints. What follows is a conversation on food justice and sovereignty work under the NPIC model. The individual level of perpetuated mindsets that limit change within institutions is then presented before the progressivism of mainstream food discourse in the city with a focus on localism is discussed. Topics of Indigeneity is then explored, bridging perspectives on the DTES community, the food movement in the city as a whole, settler-colonial histories, and Indigenous food sovereignty. Lastly, a discussion on hope and narratives for paths forward for future resilience is presented. All discussion topics and quotes interwoven throughout this following section are the sole communicated perceptions and opinions of the participants themselves and do not reflect in any way the posture of any past or current organisational associations.

5.1 Neoliberalism & Constraining Institutions

One of the more unfortunate aspects of state rollback in social service responsibilities has been the justification that people can meet their needs through personal responsibility and self-help (Alkon & Mares, 2012; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Guthman, 2008). At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many extensions of the state and service-based organisations were caught scrambling in crisis, bringing to light the existing fissures in Vancouver's food and social support infrastructure. Emergency funding was provided by the city, with portions being

allocated to service organisations for emergency food outreach programming (City of Vancouver, 2020). Several participants, especially those working in the DTES reported a large stream of public funding that was recently approved. For them, however, a one-time increase in funding did little to make up for the loss of community food assets and continued marginalisation of the city's most vulnerable, which has been facilitated over the years due to state withdrawal and unfettered gentrification. The sentiments that the existing food regime is in conflict with the actualisation of secure and sustainable food systems was clear, as one director of a non-profit organisation reflected: "the sort of idea of the charity and food banks being able to solve the worst malnutrition and hunger problems in our community like the DTES, it's kind of obvious that it doesn't work."

From a university student organisation's perspective, the composition of their executive board in relation to the university was of relevance to the former director, who noted: "It's happening in this bubble of being a university which by itself is an elite institution and an elitist place to be […] you're meeting people from different parts of the world who are upper echelon of society, right." In this, the participant highlighted the nature of those who gravitate towards involvement in certain aspects of community work as a dampening effect on radical approaches to change. Those who are privileged enough to participate often approach issues from similar perspectives, and through their involvement, the interviewee wondered whether those who's privileges benefit in less explicit ways through their participation would be the ones who would go on in the future into real systems of governance. In this way, the participant's thoughts followed in line with King & Osayande's (2007) observations that young and financially privileged people find greater ease in staffing non-profit organisations working under today's neoliberal model.

One participant echoed Guthman's (2011) work on the racialisation of alternative food systems and organisations. The romanticisation of agrarian pasts in addition to the clout of liberal progressive philanthropy play out in the expensive stalls of Vancouver's farmers markets: "it's a level of elitism, right? We see in this food system all over the place, all of those benefits […] and people who can afford that and come by that access naturally in their lives". The whiteness of alternative food models juxtaposes with Vancouver's extensive food history of racialised Chinese and South Asian immigrants whose engagement in agriculture and food commerce has existed for as long as their European counterparts. Despite the history of explicit racism and exclusion, their story has always been defined as an *alternative* (Lim, 2015). This history plays

out today with universities being just one arena of contestation: "[Asian food] is a fad now right? […] [we had] a bit of a reputation in some circles as being the white hippie food club […] it was a predominantly white-Anglo kind of group in an otherwise quite multicultural school". These sentiments resonate with King and Osayande's (2017) critique of social institutions as brokers between white, affluent capital and marginalised people of colour.

For the two FPC members, the institution of a policy council remains as a forum for people to get together in which everything from efforts to better source compost for school gardens, enact more transparent food product labeling, and host educational workshops or other events are discussed under a plethora of constraints related to resources, institutional mandate, and constituent accountability: "it's kind of a policy advocacy platform, [the council] has no policy making teeth at all […] if you're asking about it, in terms of food justice and food sovereignty, it's a little bit of a limitation there." This is by design, as a financially and institutionally dependent advisory council for the state, the Vancouver FPC has far from it capacities for dramatic change. In a more nuanced perspective, one council member had this to say:

> In Vancouver, actually, I think that the state's involvement in food systems is stronger than other places, […] I think that the state support of local food is actually quite strong here. So I don't think that- I mean, it's still weak in absolute terms, but relative to other Canadian cities, I think it's quite strong. So I think that the argument that the neoliberalisation of the state has whittled down the municipal governance of food is not on strong feet. It still is super weak, though.

