

Toward Care and Solidarity in Planning: Examining Food and Housing Insecurity Through Relational Care Ethics in Community Land Trusts

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Abstract

This Major Paper examines the relational needs of food and housing insecurity, exploring how Community Land Trusts (CLTs) as a community centred, decommodified movement can currently address material needs. Canada is facing a dual crisis of housing and food insecurity, with nearly half of renters living in inadequate or unaffordable housing and over one-quarter of households experiencing food insecurity, revealing deep structural inequities that extend beyond individual need to societal questions of health, community, and care ethics.

This study critically examines how CLTs in Toronto are attempting to integrate food and housing security, and how fragmented, solutionist approaches in planning and policy, often downloaded onto NGOs, limit their ability to meet community needs. Applying relational care ethics, I explore how planning might recenter social needs and move away from the commodified and financialized housing system. Congruent with the literature, my research emphasizes that CLTs, as a tool within the existing framework of neoliberal, capitalist and colonial understanding of land use, cannot be liberative on their own, but offer an alternative that can be leveraged towards greater mobilisation. CLTs are gaining momentum and popularity in planning theory and practice, promoted as a best practice to address structural issues in housing, yet their capacity is constrained by the very policy and economic structures that necessitate them.

The research employed a qualitative case study of Toronto CLTs, drawing on literature review, document and policy analysis, and thirteen semi-structured interviews. Participants included CLT organizers and staff in Toronto, Nova Scotia, and Boston, alongside urban planners, food security workers, and academic experts. Data were analyzed thematically to identify both opportunities and barriers to integrating food and housing security through CLTs.

Findings highlight persistent policy silos and structural barriers that limit CLTs' ability to fully address food and housing insecurity, while also illustrating their potential to bring together grassroots movements in housing and food justice as a way to holistically address interconnected needs. This research contributes to planning scholarship and practice by illuminating the relational dimensions of food and housing insecurity and identifying the limitations and possibilities of CLTs within Canada's current crisis.

Foreword

In my time working in the DTES of Vancouver it became very clear to me that issues around food and housing were deeply connected. Working as a women's health researcher, food and housing insecurity were persistent and constant source of distress for the women we worked with. My role allowed me to research food and housing insecurity for women living with HIV that drew clear connections between these material needs, beyond what I innately understood from daily interactions with the community. These experiences formed my interest in understanding the complex social and structural interactions that make up everyday needs. Further, they made me acutely aware of the myriad of ways that we fail to care for our communities, and their relationality. My time in the Master of Environmental Studies Program allowed me an opportunity to critically examine the structures that create these needs, as well as possibilities toward meeting them.

This Major Paper bring together the knowledge I acquired to meet the requirements of the Master of Environmental Studies Program and obtain the skills to meet Canadian Institute of Planners an Ontario Professional Planners Institute for Candidate membership. This research meets my Plan of Study's area of concentration and learning components. The objectives in my Plan of Study were to understand and critically examine the connected nature of food and housing insecurity through policy and planning as a response to needs. This Major Paper connects to all three areas of my Plan of Study as it examines the relationality of housing and food insecurity, through questions of governance, social welfare and planning.

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Introduction

In planning and many other disciplines food and housing are most often examined separately, however, through my MES research and previous work as a community health researcher, I have seen how these needs are deeply interconnected and integral to one another. Thus far, food and housing strategies in Canada have been largely fragmented, with little literature or policy examining these issues together despite their proven relationship. This illustrates a clear policy gap within planning, public health, and social policy, as well as an opportunity for restructuring and ameliorating the current structural failures in providing for communities. I believe that as planners it is imperative that we look comprehensively at communities' needs and health outcomes to meaningfully address inequity and plan with communities. These issues must be considered as part of a whole, an interconnected structure that contributes to the current systems of inequity. Without a comprehensive approach to these issues, there can only be incomplete solutions.

As Pothkuchi and Kaufman illustrated in their 1999 work, planning is well positioned to address issues of food insecurity, however more than twenty years later this is still an emerging field within planning. On the other hand, planners have long influenced housing and possess the capacity to integrate housing and food issues for novel approaches to addressing material needs. Foregrounding these issues within planning practice allows planners to recentre people's needs, plan for social change and support communities in addressing their own needs. Our responsibilities extend beyond land use management, or prescribed policy structures. Land, space and place constitute the essence of existence, are indivisible from the everyday functions of our lives, and must be relationally addressed in our work.

This research focused on illustrating the connections between food and housing insecurity, and why these connections are an urgent priority for planners. Through this I was able to evaluate opportunities for planners to address these critical urban issues together. As part of this research, I examined how Community Land Trusts (CLTs) as grass roots community centred efforts, can offer an alternative to the current financialized housing and land use system, with the potential to address food insecurity. CLTs have been mobilized as a best practice to solve structural issues, however their capacity is constrained by the very structures that necessitate them. With this research I examined how CLTs integrate and apply the relational needs of food and housing security. This included analysing how social needs can be recentred within planning practice, asking what type of planning is needed to better integrate food and housing security, and questioning if CLTs are able to fully respond to these needs. The fragmented and solutionist approach downloads responsibilities onto communities but fails to provide the supports needed or critically examine the underlying structural issues. I interrogated how fragmented approaches to planning and policy silos are reproduced in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (such as CLTs), limiting their capacity to apply intentions. The current crisis in Canada offers an opportunity to reconfigure and move away from the commodified and financialized housing system, as well as build solutions that meet the material needs of communities. This research works to explicate policy and practice gaps to understand the limitations, barriers and possibilities within CLTs.

Methodology

This research critically examines the present situation of housing and food security in Toronto, exploring the current moment and increasing popularity of CLTs to address fragmented responses to unmet relational needs. This research seeks to contribute to planning research and practice offering insights to the community, planners, CLTs, and researchers.

This qualitative research was designed using Case Study methodology that was guided by the following questions:

- How is food and housing insecurity addressed/examined primarily separately in planning?
 - How are food and housing insecurity being individually examined and addressed, and what are the current policy gaps?
 - How can bringing these issues together better address these gaps?
- How can food and housing insecurity be addressed from a both/and approach, building top down and bottom-up changes that meet current needs of communities?
 - What are the benefits and shortcomings of a systems approach to integrating siloed planning practices in order to comprehensively address the needs of communities?
- How can planners more meaningfully approach housing and food insecurity together?
 - What work is being done to bring these issues together currently?
 - What are the barriers for planning/planners within current practice, given planning tools and policy available?
- How can Community Land Trusts offer an alternative and innovative solution to addressing both food and housing insecurity?
 - How are CLTs currently addressing these issues? If not, why?
 - What are the limitations, and criticisms of CLTs as a way of addressing these issues?
 - What is the role of policy? How do policy contexts allow or hinder integrating food into CLTs?

For this research I conducted a case study in order to understand how CLTs are currently addressing food and housing insecurity, what limitations exist within the current structure, and the ways that policy contexts may allow or hinder the integration of food issues

into CLTs. A component of this included reviewing the literature on the merits and limitations of CLTs. The case study focused on Community Land Trusts in Toronto, Ontario with the aim of gaining insight into how different policy contexts contribute to integrating food within CLTs as well as the other guiding research questions. This case study research employed qualitative mixed methods to address the central questions of my study. These methods included literature review, semi-structured interviews, document review and policy analysis.

Literature review informed the context and guided the theoretical framework of this research. To understand the context of housing and food policy, I examined peer-reviewed articles, grey literature as well as policy documents. This facilitated comprehending the existing policy gaps and alternatives, informing possibilities. The literature review provided the background knowledge, framework and analysis that guided the case study.

Thirteen 1-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted between September and October 2024. Six of the thirteen interviews were with CLT organizers, staff and board members from CLTs and a CLT advocacy organization in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Boston, Massachusetts. This included Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Kensington Market Neighbourhood Land Trust, Sundance Commons, Canadian Network of Community Land Trusts, Crows Commons Coop, and Boston Farms Community Land Trust. These participants were selected to represent and provide insight on the current CLT movement in Toronto. Participants from other geographic areas were chosen to offer contextual comparison. Three interviews were conducted with experts in Planning, CLTs and Food Systems to provide perspectives on current research, and specialized knowledge. All three were current or retired urban planning professors from University of Toronto, University of British Columbia or York University respectively. Two interviews were conducted with planners working in Toronto, including a housing planner, and a food systems planner to

provide perspectives on practice. Two interviews were conducted with staff at a food security organization, including an advocacy coordinator and a peer staff member. These participants were chosen to offer insight into and represent perspectives from frontline food insecurity work. All but two participants consented to the use of their name and organization.

