# Whose Hand Will Feed Us: Reflections on the Canadian Food Economy and Distribution in Parkdale, Toronto

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#### **Foreword**

This MES Major Project package contains two components:

- (1) Major Project DRAFT, entitled Parkdale Community Food Hub: Agency Partner Consultation Report submitted to both the Parkdale Community Food Hub (PCFH) and to York University, Faculty of Environmental Studies. \*Note that the submitted draft is set for review by the PCFH Agency Partners in mid-August and is not currently suitable for circulation beyond the purpose of the MES Examination.
- (2) Major Project Critical Reflection, entitled Whose Hand Will Feed Us: Reflections on the Canadian Food Economy and Distribution in Parkdale, Toronto, submitted only to York University, Faculty of Environmental Studies. The Major Project Critical Reflection is also comprised of two parts:
  - a. Project Reflection
  - b. Critical Analysis

As approved in my Major Project Proposal in December, 2017, my major project role involved being the research assistant and project coordinator for the Parkdale Community Food Hub (PCFH) from January to August, 2018. I designed and led a sixmonth Agency Partner Consultation compromising of case study analysis, interviews, workshop facilitation and strategy design. The results and analysis can be found in the PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report, which will be widely shared amongst Parkdale community organizers, service providers, residents, and potential funders.

My Major Project drew from the learning objectives outlined in my Plan of Study (approved December 2017). Applying the concepts of Participatory Action Research (PAR), I combined concepts from political agroecology and ecological economics to support the social justice, economic justice, food justice and environmental justice work being done through PCFH. I strongly believe that this triangular approach was complimentary to my work. My political agroecology lens helped to shape my understanding of the Canadian food economy, Canadian food policy, and the alternative food system that is being built in Parkdale. My ecological economics lens challenged me to begin to unravel classical economic theory based on systems analysis and our biophysical reality. While my economic modeling and understanding of complexity and systems theory remains limited, I remain ever curious of ecological economics theory.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> As part of my Business & Environment Certificate requirements, I was also a Communications Intern at

Much of my research and sources used in my Project were very specific to Parkdale, to Toronto, to the food economy, to wealth distribution, or to philanthropy. However, it was my coursework and projects throughout my first year in MES that led me to develop a Critical Reflection that attempted to challenge complexity at scales much larger than PCFH.

As a student, political agroecology and ecological economics attracted me because of their respective calls for systemic change for our social, economic and environmental health. In a tiny way, I hope that I have been able to contribute to this powerful legacy through my Project Report and especially with my Critical Reflection, where I try to grapple with the enormous task of this "systemic change" tagline. I was frustrated with what I had learned of our food economy, (some of) the consequences of which I witnessed in Parkdale's food insecurity. I do not have a strong trust in the Canadian government to uphold a sustainable food system that we all deserve; however, I do argue that it is their responsibility to do so. I am grateful to have been awarded the mentorship, knowledge and resources over the past two years to explore these themes, and I look forward to carrying the lessons learned into my future endeavours.

### Acknowledgements

I am forever grateful for the mentorship and patience of my supervisor, Professor Roderick MacRae. Rod, it has been an absolute honour to work with you, and I will forever attempt to work with the critical eye and with the balanced approach that you exercise. I have had the great privilege of receiving additional support from Professors Peter Victor and Patricia Ellie Perkins. Thank you for challenging me, Peter, for expecting more from me, and for holding me accountable to my words. Thank you to Ellie for being the role model that so many womyn and femmes in this department look up to. It was a truly a blessing to have worked with you so closely. Thank you both for granting the real gift that the Economics for the Anthropocene program has been in my studies, and in my life. Thank you to my family, both chosen and born, and always, to my mother. You are my rock (especially when I can't admit it).

## **Part I: Project Reflection**

## Introduction

Six months of interviews, agency consultations, needs assessment and asset mapping later, the Parkdale Community Food Hub (PCFH) has come to its next stage in community consultations. Over a year ago, community residents came together to provide input on the future of the *Tsering* Milky Way Garden - and this next round of community consultations will combine what they identified with the needs and assets of the neighbourhood, and ask the question, "Now what?!". It's an exciting time for the partners, for myself, and for Parkdale.

My MES Project, with few exceptions, unfolded as planned in my Project Proposal and II-III Exam. The lessons learned, in a circuitous, non-linear route, ended up connecting all facets of my life, including academia, community organizing, and farming. This MES Project was an opportunity for me to apply my understanding in political agroecology, environmental justice, and ecological economics to a local Toronto project. Perhaps unsurprisingly for those who have travelled this Participatory Action Research (PAR)<sup>2</sup> path many times before, I "emerge" with more questions than answers. However, I do feel deeply connected to what brought me back to school in the first place, and that is the desire to contribute to an alternative social and ecological economy, one that respects both people and planet. The following critical reflection reviews the lessons learned over the course of the past few months, with a focus on the dynamic relationships between our Canadian food political economy, wealth accumulation, community organizing, and funding and philanthropy. It goes well beyond the scope of this reflection to adequately address these complex networks, so I will focus on how they have played a role in the building of the Parkdale Community Food Hub.

## Privilege & Positionality

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> I had the honour of learning Participatory Action Research (PAR) with Professor Ernesto Méndez at the University of Vermont (UVM) (See MES Plan of Study). PAR resonated with me as a research practice because it prioritizes long-term relationship building, community empowerment, and systems-based thinking (Méndez, 2016), all of which I have attempted to practice in my work with PCFH.

Before diving into these dynamics, it is necessary to outline my own privileges and positionality in this project.<sup>3</sup> There are multiple points of privilege that I am still unraveling, and still more that I am unaware, disguised in the ease and comfort of that privilege. I would like to highlight three distinct privileges that are specific to my role with PCFH.

The first is my class privilege, and of my visible appearance and capabilities. I self-identify as a cis-gendered, able-bodied woman of fourth generation Settler heritage and of historic class privilege. My highly visible identity comes with an incredible amount of advantages that have eased my access to education, income, opportunity, travel, and safety in nearly all spaces. Reni Eddo-Lodge writes that white privilege is "...an absence of the consequences of racism. An absence of structural discrimination, an absence of your race being viewed as a problem first and foremost, an absence of 'being less likely to succeed because of my race" (2017, p. 86). Specific to working in "food justice", it is important to acknowledge that this privilege has also ensured that I have never personally experienced food insecurity, on any level. Working with my positionality in the predominantly low-income, racialized and marginalized Parkdale, Toronto community, I recognize that I am implicated in the problematic dynamics between the middle class and predominantly white non-profit workers and the communities "for" whom they work (Guthman, 2011; Slocum, 2006). At PCFH, this is both an individual and a team responsibility. Out of the 10 PCFH Agency Partners and researchers, 9 are of visible white European heritage, and several benefit from class privilege. In reflecting on how Eddo-Lodge defines privilege as an "absence", there are organizational implications for a food security project that is made up of predominantly white and otherwise privileged folks, including those blind spots that are inherent in privilege, and a lack of representation of the people PCFH will be built for. This includes the "normalization" of whiteness, or "colorblindness" that Julie Guthman (2011) raises. I do strongly believe that the Agency Partners have learned from earlier academic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> I refer to "positionality" and "privilege" as interrelated yet distinct dynamics. "Positionality" refers to my identity, which is both simultaneously self-defined and socially assumed. It can include my heritage, my skin colour, my religion, my sexual orientation, my socioeconomic background, etc. (Goldbach, 2017). Privilege is an absence of threat and limitation (Eddo-Lodge, 2017). Both positionality and privilege impact how I am societally perceived, how I interact with others, and what experiences I undergo.

criticisms about race, "allyship" and food justice (Guthman, 2011; Slocum, 2006), however, it is still a dynamic to recognize, name and address. A small example of this in action is one of the recommendations that I've made for the forthcoming Community Consultation (projected for Fall 2018) – that a more representative Advisory Board of Agency Partners, residents, and other stakeholders become the new direction behind PCFH moving forward<sup>4</sup>.