5.2 The Non-Profit-Industrial Complex & New Public Management

Today, the mechanisms of private foundations that channel funding into non-profit organisations outweigh the ability states have at influencing society at large (Rodriguez, 2017). For those who work in non-profit or charity organisations, the realities of their workplaces are not lost on them. Many community members who depend on community services and the coordinators who manage these services (including several interview participants) acknowledge that the structures of non-profit institutions are not only a reaction to myriad of social issues, but are an inherent feature that thrives in the existing neoliberal food regime. For Rodriguez

(2017), “the overall bureaucratic formality and heirarchical (frequently elitist) strucuring of the NPIC has institutionalized more than just a series of hoops through which aspiring social change activists must jump – these institutional characteristics, in fact, *dictate the political vistas of NPIC organizations themselves* (Rodriguez, 2017, p. 29). He (2017) continues this by differentiating social service work and social change work: social service work is reactive and addresses the aftermaths of institutional systems of violence while social change work challenges the root causes of these institutions. This is echoed through one participant, who described their workplace in this way:

> Working in a non-profit, you’re basically just picking up after the state when they’ve dropped the ball […] [there are] a bunch of food providers in the same radius area and it makes me think: “even though we’re providing so many meals everyday, it’s not really addressing the underlying issue” […] if you have any desire to make things a little bit less shitty, you kind of have to end up being in a non-profit or some sort of charity or something like that. And then you witness how it’s not effective.

Participants who occupy leadership positions in food-based organisations also lament the bureaucratic nature of securing grant funding. The administrative work necessary to write extensive applications, tailor their programme planning to funder requirements, and reguarly report, all on a periodic basis is a process that diverts time and effort away from other efforts.

Another participant also highlighted the Vancouver Food Bank, one of the largest charities in the city, as one of the most explicit and most easily identifiable examples of the problematic nature of non-profits. According to the participant, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Bank began requesting identification at their distribution sites:

> It was very problematic. They were going to request IDs. You needed to have a valid ID to prove who you were, which is a huge barrier for a lot of people who access food banks because to have an ID you need to have an address. If you’ve lost your ID, you ned to pay a fee to get a new one. They weren’t going to accept scans. You have to have current valid photo identification. You also have to self identify whether you needed it or not […] the Toronto Food Bank recently scrapped that because it was proven that that was a huge barrier. And asking people to identify that they needed food and that they were food insecure turned a lot of people away, there’s a huge shame factor here […] essentially, they bypassed everyone and unilaterally changed their model of distribution in a way that was really, really, really going to harm the people that actively needed their support […] The Vancouver Foundation pays a tonne of money into the Food Bank.

In this way, the Toronto and Vancouver Food Banks and their association with billion dollar endowed funding institutions like the Vancouver Foundation demonstrate what Rodriguez (2017) argues are vehicles for continued control over political discourse, mitigating potential civil resistance, and ultimately, "the institutionalization of a relation of dominance." (p. 39). In this way of governance and funding, societal organisations and movements are vehicles in which they must continually articulate their existance through financial and civil approval from the state and liberal philanthropy (Rodriguez, 2017).

5.3 Constraints to Individual Action

The interviews pointed to a specific aspect of how organisations are designed and how individuals reinforce that structure. Even amidst institutions looking to change the current food regime in their communities, organisations themselves look inward to their own hierarchies and critique the ways of thinking that maintain unequal power structures. One participant spoke on this:

> I'm a white guy from a coloniser culture, I've got a very particular way of understanding and ordering the world in my mind […] and the way we exist in our food systems, the very same way that our food systems are designed by our minds, our minds are also designed by the food system […] because I honestly can't imagine somebody, even with really good intentions giving up the kinds of products that they're used to having to provide another group in society with a greater level of sovereignty over their food systems. If the trade-off was to be for example: we have to give large swaths of land to Indigenous people […] because land was stolen from First Nations people here […] if there's a way to increase sovereignty of people who have been so historically dispossessed, [whom] the system has excluded for so long. And in terms of food justice and food sovereignty, we're talking about transformational change.

In this way, the participant spoke to the sorts of things many are predisposed to: their privileges of having access to a diverse and globalised food market, wealth generated on unceded Indigenous land, and an internalised mindset that perpetuates hierarchal and authoritative power imbalances. However, what remains out of sight is the socio-political system that maintains products divorced from exploited workers, stolen land, violated environments, and predatory transnational trade deals. One discussion touched on this: "How do we go back? […] in a way we're locked into this food system and that's where it gets really complicated right?"

For participants who work in the DTES, there are also community level aspects of collective trauma stemming from issues ranging from mental illness, substance addiction and abuse, homelessness, and social marginalisation - matters which are all reactions to settler-colonial institutions:

> They're entrenched because they're in crisis mode. So, they're on a treadmill and it's going faster […] it's hard to think in bigger terms and more abstract concepts […] microcosms within the microcosm, it's like whirlwinds within whirlwinds within a whirlwind […] there's the dysfunction of the ongoing trauma […] what we run into is fear of the unknown and resistance to change.

To be siloed is a term that means to be isolated. Two participants used the term siloed to refer to certain aspects of food movement work and discourse in Vancouver and by extension the DTES. The ways in which many organisations and the people who staff them work, see, think, and be are internalised in pre-set ways. As one participant said, this predisposition, while it resides first in ourselves, replicates itself in multiple spaces and scales through our interactions and consolation:

> There's got to be hundreds of organisations working in the DTES […] All of the money that's been thrown on Indigenous issues has not done a thing. I'm pissed off that my former colleagues at [a federal civil service commission] because they're doing very well today thank you. The ones that are still alive, they're retired or they're making $300 to $500,000 a year in these cushy jobs and they've done absolutely sweet fuck all for the people in the DTES.

