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Opportunities and Challenges for Improving Food Security for Vulnerable Populations through Meso-Level Collaboration in Baltimore, Maryland

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Opportunities and Challenges for Improving Food Security for Vulnerable Populations through Meso-Level Collaboration in Baltimore, Maryland

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My inspiration for this topic started years ago when I lived in Baltimore, only a few blocks from where Freddie Gray also lived at the time. In my 7 years in Baltimore City, I witnessed the disparities between race and class that were perpetuated by uneven development and distribution of resources. I also experience the rich culture and resilience of the people in the city, which has continued to inspire me daily in my journey as a student of Community & Regional Planning and Sustainable Design. Finally, thank you to the community members who continue to work every day to empower and to provide resources their communities.

Abstract

Opportunities and Challenges for Improving Food Security for Vulnerable Populations through Meso-Level Collaboration in Baltimore, Maryland

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Food insecurity is a problem that affects 15 percent of all people in the United States. In Baltimore, Maryland, that number is over 25 percent overall, and 35 percent among African-Americans, which makes up 60 percent of the city's population. Food security means that not only is food accessible to all people, but also that the food is healthy.

Because of the conducive climate and high number of vacant lots and open spaces, Baltimore has a growing culture of urban food production. Despite the abundance of food, production and retail has continued to remain concentrated in food secure areas rather than being equally distributed across the city. Thus, in addition to other socio-economic factors such as high crime, low education, low-incentive for businesses in low-income areas, etc., food insecurity in Baltimore is perpetuated by unequal distribution resulting from a lack of interaction and communication between socio-economic classes and racial/ethnic groups across the city. For the purpose of this research, three levels of actors are identified: macro, or top-down governmental or external entities; meso- organizations or individuals working both internally with a community and connected to top-down resources; micro-community organizations or individuals.

This research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the current food culture in the city to better understand why food insecurity remains pervasive in certain areas, and determine what bottom-up (micro-level) efforts currently exist and how these efforts can be paired with top-down (macro-level) initiatives through collaboration with meso-level organizations who work to connect people and projects with funding and other resources. The combination of top-down policy making and bottom-up initiatives can allow individuals in food insecure areas in Baltimore the means to create a sustainable urban food network that understands and serves local community values and cultures. The overall goal of this research was to implement methods that not only shed light on why current conditions exist, but also to propose future recommendations for how meso-level actors can be utilized as gatekeepers between communities and top-down resources.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Food insecurity is the risk of households being without affordable, nutritious food throughout the year. According to the USDA, 12.7% of households in the United States were food insecure in 2015. In Baltimore, Maryland, that number is double the national average at 25%. The number of food insecure African-Americans in Baltimore city is even higher, at 35% (Baltimore Food Environment Report, 2015). At the same time, because of the conducive climate and high number of vacant lots and open spaces, Baltimore has a growing culture of urban food production. Despite the abundance of food, production and retail has continued to remain concentrated in food secure areas rather than being equally distributed across the city. Thus, in addition to other socio-economic factors such as high crime, low education, low-incentive for businesses in low-income areas, etc., food insecurity in Baltimore is perpetuated by unequal distribution resulting from a lack of interaction and communication between socio-economic classes and racial/ethnic groups across the city. Therefore, this research investigates opportunities and challenges for improving food security for vulnerable populations through collaboration between local community food advocacy groups and top-down governmental initiatives.

The purpose of this research is to: 1) gain a deeper understanding of the current food culture in the city to better understand why food insecurity remains pervasive in certain areas, and 2) to determine what bottom-up (micro-level) efforts currently exist and how these efforts can be paired with top-down (macro-level) initiatives through collaboration with meso-level organizations who work to connect people and projects with funding and other resources. The combination of top-down policy making and bottom-up initiatives can allow individuals in food insecure areas in Baltimore the means to create a sustainable urban food network that understands and serves local community values and cultures. The goal of this research is to implement methods that not only

shed light on why current conditions exist, but also to propose future recommendations for how meso-level actors can be utilized as gatekeepers between communities and top-down resources.