My second major privilege is being an academic. Many academics – too many that I can pay homage to here – challenge institutional education and the power of knowledge dissemination in their work. One day, I would be honoured to be considered one of them. But the institutional structure - sometimes referred to as the "academic industrial complex" - within which we work, deserves unpacking (Daly & Cobb, 2014; Nair, 2017; Smith, 2012; Snelgrove et al., 2014). Historically, academia is criticized for participating and perpetuating a particular leaning towards Cartesian scientific discovery, a consequence of the power of ideology in shaping our narratives and our structures (Merchant, 1995). What retained the Imperialist agenda, according to Edward Said, was not just the constant flow of cheap raw materials or heavy militarization, but also, European "positional superiority" – that is, the spreading of Western knowledge and culture as superior to other ways of knowing (Said, 1994). The production of knowledge, then, does not exist outside of a global paradigm, but rather, is itself weaponized. Its victims are those cultures and knowledge systems that do not prescribe to the same linear thinking, an atmosphere which simultaneously appropriates knowledge while also denying safe space for that knowledge or those cultures to be properly accredited, "legitimized" and celebrated (Coulthard, 2008; Martinez Alier et al., 2014; Simpson, 2014; Smith, 2012).

With this in mind, I am infinitely grateful for the flexibility, freedom, and critical analysis encouraged in the MES program. My intention in returning to school was to bolster knowledge and skills that could then be directly shared with the communities for whom I work. This can be a powerful and necessary exercise: "The apparent neutrality and objectivity of normal science is criticized because in many situations it makes hard facts explicit whilst concealing both the values and the uncertainties in question, often

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> See "Recommendations" section of the PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report

neglecting local- knowledge and hiding hegemonic interests" (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014, p. 23). At PCFH, I was often introduced as an "intern" or "researchers" from York University, an immediate and undeserved distinction from others bringing more valid experience. I like to think that I offer valuable insight and critique, but more than anything, I was valuable to be able to offer hours of "free labour" as part of my MES project requirement. I must always be wary and honest about the disconnect that can exist between on-the-ground and everyday grassroots leaders fighting for food justice, and those who can hold "legitimatized" (read: not "radical") power and influence in decisionmaking, including what is published through academia.

A third privilege is wrapped in my positionality as a non-Parkdale resident. I reside in an adjacent, and incidentally, wealthier neighbourhood. I am not a community member; I come to Parkdale as a guest, and have no authority or claim to its decisionmaking. This has been an important part of recognizing that while I might be able to advance the PCFH project, any work that I have done and might continue to do is under instructions and needs determined by the community, and is delivered according to how the community could best use the information. This project was not based on my own lived experience, but rather, my academic requirements. I often found myself frustrated at the slow progress or slow response from Agency Partners, thus wrapping my ego and personal agenda into a project, which is so much bigger than my role in it. In line with PAR best practise, my involvement in PCFH precedes my Master's degree by a year and a half of relationship building, long before I thought to integrate my work there as my MES major project. Yet, while I have tried to hold this relationship honestly, the reality is, there will be (and there already have been) instances where my privilege comes at the sake of someone else's' comfort, income security, and decision-making. In acknowledgement, I work towards earning the trust of community members through relationship building and commitment to the project long before and after my York University requirements.

Of course, these privileges and positionality, true to their nature, have served an advantage as well. As will be discussed below, capacity and unpaid labour was a major need to push this project forward. My inherited financial security meant that I could work unpaid for eight months with PCFH (on top of 4 months for just Greenest City, a lead

Agency Partner of PCFH). My institutionalized education shaped my analysis, research and other skills that were helpful to the project, without requiring supervision from overstretched Agency Partners. The knowledge that I have collected through literature reviews, case studies, and interviewing has shaped insight that is valuable coming from an outsider of the community, probing for answers that have been taken for granted, and bringing a different perspective to the table. For these and others reasons, folding in privileged folks, within certain parameters, is sometimes necessary for a project's success (R. MacRae, personal communication, June 2018).

I attempt to root my privilege within my work not to evoke guilt or shame, but rather, to acknowledge the relationship that I have with my material, as well as with my audience. I am inextricably embedded within the privilege from which I came – but I am also responsible for its redistribution. As bell hooks wrote in *Homegrown*, "Privilege is not in and of itself bad... Privilege does not have to be negative, but we have to share our resources and take direction about how to use our privilege in ways that empower those who lack it" (2006, p.73). Shannon Sullivan (2006) similarly encourages us to reflect on how a genuine understanding of white privilege can be an anti-racist practice, and I would add that "understanding" ought to be coupled with gratitude (brown, 2017) and dismantling of that privilege. I thus hold the obligation to take on the process of educating myself of these points of privilege that my culture has worked to maintain, my role within them, and the perpetuating effect that that they contribute to social and environmental injustices.

### **PCFH Reflection**

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have been involved in the Parkdale Community Food Hub. I've received incredible mentorship and I've experienced substantial professional growth in facilitation skills, critical analysis, and project management. Most of all, I have been welcomed into a beautiful, fierce, energetic community, despite not being a resident myself.

The project has further shaped my hope and concerns towards the non-profit "third sector". It has reinforced the frustration in seeing a powerful group with experience, community trust and passion hindered by limited funding and resources. PCFH is lucky to have the infrastructure that we do - and that infrastructure was likely the original catalyst for animating the space as a food hub<sup>5</sup>. But the chase for funding through donors, foundations, or government streams takes substantial time and energy away from our organizational goals, and was hugely detrimental securing our potential particularly in regards to accessibility needs and paid staff.

At the risk of sounding naive, however, I would argue that the funding insecurity, though a very real challenge, proved to be most detrimental as a *mental* barrier than a straightforward financial barrier. I noticed that despite the fact that we had a workable space that could have been better animated immediately, two larger barriers emerged as a result of a concern for future funding.