For one Indigenous interviewee, the DTES represented the physical manifestation of a collective unresolved trauma rooted in ongoing colonialism: while "its mental manifestation is not necessarily the DTES, […] we're talking about ghetto […] well where's the ghetto? Where does it exist first? It exists up in the mind as far as I'm concerned."

5.4 Localism & Discourse in the City

For participants, frustration became a common theme amongst the interviews when touching on the theme of food policy. In a city where the topic of local food enjoys a conspicuous level of buzz and excitement, the goals that a minority of engaged community members hold become

too lofty for what is realistically achievable. One participant had harsh words for the city: "just being frank, it's very progressive seeming on paper but ultimately the kind of place that lines the pockets of Goldcorp, big mining companies that are basically doing ecocide in Latin America […] there's an element of hypocrisy". What the participant highlights in the progressivism of urban discourse such as local food can also work to dissipate more radical frustrations and co-opt social movements away from bringing attention to issues from a structural framework of power, privilege, and financial interests.

All social service or food-based organisations in the DTES have in one form or another groups of stakeholders who govern the capacities of operations and staff action. These constraints most often take the form of individuals who act on behalf of funding sources, elected board of governors who dictate how funding in spent, and grants that require extensive applications and regular administration of reports to update funders periodically. In speaking on their respective organisation and how they communicated their directorial mandates and ideals, one community organiser stated:

> We have diverse funders, from governments, to foundations, to private donors, to corporate donors. And all of those donors have different agendas and thoughts and positions on [Holt-Giménez & Shattuck's food movement framework] […] some [donors] are very activist oriented, others are very conservative […] it's really hard to even sometimes get into that kind of right to food mindset when it just seems like the whole concept is just a joke. A right to food? How can we even talk about that in the DTES where everyone has their rights violated on a daily basis? It's just so far from the reality.

While there is extensive support for a wide breadth of issues supporting food systems equity through means such as urban agriculture, when that comes up against economic interests vested in property development, there is little that can be done. The mass deployment of community gardens as iterated in Pudup's (2008) scholarship is present across Vancouver. Urban gardens pop up frequently, often signed onto short term leases typically on vacant lots where developers wait for the land to remediate for future residential or commercial building construction. These leases are common because owners of the lots gain access to a reclassification of their land under supposed community garden or public park benefits and the substantial reduction of up to 70 percent in property tax that comes along with it (Gold, 2017). In the process of the tax break however, the city receives the same amount of property tax overall and the balance of the reduction in taxes for the reclassified lot is redistributed amongst the remaining community

property owners. Even so, there is frustration for some in Vancouver for how extremely valuable land in the city is prioritised. Regarding land reclassifications and the discourse around urban agriculture, one director of a food-based non-profit had this to say:

> There's the idea of local food solving food insecurity problems, just the scale. It just doesn't- it's not enough space. And you look at all these initiatives that go to supporting small community gardens, or little non-profit kind of small-scale urban agriculture projects, and effort and resources and thought and space and the dialogue. And then across the bridge we've got ALR (Agricultural Land Reserve) land being lost at just a phenomenal rate.

Even amidst this, garden participants are obligated to vacate within 30 days at the notice of the lot owner. One participant lamented that in a potential situation where a gardener who was "putting a bunch of hard work […] and was counting on that harvest to make a difference in their weekly food intake, that could just be taken away from them in a second because it's convenient for the developer."

When mainstream discourse in a city is dictated by a privileged subset of citizens, it reflects itself in its priorities as well as how issues that inherently and structurally intersect become compartmentalised. Illustrating how discourse does not automatically result in change due to the siloed and narrowed focus institutions have towards addressing issues (Kivel, 2017), one participant who is a member of the Vancouver FPC remarked on one instance in the council where that focus failed to address an important issue. In general, the majority of FPC members actively supported reconciliation with Indigenous peoples as one of the foundational institutional council principles and priorities. However, at the onset of the 2019 Unist'ot'en Camp conflict when efforts emerged within the FPC to draft a statement to the City of Vancouver condemning law enforcement action, few could be reached for feedback or support, with many citing that it wasn't explicitly related to food enough. The Unist'ot'en Camp event marked a conflict where a camp and roadblock set up by land defenders on unceded Wet'suwet'en First Nations territory in British Columbia to prevent the construction of the Coastal GasLink Pipeline was raided by militarised Royal Canadian Mounted Police. For the participant, this way of conceptualising issues in siloed terms was exemplary of a problematic aspect of scalar thinking. One FPC member observed:

> Scale is purposely used to conceal things […] people are actively encouraged to only think about their backyard […] Someone in Nunavut has a lot more in

> common with someone in Siberia than the person in Nunavut does with someone in Ottawa or someone in Siberia does with someone in Moscow […] They live very similar realities, they're both pretty well forgotten by the states that are supposed to represent them.

