



TORONTO YOUTH
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

Gathering.



*a Youth Perspective
on Food Issues*

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Letter from the Editors

The first volume of *Gathering* set a high standard in bringing a youth voice and vision to the discussion of food systems. For this second volume, we aimed to meet this standard, and with the help of the TYFPC community we are happy to be able to confidently say that we do not disappoint!

Volume two showcases the budding scholarly potential of Canada's youth in the food movement, presenting insightful commentary, analysis and primary research on complex food systems issues. Articles shed light on glaring gaps in Canada's food systems infrastructure (Malich 2014; Marsic 2014), make suggestions on how to improve this infrastructure (Fullan 2014), and present visions on what a more sustainable food system might look in the future (May-Lindsay 2014). A book review of Vandana Shiva's *Stolen Harvest* (Goyette 2014), also introduces to our readers a great text for those wanting to learn more about the global tensions and localized implications of our contemporary food system.

Importantly, a lot of what *Gathering* is all about is building capacity for positive food systems change. In putting together volume two, we devoted a lot of energy into this aspect of *Gathering's* mission. We developed a new peer review process, expanding our editorial board to include experts (PhD candidates and food systems professionals) and burgeoning experts (undergraduate and graduate students) nationwide. In this way, volume two was able to broaden the pool of ideas and talent contributing to its pages, and stand as a great experience for both authors and peer-reviewers (and editors!) alike.

But the fun is just about to begin! We are pleased to present you with the culmination of these combined efforts, and hope that you will be inspired by the work of these young authors as we have been.

Enjoy!

The Editorial Team

Joel Fridman, Dilya Niezova, Juneeya Varghese

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International Obligations and Civil Society Mobilization:

A Commentary on the Visit to Canada by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

By Erika Malich

Introduction

While Canada is considered an extremely affluent and developed country – ranking 11th in the Human Development Index – it is not immune to social development issues such as poverty, homelessness and food insecurity (UNDP, 2013). Food insecurity, for example, while not as severe as in some less developed countries, is still a prevalent issue. In 2011-12, 1.1 million households experienced food insecurity, defined as occurring when “food quality and/or quantity are compromised, typically associated with limited financial resources” (Statistics Canada, 2013). The fact that Canada is a relatively wealthy country makes the issue of food insecurity even less excusable; it is not an issue of a lack of resources, but a problem with the food system more broadly.

Currently, Canada does not have a unified food policy or strategy. Instead, food policy is relatively uncoordinated, with a wide range of departments and agencies dealing with issues surrounding food production and processing, foreign aid, nutrition, or social food issues (MacRae, 2011). Other countries have aimed to establish a coherent, national food policy, such as Scotland, which implemented *Recipe for Success: Scotland’s National Food and Drink Policy* in 2009 (Scottish Government, 2009). Similar efforts at creating a

national food policy in Canada have not been effective. One example, the Canada Action Plan of Food Security (CAPFS), was created in response to Canada’s obligations committed to at the World Food Summit (CAPFS, 1998). Though this plan was ultimately cancelled (MacRae, 2011).

Aiming to fill the gap of government action, civil society organizations (CSOs) have fiercely advocated for and mobilized over food issues in Canada. Advocacy directed at changing provincial and federal-level policy has been a key strategy for many food security CSOs (Koc et al., 2008). Many of these organizations advocate for food security and food sovereignty, such as Food Secure Canada (FSC) (FSC, 2007). While food security is understood, as peoples having access to adequate amounts and quantities of food. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, reaches further to include the “right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems” (Via Campesina, 2011). To further the goals of food sovereignty, FSC began advocating for a national food policy in Canada. In 2011, FSC, along with other collaborators, released: *Resetting the Table: A People’s Food Policy* (PFP). The PFP is a grassroots food policy project created by over 3,500 individuals who were engaged through “kitchen table talks” (small public consultations) and other events

(People’s Food Policy, 2011).¹

As a member of the United Nations (UN), Canada is party to certain international obligations and norms. As a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Canada must recognize the “right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food...” (ICESCR, 1966). Canada is also a member of the Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the UN (FAO), which unanimously adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security in 2004 (FAO, 2005). While Canada has shown leadership in their role of international food aid in response to international food crises, there has been a lack of a similar degree of attention to food issues at home (Human Rights Council, 2013).

The UN also evaluates Canada’s implementation of its international obligations; this has occurred through UN special procedures, such as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (hereafter referred to as “Special Rapporteur”), who is tasked with monitoring the global right to food. The term “right to food” is defined as having the “right to regular, permanent and unrestricted access...

¹ Many groups worked towards the creation of the People’s Food Policy, however, it has now been taken up by Food Secure Canada.

to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people... and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear” (United Nations, 201). The Special Rapporteur’s mandate includes promoting the realization of the right to food within a country at both local and national levels, examining obstacles to achieving the right to food, and offering proposals of how to overcome these obstacles (United Nations, n.d.).

The Special Rapporteur, Olivier de Schutter, visited Canada from May 6-16, 2012, to monitor and assess the realization of the right to food in Canada. The Canadian visit is significant for several reasons. The

“ While Canada has shown leadership in their role of international food aid in response to international food crises, there has been a lack of a similar degree of attention to food issues at home ”

mission marked the Special Rapporteur’s first visit to a developed country (Schmidt, 2012). The mission is also significant for Canadian CSOs mobilizing around food security, in how they could re-frame the issue in terms of human rights, and how this was able to connect them with different networks. The reaction of the Canadian government to the mission is also significant as it follows a theme of the Government’s negative reactions towards the UN (Neve, 2013).

While not all UN special proce-

dures visits create substantive policy changes, most states have made at least modest attempts to implement recommendations after a country visit (Piccone, 2011). At the very least, the special procedures have helped to confirm and call attention to a problem that CSOs had been previously championing, in this way serving to legitimate issues and their urgency (Piccone, 2011). This has in the past allowed for government action where CSOs had previously seen none. That being said, it is often difficult to prove any causality between a special rapporteur’s recommendations and a state’s action, in part due to the fact that states will often be reluctant to credit their policy changes to a UN recommendation, or that they are motivated by domestic political factors (Piccone, 2011).

Visit of the Special Rapporteur: Reactions

Prior to his visit, the Special Rapporteur received briefing notes from various interested parties, ranging from a joint civil society submission, to submissions from the federal New Democratic Party (Joint Civil Society Submission, 2012; NDP submission, 2012). In these briefing notes, interested parties expressed their views on the right to food in Canada, as well as problems and potential solutions. Common themes in these

briefing notes touched upon food security in Canada being related to poverty and issues of welfare, unemployment insurance, and housing, while highlighting specific challenges for Canada’s aboriginal peoples.

During his mission, the Special Rapporteur visited with members of various levels of government, and met with civil society in meetings across the country. Organizations such as FSC were very involved in setting up these civil society meetings, which brought together community members, academics, specialists and activists around issues such as farming, migrant workers, poverty reduction, school nutrition, obesity, and foreign food aid (Bronson, 2013).

The Federal Government, conversely, was reluctant to meet with the Special Rapporteur. Until Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq met with the Special Rapporteur near the end of his mission, the Federal Government had declined to set up meetings with cabinet members. The Special Rapporteur described this lack of communication with federal ministers as “highly unusual” for such types of missions (Schofield, 2012).

At the end of the mission, the Special Rapporteur prepared a preliminary report which was presented publicly. The Special Rapporteur’s findings were critical of the current situation of the right to food in Canada, which elicited negative reactions from the government. As quoted in the Open Letter, 2012, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney, called the mission “completely ridiculous”, while the Minister of Health, Leona Aglukkaq called the mission “insulting” in how he talked about Aboriginal issues (Open Letter, 2012,

p. 1). The mission was further seen as a waste of resources, with Immigration Minister Jason Kenney suggesting that “the UN should focus on development ... in countries where people are starving. We think it’s simply a waste of resources to come to Canada to give political lectures” (Scofield, 2012).

These negative reactions directed at a UN Special Rapporteur were seen as completely unprecedented and unacceptable by many CSOs (Open Letter, 2012). In an open civil-society response letter that received over 300 signatures, CSOs wrote to the government to express their concern and disappointment (Open Letter, 2012). These politically-charged attacks directed at the Special Rapporteur could be seen as occurring for several reasons. Alex Neve of Amnesty International suggests the government probably “assumed there were some political points to be gained” in an aim to try to delegitimize the claims laid against them and their government (Neve, 2013). Neve also identified a trend of the government critiquing the UN for looking at human rights violations in Canada rather than in countries where the situation could be considered worse (Neve, 2013). The Canadian Government’s reaction shows that it was not amenable to any critique of the current system. While the Canadian government may have thought the Special Rapporteur’s visit was a waste of resources, the Special Rapporteurs only receives minimal support from the UN. In fact, their position is conducted *pro bono* (Piccone, 2011), and it is perfectly acceptable, if not necessary that special procedures also visit developed countries (Subedi,



2011). Special rapporteur missions to developed countries can identify problems within a country’s current system or can also serve as a show of best practice to then be passed on to other countries (Subedi, 2011). These types of missions to developed countries can help illuminate gaps, while allowing states with innovative and effective practices to act as role models for others.

In March 2013, the Special Rapporteur presented his final report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. This report built on the findings in his initial document, going into more detail on issues in Canadian food availability, accessibility, adequacy, food aid, and Indigenous Peoples (deSchutter, 2012b). In their official response to the final report, the Canadian Federal Government raised concerns over the approach and conclusions made by the Special Rapporteur. In particular, issue was raised over his understanding of the distribution of power in Canada. It was also suggested that the Special Rapporteur did not do his job properly, as the response stated that “the work of special procedures is more effective when the indepen-

dent experts appointed to them ... abide by their mandates” (Country Response, 2012a). Many CSOs, conversely, welcomed and agreed with the report. In Geneva, responding on behalf of several NGOs, Bruce Porter endorsed the Special Rapporteur. Again the theme of the Federal Government’s negative response is juxtaposed by civil society’s positive and supportive one.