The first was the low capacity of the partners to really prioritize PCFH. There is incredible power in having multiple partners involved in its planning, particularly when they come from such a varied background in service offerings in the neighbourhood, thus representing the multitude of essential intersectional conversations that ought to be happening over food security (Food Share Canada, 2016; MacRae & Winfield, 2016; Roberts, 2013). However, the detriment to this partnership model is that all of these partners, being leaders in their own organizations, have very limited time and resources to put towards the PCFH. My research project aside, little else is done between our monthly meetings, and this has led to a general sense of disconnect that I think inhibits full participation. Prioritizing resources and staff time to PCFH, I believe, was limited without the security of funding as incentive. Funding aside, with so few concrete details to work with, PCFH consistently remained low compared to Partners' other priorities.

This, unfortunately, seemed to dovetail with the second barrier, the lack of leadership on the project. An opinion shared by multiple partners is that, first, Greenest City ought to be leading the design and programming of PCFH, and second, that St. Mark's needs to decide if they will be equal partners in the project, or if they will solely be the landholder of the space. These two organizations are dealing with their own internal challenges in securing funding, in running their operations, and in handling their multiple stakeholders. While I understand that investing more energy in PCFH would not

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> See "Site Analysis" of the PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report

be a light commitment, I also think that these two indecisions are keeping the project in limbo.

I do not raise these barriers flippantly so that they can be "resolved" and the project can move forward. I raise them because I think that they have acted as distractions from the potential to start creating change in the space today. It is my opinion that the lack of funding, capacity and leadership has fuelled circular conversations and has halted any spirit of risk (however low it might be). I am by no means advocating for a quick and dirty, top-down process that has serious consequences to the community. As one of the partner interviews revealed, "risk" or experimentation is always a danger for community organizations that are reliant on external funding that demands measurable impacts and report mechanisms (Anonymous Agency Partner Interview, April 2018<sup>6</sup>). However, our reality at PCFH is that research has been conducted, consultations have been hosted, and everyday feedback has been collected by the Tsering Milky Way farmers and other residents about food-related needs in the neighbourhood. PCFH is an anomaly in the richness of assets and community expertise that it holds. There are low-cost, low-demand options that community members can initiate themselves to make use of the space immediately. Yet "failure" is not a word well accepted in the non-profit sector, partly stemming from the hyper competitive fight for limited funding resources (Anonymous Agency Partner Interview, April 2018). Perhaps this is what inspired the below Critical Analysis. Even if it is only my personal opinion that the lack of prioritization and project clarity were larger obstacles of PCFH development than funding alone, the pressure, the competition, and the inadequateness of funding across the non-profit sector has become an entrenched and debilitating culture to those who depend on it most. It is a massive issue in community organizing and social welfare provision, and is the focus of the next section of my MES Major Project Report.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Myself and Ruth Bartlett (U of T research assistant) conducted Agency Partner Interviews between April and May, 2018. For the sake of confidentiality, all interviews are simply dated "April".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See "Project History" section of PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> See "Recommendations" section of PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report

"The development of this food system need not be ascribed to either ill will or benevolence, but it is, nevertheless, a global, integrated system organized to fulfill a single purpose: the accumulation of wealth. Just as it organizes accumulation, it must organize deprivation. With its only ethic that of growth, the Market Economy of food must continue to extend its frontiers and its logic. This leaves little room for diversity, sustainability, or regional economies. It also reinforces the ideology that there is only one way to organize an economy."

- Brewster Kneen, From Land to Mouth<sup>9</sup>

## Introduction

The current funding dependency that PCFH is struggling with is a story well known amongst community organizations across and beyond Canada. We have had two unsuccessful OTF grants and one unsuccessful foundation grant for accessible infrastructure. We are a group of partners not only struggling for their own organizational core funding, but also, ironically, competing for the same pot of foundation and government money. Over the course of my Masters and especially over the past eight months, I've found myself reflecting on where the root cause of food insecurity lies, a naive attempt to explain PCFH's circumstance. I have found that, though the funding of these organizations are necessary for very pressing immediate food access needs, they are in fact, subject to the economic system that has commodified our food, and removed government from its responsibilities to provide nourishment, thereby leaving it up to the non-profit sector and community leaders to make ends meet through undemocratic and insufficient funding or philanthropy mechanisms (Riches, 2018; Riches, 2002). In reflecting upon my own experience, I've grown wary of my personal role in this non-profit model, and question where my privileges are actually most useful moving forward.

There are different ways to approach this web of systemic dynamics. For the sake of clarity, I will start with a brief summary of my reflection, before diving into further critique and details. I start with an acknowledgement that State involvement in food has a racialized and disaggregated past in Canadian settler-colonial history (Daschuk, 2013; MacRae, 2014). In the development of a capitalist economy, this history enabled food to be entangled in other state ambitions to centralize processes and ownership for the

<sup>9</sup> Kneen, Brewster. (1993). From Land to Mouth. Page 18.

stimulation of economic growth. 10 Rather than focus State attention on securing nutrition for communities through sustainable food systems, the Canadian State follows a system of economic development that poorly serves the masses, but which accumulates wealth and centralizes power. An examination of our food and agricultural policies (including our *lack* of policy) indicates how the Government of Canada supports corporate agribusiness and wealthy landowners before they support food security, labour livelihoods or ecological farming practises (Magnan, 2015). These high-level decisions serve to protect wealth accumulation amongst the few, which ultimately decreases what could have been available in government coffers for redistribution through social welfare programming or lower tax rates for the working class and poor. 11 When the State has less to spend to strengthen our social welfare net, communities, families and individuals suffer. Communities are then left to pick up the slack in creating their own local movements and community projects to meet those needs that the Canadian State fails to provide. With resource access being consolidated as it is, these communities have limited resources to carry out their necessary work, and thus enter into problematic funding relationships with private donors, foundations, or government funding programs. Resources handed over through "funding" are an insulting fraction of the accumulated wealth kept from the majority of Canadians, and works more effectively to preserve the status quo than to truly bolster food security. This is not an exhaustive examination of the problems in the food system - indeed, it barely scrapes the surface - however, the rest of this analysis endeavours to unpack our food system's contribution to wealth accumulation in Canada, and ultimately, raises the danger in treating food as a commodity.

Our broken food system will not be solved by community organizations like PCFH alone – but they can and do inspire the systemic reforms that the Canadian State must take in order to support a socially and environmentally just economy. In Parkdale,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> The "economic growth" that I refer to here is a classical economist interpretation of the "health" of a nation's economy, which promotes infinite growth at the sake of our ecology and social health (Daly & Cobb, 1994)

<sup>11</sup> It cannot, of course, be assumed that increased government expenditure (acquired, for example, through increased tax revenue) would necessarily be spent on social welfare nor should it be assumed that increased welfare spending is the most appropriate and "efficient" means of achieving equity. However, I still believe that the federal distribution mechanisms that this Analysis speaks to has the potential to strengthen the social and economic distribution so desperately needed in this country.

there is no shortage of vision and creativity to build a better food system. And they will have substantial success in the food programming they will build. However, most community organizations' success are dependent on external funding, and ultimately, on long- term systemic reform. Food insecurity is the result of both structural food policy failures and of inadequate wealth distribution. Thus, a revised Canadian social economy must first directly support just, sustainable food production and supply, and, second, take a stronger role in managing wealth accumulation and distribution in this country.