5.5 Indigeneity

For several participants, Indigeneity is a point of focus that is inseparable from thinking not only of food justice or sovereignty, but sustainability as well. As long as food systems remain colonial and on unceded land, they will never be just, sovereign, nor sustainable. For one interviewee, food sovereignty represents more so a response to the processes of settler-colonialism than a capitalist mode of production. In this, a decolonising framework of food sovereignty looks to a wide range of land-related matters, whether that's land access, the interference of foodshed and watershed integrity, the overextraction and subsequent depletion of material and food resources, and state intervention in the name of sustainable resource management. Myriad of resources in Canada are under jurisdiction of state mandated resource management institutions or have been made outright illegal, regulating who has access, when, and to what extractable limit. While done under the guise of preventing unfettered harvesting, several participants saw this as nothing more than an exertion of control against Indigenous peoples: "We have all these regulations in place to ban people's ability to have food sovereignty, and then auction that off to the highest bidders, essentially." Ultimately, these matters of land culminate in efforts to reclaim the means that have made it impossible for Indigenous peoples to actualise their traditional food system. When asked about where they thought state initiative fit into the equation, one non-Indigenous participant had this to say:

> What's more dangerous to the provincial government or federal government than Indigenous food sovereignty? Indigenous food sovereignty is entirely hinged upon access to land and ownership and title of land and water resources. There's nothing more threatening to the state than that in my opinion. So, I just don't- that's where the state is and not in the food sovereignty movement. If you ask me, they're arming themselves.

For them, the processes of colonialism and assimilation are ongoing conflicts and little has changed. For one Indigenous participant, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from 2008 to 2015 was little more than an opportunity for the state to wipe their hands clean and absolve themselves from cultural genocide through disingenuous processes and financial restitution:

“They've already apologised for residential school as far as they're concerned. They paid that off in there. But what's interesting is that they apologise for genocide, and yet they continue in different ways. So it never stops.” The nature of this relationship has made Indigenous people, like the participant, pessimistic towards attempts by the state at consultation and reconciliation. Reflecting on current commitments by the Canadian state to reconciliation processes with First Nations, one Indigenous participant had this to say: “If that's what we're talking about in reconciliation, you might as well shoot me in the head right now. Because I'm not going to wait, I'm not going to waste my time going down that path.” For them, reconciliation has only meant that state institutions will recognise land title while doing nothing to change the ways in which Indigenous people and their lands are subjugated.

> I heard what Indigenous people said in all those processes, they said the same thing. Give us back what you took from us. Land, freedom to live the way we were. We were healthy before you got here. You're the ones that made us sick. Get out of our way. […] You know, Canadians complain that we cost a lot. Well, where does that money come from? […] That's our money coming from our lands that we don't get any say over how it gets exploited, how it gets used, any of that.

To move forward, an Indigenous participant spoke of existing feelings towards their collective history with the Canadian state. For example, the biggest challenges Canadian society must face, according to several participants, is the acknowledgement of legal obligations of treaties and unceded land in spite of the state sponsored and continued extraction of resource-based wealth. Only through the collective reflection of Canadian society in its role of cultural genocide and settler-colonial violence can Indigenous people work to begin processing the trauma that has continued to live on through generations:

> We're not there yet, because we're still living that unresolved trauma every day. And when you're an Indigenous person in this country, you are in that crisis mode every single day because you are a commodity. And the Canadian government wants to exploit you all the time. And the whole system is designed to just keep you going in that labyrinth. And it's a place to keep you lost and controlled. And that's what it is. It's an extension of the residential schools. And as long as the people are ghettoised in their minds, then they stay on that treadmill. And that's again, I bring it back to the DTES, you know, Hastings and Main, or Centre and Gabriel Road back home, or the main road on any reserve in this country right now […] It's not a place. It's a state of being. And until we address that nothing's going to change.

Born out of a response to the food crisis in the DTES that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, a newly conceived project has been introduced called the Food Sovereignty Hub. Although not explicitly Indigenous, it was described by two participants as Indigenous-centric. For many in the DTES, it has always been known that once the pandemic is over, the neighbourhood would revert back to the unacceptable normal conditions of crisis. The Food Sovereignty Hub is a collaborative network of community gardens and organisations that grow culturally important Indigenous foods and serve meals to the community. The organisation looks to one day serve as a central and physical nucleus for this network of community organisations. At this hub, the stakeholder group hopes that the existing capacities, networks, and community resilience built through the COVID-19 emergency response can remain long after the pandemic has ended, thus better equipping and supporting food resilience in the community. At the future Food Sovereignty Hub, the goal is to have a physical space that can facilitate culturally relevant traditions and activities revolving around food. This means a place for community members to adequately process seafood, game meat and other plant foods, grow food, and safely store any culturally relevant food that is donated to the community. All food would be provided for the community at large: “If we’re able to start bringing in moose, elk, fish, and other things, and restore those connections with some of the communities up North, then we can start to feed people better food.”