After his UN presentation, the Special Rapporteur participated in a webinar session organized by FSC. This webinar linked the Special Rapporteur with groups across Canada (FSC Webinar, 2013). During the webinar, the Special Rapporteur was able to give a brief overview of his report. This webinar was able to keep individuals and community groups engaged in the process nearly a year later. In line with the themes of CSO engagement and inclusivity, there was another webinar held in French the following day. Both were well attended and showed the continued level of support for the Special Rapporteur and of food security issues in Canada more generally. There was so much interest that FSC had to turn some interested organizations away

due to the technical limitations of the webinar, which capped the number of participants at 50 groups (FSC Webinar, 2013).

Implications and Outcomes

Framework shift

The Special Rapporteur's final report echoed many of the concerns and recommendations that were originally raised by CSOs, but transformed them into the language of human rights. This discursive change had several implications. Firstly, this rights-based discourse was able to open up a new perspective on food security. Diana Bronson, executive director of FSC suggested that for many people, seeing food as a human right was a "breakthrough," and to see "a child that can't afford to eat before it goes to school as a human rights issue" was something new that people could relate to on the most fundamental level (Bronson, 2013). The human rights discourse itself can be very complicated and specialized, and "not the language which people in [the] movement spontaneously speak in", but it can act as a mobilizing and motivating factor at its basic level (Bronson, 2013). In this way, supporters of food issues were able to see the subject in a new way.

Secondly, when the discourse of the human right to food is used, it inherently brings Canada's international obligations to the fore. In the Special Rapporteur's report, he outlines some of the various international covenants (such as the ICESCR) that obligate Canada to "respect, protect and fulfil the right to food" (de Schutter, 2012a). While some of the complexities of international law may not be easily understood or accessible to all, they do provide a very

powerful and credible additional pressure on the Federal Government.

Thirdly, this shift to seeing food as a human right has also allowed organizations to form new connections and build their networks by linking with the rights-based movement. FSC, for example, found that the Special Rapporteur's visit allowed them to "jump on to the right to food discourse" which gave them access to other groups and networks that work within this framework (Sheedy, 2013). For example, FSC worked with Amnesty International (AI) for the first time (Neve, 2013). Consequently, FSC and AI were able to collaborate on initiatives such as organizing and facilitating civil society meetings, as well as contributing to the civil society response letter showing the CSO's displeasure with the Federal Government's treatment of the Special Rapporteur. The quantity and ease of gathering signatures for the response letter was in large part due to this increased collaboration with other like-minded organizations as a result of the Special Rapporteur's visit (Neve, 2013).

Media Attention

The visit of the Special Rapporteur received a large amount of media attention in the form of print and online news articles, and television news segments. As the Special Rapporteur echoed many of civil society's concerns, this gave increased media attention to grassroots solutions to food problems in Canada, bringing to attention to the intercon-

nectedness of issues such as poverty, housing prices, and social assistance (Bronson, 2013). This increased attention on various CSOs brought attention to alternative food policy suggestions such as the People's Food Policy (PFP, 2011).

The media attention also captured the Federal Government's negative response to the Special Rapporteur's report, making apparent the difference in views between the Federal Government and the position of many CSOs on the situation of food security. While it is beneficial to CSOs that the Special Rapporteur sided with the CSOs position over that of the government (calling the Federal Government's behavior "self-righteous...[and] not corresponding to what [he] saw on the ground"), the Federal Government's actions also have serious consequences (Schmidt, 2012). One

“ The Special Rapporteur’s final report echoed many of the concerns and recommendations that were originally raised by CSOs, but transformed them into the language of human rights. ”

example highlighted by AI's Alex Neve was that this negative response lessens the capacity for Canada and organizations like AI to hold other countries to account to UN recommendations (Neve, 2013). This could occur as a result of the media coverage, since it is likely that other countries are well aware of how the

Canadian government acted towards the Special Rapporteur. This not only inhibits organizations such as AI from being able to use Canada as a positive example, it also tarnishes the Canadian Government's international reputation and credence on the world stage. Overall, the media attention benefited CSOs as it helped distribute information about the issues, helping identify for the average Canada the need for change.

Conclusion

Food insecurity is an often overlooked but prevalent issue in Canada. While there have been several attempts, Canada has yet to develop a national food policy. With the lack of federal action, CSOs have taken a leading role in mobilizing around food issues. Canada has several international obligations concerning the right to food which were brought to public attention with the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food in May 2012. In response to the visit by the Special Rapporteur, CSOs mobilized and helped with organization and facilitation, while the Federal Government criticised the mission and personally attacked the Special Rapporteur. While the Federal Government's reaction and opinion of the Special Rapporteur's mission and recommendations poses an obstacle for the Canadian food movement and the implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, the visit nonetheless had a myriad of positive implications. One main positive outcome was that the visit acted as a catalyst in creating new networks between the food and human rights movements, and in helping to create political momentum around the issues. This momentum was sustained

in the following year when people joined with FSC in webinar broadcasts with the Special Rapporteur in Geneva after he had presented his final report to the UN in March 2013 (FSC Webinar, 2013).

The Special Rapporteur's final report brought to light many of the same concerns and recommendations that CSOs had been advocating for years. The increased media attention around the issue helped disseminate this information and make the issue of food security in Canada more widely known. Overall, the mission caused a groundswell of interest, creating added pressure on the Federal Government, particularly in the form of Canada's international obligations. While policy changes may not be imminent, progress has been made. Food security organizations and their human rights counterparts have found new visibility and common-ground over the concept of the right to food, and as a result new linkages and partnerships have been formed.

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The ‘Placelessness’ of Food in Toronto

By Sarah May Lindsay

Introduction: Placeless Food

The food system in Toronto is placeless. Place in this essay is used both objectively, referring to the point of origin and eventual destination of food, as well as subjectively, dealing with the meaning it is assigned by consumers in the Toronto region (Knox, Marston, & Nash, Alan E., 2010, p. 41). This urban settlement of more than two and a half million people (or 5.5 million if one considers the Greater Toronto Area, or GTA) enjoys access to a myriad of food imported from near and far, available year-round, virtually without seasonal restrictions. This essay explores how food’s ‘placelessness’ is cultural, and largely economically motivated. Large grocers and wholesale distributors such as the Ontario Food Terminal (OFT) have created an available landscape of produce and other foods that are often disconnected from their source. An examination of Toronto’s contemporary foodshed—the manner in which fresh food is distributed and from what origin—will aid in exploring this incongruence.

Alternative suppliers such as Community Shared Agriculture (CSAs), farmers’ markets, urban agriculture organizations or food delivery systems are present in the city. Nevertheless, their scale, location and economic feasibility fall short of the amount of produce that is required to feed the city as a whole.

The discussion will conclude with an analysis of the factors that create and sustain the placeless nature of Toronto’s foodshed: scale, location, culture and cost within the West’s contemporary globalized economy of food. Bioregionalism will be discussed as a preferred method to resolve the issue of food’s ‘placelessness’ in the city.

Bioregionalism: A Redeployment of Tradition?

Bioregionalism can be understood as a new expression of an old idea. Historically, Canadian agriculture has transitioned through three distinct phases: hunting and gathering, farming for subsistence purposes and industrial/commercial farming (Anderson, 2011a). Agriculture was initially performed to sustain the farmers directly, not for profit or sale outside of the community (Knox et al., 2010, p. 354). Bioregionalism, then, is the old idea of producing and consuming locally. Regionally, diets would be composed of what *can and is* grown there, seasonally and geographically.

Bioregionalism is no longer dominant from a systemic perspective. Under the current regime, often termed the 3rd agricultural or “green” (Anderson, 2011a) revolution, there have been significant changes in production and agricultural motivation. The majority of farmers now grow crops to sell, rather than for their own use (Knox et al., 2010, p. 354). Since the late 1800s, technology and science have

been used to dramatically alter the agricultural industry. Pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the use of machines in place of manual farm labour are some of the major innovations that have occurred (Anderson, 2011a). All of these are indicators of dominant global industrialization of agricultural processes. Farmers, consumers, suppliers and regulators are now entangled in systemic reinforcement of food’s ‘placelessness’. Reliance on other regions—even other nations—for cyclical production, distribution and sale of agricultural crops has firmly replaced the small-scale, concentric [town and country/city and hinterland (Cronon, 1996)] system of old (Knox et al., 2010). This will be discussed in more detail below.

Geographically, commercial agricultural in Canada can be roughly described as fruit and grain crops in the far West, cattle and grain farming in the Prairies, and dairy, livestock and vegetable farming in the East. Expanding on this regional view, beyond even a North American perspective, productive division is stark, as fresh foodstuffs are categorized as tradable commodities (Carr, 2004). Linking these networks of production and food’s general ‘placelessness’, is the global economy: In simple terms, globalization centers on the concept of a single global economy in which each region produces only one commodity or a few specialized commodities for

the global market. In that sense, it is almost the opposite of a fully developed bioregionalism, which favours a planetary diversity of place-based bioregional economies conservatively and carefully producing and consuming primarily for their own populations' needs and only secondarily for interbioregional trade. (Carr, 2004, p. 3)

Narrowing the Discussion: A Case Study of Toronto's Foodshed

In *Nature's Metropolis*, William Cronon speaks of a "city-country dichotomy" (1991, p. 17). Essentially, this refers to a belief that "nature" is found outside metropolitan boundaries, or that "the city (is) what the

country (is) not" (Cronon, 1991, p. 8). The 'country' can be further described as the hinterland—the area lying outside of and around the city (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2011). Directly tied to food distribution, the hinterland plays a key economic and logistical role in food flow (mostly) into and (sometimes) out of the city (Knox et al., 2010, p. 60).

The hinterland around Toronto is part of the interconnected regional distribution and production arrangement in the area—the "urban foodshed" (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 213). This concept is akin to that of a watershed, an area of land wherein all water drains to a shared waterway (Hill, 2010, p. 240). Essentially,

Toronto is a catchment area for incoming foodstuffs, much like a basin receiving flow from feeder streams and rivers.