There is more than enough food in Baltimore City to feed the entire population, but with such a significant portion of the population defined as food insecure, it is clear that there are pervasive barriers keeping resources from being more equally distributed. According to city data, African-American communities are disproportionately impacted. This uneven distribution of resources is perpetuated by a lack of communication and understanding between socio-economic groups in the city. This thesis demonstrates existing barriers that prevent urban agriculture and other food distribution systems from effectively reaching all populations across the city of Baltimore, and how improved collaboration may solve this inequitable distribution of resources.

The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What macro-, meso-, and micro- level actors influence food distribution and food culture in Baltimore city?

   a. How are these three levels of actors (macro-, meso-, and micro-) currently collaborating? What are some barriers to collaboration?

2. Is the uneven distribution of food resources perpetuated by a disconnect between macro- and micro- level actors?

3. How might meso-level actors work to bring macro and micro level actors together to increase food security in the city?

   a. How might social groups interested in equine-culture and agriculture/food distribution collaborate in the production and regulation of a sustainable food system in urban food deserts?

The structure of this thesis report is as follows: Chapter 1 provides a literature review urban food economies in both the U.S and international context and reviews the cultural and food climate as it has existed and currently exists in Baltimore city. Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology and assumptions of the researcher. Chapter 3 presents the findings from the research conducted. Chapter 4 presents the main findings and analysis, including a set of recommendations and possible future research. Chapter 6 summarizes the conclusions.

Chapter II: Overview

Literature Precedents

There is a wide range of literature focused on food security issues worldwide. One often cited study by C. Levin (2000) titled "Urban livelihoods and food and nutrition security in Greater Accra, Ghana" found that, in Accra, Ghana, small-scale urban agriculture plays a significant role in food security for poor, peri-urban areas. In these areas, people spend 50%-70% of their income on food, and most of this is street food. Additionally, the study found that female-headed households spend proportionally more of their income on food. This is relevant to the Baltimore context, where female-headed households are common in poor areas of east and west Baltimore due to high mortality and incarceration rates of young men.

Urban agriculture also has a large body of related literature, but the focus of this review is not on the benefits of theoretical implementation, but on the social issues surrounding urban agricultural practices. An article by Guthman (2009) "Bringing good food to others: investigating the subjects of alternative food practice" discusses implications the growing sustainable food movement in the United States which focus on "haves" providing food, usually by some sort of donation, to "have nots." The "haves" that the author focuses on are young, college age students (usually white) and the "have nots" tend to be urban poor (usually African-American). Guthman investigates the relationship between both parties and the implications of this social dynamic. She shows how these programs aimed at giving food and education to these poor communities only perpetuates White cultural values and these ideals are often not shared by the poor, African-Americans, often making the altruistic efforts of these young college students fall short of their expectations to create lasting change. She suggests that those interested in creating real change within the sustainable food movement focus more on the cultural politics of the alternative food movement. This article provides an often unheard viewpoint in the literature regarding the potential of urban agriculture,

and is directly related to my work in that it serves as a reminder that often, real change must come from somewhere inside a culture, not from an outsider. Literature about gentrification has increasingly focused on this issue. Baltimore specific literature looked at so far has primarily focused on the relationship between food insecurity and obesity.

There is also significant literature related to food policies and regulations in urban areas. A paper by Ellis (1999) "Food production, urban areas and policy responses" contributes to the literature of the growth of urban agriculture and related policies in Sub- Saharan Africa. The paper argues that although urban food production may play a role in food security, the extent to which it does should not be over exaggerated. The paper delves into how policies regarding urban agriculture are usually divided into urban municipal planning policies, and general agriculture policies. The authors caution against policymakers trying to create un-enforceable or unsustainable urban agriculture policies since the benefits of such endeavors is not known. The one concrete position that the paper takes on policies involving urban agriculture is that, despite the fact that urban agriculture may not be as beneficial as some international scholars tend to think, policies should not prohibit this food production because even if minimal, there are benefits. Despite the context of a developing country, this conclusion is directly related to the research of this thesis. The authors state: "In the absence of rapid growth of the formal economy, the welfare of the urban poor is best served by permitting them the widest possible range of opportunities to piece together their livelihoods, as many studies of the urban informal sector have demonstrated" (1999).