5.6 Promising paths forward

The themes elicited from the interviews do not inspire confidence for the future of food systems change in Vancouver. The majority of the interviews were spent in discussion of distrustful perspectives on a variety of issues: the Canadian state, ineffectual and short-sighted discourse, the commodification of food, settler-colonial realities, and gentrification. There were however, several positive moments in which participants spoke of ways forward, offering specific actions that individual people, communities, and organisations could do. Their insights were not devoid of inspiration nor indicated a lack of understanding for the conditions and communities in which they eat, work, and live in. These potential paths forward were brought forth through understandings rooted in their lived experiences and opportunities for reflection.

Firstly, in light of the cynicism expressed by participants towards the Canadian government and adjacent institutional structures, many acknowledged positive aspects of living in a city like Vancouver. The mainstream posture regarding climate movements and social justice topics remain stronger than most other cities in the country, and indeed most other cities in the rest of the world. There is also inspiration to be drawn from acknowledging the decades of perseverance and dedication today's food movement rests upon. However, the relative strength of Vancouver's social justice-oriented discourse for many masks the inability for this dialogue to enact real and meaningful change.

Grassroots organisations have long espoused the effectiveness of collaborative models in advocating for local autonomy. In communities like the DTES where applying for grant funding is competitive, organisations cannot sustainably contain themselves in isolation: "different organisations and community leaders, everyone has a bit of a different kind of stance on how they view food sovereignty […] I think COVID has been an interesting example of working together. It brought a lot of groups together." One participant spoke of the importance of having collaborative relationships across all corners of the city; having scholars, urban agrarians, families, and university students working alongside marginalised community members in a garden can also act as an opportunity to educate different funders, board of directors, individuals involved in city politics, and the greater community in general. Another perspective on social service delivery is the balance between addressing immediate problems and securing a vision for the future. For community food organisations in the DTES, immediate provisions are a constant struggle, providing food for other organisations and distributing meals for hundreds of people who depend on these services on a daily basis is a sombre reality. It can be difficult for those who work to facilitate immediate hunger to also plan for future security. In describing one aspect of relationship and community solidarity, a director of a non-profit highlighted the value in sacrificing resources and time for others:

> It's also about pursuing those opportunities where, "hey there's this small grant, it's going to be way more effort than the actual support for your organisation for me to take on, apply for, administer, report on, but you know, [another organisation], this would be perfect for them and it would really support their work in the community. So, I'm going to take some- commit some of my resources to support this project that ultimately benefits them more than us." I think that's where, that's kind of where the rubber meets the road and you're actually sacrificing something for that partnership. I think that's important too, to prioritise.

Several participants felt that the only way forward was the idea of structural and political power stepping aside and supporting individuals and communities engaging in bottom-up solutions. When it came to discussions about where the state currently stood in the equation of food justice and sovereignty work, few participants had a concrete answer. From their perspectives, state power occupied a position somewhere between outright hostility at worst and apathy at best. In the absence of state involvement however, one participant spoke of the need to maintain that divide:

> They're not engaged in what we're doing here. There are people that say that they should be. I'm saying no. It's not time. I've had experience with this before and if you bring them in too soon, they disrupt and destroy. They don't help you because ultimately, what we're doing is a threat to them

All participants spoke of treating future food systems planning and state action with a level of delicacy, with perspectives informed by past experiences. A participant spoke of the exclusion of the state with caution, citing their time with an Indigenous non-profit foundation. The foundation had operated for five years to report on and propose solutions to addressing relations between First Nations and the Canadian government before being dissolved following the abrupt cutting of its funding by the Conservative Party headed federal government: "So it's like opening up a patient for open heart surgery. Once you got them open up. 'We're out of funding, sorry. We got to close. Yup. Now good luck to you, we'll see you later.'"

In one way or another, all participants spoke about the importance of community cohesion and the building of solidaristic relationships between individuals and organisations, especially between institutions that serve a variety of different functions and purposes. For example, one FPC member suggested that in the absence of transformative capacity within the council, it could use its formal clout derived from association with the City of Vancouver to write letters of support for organisations who conduct grassroots food sovereignty and decolonial work. In looking to nudge the needle, the council could lend institutional credibility, allowing these organisations to more easily be considered for grant funding, one FPC member suggested:

> I think that institutionally, the Vancouver FPC has a little bit of a reputation, they could approach institutions and ask for resources in a way that maybe non-profit organisations or informal networks couldn't. So there's a role for them to play there as a supportive team body to help people that are on the ground organising […] I think that the people on the council, for the most part want to see change. And that's a good way to see some change, when you look at the

groups that are actually making differences in their own communities through their collective organisation and the issuing of demands for food sovereignty, and support that and their work, and let them be the leaders of the transformation in the food system, rather than determining what needs to change from the position of government.

6 Summary & Discussion

In the previous section, a phenomenological approach was used to surmise perspectives from participants involved in Vancouver's food justice and sovereignty movements from organisational leadership, scholarship, civil service, and policy council capacities. Clusters of noteworthy subthemes were parsed out of interviews conducted to elicit participant views on what the food justice and sovereignty movement means to them, their opinions on the existing food discourse, and how they perceive state relations to the movement. The majority of the interviews were devoted to discussion of the perceived barriers to more equitable food systems in Vancouver and culminated in how they saw the path forward for future food systems change. In a conspicuously unequal and systemically flawed system, participants highlighted narratives of resiliency despite the structural obstacles identified.