Participants who preferred to remain anonymous are identified by their role and organization type. Interview participants were contacted through email or direct message on social media. After initial interviews I relied on a ‘snowballing’ recruitment method, asking participants to connect me with contacts they felt would contribute to this research. All interviews were conducted in-person with audio, or over Zoom, with video. As chosen by participants based on availability and preference, eleven interviews were conducted over Zoom, and two were conducted in-person. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

The interviews were conducted using an interview guide with approximately ten open ended questions. Through the open-ended and semi-structured nature of the interview I was able to guide the conversation and direct the interview, while allowing for further paths of inquiry to arise through the interviewing process (see [Appendix A.](#)). The interviews allowed for contextual understanding of issues that had not been captured through other methods. Interviews provided a deeper and more nuanced understanding outside of publicly available information such as intent, limitations, capacity, collaborations, current and future directions. Further, interviews brought not only insight into the guiding research questions but allowed for reflections that contribute to shared knowledge.

Document review and policy analysis was conducted for the case study to understand the policy context and provide background information that informed analysis. Policy analysis contributed to understanding insights gained through interviews. This included understanding how planning practice is currently addressing food and housing insecurity, and what planning tools exist. Document review and analysis included examining reports put out

by CLTs, any other relevant documents available such as newspaper articles, statements related to CLTs, and related policies.

Case study is a well-established research methodology within urban studies and planning that allows for broader and deeper understandings of the ways in which spatial and contextual specificities contribute to outcomes (Krehl & Weck, 2020). Although well established in social sciences, case studies have been widely debated and have no definitive definition or method. For the purpose of this work, case studies can be understood as “A social science research method, generally used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world context (Yin, 2018).” They can be further defined as “the study of a single instance or small number of instances of a phenomenon in order to explore in-depth nuances of the phenomenon and the contextual influences on and explanations of that phenomenon (Baxter, 2018).” This methodology allowed for an understanding of how CLTs, their intentions and capacity are hindered or supported by policy contexts and how this may change their ability to integrate food into their work.

Limitations to case study research include the difficulty for transferability or generalization of research due to contextual and spatial specificities as well as limited scope. However, the purpose of this case study research was to “expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalizations) (Yin, 2018).” This enabled an analysis of the influence of contextual factors, while also contributing to a broader understanding that can inform a framework for research.

Food and Housing Amid Neoliberalism

Canada is currently experiencing what some are calling a ‘housing crisis’ where 68% of Canadians are experiencing at least one housing challenge and overall growing rates of people are living in unaffordable, unsuitable and or precarious housing situations. At the same time, across the country there has been increasing levels of food insecurity, with a record high 22.9% of Canadians experiencing Food Insecurity in 2023, a 6% increase from 2019 (PROOF, 2024; Statistics Canada, 2025b). In 2024 the City of Toronto declared a Food Insecurity emergency in response to these rising numbers (City of Toronto, 2025). Food and housing insecurity are both key markers of material deprivation, and major Social Determinants of Health, moreover, they are basic fundamental human needs and rights. Increasing rates of Housing and Food Insecurity in a prosperous Global North country such as Canada indicates a serious and unacceptable failure. Clearly these issues are not adequately being addressed by current policy, planning, or practice.

It is also important to note that while it is alarming that these numbers are increasing and beginning to impact middle-income people in Canada, low-income people have been experiencing acute food and housing insecurity for significantly longer, indicating a significant long-term problem. There is a need to understand that these issues of food and housing insecurity are not separate issues but are inextricably linked as aspects of systemic structural injustice and neoliberal neglect of social reproduction. In order to understand these issues, it is first necessary to understand how Neoliberalism and Financialization work together to produce these unequal conditions.

Neoliberalism is an overarching term that describes sets of policy practices and ideology that promotes competition, free markets, free trade, and private property rights. Within this the role of the state is to ensure entrepreneurial freedoms are protected and create markets in areas where none exist (Harvey, 2005). This ideology purports that the market,

through deregulation of labour, markets, and trade barriers is the only path to personal freedom. Application of neoliberal policy and governance since its rise in the 1970s has been uneven and contradictory. This is due to the way that neoliberalism is not rigidly ideological, but rather flexible, and adaptable, functioning as an algorithm that seeks to maximize capital regardless of cost, untethered from ideology (Peck et al., 2018). In the North American context, neoliberalism came about as a response to Keynesian policies that focused on economic stimulus through government intervention and a robust welfare state. The economic downturn of the 1970s, growth in public debt, inflation and increasing globalization positioned Keynesian welfare state policies as a failure and ushered in neoliberalism as a modern reinvention of classical liberalism. Neoliberalism extends the ideas of classical liberalism where freedom is understood as the right to private property and free markets, further restricting the state's role to ensure their protection by reconfiguring the understanding of freedom to be based entirely within the market.

In practice Neoliberalism has resulted in policy practices that work to privatize, deregulate and commodify as many aspects of life as possible. A central aspect of this has been fiscal austerity across all social spending. Alongside these policy shifts are ideological shifts that as David Harvey puts it have “...become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. [Neoliberalism] has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world (2007, p. 23).” Individual responsibility and self-reliance are central to neoliberal ideology positioning those that are unable to meet their needs within the market as failed neoliberal subjects. As Brown illustrates, Neoliberalism “extends market metrics and practice to every dimension of human life” and governing through economic rationality where previously they were “governed by other order of value (2016, p. 5).” An individual's

inability to succeed under these conditions is framed as a moral failing requiring discipline, rather than a consequence of systemic or structural societal issues.

Through neoliberalization and the rollback of state support, the function of the globalized neoliberal state is no longer that of the provision of social services, but rather in the financialization of its urban areas. As Keil states “...neoliberal governmentality has been generalized to the point that it does not have to be established aggressively through an explicit policy of roll-back and roll-out...(2009, p. 239).” This shift has created a situation where only market-based solutions are deemed viable as there is little incentive, interest or ability to develop publicly funded projects.

In Canada this has been reflected in the ways that neoliberal policy addresses housing, through social housing retrenchment, privatisation, and marketization. During the post-war period Canada invested heavily in public housing, as well as other social welfare programs, creating the ‘social safety net’ (Suttor, 2016). The global rise of Neoliberalism beginning in the late 1970s saw significant retrenchment and austerity policies. Canada’s housing policy since the 1980s has followed this trajectory, with rollback of state supported housing, ceasing funding of new social housing stock and a complete downloading of responsibilities of existing social housing to Provinces and Territories in 1993 (Suttor, 2016). With the Federal abandonment of “brick and mortar”, social housing production dwindled from 20,000-30,000 units per year during the 1970s and 1980s to less than 5,000 units by 1994 with the trend continuing to today. Public housing assistance became largely demand-side, with portable rental assistance programs for low-income households in the private market (Kalman-Lamb, 2017; Suttor, 2016; Zhu et al., 2021).

Federal withdrawal from social housing production came with renewed focus on prioritizing home ownership and a shift in Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) mandate from social housing supply to meeting housing demand through mortgage

insurance (Walks & Clifford, 2015). The shift in CMHC mandate brought expanded access to mortgages, with lower nominal rates and ownership assistance programs. This created an asset-based welfare system that overtook the social safety net/welfare state, allowing low-income and middle-income households to take on increasing individual debt (Walks, 2016). The abandonment of social housing production is in line with neoliberalism's goals of privatisation and offloading of public responsibilities to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector at large. Housing was increasingly framed as an investment and commodity rather than as homes that provide shelter, and a public good. These shifts alongside the Federal government's prioritisation of private home ownership set the stage for financialization.

Financialization

Financialization describes the processes where “increasing dominance of financial actors, markets, practices, measurements, and narratives at various scales, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, firms (including financial institutions), states, and households (Aalbers, 2017a, p. 3).” In terms of housing this has broadly been through a process of restructuring housing as a financial asset, and increased corporate investment into housing as financial products (Aalbers, 2017b). As financialization of housing has increased it further constrains housing possibilities for those in precarious housing situations such as low-income renters and increasingly middle-income homeowners. The intensive commodification of housing in Canada and the lack of social housing has created deeply inequitable access to housing. Housing inequity, like food and other forms of inequity, have an intersectional nature and disadvantage those who are most vulnerable (Zhu et al., 2021). In Canada, housing financialization has been tied to Mortgage Backed Securities (MBS) and

increasingly private finance (e.g. REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts), private capital, and investment).

Mortgage Backed Securities

The period of public housing retrenchment came alongside significant changes to the CMHC. In 1987 the CMHC's mandate moved to focus further on 'core needs' housing (i.e. targeted assistance) as well as introducing MBS to the Canadian market (Walks & Clifford, 2015). MBS in Canada are guaranteed through CMHC, socializing risk for lenders.