Finally, there is a recent trend in in community-led food advocacy to use the word food sovereignty rather than food access or food security. Originally, starting in the mid-1990's, the term was used in rural, international contexts, but as Block, et al., (2011) identify, more and more people are beginning to apply the term to local, urban situations. Block, et al. state that "local level food sovereignty implies particular rights of individuals and communities to define their own food system,

to produce food in a safe manner, to regulate production, and to choose their own level of self-reliance, rather than these being set by larger national and international organizations" (2011). Thus, while there is less current academic literature on the food sovereignty movement in this context, it is likely to be a concept that permeates academic research of the urban food context in the future.

Overall, there is a large body of literature that relates to and supports my own research hypotheses, but my own work is also context specific and is focused on deeper analysis of case specific cultural valuation systems and archival data. Also, the economic and social conditions of the specific areas of Baltimore that my research is focused on are closer to those of many of the developing countries that the literature focuses on, thus drawing parallels will be relevant. However, the decision-making process in Baltimore's context is different than in other countries which will cause the proposed solutions to differ from other research.

This thesis will contribute to the field by not only providing a better understanding of how food related regulations conceal discriminatory social values that perpetuate food insecurity and inequalities of food distribution for vulnerable populations in Baltimore, but also aims to propose potential recommendations improve food security. I believe that this proposed solution can be useful not only in Baltimore, but could be a framework used in other areas in order to find solutions to similar urban problems.

Background

The city of Baltimore is a port city on the Chesapeake Bay in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Its geographic position on the coast, between the north and the south, contributed to its success during the Industrial Era of the 1800's. Post-Civil War, Baltimore became a major destination for freed slaves moving north in search of jobs. Additionally, it was the second largest immigration hub after New York City at the turn of the 20th century. This rich and complex history

has remained part of the city's distinct cultural identity, although it has largely left its industrial past behind (Chapelle, 2000).

There is a distinct patchwork of ethnic neighborhoods across the city, each contributing to the city's diverse cultural composition. These multiple influences and port location have allowed Baltimore to become a major food hub as well. In addition to fine dining, there is a thriving farmer's market culture and an emphasis on growing and eating local. Additionally, the majority of the rest of the state of Maryland is agricultural, making fresh produce readily abundant three-quarters of the year.

Despite this vibrant food culture and prevalence, **food insecurity remains a problem for a quarter of the population due to unequal distribution of resources.** In the last few years, Baltimore City government has increased its efforts and started to work collaboratively to reduce food insecurity across the city.

Baltimore City

Today, Baltimore City is 70% African-American and remains widely segregated, with the wealth concentrated in the White suburbs. Full-scale grocery stores are also located in these wealthier areas. Thus, food desert occurrence corresponds directly with Baltimore's Black population (Figure 1).

Many parts of east and west Baltimore have exceptionally high unemployment, crime, and incarceration rates, especially among young Black men. In these areas of the city, the housing vacancy rate hovers around 16% (Baltimore Housing Roundtable, 2016). The current Maryland Governor Larry Hogan has begun to target these areas for revitalization, with plans to demolish many of the homes and turn the land into parks (Project C.O.R.E., 2016). Unfortunately, this will likely displace many low-income families and invite higher income residents into the areas—the

classic gentrification story, defined as the displacement of low-income residents for higher income residents or other development (Cox, 2016).