## Racialization & the Settler-Colonial Food System

The formation of Canada's food system has its roots in the violent, racialized colonial agenda of state building. Much of our (stolen) land (re)distribution in the 19th Century was the result of racialized immigration policies rather than efficient farmland allocation. The process of othering and dehumanizing Indigenous peoples accompanied the settler narrative of private property, progress and labour theory all too well, and "justified" State sanction to clear Indigenous land, bodies and culture to make room for Settler Canada (Bollier, 2014; MacRae, 2014, Merchant, 1996; Wolfe, 2006). Projects such as the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) are implicated in this process - James Daschuck writes, "Completion of the CPR signalled that subjugation of the treaty population was complete. With the infrastructure in place for large-scale settlement and the establishment of agrarian capitalism, the well-being of indigenous people in the west largely disappeared from the public agenda." (2013, p. xxii, emphasis added). The agricultural system that the Canadian State envisioned was one that moved towards wheat farming and timber, leaving little room for the fur trading or subsistence lifestyles of its Indigenous predecessors (Neu, 2000, p. 169; Troper, 1972). This early history reminds us that food was politicized and commodified long before the post-war neoliberal era and is, in fact, a corner stone in the development of how Settler Canada was built.

Racialized immigration policy that guaranteed land settlement for white European settlers is another other example of how race played a dominant role in shaping our food system. Building a food system to feed the people on Turtle Island was not the priority of 19<sup>th</sup> Century agrarianism – the objective was to fulfill colonial obligations of providing raw materials to Mother Britain (Skogstad, 1987; as cited by MacRae, 2014). Sentiments

such as Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton's agrarian focus were powerful shapers of our early immigration policy (including the 1897 Alien Labour Act). "He wanted only those settlers prepared, experienced and strong enough to overcome the rigorous challenges necessary to build a productive agricultural economy on the Canadian prairies. No others need apply." (Troper, 1972, p. 11, emphasis added). The agrarian agenda "legitimized" racialized immigration discrimination, arguing that "the best class Anglo-Saxons" could not be expected to do the work required, that Americans were an ideal choice, and that opening immigration to "Asiatics" and "Eastern Europeans" would mean "selling our birthright for a mess of pottage, and not a savoury mess at that" (Ibid, p. 12). Racialized immigration and the emergence of Settle Canada's food economy shaped not only whom were/are "welcome" in this country (as "citizens", as "labour", as "problems"), but also who was/is welcome to make and pass down wealth, land and power. This history, hundreds of years in the making, set the landscape for today's divide between those privileged by generational wealth transfers and those who inherited generational trauma, marginalization and oppression (brown, 2016; Collins, 2016; hooks & Mesa-Bains, 2006). 12

This historical acknowledgement is important in Parkdale. The 2016 Canadian Census reports that Parkdale hosts 1,505 folks of "Aboriginal Identity" (Government of Canada, 2016), statistically representing over 15% of the Toronto's overall Indigenous population of 23,065 (Government of Canada B, 2016). However, in 2017, Rotondi et al.'s pivotal research revealed just how misleading this Canadian Census data could be. Their unique interpersonal data collection identified folks typically left out of the Census collection, including those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, and those with historical fears of government surveys (Rotondi et al., 2017). In an effort to acknowledge this discrepancy, and their impact on social service provisions to Indigenous folks in the neighbourhood, Greenest City has been expanding its partnership with Parkdale's Indigenous communities, offering space, workshops and garden plots for folks to come together around food, healing, and relations with the land. PCFH would like to strengthen these relationships amidst an appreciation of being hosted on the

<sup>12</sup> Some sweeping generalizations are made here which do not take into account that class and privilege can be both upwardly and downwardly mobile - each experience with privilege and oppression are unique and multi-faceted, despite the trends highlighted in this Analysis.

traditional land of the Seneca, the Huron-Wendat, the Petun, the Mississauga of the New Credit River, and many other traditional cultures who now call this land "home".

# Food as "Commodity"

As food moved from primarily household production to a purposefully designed commodity, it was quickly engulfed in our capitalist economy. Without the primary aim to provide nutrition to the people, food was allowed to be privatized, developed and speculated just like any other complex market commodity - somehow disregarding the reality that, like water and air, food is a non-negotiable need for human survival (Kneen, 1993, MacRae, 2011; Riches, 2018). Brewster Kneen cheekily names this complexity the "logic" of the food system, with a belief that everyone can understand logic, and that its understanding "can serve to liberate from the fatalism and sense of powerlessness that is so common in Western culture" (1993, p. 17). This "logic" is ultimately defined by his term, "distancing" - "separating people from the sources of their food and nutrition with as many interventions as possible" (Ibid).

Addressing this "distance" is a core philosophy behind PCFH. The project takes on a similar understanding of food security as the 5 A's of Food Security<sup>13</sup> outlined by Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security: Availability, Accessibility, Adequacy, Acceptability, and Agency (CSFS, 2018). The 5 A's acknowledge that "food security", as a term, is not limited to the ability to afford food, but must also include the choice of where that food comes from, how it is grown, and that its shared in community and with dignity (CSFS, 2018; Food Secure Canada, 2015; Riches, 2018; Saul & Curtis, 2013; Tarasuk et al., 2014 Wakefield et al., 2012). This broader interpretation is important to think about when datasets such as The *Food By Ward* Report are published. Food by Ward identified 7 emergency food relief programs in Parkdale, compared to the

Availability: Sufficient food for all people at all times.

Accessibility: Physical and economic access to food at all times.

Adequacy: Access to food that is nutritious and safe, and produced in environmentally sustainable

Acceptability: Access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights.

Agency: The policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security.

<sup>13</sup> The Five A's of Food Security (CSFS, 2018)

neighbourhood average of 4 (TFPC, 2016). However, as one Agency Partner interview revealed, the demand for this food relief is so high in South Parkdale that this higher than average service provision is still inadequate (April, 2018). Further, emergency food provision does little to correct the social, ecological, cultural and economic distancing to which Brewster refers (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches, 2018; Saul & Curtis, 2013; Tarasuk et al., 2014 Wakefield et al., 2012). Thus PCFH will focus on reconnecting residents with their food, their wellbeing, and their community. 14

This is important because the commodification of food into the market economy "distances" food from its use-value (to feed the hungry), replacing it with its exchangevalue (Kneen, 1993; Farley, 2012). To be fair, the exchange-value is not simply a neoliberal measurement of *profit*, but also, of *yield*. Urbanization and industrialization has greatly decreased the world's arable landmass, requiring that agricultural production increase its efficiency rather than its acreage (Ali-Bekhet, 2010). The National Farmers Union found that from 2006-2011 alone, Canada's farmland decreased 7 million acres (2015). There is legitimate concern as to how to feed our swelling global population, which is projected to hit 9 billion people by 2050 (FAO, 2009). One of the most powerful messages behind the market economy is that of "efficiency", and thus, the Canadian State has followed the example of a globally enforced Agricultural-Industrial Complex (Magnan, 2015). Supporters of the Complex have argued that the solution to global food security is through increased agricultural production, particularly using genetic engineering and chemical inputs, which will increase crop resistance, product diversity, and most importantly, overall yields (Bourlag, 1997; Finnigan, 2017). Within this reliance on technology lies the dangerous assumption that natural agricultural productivity can be continuously substituted without causing irreversible damage to the biosphere. Malthusian fears of not being able to feed the world's rising population "justifies" the push towards innovative agro-technology, some of which endanger the sustainability of our ecosystems.