Generally, mortgage insurance is required in Canada for loans with less than 20% down payments, also known as high-ratio loans (CMHC, 2018). This insurance guarantees loans and lowers risk to lenders allowing them to extend credit to households that would not otherwise have access to loans. Expanded access to mortgage credit in 1999 allowed CMHC to insure mortgages with as little as 5% down payments opening a market for greater securitization (Kalman-Lamb, 2017). MBS is a financial instrument that allows banks to bundle and sell insured mortgages into tradeable securities, with CMHC guaranteeing payments to investors regardless of borrower default (Walks & Clifford, 2015). This incentivizes banks to issue higher risk loans by transferring risk to the public, turning household debt into a safe investment for banks and investors. This extension of credit to a larger number of households has driven demand through speculation and increased prices as more households take on mortgages. At the same time, in 1999 with bill C-66 CMHC was changed from a break-even model to a for profit model, further incentivising securitization of Canadian mortgages.

This uptake in homeownership has further shifted private development from rental housing as they are less profitable, creating a lack of supply and inflating rental costs. The program of extending mortgages to more households has been successful in terms of raising

homeownership rates from 63% in 1991 to 67% in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2011, 2022). However, this rise has been primarily in middle income earners and the concurrent rise in home prices has increased mortgage debt ratios from 94% in 1999 to 165% in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019). For low-income households the expansion for mortgage credit has done little to change access to housing, but in conjunction with the decline in public housing has left renters with few choices outside of increasingly expensive private rentals. This has created a significant wealth gap between home owners and renters with home owners in 2025 having an average net worth of \$1,337,979 and renters having only \$334,552 a difference of 120% (Statistics Canada, 2025c). Additionally, there is a wealth gap between renters as well with renters in the bottom half of wealth distribution having none of total renters wealth (Moussouni et al., n.d.). These disparities are all further multiplied across racialized and gendered lines. These changes to CMHC function to reinforce a market-based housing system and are in line with neoliberal goals of commodifying housing. MBS turn housing into tradeable assets for the benefit of capital, unmoored from housing as a material need. In this way housing is turned into an asset class, with the state creating financial markets and using public funds for private benefits.

Financialized Landlords

While MBS have financialized home ownership, rental housing has been financialized through REITs and other forms of private finance. Martine August uses the term ‘financialized landlord’ to describe firms that manage and make property available to investment such as REITs, private equity funds, asset management companies, and pension funds (2020). The roll back of public housing created a gap in housing, as well as an affordability crisis, primarily in multi-family rental that financialized landlords have been able to exploit. As discussed, the disinvestment of the state in public housing, the push

towards home ownership together with limited multi-family rental housing has created a decline in affordable rental housing.

In Canada the majority of private rental housing stock was built pre-1970s when federal subsidies and tax incentives stimulated development, with very little being built since subsidies were withdrawn, and development shifted to condos. Despite the decline in supply, demand has continued to grow as they “...[offer] an important, if undermaintained, de facto source of affordable housing for seniors, immigrant households, lone-parent households and racially marginalized rents- groups overrepresented among low income renters (August, 2020, p. 979).” For investors the scarcity of stock and decline in affordability ensures demand from low-income families and new immigrants who lack access to other housing options. Combined with new financial innovations such as REITs that were introduced in 1993, this has created a lucrative financialization of rental housing.

REITs are financial vehicles that pool investors' capital to invest in real estate, which are managed by the trust, and further are tax exempt in Canada (August, 2020; Canada, 2010). Financialized landlords gain profit through cost cutting (e.g. passing on expenses to tenants, reducing staff) or raising revenue. Tenants are the only way that revenues can be raised, either through rent increases or adding new charges. The optimal way to increase rental revenue is by replacing low-paying (often long term) tenants with new tenants at higher rates. In Ontario, the 1997 Tenant Protection Act removed vacancy decontrol allowing landlords to raise rents between tenants any amount creating ideal conditions for displacing tenants. As August put it, financialized landlords profit through "dispossessing tenants of their earning and wealth, and potentially their homes.” Financial landlords also contribute to gentrification as they displace long term renters and work to install wealthier renters through renovations. Further, the switch to portable rental subsidies contributes directly to private

investors, funnelling public funds into private hands rather than investing in long term housing solutions.

Housing ‘Crisis’

Despite housing long being recognized as a fundamental human right in Canada, there has thus far been a failure to meaningfully address or respond to the growing inequity in housing access. Strategies to provide affordable and suitable housing have continued to be uneven and highly contentious. Studies show that as of 2022 33% of Canadian renters live in unaffordable housing, and 47% of renters do not live in acceptable housing (i.e. housing that is not affordable, suitable, in good repair) with 1 in 10 (11.2%) Canadians having experienced homelessness (Statistics Canada, 2024, 2023a, 2023b). Private property ownership has been a central aspect of Canadian housing policy that is connected historically to colonial expansion and persists through the over-representation of Indigenous people in Core Housing Need in Canada (Crosby, 2023).

All of this has culminated in what has been called a ‘housing crisis’, with the cost of housing rapidly outpacing incomes. Many have argued that this is due to a shortage of available housing, and the private market failing to meet the supply demand for housing needs. This prevalent ‘supply’ argument for the ‘housing crisis’ is supported by the prevailing policies that prioritize and subsidize home ownership (Kipfer & Sotomayor, 2024). Government response and emphasis have focused on the production of private market housing and homeownership subsidies over production of affordable or deeply affordable public housing. The language of ‘housing crisis’ implies that there is a crisis of available housing within the market, eliding the reality that there is a crisis of affordability and equity created through abandonment of housing as a public good, commodification, and supported through financialized neoliberal policies. The supply framing of the ‘housing crisis’ fails to

consider the relational needs of housing, untethering it from related issues such as suitability, living expenses, and wages by abstracting the conditions responsible for ‘crises’. These ‘crises’ are not simply a failure to provide housing or food, but a failure to acknowledge that material needs are not something to be earned and merited through the self-care performance of neoliberal citizenship, rather necessity for all. Allowing systems to be dictated by the allegedly inexorable economic order fails to account for humanity.

Food Insecurity

Neoliberalism and welfare state retrenchment has not been limited to housing, cuts to social programmes and downloading of responsibilities from Federal to Provincial was seen across all social spending. These changes that began in the 1980s saw significant rollback of income supports as well as labour gains, which in turn have shaped food insecurity across Canada. Food insecurity is acutely impacted by these issues as it is foremost an income issue. In wealthy urban centres such as Canadian cities, food insecurity is less related to access or availability but affordability (Tarasuk et al., 2022). The neoliberal turn has in Canada seen a continuous rise in Food Bank usage since the first one opened in 1981.

Food insecurity (like housing security) can be understood as the outcome or symptom of complex relationships that result in a state of material deprivation. Neoliberalism, capitalism and globalisation have turned what should be straightforward food provisioning into a commodified system of trade based on market logics that prioritize exchange-values over use-values. This commodified system of food production, provisioning, procurement and distribution has created global food insecurity that is not tied to supply but rather inequity (Altieri et al., 2012).

In Canada, food insecurity is a growing issue, with 25.5% of households experiencing food insecurity in 2024, an all-time high since monitoring began (PROOF, 2024; Statistics

Canada, 2025a). As a major social determinant of health, food insecurity has been shown to have long term impacts on health with many associated upstream impacts on healthcare costs (Tarasuk et al., 2015; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). Food is not only a biological necessity but further, it shapes our connections to culture, community, and identity.

While at first glance food security may look to only be a food problem, it is closely tied to other material needs; “food problems that define household food insecurity denote much more pervasive material deprivation. Food-insecure households compromise spending across a broad range of necessities, including housing...(Tarasuk et al., 2022).” Their data shows that food insecurity is closely tied not only to income, but other stabilizing assets such as home ownership. Renters make up more than 50% of food insecure households, with over 25% having experienced some level of food insecurity. This illustrates the rent-food dichotomy: a situation where housing costs rise above what households can afford and food is then sacrificed in order to ensure continued housing (Friendly, 2008; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Research has additionally shown that there is a bi-directional relationship between food and housing insecurity, further illustrating the connection between material needs (Lee et al., 2021).

Race also plays a critical role in how households experience food insecurity. Black families (compared to white families) in Canada are more than 3.5 times likely to experience food insecurity (Dhunna & Tarasuk, 2021) and Indigenous families are disproportionately represented with more than 30% of Indigenous people experiencing food insecurity (Tarasuk et al., 2022). Further, single parent households, especially ones that are female led are significantly more likely to experience food insecurity. Although there has been limited research on disability and food insecurity the literature that exists points to higher instances, as factors such as mobility, higher medical expenses, and low incomes creates barriers to

access (Schwartz et al., 2019). There is an intersectional aspect to food insecurity; as with other types of inequity, it affects those who are marginalized and vulnerable most.