All participants expressed an awareness of the extent to which logics of neoliberalism pervaded Canadian food systems and the non-profit sector. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light several structural issues to food insecurity in the city. However, the culmination of a temporary increase in funding as an emergency response has left many in want for a more structural approach. For participants, it has always been clear that once the worst of the pandemic subsides for the majority, funding would cease and the city's most vulnerable communities would revert back a neglected and complacent *normal,* forgotten from public and political consciousness. Neoliberal aspects of the NPIC also place constraints on organisations who answer to funding bodies and their own board of directors. Echoing Guthman (2011) and Lim (2015), the interplay between race and privilege throughout Canada often highlights the elitism and whiteness of alternative food institutions, juxtaposed with the historical and continued exclusion of racialised communities and agrarians.

The institutional structure situated under the umbrella of the NPIC and NPM models was also heavily discussed as a vehicle in which the more radical aspects of social change and grassroots organisation are dampened. Bureaucratic obligations and funding structures inhibit and transform capacities for social change work into social service work. Drawing on literature discussed in section 2.5, participants highlighted examples from their own organisations and

others, such as the Vancouver Food Bank, as cases where socially constructed barriers are unilaterally enacted on a regular basis, resulting in real harms for those who depend on this model for survival.

In more abstract terms, dualities of mindsets pervaded two sides of social service provisioning in ways that are embedded in the existing non-profit foodscape: the individuals that staff social service organisations and the community members of disempowered communities such as the DTES. For progressive organisations, perspectives on structure default to western narratives of hierarchy and top-down authority. These modes of thinking presuppose privileges that value benefits, such as convenient and globalised food markets that are divorced from the realities that are foundational to its existence: worker exploitation, stolen land, and environmental destruction to name a few. For disempowered service users, participants acknowledged the challenges of unaddressed mental health issues, substance addition, and social marginalisation as an ongoing response to settler-colonialism and the pervading economic mode of production.

Participants were keenly aware of a dominant discourse in the city in regard to progressive food systems and localism. In certain ways, the collective dialogue in the city, which revolves around alternative food institutions, the charity model, and localism, is as effective a mechanism as other more explicit institutions or processes in curbing the more radical aspects of community practice. Drawing on Pudup's (2008) literature in section 2.3.3., urban gardens also shed light on the ways in which the discourse in Metro Vancouver shapes and influences behaviour. Mainstream conceptualisations of food systems also allow Vancouverites to compartmentalise and silo issues into narrow foci that ignore the intersecting nature of many of the issues revolving around food and inequality.

Food sovereignty remains an issue from which, for several participants, Indigeneity is inseparable. For many, today's state of food insecurity and social marginalisation is a direct response to the commodification of food and settler-colonialism, two sides of the same coin: that of capitalist development. For First Nations on Turtle Island, Indigenous food sovereignty has always been the default model for relations to food and land long before Indigenous food sovereignty was ever a concept. In this way, Indigenous food sovereignty has only ever needed to be defined as it is today as a response to today's climate crisis. In looking for solutions to today's food regime, Indigenous perspectives on food and environments can yield insights into future sustainability, equity, and greater community control.

In an urban food system where there is seldom to be positive about, there remains pockets of optimism. The Indigenous-centred Food Sovereignty Hub is an example of a community strategy to wrest free control over their space and capacity to practice greater sovereignty over their food systems. Institutional alliances and networks of support was also a prominent theme in discussing ways to make a difference. Leveraging resources and institutional legitimacy from bodies who enjoy an elevated status to benefit other organisations has been a key focus for those who work in and view the food system from a strategic viewpoint. Even then, one participant reflected that the involvement of state institutions in food systems change would only cause interference. For a movement that holds the state in an antagonistic light, community cohesion and solidarity amidst common goals has been the clearest path for those working for food justice and sovereignty.

These findings show that there are similar strains of thought when it comes to the food justice and sovereignty movement in Vancouver, even amongst actors who occupy different spaces of knowledge. Frustrations regarding the nature of food systems narratives and perceptions of the state were acknowledged across participants who had a wide breadth of expertise and scopes of knowledge. In concluding these results, there is suggestion that by and large there is a certain level of consensus when it comes to prominent aspects of Vancouver's food movement, the nature of Vancouver's food discourse, the neoliberalising intensity of its institutions, the relevance of settler-colonial history, and potential avenues for community food systems change.