A closer view of the agriculture around Toronto is provided in Figure 1, above (Lister, 2008, pp. 152–153). Note the prevalence of vegetable, fruit and cattle operations, and their proximity to the city center (within a 200 kilometre radius) (Lister, 2008, pp. 152–153). Indeed, some of the country's most productive farms are located in Ontario. More than half of Canada's "prime agricultural land" (Lister, 2008, p. 151) is found in this province, and much of it can be included in Toronto's foodshed (Knox et al., 2010, p. 363).

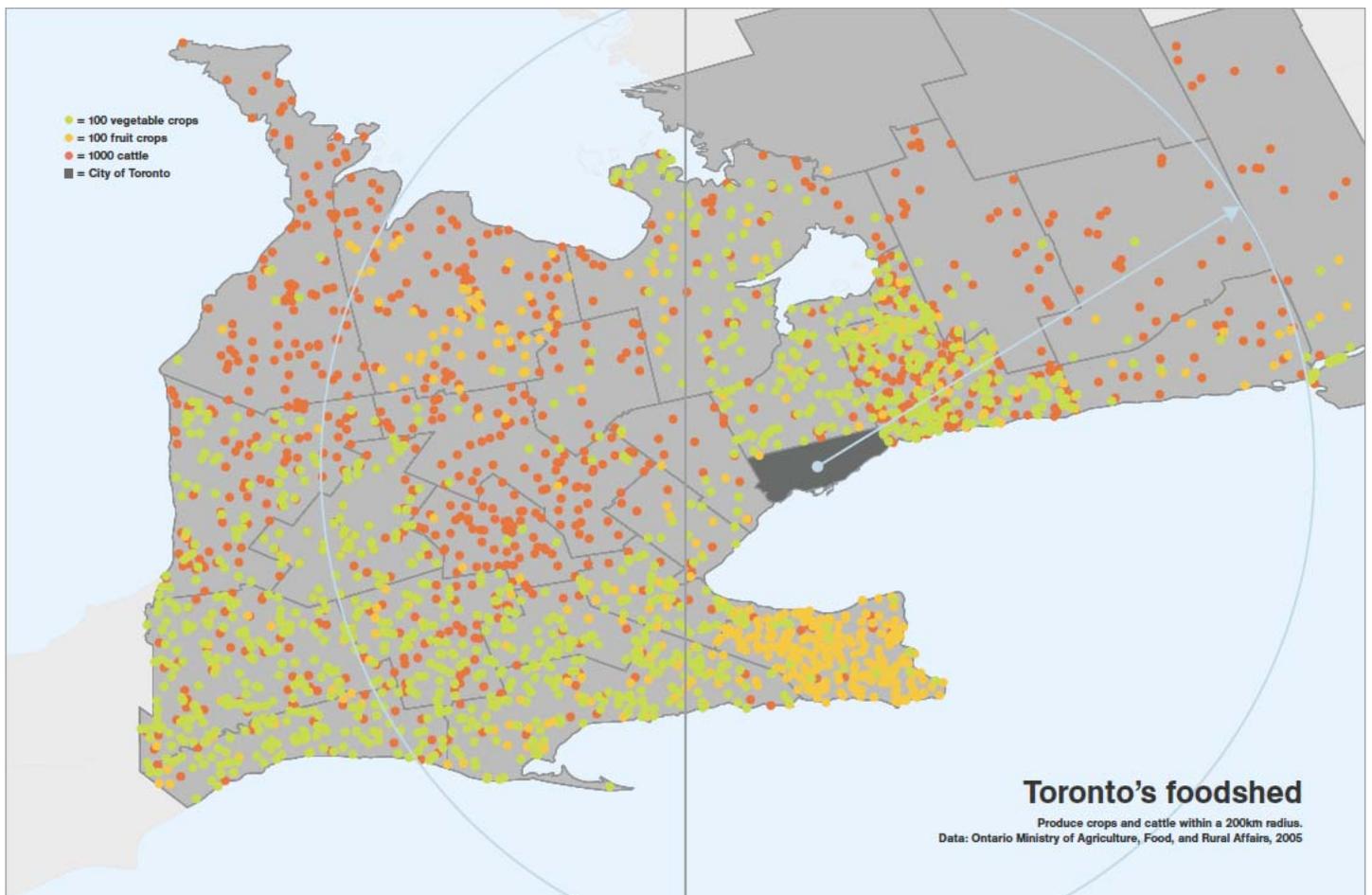


Figure 1: Toronto's Agricultural Foodshed (Lister, 2008, pp. 152-153)

Von Thünen's Model

Geographical theorists have studied the spatial distribution of agriculture. Around 1826, German farmer Johann Heinrich von Thünen studied how a city affected the farming landscape. As shown in Figure 2 below, a circular pattern seems to radiate out from the metropolitan center, with a distinct correlation between land value and the type of crop grown in each location (Knox et al., 2010, pp. 360–361).

In this model, the price-value of land closer to the city is higher than the land in outlying areas, and crops that are both extremely perishable (e.g. dairy products, tomatoes) and higher in cost are located close to the core (Knox et al., 2010, p. 360). Von Thünen notes that the combination of prime land and expensive crops translates directly into the cost of the goods, clearly illustrating that economics is a large factor in determining the location of particular agricultural activities (Knox et al., 2010, p. 360). In fact, included in Figure 2 above is von Thünen's model of land

rent levels, showing a negative correlation: the steady *decrease* in rent amount as distance *increases* from the city center.

Von Thünen's theory was developed almost 200 years ago, and the enormous population size and sprawling nature of a modern city such as Toronto certainly differs from the simple market-producer geographical model of his time. Yet, the idea of an agricultural hinterland still holds; the main difference today, and key factor in creating placeless food, is the fact that Toronto's foodshed does not merely consist of farms and suppliers within the fairly manageable 200 km radius described by Lister (2008, pp. 151–153), but involves a global network of producers, suppliers, manufacturers and distributors.

Toronto's Cultural Food Chain

One can understand culture generally as “a shared set of meanings that are lived through the material and symbolic practices of everyday life” (Knox et al., 2010, p. 199) or “a particular way of life . . . surrounding

a particular type of economic practice” (Anderson, 2011b). Culturally then, Torontonians *expect* to have fruits and vegetables available to them, even in the off-season (produce can generally only be grown from the end of May to the middle of October in Southwestern Ontario) (Lister, 2008, p. 154). Consider the alternative: without a consistent supply of oft-imported produce, one's diet would likely have to follow the seasons, and/or produce would need to be preserved (through freezing, canning, dehydrating etc.) for consumption during the months when the climate does not allow for farming practices in Toronto's local foodshed.

When one enters a grocery store however, seasonal limitations do not seem to be a factor. Effectively, there is no longer an off-season. How is this possible? A food chain has been established to cope with this cultural demand for food availability. The dominant food delivery system in Toronto (i.e. grocers, franchises) can be seen as an example of the growing “ambivalence towards—and growing ignorance of—[food's] production and place of origin” (Lister, 2008, p. 158).

This global network forms a complex food chain, an example of which is found above (Figure 3). In Figure 1, we saw that the area around Toronto is fertile, with vegetable, fruit and livestock farming being quite active. However, a simple concentric producer-consumer model is not employed for the majority of the city. Instead, food is imported at a scale ranging from several kilometres to several *thousand* kilometres away. Much of this produce passes through the Ontario Food Terminal

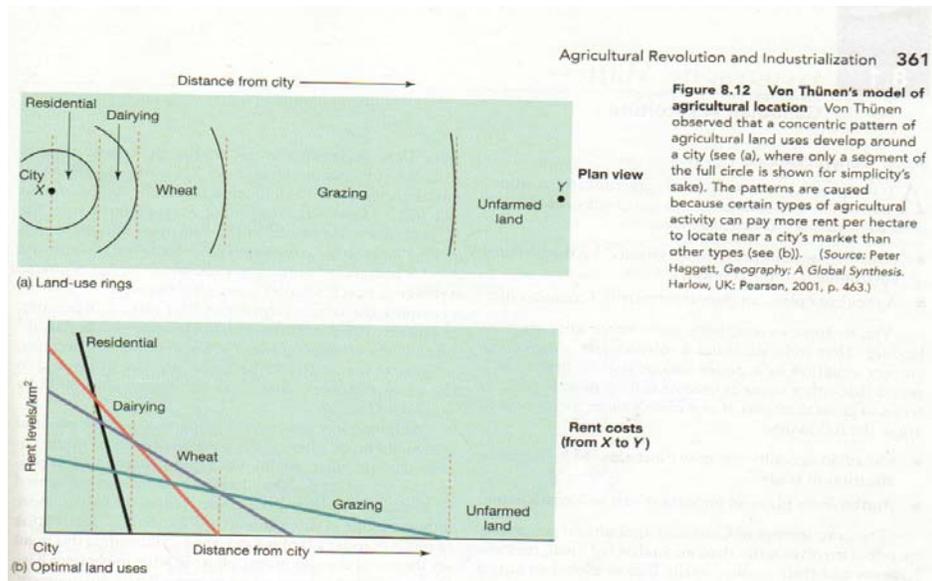


Figure 2: Von Thünen's Theory of Near-Urban Agricultural Land Use and Value (Knox et al., 2010, p. 361)