In Canada there is currently no comprehensive food security policy at any level of government and until 2019, there was no national food policy at all. Despite calls to create a “joined up” food policy that would “create a food system that reflected the biological and social realities of food” and would work to comprehensively address both supply and access issues, critics have noted that Canada’s national food policy fails to provide an integrative systems-based approach or meaningfully address issues of food insecurity (Andree et al., 2021; MacRae, 2011). There has been movement at the municipal level towards adopting food security policies (Toronto, 2001; Vancouver, 2007). However, without comprehensive national food security policies and applying evidence-based supports, food insecurity has continued to rise. Much of the work to alleviate food insecurity has been offloaded to charitable non-profit initiatives such as food banks. These solutions are stop-gap at best, with much of the data showing that food banks in particular do not support long term reduction of food insecurity and are structured primarily as short term emergency support despite many accessing them on a regular basis (Enns et al., 2020). With the growing evidence that reliance on food charity programs does little to address the underlying structural issues, there remains large investment of public funds towards food charity as a solution (Tarasuk et al., 2022).

There have been further criticisms of charity-based food security initiatives such as their reliance on corporate sponsorship of programs from large companies. These partnerships raise several ethical concerns about the companies own implication in not only the globalized agri-food system but of workers who may themselves be forced to rely on these services due to low wages as well as health concerns about the quality and nutritional value of the food provided (Mendly-Zambo et al., 2021). Further, means testing as well as other barriers such as requirement of government issued identification, foods that require

kitchens and storage makes these programs less accessible to segments of the community who are most vulnerable (Enns et al., 2020).

Food Justice movements describe mutual aid and grassroots initiatives that provide solutions to immediate material needs without relying on the non-profit charitable model, while simultaneously working to reform or dismantle inequities in food systems. Going back to the Black Panther Party's community work in the 1960s, particularly their Free Breakfast for Children Program, which at its peak served over 200,000 children daily, five days a week (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011). Rooted in liberation and anti-capitalist principles, the Black Panther Party also applied pressure for policy change, contributing to the expansion of government-funded breakfast programs in the United States. In Canada, organizations such as The Stop and FoodShare in Toronto exemplify local food initiatives by organizing community gardens, educational programming, partnerships with local farms, and community kitchens to provide sustainable, nutritionally dense options for those experiencing food insecurity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a rise in Community Fridges across Canada organized by mutual-aid networks as a way to mitigate some of the challenges faced during the pandemic. These efforts provide solutions to some of the issues posed by food bank programs, however without larger structural changes they serve as a band aid to a growing problem.

Neoliberal restructuring has involved a growth in third-sector organisations emerging to address gaps left by state retreat. Universal public programmes and core funding were cut through austerity measures, alongside a move toward NGO professionalization that applies neoliberal logics of efficiency and competition to service delivery. This has created growth in the third-sector, as an expression of the neoliberal push for privatisation, but also forced competition for funding while working to meet ever growing needs. NGOs and non-profits must prove that they not only deserve funds, but they are able to use them more efficiently

and better, which justifies and reinforces the neoliberal logic of retrenchment. This need to appeal to funders can further push aside sensitive political or ambitious goals of structural and social change in order to ensure funding (Classens & Martin, 2024; Evans et al., 2005).

Social Reproduction and Relational Care Ethics

Social Reproduction

In line with neoliberal ideas of responsibility, self-sufficiency and austerity, unemployment insurance was reformed, reducing eligibility, duration and amounts. Further, social assistance programmes began to incorporate workfare like requirements, and stricter means testing. There has also been an increase in types of employment not covered by insurance benefits, such as part-time or temporary work, as well as low-wage employment that commensurate with lower benefit rates. At the same time there have been worldwide shifts in labour through trade liberalisation and globalization that has exacerbated conditions through weakening unions, flexible labour policies and restrictions on organizing. Compounded with the other aspects of neoliberal restructuring this has created multiple crises (housing crisis, food insecurity crisis) that amounts to a crisis of Social Reproduction.

Social Reproduction Theory (SRT) has been conceptualized by feminists in response to Marxist theories that focused only on the economic and class struggles of production but failed to account for how social structures contribute to and shape the reproduction of inequity under capitalism. As Tanyildiz et al state “Social reproduction can be defined as the process through which a society reproduces itself across and within generations (Tanyildiz et al., 2021, p. 5).” While SRT continues to be conceptualized this definition provides a working overview through which it can be theorized.

A key aspect within SRT is conceptualizing that in as much as production is bound to the structures of capitalism, reproduction is similarly and inherently tied to it. This is crucial in that despite the need for capital to be constantly accumulating, it is unable to produce the labour itself or the social conditions that allow for production. As Katz states social reproduction is “a set of structured practices that unfold in dialectical relation with production, with which it is mutually constitutive and in tension. Social reproduction encompasses daily and long term reproduction, both of the means of production and the labour power to make them work (Katz, 2001, p. 711).” Therefore, SRT is a methodology that is able to frame the social structures of capitalism as well as one that accounts for the spatial organization of society to reproduce capitalism.

As a methodology we can understand SRT as an “organizing lens at least partially frees us from predetermined sets of implicitly white and explicitly economically reductive analytical categories, providing a much-needed epistemological reflexivity. Such an intentionally open framework enables us to attend to the range of ways in which people shape the circumstances of daily life in relation to conditions of hegemonic capitalist production (Tanyildiz et al., 2021, p. 4).”

Recently, SRT literature has shifted to consider the role of the urban as an analytical focus in its theorizing. Tanyildiz et al., illustrate the importance in this shift as “the urban is increasingly the site and urbanization is increasingly the process through which social reproduction takes place (2021, p. 10).” They argue that urbanization has increasingly become the driver of capitalism through the financialization of real estate as well as the state's increasing involvement in urbanization through prioritization of land development. Taking from Lefebvre's urban revolution wherein the urban is no longer dependent on industrialization, and the struggle has shifted to the everyday, they argue that processes of urbanization must be understood through social reproduction as a methodology.

As neoliberalism and dependence on the market has grown there has been an increasing crisis of social reproduction. Since governance has shifted from a Keynesian welfare state approach, towards a more financialized, individualized and privatized neoliberal form, the inherent tensions of accumulation and social reproduction have been emphasized. As Rodríguez-Rocha illustrates, the cost of social reproduction has been downloaded from the state onto the individual, while simultaneously this labour has become increasingly commodified through global migration. Through this “an alternate path for the production of financial value has emerged, linking reproductive work with global economic growth and capital accumulation via financial speculation. These shifts describe a process of ‘financialization of everyday life’, suggesting that financialization and social reproduction are intimately related operations (2021, p. 8).” Therefore, it has become increasingly pertinent to understand and theorize social reproduction as central to the system of capital.

Although there are many dimensions to the crisis in social reproduction, one of the key ways this has been theorized is to examine inequalities that are distributed spatially. Through examining the geographies of social reproduction, it is possible to “pull at the invisible threads that connect the intimacies of everyday life, with institutions, corporations, markets, states and circuits of global capitalism (p.11, Rodríguez-Rocha, 2021).” In examining the various scales of social reproduction, it becomes possible to clarify the way in which capitalist accumulation and financialization are propped up by inequity and socially reproductive labour. This in turn allows for theorizing sites of resistance.

Relational Care Ethics

Relational care ethics offers further possibilities for theorizing sites of resistance and conceptualising how to build socially reproductive communities. Care is central to social reproduction and is an “activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and

repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible (Tronto & Fisher, 1990, p. 40).” Care ethics as a framework allows us to question how relations, infrastructures, and policies can enable or prohibit care, allowing us to envision how we can build systems that expand caring possibilities. Relational care ethics problematizes neoliberal care ethics that configures care as a private practice where needs are self-met through the market, and care is reserved for the deserving vulnerable (Power & Bergan, 2019). This positions “...those perceived as unable to self-provide and in receipt of care (including care from the state in the form of welfare) ...as ‘dependent’ or ‘needy’ (Power & Bergan, 2019, p. 428).” Within neoliberal conceptions “...dependency becomes a negative moral attribute, rather than a basic condition of life (Olson et al., 2020, p. 52).”

Countering this individualized understanding of care, relational care ethics argues that all life requires care, and we are dependent on one another, in different forms and to different degrees throughout our lives (De La Bellacasa, 2017; Power & Mee, 2020; Tronto, 1993). Taking this understanding of care, Powers and Mee posit that housing can be understood as an infrastructure of care. They “...conceptualize infrastructures not as pre-figured objects or necessarily public, capital goods, but as dynamic patterns that are the foundation of social organization (2020, p. 485).” Further, by “[u]nderstanding infrastructures as sociotechnical systems, new infrastructural analyses attend to how infrastructures pattern social life and identify the values that are selectively coded into infrastructures, (re)producing social difference through use (p.485).” They argue that housing infrastructure shapes care possibilities across scales, within the home, and through systems.