Approaching the "yield" question this way continues to "commodify" agriculture and food as a product, rather than a human right. In Canada, this means that food has become, first and foremost, an import-export industry, rather than a sustainable system

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See PCFH Agency Partner Consultation Report for details

that nourishes both people and planet (Food Secure Canada, 2015; MacRae, 2014; Magnam, 2015). This is the dominant discourse in global food trade, despite knowing that 70% of people receive their food from peasant and/or local farmers, who use 25% or less of the total resources used to feed the world (The ETC Group, 2017, p.6). On the flip side, the Agricultural-Industrial Complex model accounts for 75% of the world's resource intensity in agriculture production, while only providing food to 30% of the global population (The ETC Group, 2017, p. 6; Holt-Giménez, 2017). In an effort to align with the former and reject the latter, PCFH is trying to empower residents with the authority to access what food they want and how they want it, consistent with the concept of food sovereignty (Clapp, 2016; CSFS, 2018). However, PCFH and other food justice/security groups are limited in what they can provide to this alternative social economy when compared to State support that, unfortunately upholds a much larger and for Parkdale's purposes, less desirable, ideology. Food insecurity in Parkdale, fundamentally, is the result of two interrelated dynamics: first, State support of structures that uphold conventional agriculture and, second, an inadequate State involvement to curb the concentration of wealth, power, and ownership that has exacerbated income inequality.

### State Support for Conventional Agriculture: Subsidies

Like other products circulated through the market economy, food is far more regulated than the "invisible hand" principle might let on. Previous State interference evolved out of the Keynesian style approach that emerged in recognition that food was indeed a commodity requiring careful attention. The Neoliberal narrative allows for government involvement in market affairs in the case of market "failures". Subsidies<sup>15</sup>, for instance, were originally created to support those industries that do not just stabilize

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Throughout this paper, I refer to "subsidies" as a generic term to describe the various mechanisms that the State can take to support an industry, a process, or an ideology. Agricultural subsidies themselves can fall under "'Red" and "Amber" (trade distorting), "Blue" (direct payments for production intensification) and "Green" (research, infrastructure, etc.) (MacRae, 2014). My argument is not that "subsidies" themselves are improper mechanisms – in fact, I would argue for *more* governmental support of agriculture and food. However, I do believe that the current subsidy structures favour industrial agriculture and prioritizes an import-export food economy. It must be recognized that while there are many subsidy structures in support of conventional agriculture, there are very few that would support ecological practices and community food efforts such as PCFH.

an economy, but also protect the public interest (Pfieiffer, 2006). This is particularly evident in agriculture, which fell under special consideration because it produces a necessary good: food. (However, remember that these subsidies and government support have a much darker history of supporting racialized settler colonial visions as well). Theoretically, these protections were intended for consumers just as much as for producers: for example, our national supply management schemes were originally designed to enable Canadian farmers to still compete in a market dominated by Agribusiness (MacRae, 2014). Depending on the circumstances, the Canadian State has also experimented with the boundaries of what might be considered too much market control. Rod MacRae reminds us that Canada has experience in a more centrally controlled "Demand Supply Coordination" (DSC) model – during World War II, Canada was one of several countries to actively adopted a Keynesian approach to food policy to ensure that there was equitable distribution and compensation during wartime (2014). Though this is an oversimplified account of a more complicated historical time, this DSC model is worth mentioning if only to showcase that another workable food system was and *could* once again be functional in Canada.

Today, government mechanisms provide less direct support to agriculture and food, and instead support indirect industries or programs that bolster conventional agriculture and food distribution (Kneen, 1993; MacRae, 2014; Magnan, 2015). Overtime, and particularly through the "Globalization" surge of the late 1980s, largescale national food subsidies, said to be protectionist-style interference into global commodity trading, started to disappear worldwide. In Canada however, the Agricultural Industrial Complex is still upheld through State support of the Energy Sector, and a movement towards a more sustainable system requires its divestment (Yiridoe, 2014; Bataille & Melton, 2015). Conventional agriculture being the fossil-fuel dependent industry that it is, energy subsidies represent a powerful way to support the "efficient" yield narrative that make industrial agrochemical inputs and mechanization "less costly" than labour-intensive ecological farming - particularly oil extraction and natural gas processing. The Global Subsidies Initiative reports that Canada spent over \$2.8 billion on subsidies on the oil sector in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland/Labrador (which accounts for 97% of the nation's oil extraction) (2012). The federal government also

increased subsidy funding in 2015 through the Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance (ACCA) for liquefied natural gas exploration (Touchette, 2015). These "subsidies" can cover anything from upstream production, tax breaks, mechanization and equipment, exploration activities, development, extraction, environmental repair, public funding, and social enterprise spending (Ibid). In comparison, the Canadian government spent \$1.25 billion on renewable energy R&D projects across federal, provincial and municipal budgets combined- not even half of which was just given as a subsidy to only three provinces (Ivey, 2016). With these government programs in place, the Agricultural-Industrial Complex's large scale and highly mechanized food production, processing and transportation *appear* to be the most "efficient" model.

Of course, nothing about this system is "efficient". State support of oil & gas and other industries is economically perverse. If, for example, farmers apply additional fertilizer to compensate for soil erosion and nutrient loss, that input is actually considered an additional item for GDP growth (Myers & Kent, 2011, p. 11). Rather than an indication of farm management failure, these trade distortions, which appear to positively contribute to our country's economic growth. This serves to distract and cover up the high costs of externalized damages in so many cases of social and environmental injustice, where major polluters or contributors are rarely the same groups who have to "pay" for the damage (Martinez-Alier, 2014; Nixon, 2011). Small-scale farmers look to off-farm income to make ends meet, migrant workers have very few safety regulations to trust when dealing with toxic materials, etc. Our lowest-income consumers deal with the highest food-related health problems such as diabetes, heart disease and malnutrition because of our economic support for corn, salt and sugar production (Roberts, 2013). By subsidizing the cost of production of these products, the Canadian State is essentially shifting the costs of "choosing" healthy, nutritious food onto the consumer. And once food becomes a commodity like any other product, the "consumer" becomes a "customer", and if that "customer" lacks sufficient funds to pay for more nutritious food that the government does not subsidize, then they are denied choice, and thus rely on lownutrient and unhealthy foods to meet their basic hunger needs.