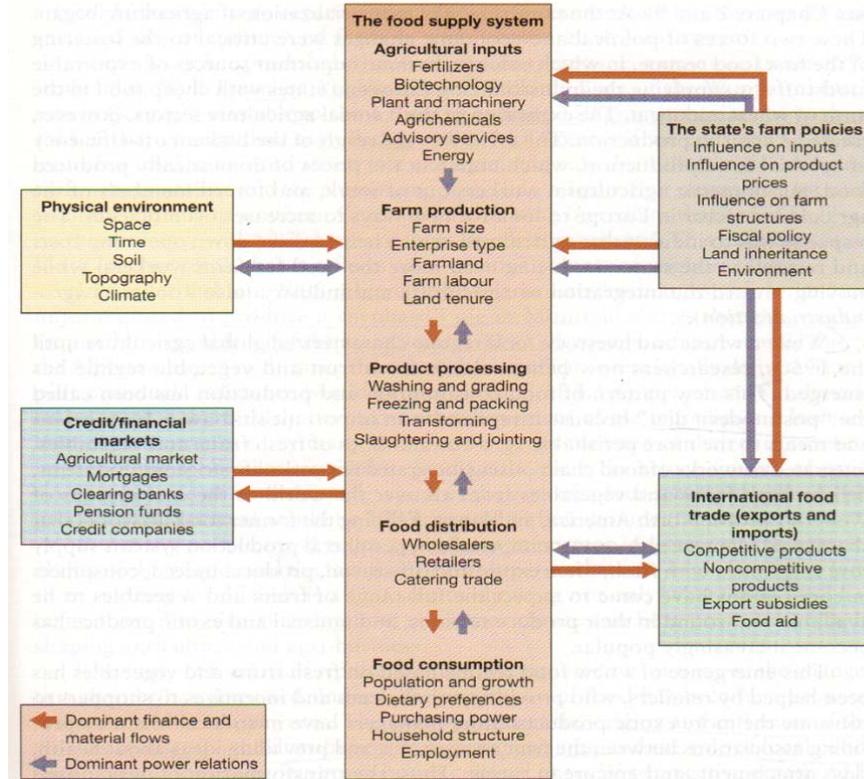


Figure 8.15 The food chain The production of food has been transformed by industrialization into a complex system that comprises distinctly separate and hierarchically organized sectors. Mediating forces (the state, the structure and processes of international trade, credit and finance arrangements, and the physical environment) influence how the system operates at all scales of social and geographical resolution. (Source: I Bowler [ed.], *The Geography of Agriculture in Developed Market Economies*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1992, p. 12.)

Figure 3. A Typical Food Chain (Knox et al., 2010, p. 373)

(OFT) in Toronto. The OFT is considered as “an arm’s-length governmental organization” (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 218), and has been an exchange point for produce since 1954 (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 217). The operation is self-sustaining, receiving no subsidies from the municipal, provincial or federal governments, yet has undertaken the responsibility of managing just-in-time food¹ delivery for millions of Southwestern Ontarians (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, pp. 218, 225). Farmers, independent grocers, franchises and small to medium sized businesses

1 A just-in-time (JIT) manufacturing/production system is “a manufacturing system in which components are delivered at the time required for assembly, in order to minimize storage costs” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014).

are the main players in this operation, with the larger chains (such as Loblaws) having the capacity to store goods and organize their own distribution (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 218).² The OFT has established a transportation and distribution infrastructure, acting as a wholesale warehouse and market, connecting farmers with retailers, and, ultimately, consumers (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, pp. 213, 218).

The source of this produce is not static, as this changes on a seasonal basis. During the summer months, produce arrives directly from growers in Southwestern Ontario. How-

2 Fifty percent of Toronto’s grocery stores are owned and operated by only three major chains: Empire (Sobey’s), Weston (Loblaws) and Metro (A&P) (Lister, 2008, p. 167).

ever, in off-peak times, produce becomes an international concern.

In 1994, Canada, Mexico and the USA signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As a consequence of this, Canada has now become the United States’ primary fruit and vegetable trading partner (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 212). NAFTA, along with the bigger concept of globalization—the interconnectivity of the earth’s various economies, cultures and politics (Knox et al., 2010, p. 18)—has enabled produce to arrive at the OFT in the spring and fall from the Southern United States and Mexico (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 239). In the winter months, the OFT extends its reach substantially, with produce being sourced from distant countries such

as Argentina and Australia (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 239).

These seasonal supply changes indicate an astounding variation in the distance travelled by produce, based on time of year and availability. To further clarify this, let us look briefly at an alternative: a farmers' market.

Figure 4 provides statistics for the distance travelled for produce being sold through either a farmers market or a supermarket in Toronto (Figure 4). For instance, the carrots one might purchase at the Dufferin Mall No Frills grocery store (owned by Weston) (Lister, 2008, p. 167) originated over 4000 kilometres away, in California, USA (Bentley & Barker, 2005, p. 7). Whereas the carrots purchasable at the Dufferin Grove Farmer's market (actually situated across the street from the big No Frill supermarket) travelled only 72 km from Milgrove, Ontario (Bentley & Barker, 2005, p. 7).

For comparison purposes, I reviewed produce from two stores in the GTA during the summer of 2011 and spring of 2014. Both locations were part of the same Weston group of grocers (Lister, 2008, p. 167). The first was the Loblaws store on Lower Jarvis Street. In the summer of 2011, the selection of produce appeared to be about fifty percent local: items like tomatoes, broccoli, zucchini and cauliflower were all from Ontario (Loblaws, 2011b). The remaining portion was sourced elsewhere, mostly from the United States, but also from as far away as Mexico (red grapes) and New Zealand (Eve/Jazz apples) (Loblaws, 2011b). In contrast, the Spring 2014 selection was almost exclusively from the USA. The very few exceptions included

Summary of Results				
1. Distance				
Figure 1A) From the Dufferin Grove Farmer's Market, Toronto November 27th, 2003				
Product/Produce	Point of Origin	Distance Travelled (km)	Weight (tonnes)	Tonne-Kilometres (T-Km)
Mixed Baby Salad Greens	Hamilton	72	0.00025	0.018
Swiss Chard	Milgrove, ON	72	0.000375	0.027
Carrots	Milgrove, ON	72	0.001	0.072
Sweet Potatoes (4) *	Alymer, ON	209	0.001	0.209
Bosc Pears (6)	Milton, ON	56	0.0009	0.05
Apples (8)	Collingwood, ON	144	0.0008	0.115
Tomatoes (3)	St. Jacobs, ON	113	0.0009	0.102
Lamb Chops (4)	Flamborough, ON	72	0.0006	0.043
Average		101	0.000728	0.0795
*Sample purchased on November 20th				
Figure 1B) From the Dufferin Mall No Frills Supermarket, Toronto November 27th, 2003				
Product/Produce	Point of Origin	Distance Travelled (km)	Weight (tonnes)	Tonne-Kilometres (T-Km)
Mixed Baby Salad Greens*	New Jersey (through Montreal)	1231	0.00025	0.308
Swiss Chard	Texas (through L.A.)	8044	0.000375	3.017
Carrots	California (through L.A.)	4242	0.001	4.242
Sweet Potatoes (4)	Mississippi	1976	0.001	1.976
Pears, Bosc	Ontario		0.0009	
Pears, Rocha	Portugal (through Halifax)	6243	0.0009	5.618
Pears, Anjou	Washington (through L.A.)	5887	0.0009	5.298
Apples, Macintosh	Ontario		0.0008	
Apples, Granny Smith (4)	Washington (through L.A.)	5887	0.0008	4.71
Apples, Royal Gala	Washington (through L.A.)	5887	0.0008	4.71
Tomatoes (3)	Pelee Island	361	0.0009	0.325
Lamb Chops (6)	New Zealand	13882	0.0006	8.329
Average		5364	0.000769	3.8533
* Sample purchased at Dominion supermarket (source unavailable at No Frills)				

Figure 4: Example of Distance Travelled by Produce: Grocer vs. Farmer's Market, Toronto, ON (Bentley & Barker, 2005, p. 7)

fruits from tropical climates (e.g. papayas and mangoes), and mushrooms—the only Ontario (and Canadian) grown vegetable advertised (Loblaws Inc., 2014).

The comparative location chosen was No Frills on Dufferin Street in Toronto. Despite July (2011) being within the province's peak growing season, one lone produce item was advertised as being grown in Ontario: romaine lettuce (No Frills, 2011). Yellow onions were said to be from "Canada" (No Frills, 2011), not specifically Ontario. Other items featured in the produce flyer included red cherries, corn and watermelon

from the USA, papayas from Belize and clementines from South Africa (No Frills, 2011). Further, in the spring of 2014, only asparagus was listed as grown within the province. As with the Loblaws Lower Jarvis location, American produce dominated this store during the Spring months (No Frills, 2014).

In addition to climate and the larger issue of globalized economies of food, the 'type' of consumer who frequents the store affects the sourcing of produce. In other words, the store and corporate managers would undoubtedly monitor the demographic of local shoppers. Importantly,

knowledge of the age, income, mobility—the ‘class’—of store patrons is vital for managing stock types and quantities; consumer demand dictates supply. No Frills’ slogan is “lower food prices” (No Frills, 2011), claiming that they “won’t be beat” when it comes to the cost of many items (No Frills, 2011). Loblaws, while part of the same chain, does not seem to prioritize price as its main concern, but instead speaks of “great food” (Loblaws, 2011a). The economic positioning and preference of the buyer would undoubtedly influence whether items are primarily sourced as cheaply as possible, or for other ‘qualities’. The topic of cost as a factor in food sourcing is significant; it will be returned to later in this essay.

This comparison illustrates not only

the variation between individual grocery stores and farmers’ markets, but also the year-round nature of produce in Toronto. If the item is not locally available, it is simply imported from thousands of kilometres away. Importantly, many of the fruits and vegetables available in these stores required tropical or near-tropical climates. It should be noted that these varieties *would not available for purchase in Toronto at any time* if an international food system was not in place. This is a tangible example of the globalized food system that dominates Western culture.

Returning to the import power of the OFT, note the global reach of its distribution network, clearly shown in Figure 5 below (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, pp. 236–237). Some claim that the largely international sys-

tem employed by the Ontario Food Terminal makes it “one of the most sustainable networks of food distribution in the history of the New World” (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 239). Although the OFT seems a remarkable use of international trade and transport, caution should be used with the word ‘sustainable’. If the global trade regime, climate or transportation network were to face sudden adversity, the OFT’s just-in-time system would also quickly falter.