This understanding of care when applied to food insecurity can elucidate broader connections and structures in food systems that facilitate care. Food systems as an infrastructure are broken at multiple levels, requiring intervention to address the access, environmental, labour and social problems that persist within it (Williams, 2022; Williams &

Tait, 2023). Care ethics provides a lens with which the related and complex systems can be understood by situating it as an aspect of our ability to maintain, continue, repair, and flourish. Like housing, this allows for attention to relational possibilities and deficiencies across scales. Applying relational care ethics allows us to attend to the connected needs of food and housing insecurity, understanding them not as separate issues but aspects of care offering possibilities for new ways of theorizing or restructuring systems.

Food and Housing Insecurity in Planning

It has been widely recognized that food and housing strategies in Canada are fragmented (Friendly, 2008) and there is a paucity of work in the literature that looks directly at these two issues together. Of the small body of work that looks at these two issues in conjunction there has been a focus on the social housing context in Canada's urban centres. Abigail Friendly's 2008 examination of food security in the social housing sector is an example of this, providing a series of policy recommendations for government and social housing providers, suggesting a Community Food Security Model (CFS) approach. Friendly suggests that CFS should be applied at an institutional policy level to build a sustainable food system. The report suggests that social housing providers are in a unique position to implement community food security policies and initiatives as a means for providing tenant food security but also to work towards developing an overall "joined up" food policy and supporting the right to food as well as housing for Canadians.

Although food, and in particular food insecurity, is still an emerging field within planning, it is well positioned to address these issues (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Planning can provide avenues toward bringing urban food and housing insecurity together, however, there has to date been little that addressed them both. Planners' influence over comprehensive city plans, land use, transportation and municipal issues allows them to

“gradually connect the different dots (hunger, poverty, food waste, health, etc.) in a coherent, comprehensive and systemic way (Cabannes & Marocchino, 2018, p. 31).”

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) offer a potential pathway through which these interconnected material issues can be addressed. CLTs are organizations that hold land and property in trust for community ownership and to serve public interest (Davis, 2010, 2014). They are primarily operated as non-profit organizations and work to remove property from the private market in order to ensure community access and affordable access to land. While community ownership and land reform are not new concepts, CLTs are a newer expression of these ideas that are currently gaining interest and popularity. The first CLT was founded in the late 1960s in Albany, Georgia in the US by civil rights organizers who wanted to build an agricultural community based on communal principles (Meehan, 2014). This was further developed and gained momentum throughout the 1970s and 80s which brought the idea into urban areas and shifted from its rural agricultural roots. Modern iterations of CLTs are primarily focused on protecting and ensuring permanently affordable housing in rapidly gentrifying and financialized urban centres. These newer CLTs are also often involved in activism around wider issues such as food security, gentrification, and issues of intersectional inequity in their communities (Barndt & Bunce, 2020). This broader agenda and access to land intended for public benefit positions CLTs as promising sites for addressing the combined material needs of food and housing.

While the most direct predecessor to current CLTs is New Communities Inc., CLTs can be traced back to other thinkers and land reform movements. Henry George’s critiques of private property and his ideas relating to land taxes were a direct inspiration for the New Communities founders (Davis, 2014). Henry George was a journalist and economist during the 19th century who argued for land reform through a single tax on land value, which he saw

as the central cause for inequality and poverty during the industrial age. He argued that land should be turned into a ‘common trust’ that was equally available to all. Current CLTs also have forebears in land reform movements such as Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities, the Gramdan and kibbutz movements that the founders studied and visited to build the foundations of the first CLTs. While modern iterations of CLTs may not all be actively working towards land reform these ideas are built into the structure of CLTs. Social and economic restructuring was central to the goals of New Communities Inc. and continues to be reflected in the organization of CLTs.

As Davis (2014) notes, these progenitors differ in key ways from the modern CLT. These communities had communal ownership, bringing together the individual interests of those occupying the land, but it was exclusive to them. The broader community and public were excluded from the benefits of this shared land tenure. Modern CLTs differ (in theory) in that they are intended to be organized and operate for the ‘common good’ of the community (as geographically defined by each CLT). Primarily, CLTs have an open membership that includes all equally consisting of leaseholders (residents), community members (non-residents in the community), and those that represent the public interest (NGO organizations, community organizations, politicians, etc.). This structure is what distinguishes the CLT model from other forms of communal land ownership structures such as Cooperatives.

CLTs are structured to be inclusive of the larger community, and this distinction is key for understanding the possibilities and potential of CLTs. This model requires inclusivity, consideration and accountability to the larger community missing from other models (Davis, 2014). The broader structure offers flexibility to include projects outside the singular focuses of communal arrangements. The structure of the modern CLTs was crystalized with the 1982 publication of the *CLT Handbook* defining CLTs as they are understood today. This definition was further federally legislated in the U.S in the 1992 Housing and Community

Development Act. The handbook asserted not only the importance of land tenure, but redressing social problems by creating opportunities for lower income people and communities to secure permanent affordability, emphasizing stewarding CLTs for the public benefit. The CLT model as defined in the 1982 handbook aimed to prevent gentrification, and displacement, bringing a new focus to the movement. Focusing the work on ‘charitable’ areas opened funding avenues through which CLTs were able to gain recognition and grew rapidly in response to the neoliberal rollbacks of the 1980s.

CLTs today are wide ranging, with varied goals, tenure, and demographics. Despite their initial rural focus, CLTs have been widely adapted and applied in the urban context (Barndt & Bunce, 2020; Davis, 2014). Housing focused urban land trusts are the most common but there are a growing number of rural, commercial and agriculturally focused CLTs. They are seen as a valuable tool for fighting gentrification and addressing housing affordability for low income and racialized communities while preserving long term affordability and protecting land from the private market. Recent years have seen a significant rise in numbers, and growing interest in response to the ongoing ‘housing crisis’. As the model expanded, different kinds of CLTs have formed with differing goals, with much of the original focus on land reform being sidelined for a stronger focus on housing affordability.

The proliferation and standardization of CLTs has resulted in increasing reconfiguration as a housing model or legal framework (Cahen et al., 2020). CLT growth has been accompanied by increasing professionalization, and institutionalisation. This shift has the potential to recontextualize what CLTs are, leaving space for the broader community focus to be omitted, altering the original intent. If understood only as legal frameworks or housing models, CLTs are significantly more vulnerable to co-optation, reducing caring capacity and limiting possibilities to address broader issues. The broad applicability of the

CLT model is an asset but leaves room for interpretation that can exclude the larger goals of the CLT movement. This has been demonstrated in the U.S and U.K contexts where critics argue that organisations have been steadily deradicalized towards reformist approaches away from social transformation goals (Bunce, 2020; DeFilippis et al., 2018; J. Spicer & Trana, 2025). This has the effect of depoliticizing the model as another tool for “technocratic policy intervention” limiting possibilities beyond affordable housing provision (DeFilippis et al., 2018).

In Canada there are currently at least 40 CLTs across the country, with one third having been established since 2020 (J. Spicer & Trana, 2025). Overall, CLTs in Canada are relatively nascent compared to those in the U.S. and U.K., with no federal definition and most organizations operating at a local level. The lack of clear legislative and policy definitions for CLTs in Canada may hinder their ability to secure and maintain consistent long-term funding (Bunce, 2020). Nevertheless, Canadian CLTs have expanded significantly over the past decade, primarily through government funding and land transfers, outpacing U.S. counterparts per capita and size. This rapid growth can be traced to community organising and renewed state interest in public housing in the response to ongoing ‘housing crisis’.

Toronto especially has seen significant growth of CLTs over the last decade. Through community organizing, fundraising and municipal partnership CLTs such as Parkdale Neighbourhood Community Land Trust (PNLT), Kensington Market Community Land Trust (KMCLT) and Circle Land Trust have acquired private properties at risk of financialization. They have also acquired at-risk social housing, In 2022 when the Toronto Community Housing Corporation transferred a portfolio of public social housing to PNLT and Circle Land Trust (Toronto, 2022). Though this could be viewed as a further step toward neoliberal privatization as observed in the U.S. and U.K., in Canada the outcomes remain to be seen, as this arrangement is largely unprecedented. One key difference is although the

properties are managed through a private organization, the funds remain public. The PNCLT, for example, was able to secure \$23 million in combined federal and municipal funding, as well as ongoing subsidies and property tax exemption (Goldstein & Barndt, 2024). In this way, properties at risk of being sold on the private market instead remain as social housing. This preserves and expands the public benefit despite the apparent downloading of responsibility. Of course, this arrangement is new and remains subject to change, necessitating that CLT's and the community remain responsive and organized to protect their interests. As Spicer points out, "states structure all market activity, including that of alternatives which emerged in response to state abandonment or paternalism. While CLTs developed in resistance to the state and as an alternative to the traditional market, they inescapably function in relation to that same state and market (2022, p. 1787)." The growth in popularity of CLTs presents new avenues for food and housing affordability, but not without potential risks of co-optation, dependency on state funding, and limited scalability, as well as other challenges examined through interviews with CLT organizers, planners and researchers and discussed in the following section.