Low-income communities like Parkdale notice this shift in nutritional responsibility. Thankfully, Parkdale is not a "food desert" like other Toronto

neighbourhoods (Richer et al., 2010). However, there are fears of turning into a food desert in the near future given that retail rent on Queen Street West keeps rising (Kamizaki, 2016) and that the local No Frills, a staple food retailer for the community, is rumoured to be slated for redevelopment. Because food is seen as a "soft" cost (compared to hydro or rent, for example), "choosing" healthy, nutritious food may not necessarily be an "option" for low-income Parkdale communities (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches, 2018; Tarasuk et al., 2014). Part of this is due to inadequate income, but in Parkdale, nutrition and connectivity to food is also tied to mental health challenges, cultural disconnect (forced or otherwise) from food, and lack of kitchen access or food "literacy" (Agency Partner Interviews, 2018; Kamizaki, 2016). In building PCFH, our programming faces several of these food security challenges: our own growing space cannot feed the entire neighbourhood, organic food for all is cost-prohibitive for a non-profit, and not all culturally appropriate food can be grown "locally". The array of challenges that PCFH and other food justice organizations face is indicative not just of support of the energy sector in conventional agriculture, but also where the government is *not* subsidizing (i.e. ecological farming practices, small, local supply chain management, etc.). This lack of active support in public expenditure then becomes compounded by the Canadian States inadequate taxation and distribution mechanisms, which I argue have grave impacts on the concentration of land, wealth and power in our country.

### State Support for Conventional Agriculture: Taxation

Low corporate tax rates and inequitable income tax rates play a role in the State's indirect support of conventional agriculture, and lack of support of local food economies. Social welfare expenditure is dependent on taxation revenues (Bryant, 2010), and thus, the decreasing rate of corporate tax rates in Canada ought to be examined as a potential threat to social expenditure. The Corporate Tax Rate on General Income has dropped from 36% in the 1980s to 15% today - from 2007 to 2012 alone, Stephen Harper's Conservative Government reduced the rate by 6% (Library of Parliament, 2012). At 15%, it is the lowest total tax index of all G7 countries (KPMG, 2016). A small, but powerful group of "efficiency" experts - corporate agribusiness, energy business and large-scale land-owning producers (those that promise increased agricultural yields to feed our

growing population) - benefit from Canadian corporate and income taxation policies. A low corporate tax rate is meant to attract foreign investment and stimulate economic development – however, it is large corporations who benefit the most from these low rates, especially during economic downturns (Yiu, 2015). A smaller corporation has smaller profit that will be impacted by taxation, fluctuating their savings by maybe a few thousands of dollars, whereas a major corporation's profits can benefit by several million by a lower tax rate (Ibid). The defense oft made for low corporate taxes is that the private sector more efficiently distributes wealth through labour and (re)investment than State mechanisms. However, the trend we've seen in increasing inequality indicates that this trickle down economics is not playing out as it was said it would, and rather, that the opposite is occurring (Magnan, 2015). Further, capital investment in corporations has not necessarily translated into more jobs, or fair wages. The Broadbent Institute reports that while our national GDP grew by 50% from 1981 to 2011, the real median hourly wage only grew by 10% (Jackson, 2015, 3).

This dynamic reminds us of how the centralization of corporate wealth has likewise allowed for the concentration of *private* wealth. One way this is problematic is that corporate tax rates can actually decrease the income rates of high-income households. The original protective purpose of the Corporate Tax Rate was a "withholding" measure to tax the equity earned through the corporation that would not otherwise be taxed through personal income tax collection. However, as the Library of Parliament *Primer on Federal Corporate Taxes* reports, the appropriate equity deserving of taxation becomes distorted when the company is foreign owned, whether capital was reinvested in the business, whether dividends were paid out, or what expenses were deducted before tax (2012). The Primer goes on to say that "the extent to which the corporate tax burden may be shifted from shareholders to consumers or employees is, however, affected by market forces, and varies across firms and industries as well as over time" (Ibid). Within our system exist several opportunities for high-income owning-class earners to avoid taxation by conflating capital wealth and income wealth. If, for example, the owner of a business sells it for \$100,000, that individual owner is taxed at the 15% corporate tax rate. However, if an individual earns \$100,000 through income, they are taxed at the highest 33% income bracket – not to mention that capital sales have just a

50% "inclusion rate", meaning that only 50% of its original value is taxable (Macdonald, 2014).

Further inequity is seen in just our current income taxation rates alone. The Corporate Tax Rate has dropped 11% in less than 40 years (Ibid), rendering it the same rate or lower than Personal Income Tax rates, which range from 15% to 33% of taxable income (Government of Canada, 2018). The 15% rate starts at taxable incomes of \$46,605 – yet the wealthiest Canadians earning over \$205,842 (four times the income) are only paying double in income taxes. Further, individuals do not enjoy the same exemptions that corporations do – we pay our taxes based on our gross income, before our expenses. If individuals or households were taxed like business was, after expense deductions, than perhaps many would not be taxed at all, shifting the wealth accumulation throughout the country (Yiu, 2015). 2014 was the first year ever that more than half of the Canadian Government's revenue came from personal income tax, not corporate tax (Tencer, 2013). That year, the Government of Canada collected \$34.6 billion in corporate income tax – if the tax had been at 30% (5% lower than the American corporate tax rate, for comparison), another \$30 billion could have been generated for social expenditure (Yiu, 2015) – though of course, there is no guarantee that this is how the surplus would have been spent.

### Concentration in the Food System

The concentration of agricultural land ownership, production, and retail is at an all time high as a result of our food system failures. Only four retail firms generated 62% of all Canadian grocery sales in 2011 (Clapp, 2016, p. 117). The average Canadian farm is three times the size of the average sixty years ago (Robicheau, 2012, p. 244). The most recent 2016 CANSIM tables reflect that the total number of farms have fallen from 205,730 to 193,492 since 2011 – yet while all small-medium farms followed this decreasing trend, micro-farms (under 10 acres) and massive-scale farms of 3,520 acres or over were the only categories to *increase* in those 5 years (StatsCan, 2016). 75% of food is produced by farms that make over \$250,000 in annual net revenue, despite only representing 15% of all farms (AAFC, 2007, as quoted in Robicheau, 2012, p. 245). Increasingly, these farms are owned by non-farmers – in fact, the regulations around the

Farm Credit Corporation (FCC) were actually changed in 2001 so that the FCC could lend credit to "farm-related businesses that are not majority farmer-owned" (NFU, 2015, emphasis added). The FCC pays a dividend to the federal government, and is an active part of the creation of *Growing Forward 2* and the AAFC policy related to growing agribusiness enterprise and expanding export business (NFU, 2015). While this concentrates wealth through maximizing profit in larger conglomerates, it also concentrates *power* within the food system. If, for example, the four major retailers demand a particular production standard be enacted, smaller producers and retailers have little bargaining power to do anything but comply (Rotz & Fraser, 2015). Small-scale producers become "price-takers" in buying inputs as well as in competing to sell at market prices (NFU, 2015).

This is why the "income" argument of food access is too simplistic. The PCFH cannot achieve food security for all of Parkdale – the community is just up against too much. One way this concentration trickles into Parkdale is in the competition between large, medium and small-scale food distributors – including for-profit retail models and non-profit good food markets or emergency food distribution models. The No Frills outlet at Dufferin and King streets is a major source of affordable, fresh food for many Parkdale residents. A simple economy of scales enables No Frills to be able to sell their produce, dairy, proteins and whole-wheat products at costs that are incomparable to smaller green groceries, the West End Food Coop, or the Sorauren Farmer's market – yet the latter are the venues where the community return on investment would be the highest.