Food Manufacturing in Toronto

Of course, not all of a Torontonians’ diet is usually raw, whole foodstuffs; processed food has a very real place in the city. In fact, entities like the Ontario Food Terminal are linked to Toronto’s food processing industry,

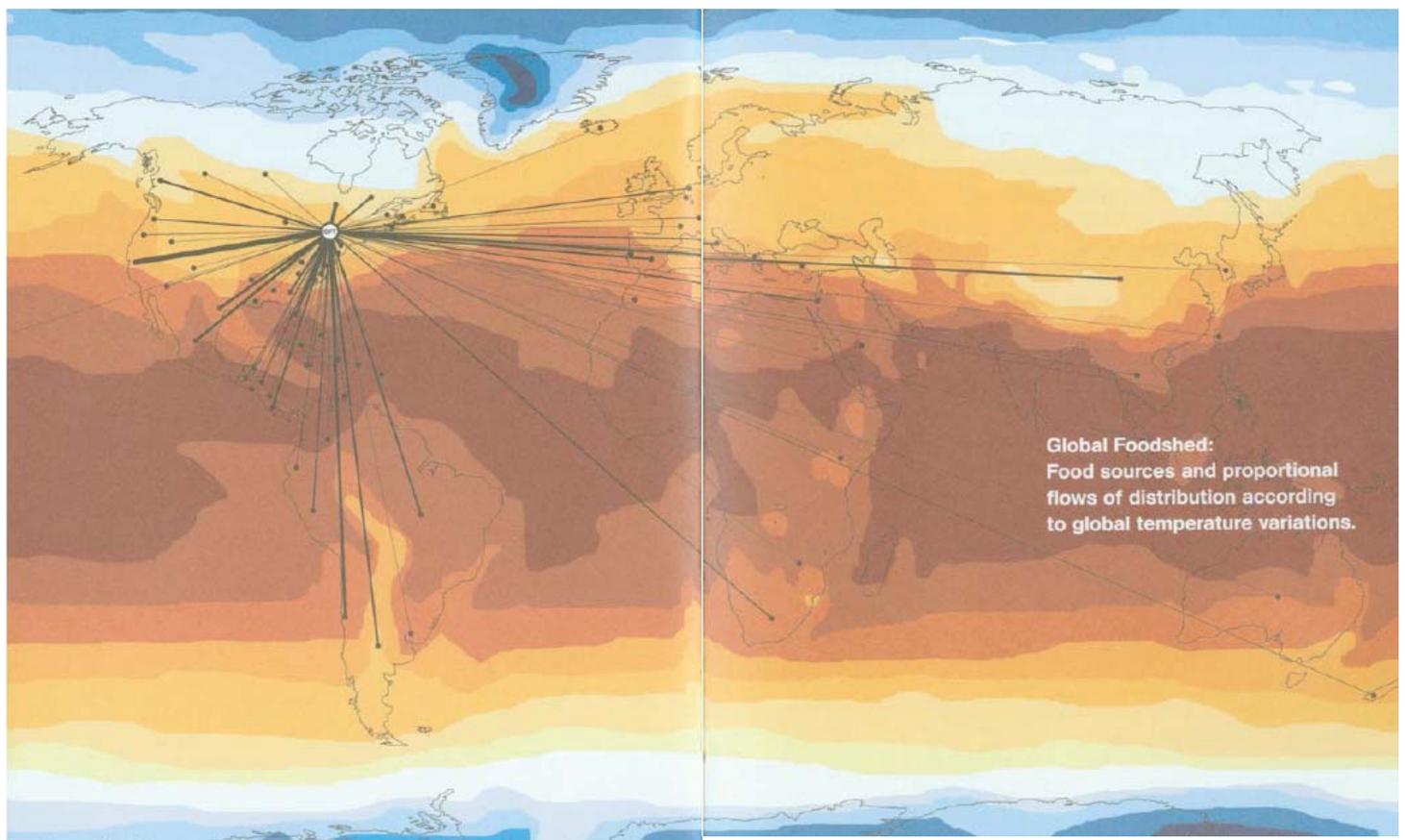


Figure 5: The Global Reach of the Ontario Food Terminal’s Distribution System (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, pp. 236–237)

which is also now the city's largest manufacturing sector (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 229). Corporations like McCain, Lipton and Parmalat all house operations in the GTA (Belanger & Iarocci, 2008, p. 230).

The proximity of these factories identifies the *productive place* of these processed foods (i.e. they are manufactured in Toronto). What is missed here is the *origin* of each component used in the manufactured product. The contents may be listed on the box or bag in which the food is packaged in, the package may state the address of the manufacturer, but how is one to learn the source of each of the ingredients used to make the final product? These details would likely only be obtained through communication with the product's manufacturer. The level of 'placelessness' in Toronto's food manufacturing seems significant, and warrants independent research and exploration, something beyond the scope of this piece.

Alternative Food Systems

"...Bioregionalism, based on locally and regionally integrated, self-reliant, holistic economies networked through communication and limited trade linkages, offers a crucial contribution toward sustainable, healthy, and sane alternatives to an increasingly unhealthy, unsustainable, and fragile global capitalist monoculture" (Carr, 2004, p. 2). As identified earlier, *bioregionalism* is a new term describing an old idea. Before the transition to the globalization of virtually all commodities, community-centered economies of food were not optional: they were the *only* option. Lacking contemporary infrastructure, trade agreements

and joint, complex, systemic organization of food, local produce would instead be grown and distributed in geographically restricted areas: bioregions (Carr, 2004; Knox et al., 2010, pp. 360–361; Figure 3). This, however, is not the norm in Western society today (Carr, 2004).

Are there other food supply options available to consumers? Indeed, there are. Urban agricultural endeavours such as community gardens, farmers' markets, Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) programs and non-profit fruit and vegetable delivery strategies operate in Toronto.

Foodshare Toronto (an organization aimed at alleviating hunger) offers a program called The Good Food Box (GFB), which originated from a Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) initiative (FoodShare Toronto, 2014a; Scharf, 1999, p. 122).³ This is an example of an alternate food delivery strategy, one based outside of the typical profit-driven grocery. At minimum, five neighbours or co-workers must collaborate to place a collective GFB order (FoodShare Toronto, 2014b). The GFB provides delivery of produce more-or-less locally grown produce, which it buys in bulk and offers to its customers at low cost.⁴ Also of note is the free box incentive: if ten or more individu-

³ The TFPC functions as an advisory board, performing research and developing food policy direction for Toronto's municipal government (City of Toronto, 2011b).

⁴ FoodShare does include some produce that is not locally grown, to provide some diversity in what the GFB offers in off-season months. Cost is also a consideration as the central goal of the GFB program is affordability for the consumer of fresh fruits and vegetables. Local is provided to the extent that is available and affordable.

als or households place a collective order, one free box is sent with the delivery which may be distributed amongst the purchasers or donated as they see fit (FoodShare Toronto, 2014b).

Through these community-focused methods, the consumer develops a connection with the retailer of the produce (the GFB) that they would likely not have with a large, anonymous grocery chain. This closeness allows a relationship to form between the purchaser and seller, thus removing the 'placelessness' of these foods. Although it is unlikely that the consumer's improved relationship would extend to the growers, the GFB program, at minimum, provides the opportunity to actively participate in the distribution process. The increased connectivity between actors in the system reinforces and identifies the process, allowing visibility and nurturing more familiarity with produce available locally. The end user is able bond with those providing their food, promoting connection and relational familiarity. In this way, food becomes less abstract, reducing or eliminating its 'placelessness'.

However, the GFB-consumer connection is not immune to globalized economies of food: this delivery system obtains a portion of its produce from the *Ontario Food Terminal*, bringing even this charitable organization back to one of 'placelessness', albeit in a somewhat reduced (partial) form (FoodShare Toronto, 2014a; Scharf, 1999, p. 123).

Farmers' markets in Toronto, offer an alternative location for purchasing produce and other foods. In addition, Community Shared Ag-

riculture (CSA) programs, wherein the consumer buys a share of the yearly harvest from an urban or rural producer and receives (sometimes organically-grown) fruits and vegetables throughout the season as it becomes available (Lister, 2008, p. 178). These ways of purchasing food recreate linkages between farmers and eaters that have disintegrated in the development of the global food economy.

As well as urban agricultural organizations and community gardens, there are other options for those interested in growing their own produce.

The Toronto Community Garden Network (TCGN) links individuals or groups interested in gardening in

an urban setting (Toronto Community Garden Network, 2011). Place, when it comes to gardening within the city, can vary a great deal. Members of the TCGN grow on rooftops, in schoolyards, churches, and even city-owned 'public' lots and parks (City of Toronto, 2011a; Toronto Community Garden Network, 2011). Contact between growers and community members via urban gardens, CSAs and farmers' markets may well be one way to reduce the placeless quality of food, and re-establish food growing knowledge among urban residents that has been lost. The ability to grow one's own food has become culturally less important since the onset of a global food economy. Similar to initiatives such as

the GFB, these options draw people together, and bring cultural connections of food growing and eating out into the open, loosening the grip of anonymous globalization.

Scale, Location and Affordability

There is criticism, however, of alternative food initiatives like the ones outlined above, which Johnson and Baker (2005) summarize three-fold: a matter of scale, location and affordability. Scale is a significant factor. Though the TCGN notes that there are thousands of acres of land in the GTA that are currently un-

derutilized, and could be used agriculturally (Lister, 2008, p. 179), the Toronto Food Policy Council estimates only 10% of the vegetables needed to feed the city

could feasibly be grown within the GTA (Lister, 2008, p. 179). Therefore, if only 10% of the produce needed can be grown within the city, Toronto's foodshed *must* extend far beyond its physical boundaries.

This, then, complicates what is meant by 'place': there is a vast amount of potential, used and unused agricultural space in the GTA, yet even this prevalence of plots is overwhelmingly insufficient in terms of providing for the population within Toronto's boundaries. Thus, the quantitative inadequacy of productive land prevents the possibility of obtaining a sense of food's place within the city, at least directly. Food's 'placelessness', then, is identified as *logistically* unavoidable. With more than 90% of

the required produce arriving anonymously, one can extrapolate that residents would not routinely encounter their food during the growth or harvest stage (Lister, 2007, p. 179). Instead, the anonymity of their food supply is reinforced by the practical impossibility of growing it in plain view.