Picking Up the Pieces: Community Land Trusts and Food Systems

This section presents the key findings of the research, revealing how CLTs, and Food Systems intersect with broader socio-political dynamics. Five interrelated themes emerged from the data, each shedding light on the complex tensions and possibilities. First, the impact of austerity and precarious funding surfaced repeatedly, revealing how neoliberal logics hinder social change and impose control over organisations. Second, the contradictions and tensions of working towards decommodification while operating within market constraints that necessitate and undermine these efforts. Third, the research highlighted the persistence of siloed approaches, where fragmented policy and practice inhibit holistic responses. Directly linked is the sidelining of food systems in broader social policy discourse, where it is often understood as a peripheral issue rather than an aspect of structural injustice. Finally, a discussion around building caring CLTs through food systems work, examining relational practices. These findings underscore the tension between systemic barriers and social change, illustrating both the limits and transformative potential of CLTs.

Austerity and Funding

One of the core themes that emerged during research was the way in which funding and austerity impacts the work of CLTs and non-profit organizations. Firstly, there is limited funding for CLTs core mandate and acquisition is both difficult as well as costly. Funding for acquisition is additionally tied to political support and therefore temperamental. CLTs in Toronto have primarily been funded through a mix of government grants (municipal, federal), philanthropic contributions, and private funding. Secondly, available funding arrangements do not allow for organizational capacity, and therefore staffing is often extremely limited, with reliance on volunteers, temporary (contract) and part-time staff. Lastly, funding is often narrow, rigid, and tied to meeting specific outcomes which do not align with organizations

working to include larger social concerns, or less measurable outcomes such as social wellbeing, community building or cultural needs. This promotes a culture of accountability, taking time from staff that should be for land trust activities rather than reporting requirements for funders. Additionally, acquiring funding requires significant research and specialized knowledge of granting criteria for organizations that already have limited capacity and staffing.

In the last five years the CLT model has seen significant growth and interest as a response to the ‘housing crisis’ which has increased available funding. One third of CLTs in Canada have been formed since 2020, and in Toronto there has been a significant transfer of social housing to CLTs. This indicates a notable municipal shift toward CLTs as a preferred model for social housing management. While this recent boom in CLT funding has created significant opportunities for communities, the primarily public funds cannot be guaranteed.

As Tendon Dongtotsant from PNLT states:

“I think the reason that funding is a challenge is because if you have a change in leadership at the municipal, provincial and federal level, then that threatens the promises that the government has made to fund affordable housing initiatives. So, the funding challenge is really the change in political climate. There is [currently an] appetite, there is interest in housing. But, yeah, we are kind of, you know, susceptible to the political winds and change election cycles and things like that too. So that's a challenge.”

The neoliberal downloading of the welfare state and government responsibilities to non-profit NGOs creates flexibility in the provision of funding. Non-profit NGOs are significantly more susceptible to austerity cuts due to changing political will or policy direction as funding is provided on a project or contract basis. Political contexts also inform funding as supportive administrations are required to continue funding. This places organizations in a state of

precarity where the work must be constantly justified and funding remains at risk unless they are able to become self-sustaining. This precarity instils an urgency to be available to reactive policy directions that may not align with longer term goals or broader community needs.

Further, funding and organizational successes are often tied to measurable outcomes such as unit counts as opposed to less tangible social needs such as community. Richard Marshall, a Planner working for the City of Toronto states:

“...across the board, those levels of government that are setting the program funding criteria, they're looking for [achievable metrics like unit counts], all the way down to kind of more local politicians. They're looking for targets that they can achieve.”

This points to the logic of neoliberal governance where economic efficiency and exchange-value is prioritised over use-value that allows for socially reproductive processes. Imposition of economic metrics on social policy omits care and social value as the organising principles altering the intent. Funding criteria and targets therefore allow economic processes to measure and justify value, validating the commodification of human life.

This is illustrative of New Public Management (NPM) which can be understood as Neoliberalism's administrative expression, wherein public and social service delivery is managed through market rationalities by applying corporate principles to promote 'efficiency' (cost cutting), 'productivity' (market metrics) and 'competition' (bidding). NPM is characterised by "hollow core funding" where funding is granted on competitive short-term contracts with stringent accountability measures and outcomes reporting (Joy & Shields, 2020). Little to no funding allocated to organizations administrative or staffing needs, assuming that the shortfalls will be solved through volunteers or donations. This results in organizations essentially subsidising programming, while also being restricted in their activities. Not only does this place pressure on organizations to continuously search for

funding, but also restricts their capacity for coordination, long term planning and including broad systemic needs.

Striving Towards Decommodification Within a Capitalist System

CLT experts noted that although CLTs are decommodified entities, they still function within the market, and current funding is not sufficient for additional programming to address intertwined needs. While CLTs are capable of many things and have the ability to be expansive they are limited under current conditions. As Dominique Russel of KMCLT and CNCLT states:

“CLTs have to be this sort of porthole of radical thinking into a different organizational structure with communities at the heart of it. There's all kinds of things that CLTs can do, but it all depends on capacity. There's a great deal of imagination, there's a great deal of excitement, but at the core of it is, like for us [KMCLT], I would love to be able to, you know, offer up a commercial space to a grocery store like there is in the Downtown East Side [in Vancouver, B.C] But the obstacles to that are that I would need to be able to make that work and pay off the mortgage. So CLTs are not immune to, and we're not separate from the logic of the market, that market in the sense of capitalism”

This speaks to the inherent tensions of the non-profit NGO model where social needs are made to compete and not conceived as bounded processes. For CLTs the burden of funding is exacerbated by the high cost of acquisitions and permanent affordability which requires significant upfront and long-term funding. Further, they do not have the advantage of generating profits that can be used to expand capacity or programming despite being forced to function within the logic of the market.

Austerity curtails capacity in multiple ways, but labour is often particularly limited which has significant impacts on organizational scope. As Dr. Susannah Bunce a CLT expert states:

“Funding is really the Achilles heel of all nonprofit non-governmental organizations. I think it's, you know, very hard to do a lot of things. And I think CLTs organizations represent the community, and they are asked to do a lot of things. Often, they manage huge housing portfolios, but their organizational structure is so small. So, they'll get funding for a housing portfolio to some extent, but no money to run the organization itself. So, it's really the way funding is given. Governments now are focusing much more on the CLT model, because it's a way of, you know, offloading the responsibility for the provision of affordable housing to non-governmental organizations. But they tend to forget that the staff that do the work for the land trust organization are the ones who have to do all the work of the offloading and on a very like, and they aren't given any funding.”

Lack of funding for staffing therefore limits what additional work a CLT can take on to address broader social needs, not only due to expenses of acquiring and maintaining land but because labour for purposes of direct mandates is already insufficient. This places significant pressure on frontline staff to take on unpaid labour, leveraging their social responsibility and care against their rights as workers. Taking on additional projects requires further work from staff already working with limited capacity, Dr. Bunce illustrates these obstacles stating:

“Capacity is a huge issue. I think, even if an urban farm was created on community land trust owned land, they'd still have to probably run it with volunteers. And that would require oversight of volunteers, which is different than when you have paid staff... It requires another level of staff oversight and staff capacity to make sure

you're managing because it's not the housing portfolio, and then you've got urban farming, which is labour intensive, right? Food security is labour intensive.”

This offloading of responsibilities under austerity budgets to non-profit NGOs does not come with the labour resources of governments and requires that labour costs are flexible for organizations by presuming work can be achieved through volunteerism without additional supports. This ideological assumption of neoliberalism reflected in hollow core funding therefore works to undermine labour and hinder progressive social change.

Even for organizations that have developed some level of capacity through acquisition, expanding outside of mandates remains difficult. Capacity is limited, and to broaden scope requires staff with specialized knowledge outside of their expertise to locate and acquire funding. Dominique Russel of KMCLT/CNCLT notes the way currenting funding parameters are tightly delineated by category, with each separately requiring research, as well as knowledge of current funding directions, and organizations. This process is prohibitive for organizations already facing significant organisational capacity and staff limitations. This speaks to the precarity, and burden placed on organizations through NPM which requires organizations to have expertise and engenders professionalization that hinders grassroots organization.

Facing constraints and austerity budgets, CLTs and those working in social provisioning feel they need to focus their resources on the highest need as a means of triage. This produces an ongoing internalized understanding that funding is always precarious, limited, and hard-won. As such, organizations are unable to expand their scope beyond their mandate or short-term goals. Precarity of funding and the ideology of austerity works from within and without. This has been referred to as the “double bind” that NGOs find themselves in, where they are dependent on government funding, restricted from self-reliance by managerial pressures while taking on responsibilities of social provisioning that were

previously managed by a well-resourced public sector (Shields, 2014). Hegemony of neoliberal rationale and NPM funding forces the logic of austerity to be assumed. Not only is the funding itself precarious and susceptible to change from external structures, but organizations operate within the logic of austerity at every level. The will to push for change beyond the scope of one's mandate is curtailed by the urgent need to make do with what little is provided, and the uneasy knowledge of being at the mercy of shifting political wills.