Income inequality is a major part of this – but the concentration of power, land and wealth in our food system is secured not through income earnings, but through government support structures for some industries and companies over others, and through an inadequate taxation and distribution regime. This system can hardly be considered an "efficient" means of supporting the nourishment and wellbeing of a country. The impacts of this economic model are felt in low-income, racialized, oppressed and otherwise marginalized communities, and the responsibility, like in any case of social or environmental injustice, falls onto the shoulders of those with the fewest resources to combat it (Martinez-Alier, 2014; Nixon, 2011).

## Funding & Philanthropy

Enter philanthropy. Giving to thy neighbour is by no means a new concept, and food provision has historically been at the forefront. Yet food relief, at the *scale* that it operates today, is a relatively new phenomenon. Food banks first emerged in Canada in the 1980s as a short-term, emergency relief system during austerity cuts and economic instability (MacRae, 2014; Riches, 2018; Riches, 2012). However, the need for emergency food access has yet to decline and food banks and emergency food relief have only increased since (Riches, 2002; Riches, 2018). Corporate tax rates started their drastic decline in the same era that the individual need of food banks went from an "emergency" and temporary measure, to the "norm". Reduced tax rates diminished the revenue that the government *could* spend on social welfare programming.

Instead, corporations and individuals who benefitted from government support mechanisms or taxation policy are playing an increasing role in philanthropy and funding in "vulnerable" communities (that are made vulnerable by those same policies). Of the 13 foundations included in the McConnell Foundation Report *Sustainable Food Systems: A Landscape Assessment for Canadian Philanthropy*, food funders across Canada donated \$252,670,000 to 8,395 projects in 2016 (2017, 19). 80% of food funders who have donated in the last 5 years have contributed to "Food Access & Nutrition", 78.6% to "Education", 71.4% to "Social Enterprise Development", and 71.4% for Food Distribution or Storage (Ibid, p. 21). All of the Agency Partners involved in PCFH depend on external funding – and nearly all of them are vying for the same pots of money. Philanthropy and government grants are, and will continue to be, a very necessary part of non-profit survival, and, I would argue, community "resilience".

So-called critical vernacular to describe marginalized communities has moved from the attitude that folks are in need and dependent on handouts, to the celebration of communities that are "innovative", have "agency", and are "resilient". I wholeheartedly agree with the principle of this thinking, and if a community, organization or individual chooses to self-identify as "resilient", I respect that choice, and further, I understand the history from which that term has emerged (Rotz & Fraser, 2015). However, I'm also wary that the term "resilient" can actually celebrate the unpaid, and often, gendered, labour that communities *have* to take on because government provision has failed them

(How to Be An Ally, 2017). I worry that the term has been in danger of being co-opted by the very institutions and governing structures that created the circumstances requiring such "resilience" in the first place. I worry further that we are celebrating "resilience" without addressing how our economic system actively abandoned those communities. And ultimately, no *celebration* of "resilience" is going to grant that community the systems change for which they are fighting.

Facing the circumstances that our food economy has put them in, communities thus enter into funding relationships, whether they are with government, with foundations, with private institutions/corporations or with individual donors (or more likely, with all four). This becomes dangerous for three reasons. First, it is precarious. Second, it is incomparable to the amount of money that *could* have been equitably redistributed with a more social economic mode. And third, it does little to combat the core root of the problem – in fact, it just might perpetuate it.

First, there is much criticism about the precarious nature of external funding. Part of this is because of the short-term "interest" that a funder might have in a project – however, more dangerous than that is the belief that nonprofits have to show "progress", "impact results", and "sustainable business strategy" the same way that a for-profit operation would. A very small percentage of grants are longer than 3 years (McConnell, 2017). As a result, the receiving community must design their program or activities around that limited timeline, thus fragmenting their work, let alone their impact. PCFH, for example, can only propose an activity within the scope of whatever grants it is applying for, and it is rare for these to include operational costs or salaries. With no guarantees that the grant can be extended, or another grant can be secured, it could be irresponsible for an organization to plan beyond its guaranteed funding. We see the effect of this at PCFH in the mental paralysis that the partner agencies experienced when our funding applicants proved unsuccessful. To move forward without funding security could jeopardize the payment and livelihoods of the staff we might hire, the businesses of those entrepreneurs we might support, our capacity to complete our programming in full, and even the food security of those who might take home our produce.

It's not just that our mission becomes precarious with unstable funding, it's that the dissemination of funding itself is precarious. Funding typically follows trends, though unfortunately those trends are not necessarily based on community *needs*. In "trend" with the transition from "dependence" to "resiliency", we now see government grants, foundations, and private donors looking for projects that do not simply feed people, but rather, that create social enterprise opportunities, that provide food literacy training, or that encourage urban agriculture initiatives (McConnell, 2017) – communities that indicate a plan for "resilience". Funders want projects to have strong business plans, to be working towards a sustainable revenue stream, and to create innovative solutions to social challenges. A significant portion of food funding right now goes towards "innovative" and "emerging" projects, while less goes to projects that fade from being the new, shiny initiative (Levkoe et al. 2018). Projects sometimes have to shift missions, programming or outcomes in order to attract the latest funding trend (Levkoe et al., 2018; Wakefield et al., 2012). Yet being "sexy" today grants no security for the future. Ultimately, all of these caveats and concerns ought to remind us that food security is not something that can be left reliant on the handouts of ad-hoc government, foundation or private funding.

Second, food philanthropy and emergency food provision receives accolades despite representing an insulting amount of shared resources compared to the wealth accumulation retained. This is an ultimate luxury of the owners of assets and resources – they can *choose* to give (or not), and the decision-making process is inevitably going to involve human bias (I'll discuss this "bias" in a few pages). The 15 funding organizations that included both their total assets and their granting expenditure to the McConnell Foundation's report gave away an astounding total of \$339,950,000 in 2016. However, their total recorded assets came to \$30,021,130,000 – thus keeping 88% of their assets (McConnell, 2017). I by *no means* want to belittle how far nearly \$340 million can go to help food security initiatives across Canada, or how beautiful it is to see folks want to contribute to helping others. And I *do not think* that the solution is to "eat the rich", or to shame wealthy people for not giving away their entire fortune – not only is that polarizing and stigmatizing, it is unrealistic, and regardless, it too is just a band-aid solution that does not address the powerful economy that created this disparity.

Which leads to the third challenge: that food philanthropy not only fails to address the root of the problem, but that it is *part* of it, in two distinct yet interdependent ways. The first is that reliance on the non-profit sector and "community resilience" to find funding

to cover programs gives the illusion that this "market failure" has been corrected, and that the government does not need to step in. Janet Poppendieck, author of *Sweet Charity*, is critically acclaimed (emphasis on "critically") for this opinion when speaking specifically to food banks or soup kitchens in the United States (1998). Yet Sarah Wakefield et al. (2012) and Graham Riches (2002, 2018) have found similar circumstances across Canada. While this is sometimes dismissed as a critique of supposedly archaic "food handout" style philanthropy, Tiffany Lethabo King & Ewuare Osayande (2017) argue that this perpetuation is apparent even with progressive social justice philanthropy today (of which, incidentally, there is not much of in Canada anyway).