Additionally, and also practically, one must be near or have access to alternative food systems in order to utilize them. The location and reliability of the produce supply must match the consumer's need and area of residence. As well, smaller growers are often unable to compete financially for a buyer's grocery dollar, even if they are located within a reasonable proximity. Essentially, "cheap' agricultural imports . . . undermine the competitiveness of local food production" (Johnston & Baker, 2005, p. 321). The enormous scale and buying power of the large grocers may trump local alternative food suppliers; cost may be the deciding factor.

Food, then, is forced further into invisibility, as the powerful and vast network of mega-grocers dominates Toronto's produce landscape. Overwhelmingly, the consumer experiences corporate domination of the food system, practically obliterating the notional *origin* of the food items themselves. Produce arrives from distant and/or unfamiliar sources through the abstract OFT apparatus or grocer warehouses and appears year-round on store shelves.

At present, alternative food systems remain the minority in Toronto. Bioregionalism remains on the fringes of the global food economy as a model of food growing and

“ Bioregionalism remains on the fringes of the global food economy as a model of food growing and distribution ”

distribution, even though it has been employed successfully—albeit of necessity—in the past. Globalized, just-in-time food structures have become normalized in the West. In order to restore a sense of place in our food system, the global food economy must be supplanted in some way by alternative food initiatives. There are formidable barriers to overcome before this could be realized; cities such as Toronto have yet to embrace any alternative food strategy en masse.

Conclusion: Still Placeless

Toronto's contemporary foodshed is predominantly not a local one, being global in its reach of both produce and processed items. Although the city is located within a highly fertile part of the country, its population and current food delivery configuration rely predominantly on international produce supplies. Culturally, an expectation for a continuous supply of produce—without seasonal restrictions—has resulted in a globalized food delivery system (or vice versa). Large grocers and wholesale distributors such as the OFT have created an available landscape of produce and other foods that are often disconnected from their source.

Alternative suppliers such as CSAs, farmers' markets, urban agriculture organizations or food delivery systems are present. Nevertheless, their *current* scale, location and economic feasibility fall short of the amount of produce that is required to feed the city as a whole. Further, even if produce were to be grown in every urban location possible, it would amount to only 10% of the fruits and vegetables required to feed the population within city limits (Lister, 2007, p. 179). Thus, the larger problem of

proportion is currently insurmountable without the adoption of systemic bioregionalism at the micro, neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood, community-by-community level.

Opportunity, then, exists for systemic change. Barriers to sustainable local food production loom large, yet the quiet hum of local food initiatives such as those mentioned in this piece (i.e. farmers' markets, Foodshare programs) suggest that the implementation of a more cohesive strategy—such as the bioregionalism model—could be used to address the 'placelessness' of Toronto's food.

Nevertheless, at present, the city continues to rely on the incessant importation of foodstuffs; Toronto is unable to feed itself without participating in the global food system. Until systemic change is fully embraced—a local turning in, rather than a global reaching out—Toronto's food will remain anonymous.

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The Student Nutrition Transition:

The State of Student Nutrition Programs in Ontario and the Need for a Whole Systems Approach to Child and Youth Health Initiatives

By Genevieve Fullan

It has become abundantly clear in recent years that the average Canadian diet is contributing to poor health. This is most alarming among children and adolescents: the rate of obesity and type-2 diabetes is increasing, making for a generation of children who are expected to have a lower life expectancy than their parents (Cooper, 2007). The lack of access to healthy food in schools is one important factor contributing to this health problem. In her 2007 TED Talk, Ann Cooper, Nutrition Services Director for schools in Berkeley, California, stressed that, “We need to teach children the symbiotic relationship between healthy planet, healthy food, healthy kids.” And she is doing this by starting in schools.

Canada is beginning to take similar steps towards ensuring healthy food in schools. Farm to Cafeteria (2012) is an emerging national network that links various farm to cafeteria programs across the country in support of connecting farmers with public institutions to promote healthy and sustainable regional food systems. In 2008, the Government of Ontario passed the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, mandating a reduction in sugar, salt, and fat in foods available on school property. It also prohibits trans fats

entirely, as well as foods that contain little or no nutrients, namely confectionary and deep-fried items (Government of Ontario). As part of the Healthy Kids Strategy, the Ontario government recently pledged another \$3 million dollars to the Student Nutrition Programs (SNPs) that have been multiplying in schools across the province. With this funding, the Ontario Government aims to create 200 new programs and to support the hiring of 14 food distribution and logistics coordinators (Ministry of Children & Youth, 2013). On top of that, school gardens continue to emerge across the country along with initiatives to promote and support food literacy that complements the current school curriculum.

Of course none of these initiatives are without their challenges, and lack of access to healthy food is not the only barrier to health among children and adolescents. The proximity of schools to fast food restaurants, as well as aggressive advertising campaigns promoting unhealthy foods, both contribute to this problem.

“lack of access to healthy food is not the only barrier to health among children and adolescents”

In this paper I will assess some of the efforts that are currently under way to increase student access to

healthy food, as well as address some of the other factors that contribute to unhealthy diets. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that a whole-systems approach is needed to change the eating habits of children and adolescents to promote health and to contribute to a more sustainable food system.

School Nutrition Programs in Ontario

A number of SNPs exist across Canada, but for the scope of this paper I will focus on those that exist in Ontario. The Healthy Kids strategy in Ontario arose from a “Healthy Kids Panel” appointed by the Ontario Ministry of Health in response to rising obesity rates among kids in the province. In their report, the panel recommended a three part strategy: 1) Start All Kids on the Path to Health; 2) Change the Food Environment; and 3) Create Healthy Communities (Ministry of Health, 2013). SNPs are a key recommendation in this strategy, where successful programs are defined as incorporating long-term commitment, teacher training, integration with curriculum, student leadership, and parental involvement (ibid.).

SNPs in Ontario are organized regionally, with each region providing its own model. However, the goal of providing healthy meals or snacks for students, regardless of income, is common to all. Each regional SNP

follows the same nutrition guidelines provided by the province, and applies for provincial grants and funding in the same way. Despite the 2008 Act and 2013 strategy promoting SNPs, the province has yet to implement a standardized student nutrition program that would be universal across the province. As a result, the effectiveness and breadth of SNPs throughout Ontario varies considerably.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services website provides information about SNP locations across the province, and each program's website can be examined to get an idea of how each regional program is running and the resources each has at its disposal. The best examples of regional websites belong to the OSNP Southwest Region (encompassing Huron/Perth, Grey/Bruce, London/Middlesex, Elgin, Oxford, Chatham/Kent, Windsor/Essex, and Sarnia/Lambton) and SNP Central East Ontario (encompassing City of Kawartha Lakes, Durham, Haliburton, Northumberland, Peterborough, Simcoe, York Region). Both websites provide contact information for community coordinators, monthly progress reports, information for how to get involved, and resources for setting up and running SNPs, including links to grant applications and program models. The Southwest Region website is by far the most comprehensive, providing recipes, fun food facts, nutrition statistics, and lists outlining the benefits of these programs. At the other end of the spectrum, websites such as those affiliated with Algoma District/Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury/Manitoulin provide only basic information about the program, such as guidelines,

eligibility, and links to the provincial government website, of which two links to regional websites from the government website were broken. It is clear from simply examining the websites that when it comes to setting up new SNPs, some schools are at a greater advantage than others, with more supports and information available to them.

Challenges to SNPs in Ontario

Insufficient funding is one of the greatest challenges faced by SNPs across the province. Education falls under provincial jurisdiction and so most of the funding for SNPs comes from the provincial government. Out of ten programs consulted by Toronto Public Health in their *Nourishing Young Minds* report, only three jurisdictions—Toronto, York, and Ottawa—received municipal funding on top of provincial funding (De Wit, 2012, p. 31). In Toronto, where municipal funding per student is higher than anywhere else in the province (De Wit, 2012), combined provincial and municipal funding accounts for less than 20% of program budgets, with the rest of it coming from parent and student contributions, private donations, and fundraising efforts (Medical Officer of Health, 2012). Most programs are running at 40% of full funding, causing programs to cut back on food quantity and/or quality, and often to run fewer days than planned (ibid.). In addition to this lack of funding, many programs in Ontario also experience insufficient or inconsistent parental support and there is a general consensus that having paid coordinators would improve the programs (De Wit, 2012).

There is a great deal of research and

evidence outlining the benefits of SNPs, and the *Nourishing Young Minds* report offers a comprehensive summary of this research. Some of the benefits outlined include: better overall eating habits, decreased rates of obesity, improved mental health, increased school attendance, decreased lateness, and increased cognitive functions (De Wit, 2012). Although no studies have been conducted to determine direct causality of SNPs on student behaviour and performance, much of the evidence is consistent enough to suggest a causal relationship. As an example, the Feeding Our Future project, a three-year study by the Toronto District School Board currently in its second year, provides 100% funded breakfasts for grade 7 and 8 students at seven schools and has so far seen a noticeable improvement in independent work, initiative, problem solving, and class participation, as well as improved math skills of its participants (ibid.). *Nourishing Young Minds* also offers criteria of a “Gold Standard” SNP. Such a program would: be offered to all students, have a high participation rate, be integrated into the school environment, involve students actively, be culturally appropriate, integrate food and nutrition education, be financially sustainable, have sufficient volunteers and a strong committee, have adequate kitchen facilities, and be evaluated on a regular basis (ibid.).

In order to maximize the benefits of SNPs across the province, a standardized program needs to be implemented—one with increased funding. The Toronto Board of Health proposed an improved funding model where contributions would be split equally at 20% each between

the community and parents, municipality, province, private sector, and a new federal contribution (Medical Officer of Health, 2012). With this increased funding, they projected that program capacity could increase from 40% to 60% by 2017 (ibid.). This would also enhance the sustainability of existing programs. If such a funding model were implemented in Toronto, and if it were successful, it could provide a model for creating well-funded, standardized programs across the province.