Silos

Silos and fragmentation are a recognized and persistent problem within policy, government (at all levels), academia and NGOs (Guna et al., 2024). There are complex multi-factor reasons that silos persist, however siloing and fragmentation has an overall negative effect particularly on social policy. Separation between food security and housing security issues are an outcome of these complex processes that impact lived realities of communities, in particular those who are most marginalized. To put it simply, food and housing are understood from a policy, governance and practice perspective as largely separate issues. This perspective is reinforced by funding, planning, and policy that fails to account for broader processes. This kind of thinking is reflected in planning education that rarely has any kind of focus on the food system, and if so, it is primarily focused on rural issues such as food production or environmental sustainability factors. While rural food systems and production issues are key components of food security, there remains little focus on the way urban food insecurity can be addressed through planning. The practice of planning remains largely relegated to urban infrastructure, development and land use with less focus on social or ecological needs and community planning that could open the practice to integrating systemic approaches.

As a society it is intuitively understood that food and housing insecurity are deeply intertwined and the separation between these material needs are spurious, however attempts to address these issues are fragmented. This research showed the existing silos are deeply embedded and difficult to overcome. Despite interest in bringing together these material needs, finding pathways to do so struggles to be a priority especially given the constrained current environment.

Notably, food largely being considered a trade good that is procured through the market without much consideration for the broader aspects of the food system or food security plays a significant part in the continued separation. There is both a political and cultural failure to consider food as a public good, which hinders broader incorporation into public policy. Dr. MacRae, a Food Policy analyst, noted the Canadian constitution as a significant barrier to integrating food as the food system and its multiple dimensions are significantly divided between authorities (municipal, territorial, provincial and federal) with little coordination between them. He states that this fragmentation results in food system change largely being addressed through grant programs that are piecemeal and fail to meaningfully create system change. Further, he notes that Canada's international trade policies play a significant effect on the ability to implement food systems change and impacts Canada's food security.

Broadly, limited funding hinders the ability to achieve systems change through a bi-directional process where funding limitations restrict what is possible, and those limits reinforce funding constraints. The internalization of austerity narrows the scope of what seems possible therefore allowing silos to persist. Existing silos and limited funding creates and entrenches siloed practices, limiting possibilities, feasibility and eroding will. Silos contribute to all kinds of outcomes, but overall, they limit the inclusion of broader practices and in some instances work to reproduce systemic issues. While it is outside the scope of this

research to examine how to address silos within the public sector, there is a need for further coordination and co-production to ensure social needs are met holistically. A focus on community needs, engagement and broad bottom-up policy will allow for capacity building.

Professional and sectoral divisions further contribute to the divide between food and housing. These divisions are widespread within as well as across government, NGOs, and academia. This level of siloing and division makes significant systemic change difficult in that all actors are working separately to meet narrow individual goals with little coordination or consensus. In part this can be understood as the bidirectional impact of austerity and funding silos. In NGOs divisions driven by professionalization and forced funding competition, narrows out and isolates issues providing little incentive to coordinate. Even within organizations that focus on similar issues such as food, there is a split between those that focus on issues of production (agriculture, labour, land) and those that focus on hunger (food banks, meal programs) (Clapp, 2014). Despite the ways these issues are clearly connected and should contribute to larger changes by working towards shared goals, they fail to coalesce. Austerity as previously discussed constrains broad organizing and redirects to the individualism of neoliberal ideologies.

CLTs offer significant possibilities here in that they are primarily grassroots, community-oriented organizations that focus on bottom-up responses to specific community needs. However, thus far CLTs, particularly in Canada are still nascent and struggling to meet their core mandates. CLTs have seen significant growth in recent years with heightened interest in the model and new funding. This has created significant expectations for CLTs, however they are also left to fill the large expanse left by the eroded welfare state. A CNCLT 2023 census showed that out of 27 CLTs surveyed 37% had no paid staff, and 19% had only contract staff (Trana et al., 2023). Their report further identified lack of funding for staff as a key barrier to growth across the sector. Examining NLT (the charitable arm of PNLT) yearly

reporting shows staff salaries in 2023 as only 10% (\$322,961) of total revenue (\$3,114,999) for 8 employees while in 2021 staffing accounted for 20% (\$193,249) of organizational revenue (\$1,202,026) for 11 employees (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021, 2023). This data demonstrates despite growth in funding, staff funding is overall diminished with the additional workload of new projects. CLTs currently have significant pressure on them due to growing interest in the model and new funding. As Dr. Bunce pointed out, this places unrealistic expectations on CLTs to be both expansive and agile, despite the practical limitations they currently face.

Food Insecurity is Sidelined within Urban Priorities

Overall, issues around food struggle to be included in the conversation. Planning as a whole largely fails to consider the food system, be it agriculture, or access to food in communities. There is an expectation from Planners that food issues will be solved through the market. This prevalent perspective misses the fundamental importance of food as not only a material need but a social structure, which must be considered as a collective effort to ensure the well-being of communities. By disconnecting needs and addressing them discreetly, not only are we failing to holistically meet the basic needs of communities, but opportunities for solidarity and connection are missed. The food system is broad and complex, but it is pertinent that we consider them as they have significant implications on the urban environment, sustainability, health, community and equity. It is not possible to break up the natural processes of life and living without causing harm. It is not necessary to put human and environmental needs in competition which the current system engenders.

Through interviews community members, service providers, organizers and CLTs repeatedly expressed that current housing needs are a priority as well as significant and acute, requiring immediate attention. This perspective is reflective of research that shows housing as

a stabilizing asset, which allows for other needs to be more easily met. As a community advocacy worker at a Toronto food security organization noted, in the competition between the high costs of housing and food, housing is more concerning. However, it is not just about providing enough, food is connected to our environment, our stewardship and care over land, culture, community, health and ability to thrive. It is a key part of social reproduction, alongside housing. Dr. Bunce similarly noted that the urgency and mentality around affordable housing supply “detracts from other practices that could go hand in hand with that.” The issues discussed above of austerity, siloing forces us to think in terms of what is pragmatic and possible, limiting what kinds of connections can be made to build larger social change.

Recently there has been growing conversation about an ‘affordability crisis’ in Canada which has brought connections between housing and food affordability to the fore. These concerns are primarily focused on the middle-income, middle-class perspective with a focus on home ownership and food costs, with little attention to the fact that housing and food security, let alone home ownership, has always been out of reach for many low-income people. These conversations around the ‘affordability crisis’ bring these issues together as the middle class are no longer able to meet their self-care needs, which implies a breakdown in the neoliberal understandings of the world. As Dr. Bunce noted,

“Once it starts to hit the urban middle class, then it becomes a crisis. It's been a crisis for a long time for people on low incomes. But now it's hitting people who are like ‘I did everything right’, and that's when policy responds...but that's how the class system produces and reproduces itself.”

While the ‘affordability crisis’ in Canada, may contribute to new interest in understanding these connections, food insecurity and housing insecurity remain very separate within the political imaginary and food systems as a whole are still failing to be considered.

Within this, there is the primary issue of the food system at large being highly commodified and considered to be something that should be acquired through the market rather than a common public good, and a right for all. The failure for food to be considered within planning and policy indicates a failure to understand the dimensions of care as part of our responsibilities. This is reflective of “Neo/liberal care philosophies [that] understand care as a private practice for which autonomous and rational individuals are responsible and capable (Power & Mee, 2020, p. 490).” Within this framing, able bodied adults who fail to meet their needs (such as housing or food security) are constructed as having failed in their responsibility for self-care. While housing has been commodified to a great extent, public housing remains an aspect of the total housing makeup despite its diminished position. Unlike housing, food is understood as a fully commodified market good, procured and prepared individually. As Dr. MacRae notes, there is very little sense of food as a public good, unlike water or air, the other two requirements for human survival. The imagined privatisation of the home strengthens the notion that food is a private individual practice met through the market, and within the private space of the home. As such, food insecurity is primarily answered through food banks that provide ‘emergency’ care for those that have failed to meet their self-care responsibilities. This is only compounded by the flexibility of food as a cost, especially in contrast with the increasingly high and fixed costs for housing, which further contributes to the perspective that food security is less acute.

This understanding of food helps illustrate the ongoing disconnection between food and housing insecurity. However, this framing of food insecurity neglects the broader food system and the relationship to other systems of inequality. Contributing to this is an urban-rural divide where food system issues are considered to be rural problems and material deprivation urban ones. This disconnection also fails to highlight various injustices and inequality that fall on both ends of the spectrum (urban/rural, production/consumption) that

impact both at various scales (Morgan, 2014). The needs are still placed in competition with one another, rather than being understood as aspects of the failure of care within neoliberal society and part of the crisis of social reproduction.