Because food provision services allow for the government to evade its responsibility to ensure nutrition for all, the third sector services that develop in turn become a part of the "shadow state" (Wakefield et al., 2002; Wolch, 1989). The shadow state appears well meaning in that it picks up the pieces of those services left unprovided by the State. While this enables the State to evade its responsibility to social service provision, it also inextricably ties up the third sector in funding and contracts - however, *without* the democratic decision-making of social service provision that made governments the appropriate body for provision in the first place (Ibid). Rather than address the economic "failure" that *is* the emergency food programming, the non-profit & funding dynamic serves to distort and ultimately, to hide the problem, removing the urgency for the Canadian State to pivot its support from the Agriculture Industrial Complex towards a sustainable food system (Poppendieck, 1998; Riches, 2018; Saul & Curtis, 2013; Tarasuk et al., 2014; Wakefield et al., 2012).

The other way in which philanthropy actually plays into our economic and social crisis is that, without addressing the history of racialized and oppressive wealth accumulation, it enables the *control* of assets to remain in (typically white), wealthy hands. Integrating racial and class analysis, King & Osayande argue that even progressive philanthropy continues to protect white wealth accumulation because the capital base from which it draws from has been generated by both the white Left and the white Right through a long history of capital oppression and exploitation (2017). Further, in acting as "brokers" between the exploiters and the exploited, progressive philanthropy keeps the control of capital in the hands of white wealth, and out of direct access from people of

colour (Ibid). Note that this "brokering" position also enables white wealth and philanthropy to continue to accumulate through charitable tax receipts and annual interest gains. Since the 1990s, Canadians have enjoyed a tax return for their charitable donation, at a rate of 50% or higher (Burrows, 2016). What this means for government expenditure is that for every \$1.00 of private capital donated, \$0.50 of social expenditure is taken out of circulation, and given back to private donors. The grave danger here is that while philanthropy and funding are largely considered to be a private personal decision, social expenditure is not. So when the Canadian State (failed as our electoral system is) does not provide food security for communities, the "shadow state" steps in, but they are reliant on private or "biased" funding networks. I am not demonizing the biased selection process of philanthropists - it is natural that a personal process is going to be informed by personal experience. "Funder A" is going to be attracted to "Group X" for some personal reason, and "Funder B" is going to be attracted to "Group Y" for another reason. This is not inherently wrong – but it is part of the reason why personal or foundational giving can *not* be the means of redistribution of wealth. This undemocratic approach effectively results in the private decision making of public funds and allocation (Wakefield et al., 2012; Collins, 2016). What complicates this further is that community food organizations themselves do not stand on equal grounds - indeed, there are some models here in Toronto that, for a variety of reasons - including the race, privilege or connections of their leadership (Wakefield et al., 2012; King & Osayande, 2017) - can attract significantly more dollars from public and private funding than others. Canada's increased rate of philanthropic giving over the years is not necessarily worth celebrating if it ultimately represents that private capital is increasing its control on public investment.

External funding is necessary for community food organizations, absolutely. But it is necessary because our economic system has made it so. For wealthy families to continue to donate through foundations alone, for corporations to only develop corporate social responsibility platforms, and for individuals to simply be giving their money to an organization of their choice, is, ultimately, a plug in the wall. There is potential in Parkdale, a highly "mixed" income community, for wealthier neighbours to be contributing to protecting the equity of all residents, however, we already know what limitations this might have. Rather than fixing anything more than temporarily, this style of external funding provides both the public with a false sense of food security, and decreases pressure from the Canadian state to adjust existing taxation policies or subsidies for more systemic change (Poppendieck, 1998). Yet Poppendieck's greatest concern is that our philanthropic culture is actually *normalizing* inequality and food security, and is causing a disintegration of our social fabric as a result (ibid). Painting a vision of "us" vs. "them", as separate groups (with wildly different problems, and different abilities to address those problems) removes any collective effort to combat our economic food system together (Collins, 2016; Poppendieck 1998).

Many good food advocates argue that the primary cause of food insecurity is income inequality (Poppendieck, 1998; Tarasuk, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2012). I do not disagree that income inequality is the most immediately related injustice impacting food insecurity. However, I would argue that income inequality is more of a *symptom* of the cause - which is an entirely broken, unjust food system, which of course, has developed under the umbrella of a larger, oppressive global economy. Rather than try to pinpoint a single root causation, I have concluded that insisting that food is a commodity like any other is *itself* a market failure, and that all expenditure (including tax breaks, subsidies, and philanthropic giving) to stabilize this system is merely symptomatic of its failure. The limited scope of this reflection focuses on how the Canadian State abandons "nourishment" as the basis for our food system, thereby shirking food provision to communities and the "shadow state". Relying on the precarity of funding and philanthropy, be it government grants or private foundations, is an irresponsible, undemocratic, and highly problematic guise to cover the gaps in the system. To continue with this system only alleviates pressure on the government to allocate resources away from conventional food and towards a truly sustainable food system, for people and planet.

### **Conclusion: Personal Implications**

As an individual implicated in this system by my positionality and privilege, as well as my role in the "shadow state" at the Parkdale Community Food Hub, I have strongly questioned where my privilege and responsibilities really ought to focus. As one Agency Partner interview revealed (2018), Parkdale is a neighbourhood that is well equipped with community organizing and social service agencies – however, they are

struggling with the *volume* of challenges in mental health, affordable housing and income security. As this Critical Reflection reviews, there is both a need and a frustration for the immediate relief of these social challenges, which are sometimes prioritized at the cost of more long-term, systemic strategy. To use my privilege to advocate for systemic change on behalf of marginalized communities could be inappropriate as well, if it maintains King & Osayande's "brokering" relationship between those in control of land, wealth and power and those who are seeking access to it (2017). There is a phrase popular amongst anti-racism educators and organizers: "Collect your people". Following this wisdom, and the warnings flagged by Rachel Slocum, Julie Guthman and other food justice advocates, I will continue to collaborate with PCFH as the project requires my help, but I will be putting the brunt of my energy into the organizing of my own community - which is nearly exclusively white, university educated, and wealthy – to take the responsibility of education upon ourselves, to fight alongside established organizers for systemic redistributive justice, to move our money towards social justice projects that receive little to no funding attention, and to advocate for equitable distribution through maximum income strategies, adequate taxation and distribution mechanisms, limited generational wealth transfers, and so forth. More than anything else, working with PCFH has exemplified that expertise, ambition, passion and community "resilience" still face extraordinary barriers when trying to make small change in a broken food system. So while no single human or fight may be able to take on this system alone, we - including Canada's wealthy - have a responsibility to our ancestors, our future generations, and our Earth, to do so collectively.

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