Beyond funding, the 2008 Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, which legislates all food sold and served on school property, including SNPs, has been met with some resistance. Browns Dining Solutions, for example, a catering company that used to serve Renfrew County schools, has said that since the Act effectively banned 80% of its offerings, schools are no longer viable clients for its business (CTV News, 2011). Resistance has come from students as well. Students in Brampton have

“ when it comes to setting up new SNPs, some schools are at a greater advantage than others, with more supports and information available to them ”

protested the junk food ban, and the Toronto District School Board has cited some cafeterias as making only \$35 a week due to students heading to fast food restaurants instead (Babbage, 2012). Some have suggested that the policy should have been rolled out gradually, although Dr. Yoni Freedhoff of Ottawa's Bariatric

Medical Institute maintains that, “The fact that kids are going across the street to buy crap is not an argument to sell crap in the schools” (qtd. in CTV News, 2011).

Students going elsewhere for lunch also feeds back into the issue of funding. One of the main problems with cafeteria's not making as much money is that the schools and students ultimately lose. Anthony Winson (2012) points out that many schools rely on the income from cafeteria purchases to fund student activities and, in some cases, for basic infrastructure. So decreased cafeteria sales means decreased funding for schools that are already strapped for cash, and less money for SNPs the schools may be running. Winson also cites the marketing of junk food and fast food as contributing to poor eating habits among youth, the effects of which are amplified by the clustering of fast food outlets near schools. So while it is all well and good for the provincial government to insist that that schools need to

be more creative in getting kids to eat healthier food (Babbage, 2012), schools are up against large advertising dollars working against their message.

Marketing has had a profound effect on the eating habits of children and youth, with soft drink companies specifically targeting 8-12 year olds

(see Nestle, 2013, p. 178). Advertising companies even admit that such marketing “is nothing less than primary education in commercial life” (qtd in Nestle, 2013, p. 179). Research has shown that eating habits developed in childhood tend to persist into adulthood (Nixon and Doud, 2011, p. 182), so it is important that children develop good eating habits early on to ensure healthy eating habits later in life.

A Whole-Systems Approach to School Nutrition Programs

There are inherent design flaws in a policy such as Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools. The 2008 Act regulates the nutritional quality of food being served in cafeterias, but there are many other barriers to effective programming. The proximity of fast food restaurants to schools, schools' difficulty in substituting more nutritious food, and the barrage of advertising aimed at children and youth that promotes unhealthy food are all structural issues that contribute to unhealthy food environments and need to be addressed for the legislation to be fully effective. The Act has been cut off at the knees as it was rolled out on its own. It needs other supportive policies in place in order to function with maximum potential—for example, policy to support funded, standardized SNPs or to limit food advertising to children, as has been introduced in Quebec under sections 248 and 249 of their Consumer Protection Act (1978).

In their report *Improving Food Literacy In Canada*, the Conference Board of Canada recognized that changing students' eating habits “requires a comprehensive approach that involves parents, communi-

ty and stakeholders, and includes supportive policies, programs and environments” (cited in Howard, A. & Brichta, J., 2013, p. 42). Increasingly, there is consensus that a more holistic, integrated approach is needed to address both health issues and environmental issues in Canada.

SNPs are part of a broader approach to promoting healthy eating among youth, along with initiatives such as Farm to School programs. The Farm to Cafeteria Network, emerging out of British Columbia, is working to connect different farm to school programs across the country. They list eight main objectives on their website: close the distance between the farm and cafeteria tray; support local production, processing, and delivery of local foods for public agencies; increase purchase of local foods; increase consumption of local foods; improve skills in food production, preservation, purchasing, and serving; enhance skills around producing, processing, purchasing, and preserving local foods; contribute to the health of the environment; and adopt a supportive food policy (2012). The Farm to School program run by FoodShare Toronto has similar objectives and offers bulk produce at a reduced cost for schools to purchase. Unfortunately, these programs often lack funding, good coordination, and educational tools for staff (Farm to School Greater Vancouver, 2013).

Another strategy for increasing access to healthy food in schools, as well as providing an opportunity for teaching students about food and nutrition, is establishing a school garden. Sustain Ontario (2013), in their “Backgrounder on Food Literacy, Food Security, and Local Food

Procurement in Ontario Schools”, state that, “Many teachers have learned the incredible potential of school gardens as a fun educational vehicle for virtually every subject” (p. 3) and *The Globe and Mail* profiled Vancouver’s Windermere Secondary School, whose garden has provided produce for the cafeteria and which has an aquaponics system that Grade 10 science students have used in learning about the nitrogen cycle (Hammer, 2012). Emily Ozer (2006), in her examination of the effects of school gardens, cites research that suggests greater vegetable consumption among students with school gardens and states that, “The school lunch and snack options send messages to students about appropriate food choices” (p. 853).

While complementary, curriculum-supported nutrition education and food literacy programming is a good end in itself, there is even greater potential when combined with providing students healthy snacks and/or lunch meals, which allow them to not only eat healthier, but learn by experience the foods that contribute to good health. It is a far more intuitive kind of learning than simply trying to preach good eating habits. The Toronto Board of Health (2012) states that, “the cur-



rent SNP model is viable provided adequate and sustainable funding is provided” (p. 4). More than removing unhealthy food from schools with the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, we need policy in place to fund standardized SNPs and create food literacy infrastructure.

Ultimately, we must strive for a holistic approach in which all of these initiatives intersect. The University of British Columbia is currently running a research project called Think & Eat Green @ School, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Community-University Research Alliance. It is a project that facilitates collaboration between a multitude of players to build healthy, sustainable food systems in public schools in the Vancouver School Board (ThinkEat-Green, 2013). The project allows for a myriad of efforts such as school gardens, school food programs, building cooking skills, farm-to-school programs, composting, and policy development, to come to-

gether to create larger food systems change. In a paper describing the efforts, framework, and methodologies of the project, Rojas et al. (2011) state that, “From the direct effects on children and community learning about food, health and the environment, to the cumulative effects on food systems through procurement, production, consumption and disposal, school food systems are important contributors to the overall impact of humans on the planet” (p. 766-767). They also cite the *School Lunch Initiative* in California’s Berkeley Unified School District as a model of success in promoting healthy, seasonal, locally-grown food in cafeterias and in food- and garden-based curricula that has effected food policy changes in the district (Rojas et al., 2011). The project recognizes the need for an interdisciplinary, holistic approach to transforming food systems and rebuilding food culture in Canada, and has demonstrated that such an approach has the potential for great success.

Conclusion

In examining SNPs in Ontario, as well as other initiatives to change the food system while considering some of the external factors affecting student diet, it is clear that a whole systems approach is needed to effect significant, long-lasting change. SNPs would benefit from the implementation of a well-funded, standardized model to increase their sustainability and breadth. Beyond SNPs, nutrition education is required so that students understand which foods contribute to a healthy diet, and which contribute to an unhealthy diet. It is also clear that advertising and availability of fast food needs to be curbed in order to en-

sure healthy diets outside the school environment. By turning to models that have proven successful, such as Vancouver’s Think & Eat Green @ School project, and the *School Lunch Initiative* in Berkeley, we can determine best practices for strategies that work and improve upon their weaknesses to create school food systems that not only improve access to good, healthy food for students, but contribute to transforming our larger food system into one that is more environmentally sustainable.

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Evidence-Based Policymaking:

When it comes to food, what constitutes evidence?

By Martina Marsic

We all don't experience food-related matters in the same way

For educators, policy-makers and consumers of information alike, sensibility and understanding work together simultaneously to construct cognition of reality; reality being the information we take in through our senses, which today occurs frequently via digestion of readings, visual media, personal reflection and discussion. Reasonably, what each person takes away from all of this incoming data depends on:

- The way our minds actively process (rationalize) it, according to our *pure intuition* (which are universal forms and frameworks used to structure data, common to us all); and
- Subsequently, the conclusions we draw from this organized data, which are dependent on our *empirical intuition* (our personal perceptions).

Both are pertinent to all human beings, but the latter is unique to each individual. What is important to highlight is that we are thus each concerned solely with our empirical intuition, that is to say, the results of our unique cognition. Resonant of pragmatic philosopher Immanuel Kant's transcendental idealism theory of two types of knowledge (Kant, 2003): *a priori* (knowledge derived

from pure logic) and *a posteriori* (knowledge dependent on experience), I suggest that an individual's experience of the food system is constructed from and dependent on their empirical intuition. An individual's empirical intuition is guided by their academic/professional backgrounds, their unique lifelong experiences and their framework of morals, and is directed by their interests and future objectives. Hence, two people can be faced with the exact same food-related matter, yet derive different conclusions. With food being such an intimate element to peoples' everyday lives, individuals are constantly making value-based judgments on food-related matters. Now, the question arises – to what extent do value-based judgments play a role in policymaking concerning food?

In a brief examination of Canadian food regulation and policymaking, the inextricability of science, policy and socioeconomics, and the importance of explicit and comprehensive standards setting becomes clear, especially facing the pressures of globalization and biotechnology, and the increasing sophistication of consumer concerns.

Working together in the food system: Policymakers are often not scientists and consumers are often not interested in the details of policy or science

In the same way we process information and come to conclusions, legal

matters are addressed and codified by policy-makers, so that consumers and regulators can interpret and use these constructs as policy. For reasons of health, trade and consumer protection, the Canadian food industry is highly regulated and one of the most stringent in the world, which has regular implications on the management of food-safety related issues. As evidenced in MacDonald's 2009 study, *Socioeconomic versus Science-Based Regulation: Informal Influences on the Formal Regulation of rbST in Canada*, though the discussion of the human safety of recombinant bovine somatotropin (rbST)¹ was said to be a strictly scientific one, types of evidence beyond scientific facts did influence the final outcome to ban rbST. Further, "socioeconomic concerns [did appear to be] equally important" in assessing whether rbST should be allowed or disallowed in the Canadian milk supply (MacDonald, 2009). MacDonald reasons that "politicians (policy-makers) view all information, [scientific] or [socioeconomic], as political input," (MacDonald, 2009) so that the information presented to them is digested and assessed in the context of its application to politics. Likewise, scientists are concerned with testing their hypotheses and the degree of confidence with which the results prove/disprove, rather than the degree of confidence that consumers will have

¹ rbST is a controversial artificial growth hormone given to dairy cows.

in the findings – their confidence being a social construct not solely based on science.