7 Concluding Remarks

This thesis draws on a selected set of participants who hold specific forms of expertise from Vancouver's food justice and sovereignty movement in an attempt to contribute to a deeper understanding of where it stands today. As such, there is no definitive generalisation that can be conclusively beyond attempts to mirror a more contextual, peripheral, and nuanced evaluation of a food-based social movement. From academia to organisation leadership in the DTES, much of what is discussed in review of the scholarship was identified as lived realities for those who operate in Vancouver's food system. Several major theoretical concepts were reiterated by participant discussion. Narratives of urban spatial transformation in *actually existing neoliberalism* and *neoliberalisation processes* (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002) manifested in the public and charity models of the NPIC and NPM (Findley et al., 2012; Rodriguez, 2007) and mainstream discourse of the city (Guthman, 2008; 2011; Kivel, 2017; Pudup, 2008; Tornaghi, 2017) were illustrated throughout. Assessments loosely reminiscent of Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) food movement trends applied to Vancouver were also used to conceptualise the realities of today's food regime (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). By providing a deeper understanding of Canadian history, participants could not separate topics of food sovereignty without disentangling the context of Indigeneity and settler-colonialism, as well as discuss Indigenous sovereignty as a means to address goals of food insecurity, future sustainability, and addressing today's climate crisis (Barker, 2009; Coté, 2016; Desmarais & Wittman, 2014; Taiaiake, 2005). Considering the structural hurdles to systems change, all participants saw necessity in supporting activists and organisations already in the throes of food sovereignty and community resistance work from a bottom-up approach.

While the results discussed can only be attributed to those who partook in the interviews, one could potentially seek to build on these findings by comparing other urban spaces in nations also characterised as a liberal welfare regime model with a sizeable urban food movement in practice of replicability.

We in wealthy nations are at a precipice, characterised by an ever-intensifying climate emergency and a food system that continues to have its instabilities laid bare crises after crises (Friedmann, 1982; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2011). What are seen as fundamental issues are no secret for many with lived experiences, but there exists pervasive and formidable mechanisms motivated to obscure, deflect, and undermine this reality in the name of maintaining existing power relations (Guthman, 2008; Riches, 1997). Not only do we as the primary beneficiaries of such systems of inequality have an obligation to the globally disempowered who have been subjected to the larger politics of unfettered imperialism, capitalism, and neoliberal logics of individualism in which food is only one component (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Guthman, 2008; Patel, 2009) - these responsibilities also run parallel to the most vulnerable situated within our own vicinity to empower the reclamation of their own agency. In closing, one Indigenous participant reflected on a starting point of hope and perseverance for the future of food sovereignty in Vancouver, and by extension greater decolonial systems change in Canada:

> We're talking food sovereignty. Sovereignty is a big word that everybody's scared of, especially in Indigenous and political contexts. But nobody scared about food, everybody loves to sit around a pot of food and talk, and that's where community happens.

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9 Appendix 1: Initial Email

Msc. project participant inquiry

Hello,

My name is Mason and as part of my Msc. program, I am looking to conduct a series of interviews for my thesis project that will hopefully help provide some insight into bridging a link between the utility of welfare policy and food justice movements in urban Canadian cities. I am looking for participants who have in the past or currently are engaging with relevant food movement related activism, organizational management, and/or scholarship who may be able to speak on how welfare policy and other top-down state institutions can help alleviate food justice related issues. I am currently a master's student in the Welfare Policies and Management program at Lund University in Sweden though I am also from Vancouver and spent several years during my undergrad at UBC engaging in and around food justice and sovereignty movements on campus as well as in Downtown Eastside.

As a city very much integrated in the global north and with pockets of intense activism and radical resistance, food justice in Vancouver holds a prominent role in public policy discourse represented by a wide breadth of stakeholders. Because of this, I believe that participants can provide expertise into the needs and challenges for one of the most salient issues in the city today.

The interview is voluntary and no personal data will be published. In the final text, quotes and descriptions of relevant expertise (occupation, role, etc.) will potentially be used and described (such as "City policy council member" or " programme manager at non-profit organization"), though all identifiable personal information (name, age, etc.) will be kept anonymous. The interview will be semi-structured in nature, allowing for 30 - 45 minutes although more may be possible if time and other constraints for both parties allow. The interview will be conducted online, with audio recorded and transcribed, and information gleaned from the discussion will be used as research data. During the interview, you may decline any question or discussion topic. You may also end or pause the interview at any point. Following the interview, if desired you may fully withdraw yourself and what was discussed from the project. All data will only be accessible to me and my supervisor for the duration of the study and will be deleted 6 months following the thesis defense.

If you would like to participate, want further information, would like to discuss the questions and/or structure of the interview in advance, or have concerns about any aspect of this project, please contact me at masonhychiu@gmail.com.

Yours kindly,
Mason Chiu

10 Appendix 2: Participant Experiences

- Note: While all participants have relevant experience with the topic at hand, several have, through simultaneous and ongoing participation in addition to past participation have more than one marker of experience

- Elected Director of a university food justice and sovereignty aligned student association
- Two members of the Vancouver Food Policy Council
- Several decades experience in Indigenous oriented civil service and community building
- Executive Director of a food aligned NGO
- Lead for a local governance and leadership program with a food aligned NGO
- A key stakeholder for the Vancouver Food Sovereignty Hub project
- PhD Candidate in food sovereignty and urban agriculture

11 Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Thank you so much for your time and participation. To reiterate, this interview is voluntary and no personal data will be published. In the final text, quotes and descriptions of relevant expertise will potentially be used and described, though all identifiable personal information will be kept anonymous. The interview will be semi-structured in nature, allowing for 30 - 45 minutes although more may be possible if time and other constraints for both parties allow. The interview will be conducted online, with audio recorded and transcribed, and information gleaned from the discussion will be used as research data. During the interview, you may decline any question or discussion topic. You may also end or pause the interview at any point. Following the interview, if desired you may fully withdraw yourself and what was discussed from the project. All data will only be accessible to me and my supervisor for the duration of the study and will be deleted 6 months following the thesis defense. Please indicate whether or not this is agreeable with you.