Building Caring CLTs through Food Systems

Although CLTs in Toronto are not currently working to address these issues, there is a large opportunity for them to start bringing these pieces together. While there may not be capacity or funding to make significant changes or to take on projects, discussing and bringing these needs into conversation is a step towards bringing a holistic understanding to social needs. This research illustrates that CLT organizers understand and are aware of the relational needs of food and housing, however they struggle to include them within their programming. As previously discussed, the high demands of starting a CLT within austerity leave little capacity to attend to larger social needs. Further, there is a sense that food insecurity is already being addressed elsewhere by other organizations, or people are able to meet their needs privately within the market. Another aspect is that CLTs work in response to community needs, prioritising what their community members ask of them. The privatisation of food and care has obscured the understanding of food as a common good, therefore issues of food security fail to become apparent to the community as a need that can or should be addressed. Tendong, a PNLT organizer noted the way that PNLT understands itself as part of the larger ecosystem of neighbourhood service delivery. PNLT may not directly be working with food insecurity or food system issues, but they work with organizations that do. Additionally, the first property that PNLT was able to acquire was a community garden, which continues to provide education and food for the community. Dominique Russel of KMCLT, also discussed the ways that the land trust aims to work with other organizations to address food issues in the community. However, she also described the difficulty of including this work within the mandate of the CLT. KMCLT is also uniquely positioned within the

community where they have immediate access to small raw food sellers, which mitigates many of the immediate food insecurity needs of their residents.

While CLTs in Toronto are not specifically working towards food system goals, they are including them in their work in a variety of ways. Furthering this is a benefit to CLTs and can bring awareness to their work and find new ways to connect communities. Including food systems within these projects as “...the process toward food self-sufficiency is more important than the a priori feasibility of the goal. The steady increase of people’s knowledge and practice of food production should support the end goal by unveiling new possibilities (Giraud, 2021, p. 4).” Unlike other housing organisations such as Cooperatives, CLTs are well situated to address broader systemic issues within their work, as the model is inclusive and responsible to not only residents, but also to the greater community, this provides CLTs with an opportunity to build care into their work. If CLTs and other housing justice organizations are committed to infrastructures of care, it is pertinent that they include these larger questions within their work even if they do not currently have the ability to address them. As Tronto states, care is an “activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible (1993, p. 103).”

Austerity and deep-rooted perceptions of food as a market good creates a detrimental trade-off between needs that are fundamentally interconnected. This failure to consider food system issues within planning and housing discourse is reflective of the siloing that neglects the wider implications of social care issues. In particular, this is pertinent when thinking of downstream health care costs and public health. These issues are not discreet and will not be solved individually. Further, while we have discussed the way capital facilitates precarity through neoliberal order, Food and Housing Insecurity is also a product of our settler-colonial society. Food scarcity and insecurity is a persistent issue necessary to reproducing the colonial capitalist world order. While it is beyond the scope of this project, further research

should look towards Indigenous stewardship and ways of knowing and relating to land and to each other to help guide a more sustainable equitable Earth. Rather than seeing land (food/housing) as a commodity, we might lean towards Indigenous ways of knowing, such as Grounded Normativity, which

"...teaches us how to be in respectful diplomatic relationships with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations with whom we might share territorial responsibilities or common political or economic interests. Our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which we practice solidarity (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016, p. 254)."

Given that housing and food precarity acutely impacts Indigenous peoples, if we want to make meaningful strides to reconcile, this requires addressing the way Colonialism continues to disproportionately impact people across racial hierarchies. Meaningful reconciliation requires solving material needs as much as it requires addressing the power structures and hegemonic conceptions of commodity. Therefore, we must also support Indigenous resurgence efforts and turn towards our Indigenous communities as expert knowledge holders on solving these issues.

Conclusion

The findings of this research reveal the enmeshed nature of grassroots resistance and austerity politics within current social provisioning. While CLTs and other community led actions challenge the commodification of bare needs, they do so within a landscape marked by structural constraint. Neoliberal austerity and siloed governance restricts and shapes community organizing, limiting the capacity of these efforts while forcing reliance on limited funding. Within these tensions the foundation for change is visible. CLTs offer glimpses of

relational, caring and land-based futures that contest hegemonic logics of property and accumulation.

Incorporation of community gardens and urban agriculture projects in CLTs offer a way to connect care needs. While these have shown limitations for significantly improving food security, they do present community and skill building opportunities (Horst et al., 2017; McClintock, 2014; Morgan, 2014). Building connections with rural land movements that bring together food systems and housing issues offers further potential towards drawing connections between communities and strengthening movements through collective demands. There is a burgeoning movement towards this within the CLT community with organizations such as Crow's Commons that have formed a rural agricultural and housing land trust.

Turning to broader community and care needs also offer pathways to addressing material needs. Financialization and rising rents are not relegated to housing but similarly impact commercial tenants. As commercial tenants have significantly fewer rights protections including rent control, they are often at risk of displacement. Displacement of long standing businesses and organisations contributes to diminishing social space due to gentrification (Mazer & Rankin, 2011). Often replaced by capital rich corporate franchises, and enterprises targeted towards new gentrifying residents that are not accessible (affordable) to, or do not serve the needs of the existing community. This creates barriers in residents' ability to meet food (access to affordable or culturally appropriate foods), safety (police harassment), or social (inclusion) needs.

In response, CLTs such as KMCLT have worked to include commercial units in order to fight gentrification and protect social space. Future directions to expand commercial units in CLTs will require increased capacity as they currently do not have the financial capacity and are tied to market logics. As CLTs expand and begin to develop new properties there is an opportunity to include commercial tenants who serve community needs such as grocery

cooperatives, or other organisations that provide community benefits but lack the commercial viability to operate in gentrifying and financialized markets.

While none of the possibilities outlined are a panacea for food and housing insecurity, they are ‘for now’ interim strategies that can mitigate harm and build solidarity towards larger structural change. CLTs as a type of land tenure reform provides some relief from the tension and contradiction of capital but struggles to be fully liberative while functioning within the restraints of a commodified system.

For planners, there is a need to reconfigure our understanding of planning not as a professional practice, but something that communities actively do. Our role should be finding ways to support, respond to, and connect with this work beyond prescriptive practice. Planners’ expertise can be harnessed for social change, bringing together the pieces, and enacting praxis by working with and for communities. Planning should not be something that planners do *to* communities. Centring relational care needs allows planners to envision broader connections and solutions that work to meet community needs now as well as build towards just futures.

These findings emphasise the need to reconfigure how we address not only food and housing insecurity but also the systems that produce them. This will require a shift from crisis-based responses towards structural reconfigurations that centre care, justice and the social needs of communities. Future research should examine how to continue and harness this movement without diminishing the radical potential or allowing for co-optation.

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Appendix A. Interview Questions

Interview questions – For PNLT organizers

Introduction

1. Could you introduce yourself and your relationship with PNLT? (professional background, work, etc.)

Current and Future CLT directions, limitations and barriers

2. What do you see for the future direction for the CLT? (goals, areas of focus, plans)
3. What are some examples of challenges/barriers the CLT is facing and how do you manage these situations? (funding, capacity, policy, engagement, operations, etc.)
4. What do you think the limitations and issues with CLTs are as a solution to housing affordability/security/structural issues?

Community Connections

5. Can you tell me about PNLT's collaborations and partnerships with other community organizations?
6. How do you see these relationships relating to/helping meet the larger goals of PNLT?

Food Security

7. Can you tell me about how PNLT conceptualizes and defines food security?
8. How do you see food security relating to the work PNLT does?
9. Can you tell me about how you integrate food security into PNLT? (connections with community orgs, programs, social services)

Planning & Policy

10. Can you tell me about some ways that planning policy has impacted PNLT? Specific examples? (rooming house restrictions, zoning, etc.)
11. What kinds of supports do you think PNLT (or CLTs more generally) require from planners, policy makers, and communities to better integrate housing and food security needs?

Interview Questions - For experts/community organizers/practitioners

Introduction

1. Could you introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your work?

Connections between Food and Housing

2. Can you tell me about how you see the relationship between issues of food security and housing security in your work?
3. What do you think the central barriers are currently for integrating these issues? (funding, policy, capacity, etc.)

Food and Housing Policy

4. How do you think policy impacts integrating issues of food and housing insecurity?
5. What policy changes do you think are needed to integrate issues of food and housing insecurity? (affordable housing, public housing, agriculture, etc.)

Planning – (for planners/people with knowledge in planning)

6. What do you think are the biggest barriers and challenges for planners working to integrate food and housing insecurity?
7. What do you think that planners/planning can do to better integrate food and housing insecurity?

CLTs

8. What do you think the limitations and issues with CLTs are as a solution to housing affordability/security/structural issues and addressing social needs?