Increasingly, the controversial issues facing the Canadian regulatory system today are such that they are “socially coded and historically situated,” (Jones, 2000) so that it becomes ever more important to not “restrict the scientific advisory practice to solely technical issues...as the subjective values of scientists [and politicians] are relevant to decision-making” (Jansoff, 2006). Our regulatory system has been categorized by countless contemporary economic analysts as “bipartisan bargaining between the regulator and commercial stakeholders,” (Turner, 2001) meaning that the decision-making process in the policy-making arena reflects the multi-faceted nature of food issues at stake. Those who wield power in this arena must not forget during this process that the larger picture at hand is incredibly complex and its prosperity depends not only on scientific matters, but also on societal values and issues of trade (Turner, 2001). Most scientists, politicians, consumers and professionals in the field will agree that these larger policy issues span multiple domains. One current issue is sustainable food production for current and future generations, while concurrently obtaining the benefits of trade liberalization in globalization, and without sacrificing certain national sovereignty rights. This level of complexity is compounded by the fact that most Canadians are not scientifically literate to the degree required for this kind of analysis, are highly sceptical of food marketing (Serecon Management Consulting Inc., 2005), and have little interest in participating in

the actual risk-assessment process inherent to policy-making (Doering, 2007). Moreover, media has no greater understanding (Doering, 2005), hence, consumers are confronted with a great deal of conflicting information on matters related to what is intimately pervasive to their daily lives – food. As a result, there is significant pressure at national and regional levels to effectively manage food-related issues in a way that is lawful, but also considers public and industry interests and balances their (unique) perceptions of risk.

Complex issues combined with divergent perceptions of risk leads to reactionary, and not proactive, behaviour

Major parts of Canadian food law deal with food quality and standards. Expert opinions on food health claim standards and labelling practices have served to highlight how notoriously reactive government regulatory agencies are (Hennessy, 2011). Functional food, as an example, (such as natural health food products and dietary supplements), has been a booming market in recent years and its pace of growth is accelerating as obesity rates in Canada continue to rise and our total population ages (Serecon Management Consulting Inc., 2005). Contrastingly, Canada’s *Natural Health Product Standards* focus on the form (shape and manner of intake) of the supplement, whereas Japan’s *Food for Specified Health Uses* (FOSHU) licensing system focuses on the function (intended result) of the supplement (Curtis, 2012). This

raises the question as to whether intended functionality and the effects of usage or the form in which it is marketed is more important to the consumer, who is one beneficiary (so to speak). Over the next fifty years, the international market for health supplements will undoubtedly experience rapid changes in the form of functional food products, as food marketers attempt to differentiate across and within all various food functions. The original underlying motivation of form-based standards was to provide small but helpful protectionist measures for another beneficiary – manufacturers – but mostly it lead to wrongly wasted resources (Doering, 2011). For years, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regularly applied the standard container size regulations (set out in the *Processes Products Regulations* (PPR)) as a trade barrier to the importation of new and cheaper wholesale bulk product for domestic manufacturers who used it for further processing (Doering, 2012). Regulating form instead of

“ the decision-making process in the policy-making arena reflects the multi-faceted nature of food issues at stake ”

function is but one example of an evidence-based fallacy in policymaking; if policies are not constructed from a wide range of evidence types important to beneficiaries, Canada will be ill-prepared to respond quickly enough to the underlying quality and safety issues that will be sparked by new trade and industry pressures

(Doering, 2012). Wasted resources hinder proactive behaviour, and policymaking in food is complex, in that regulation must address not only economic considerations, but also public health and safety, which necessitate proactivity. Canada's food industry is highly competitive and fragmented. If scientific and socioeconomic evidence are not both taken into account in policy-making, soon, the real effort of the food industry will be in explaining to the general public that it produces safe and low-cost quality food that responds to consumer perceptions – and thus demand – in a clear and widely comprehensible manner (Doering, 2008).

Policy-making for the public in the area of food and nutrition is a difficult task at the best of times, and moreover, when the science is unclear (which is often), our regulators are essentially left with the question of, “which science or whose science?” (Doering, 2003) There is much regulatory discretion vested in regulators, who make decisions that have definite consequences. Science is a search for truth and always uncertain, and although there may be lots of internationally accepted scientific findings available, regulators may pick the science that supports their individual empirical intuition (bias). However, socioeconomic concerns, which are top of mind for politicians and the public, are also based on individual biases, but are not widely accepted as valid evidence. Yet ministers and public representatives who carry out risk management are constantly weighing “science-based” risk assessments against the political, economic, ethical and social considerations. If this is how policy



decisions are generally made in the real world – because of the profound implications of ignoring such considerations – then socioeconomic and political factors play a role as they are supposed to, regardless that regulators purport recommendations to be solely “science-based” (Doering, 2007), which current politics posits as the only evidence type that is iron-clad/absolute. Thereby, the integrity of the decision-making process can fall victim to several political loopholes that damage its legitimacy (Bevilacqua, 2006). The government must adopt ideological underpinnings that are interest-based – not positional – and are thus concerned with the underlying issues causing conflict (which are based on differing interests and empirical perspectives) as the focus of discussion, rather than the absolute positions in which each group is originally entrenched. This would greatly aid our legislative bodies in their search for new and mutually beneficial approaches to current and future issues. The regulatory environment befalling Canada highlights the importance of the government's role in creating thor-

ough “hard” and “soft” food laws and enforcement of legislative authority – its citizens spend over \$1 billion per week at grocery stores (Statistics Canada, 2012) and rely upon the system's safety for survival every day.

Plan for incremental regulatory and policy changes that are inclusive, instead of talking of sweeping legislative reformation that will afterwards continue to take the same absolute position

Canada's food regulatory system desperately needs reformation of its rigid and unresponsive tendencies (Doering, 2011). In addition, more accountable and proactive public leaders who can effectively manage the interface of consumer, commercial, and legislative stakeholders – understanding the perspectives of each. These leaders should be driven to come to conclusions, work tirelessly at managing dialogue between these three key stakeholders, and have transparent and solid values to base their decisions upon. Powell's 1996-1998 *Case Study of Guatemalan Raspberry Imports* into the United

States and Canada affirms that the most optimal practical utility must be extracted from a regulatory and non-regulatory food landscape that is already “seriously stressed and struggling at both the federal and provincial levels to provide timely [conclusions] that industry needs and the public deserves” (Doering, 2004). Easier said than done, but we must move away from political talk of sweeping legislative change and instead plan for modest and incremental regulatory and policy changes that consider both scientific and socioeconomic concerns. This will help free up resources for areas of higher risk, maintaining the ultimate focus on public interest(s) and safety protection.

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Book Review:

Vandana Shiva's "Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply"

By Aisha Goyette

What do cows, religion and ecological conservation have in common? According to Vandana Shiva, everything.

Vandana Shiva has had the opportunity to witness first hand how Monsanto has broken promises of safety and increased yields that they insist upon as well as the ecological disasters, lost crops and bankruptcy which have resulted for farmers instead. Shiva is now a leader in the International Forum on Globalization and the Director of the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy, as well as a renowned public speaker and author of over twenty books.

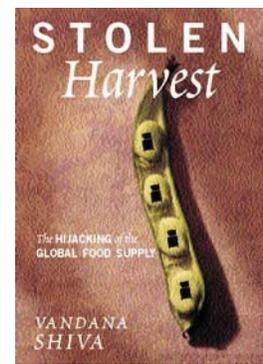
Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply is a short non-fiction novel that reads like a series of essays, varying in length and topics, all tied together under the theme of theft. Shiva makes the argument that agricultural monopolies are taking what isn't theirs to take, both from the people and the environment. The short collection of essays stands as the perfect introduction to very complex issues, however it is not a stand alone piece of work. This is because Shiva's book stands as an introduction to many different subjects, as the chapters cover a range of topics.

Shiva engages scientific research to build her arguments, but at the same time the chapters are written with a

simple clarity that anyone can follow, which makes them very accessible.

Her greatest strength as a writer is that she can jump between styles — the informal and the formal, the poetic and the academic, the harsh and the hopeful — and in doing so, she creates a style that is all her own. A scientist with the soul of an artist, and an academic with the heart of an activist, it is certain that Shiva is a natural born storyteller. In her eyes there is no cause that is too little or too great because all causes are equal in value: protecting Indian culture, livelihoods and centuries of collective innovation by farmers; defending women's roles in traditional agriculture; upholding the sacred stature of cows and ethical treatment of all animals; stopping the native mustard plant from being replaced by GMO soybeans; and saving the seed for the sake of food security. Though her arguments are rooted in science, Shiva's goal is not to win over the reader with statistics and studies, she wants the reader to understand the bigger picture so they can understand the interconnected relationships between culture, sustainable agriculture and social justice.

One of the greatest examples of these interconnected relationships in *Stolen Harvest* comes through with Shiva's discussion of cows. Many North Americans know that cows are considered sacred and allowed to roam free in India, but few North Americans understand that aside from how useful cow manure is as



fertilizer, rural communities in India can meet two thirds of their power generation requirements by turning cow manure into fuel. Manure from free roaming cows is a vital resource for rural farmers, and serves not only as an ecologically friendly fertilizer for agriculture but also as a sustainable source of energy to heat the homes of farmers.

North American industrial ideology has never fully appreciated or even understood the beneficial relationship between the villagers, the cows and the environment. Forced trade liberalization policies have resulted in an economic philosophy that free roaming cows should be round up for the export of meat or milk. What economic philosophy does not recognize is that trade liberalization policies come at the expense of rural communities losing their sources of fuel and fertilizer, contributing to the decline of religious traditions and jeopardizing an environmentally and financially sustainable way of life. Free trade advocates call this economic growth and progress while many simply experience it as theft.

Winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize and a true activist, Vandana Shiva does not choose between social and environmental activism because she feels that in so many ways they are actually the same fight. Shiva makes no apologies for her words, and makes clear what is worth fighting for.

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