The overarching theme will be about food sovereignty and food justice movements in Vancouver and its relation with the state. What exists to connect the municipality, province, or Canadian government with grassroots, activist, and community building food movements? Of course, this discussion can range from there being a positive, neutral, non-existent, negative, or even an egregious relationship. Then maybe we can talk about why that's the case.

Throughout this interview I will give you a few prompts based on scholarship I've been reading and then ask you to just reflect and elaborate on your thoughts based on your expertise, experience, and knowledge

Firstly, can you tell me about your past and current involvement or familiarity with food movements in Vancouver? Can you describe for me these organisations?

Guiding literature	Questions
Food sovereignty as a broad and malleable concept across regions, countries, and continents. Differences between the rural and urban, varying between different actor, organisations, and people's lived experiences (Masioli, & Nicholson, 2010; Shattuck et al., 2015)	What does food justice mean to you and/or your organisation? What does food sovereignty mean to you and/or your organisation? Does your organisation have a food justice or sovereignty component to it? In your work within the food movement, is there a clear distinction between food justice and food sovereignty? Why or why not?

The hegemony of the current food regime heavily favours agri-business, land development, and other financial interests (Masioli, & Nicholson, 2010).	What are some structural challenges to your organisation's work?
Neoliberal conditions that have induced narratives of personal responsibility also reproduce its own existence through cooptation of social critique into neoliberal mentalities and spaces of governance (Guthman, 2008).	Do the conditions of neoliberalism affect the organisation's work capacity? If it does, how and why?
Cities are spaces where neoliberalism with a particular intensity occurs through policy experiments, institutional innovations, and politico-ideological projects occur (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck & Tickell, 2002) Cities are also spaces for both natural, social, and financial capital consumption across surrounding areas (Bowness & Wittman, 2020; Foster, 1999)	Does the fact that Vancouver is an urban space affect the organisation's work capacity? If it does, how and why?
The local trap poses danger to food systems as a socially constructed agrarian sentiment without inherent benefit to any specific end goal (Born & Purcell, 2006; Guthman 2011)	Does the idea of the local feature heavily in Vancouver's food discourse? And if so, how does that affect your work in the food movement? How important is scale when thinking about food justice and food sovereignty?
Indigenous face unique and disproportionately more difficult public health challenges than other Canadians (Demarais & Wittman, 2014) Indigenous food sovereignty as a restorative framework for decolonialization, autonomy, and reclamations for self-determination of land, food systems, and traditional practices (Coté, 2016; Taiaiake, 2015)	What does Indigeneity mean to you and/or your organisation? How does Indigeneity play into the concept of food justice or sovereignty from an organisational or movement planning perspective?
The importance of alliance building between organisations in a region, reaching across issue spheres of social equity, consumers, environmental justice (Masioli, & Nicholson, 2010).	Can you distinguish between the sorts of strategies, frameworks, or narratives that have led to more success than others? From your perspective, what sort of conditions are necessary for building up to food justice and sovereignty as a whole?

The dominant consensus of economic liberalism across entire political spectrums (Masioli, & Nicholson, 2010).	In looking at the food justice and food sovereignty movement in Vancouver as a whole, where do you see the involvement of the state Is there a disconnect between the movement and the top-down nature of the state? If so, why?

Are there any closing thoughts you'd like to add or share?

12 Appendix 4: Coding Scheme

Central Themes "Clusters of meaning" (Moustakas, 1994)	**Sub-Themes**
Neoliberalism & Constraining Institutions	- History of gentrification and community marginalisation - The inability for the charity model to solve structural problems - Privilege and whiteness within alternative food institutions
NPIC	- Non-profit organisations featured within neoliberal food regimes - Private funding foundations and bureaucracy - Liberal philanthropy mitigating civil action through the NPIC
Constraints to the individual	- Inherent ways of thinking and structuring organisations - Entrenched mindsets - Siloed work and discourse
Localism & Discourse in the city	- Hypocrisy in progressivism - Constraints of funders, board of directors, and other stakeholders - Urban garden discourse - Isolated perspectives on organisational goals
Indigeneity	- Indigenous traditional ways of being - History of genocide, settler-colonialism, and intergenerational legacies of trauma - A perceived threat to the state - Present dialogue held in bad faith - The Food Sovereignty Hub
Promising paths forward	- Coalition building between organisations - Lending institutional legitimacy for support - A fragile approach to involving the state - Open dialogue and co-operation - Using top-down power to support the grassroots