Because of the relatively low rents and the available housing stock, Baltimore has been an attractive place for the creative class in the last few years, drawing young artists from places like New York City with its exclusionary high rents. The creative class is defined as a "socioeconomic class made up of knowledge workers, tech workers, artists, designers, entertainers, and professionals in education, healthcare, and law and are a are a key driving force for economic development of post-industrial cities in the United States" (Florida, 2014). With this growing socio-economic group there has come an abundance of street art and a flourishing interest in urban agriculture. The city's climate and large amounts of open space has been conducive to community gardens and farmer's markets. Still, this growing business has not extended to vulnerable communities of east and west Baltimore (Figure 1).
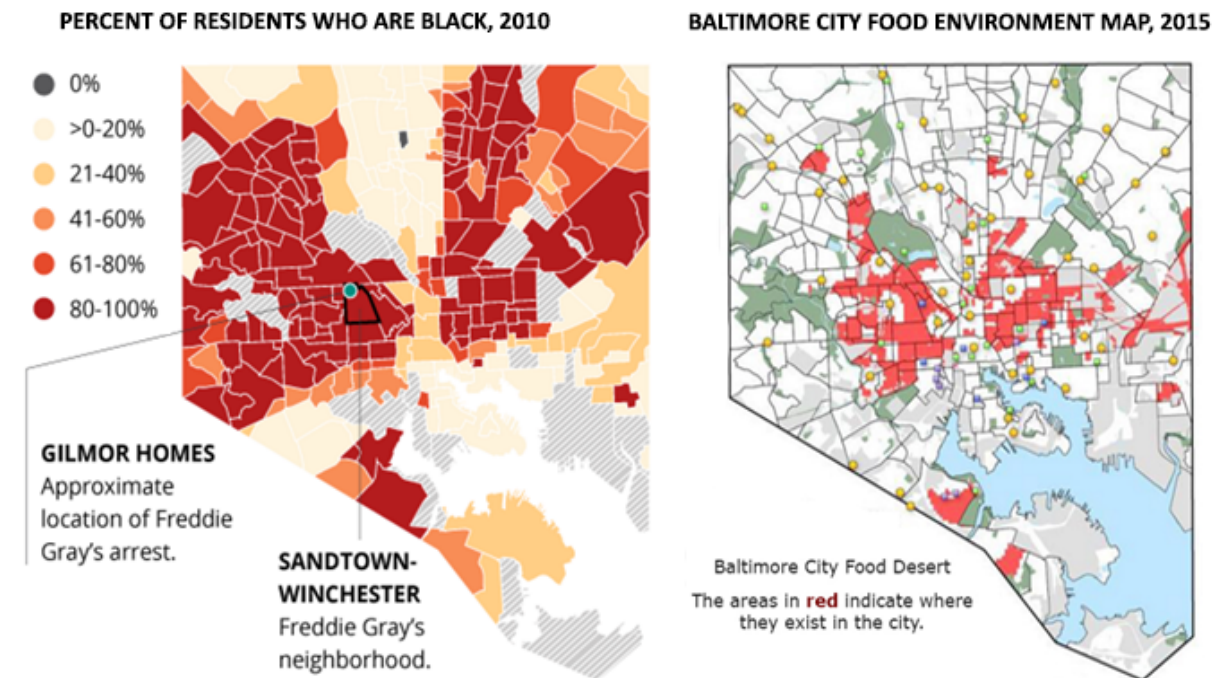

Figure 1 Baltimore City Food Environment Report, 2015

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a problem that plagues the poor in the United States, despite the overabundance of food resources available. The USDA defines food insecurity as a state in which "consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year" (USDA, 2017). Food security means that not only is food accessible to all people, but also that the food is healthy.

While many developing countries struggle with food security problems due to food scarcity resulting from reduced production stemming from environmental or economic factors, food insecurity in the United States is not caused by lack of food production, but by a failure in resource distribution. In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30-40 percent of the total food supply (USDA, 2017). Of this amount wasted, around 42 percent of it occurs at the household level (FEBA, 2017). Roughly 50 percent of all produce in the United States is thrown away—some 60 million tons (or $160 billion) worth of produce annually, an amount constituting "one third of all foodstuffs" (Goldberg, 2016). "Every year, consumers in rich countries waste almost as much food (222 million tonnes) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tonnes)" (FAO, 2017). Thus, there is a correlation between income and the amount of food wasted: as income increases, food security increases while food waste production also increases.

Per capita food losses and waste (kg/year)
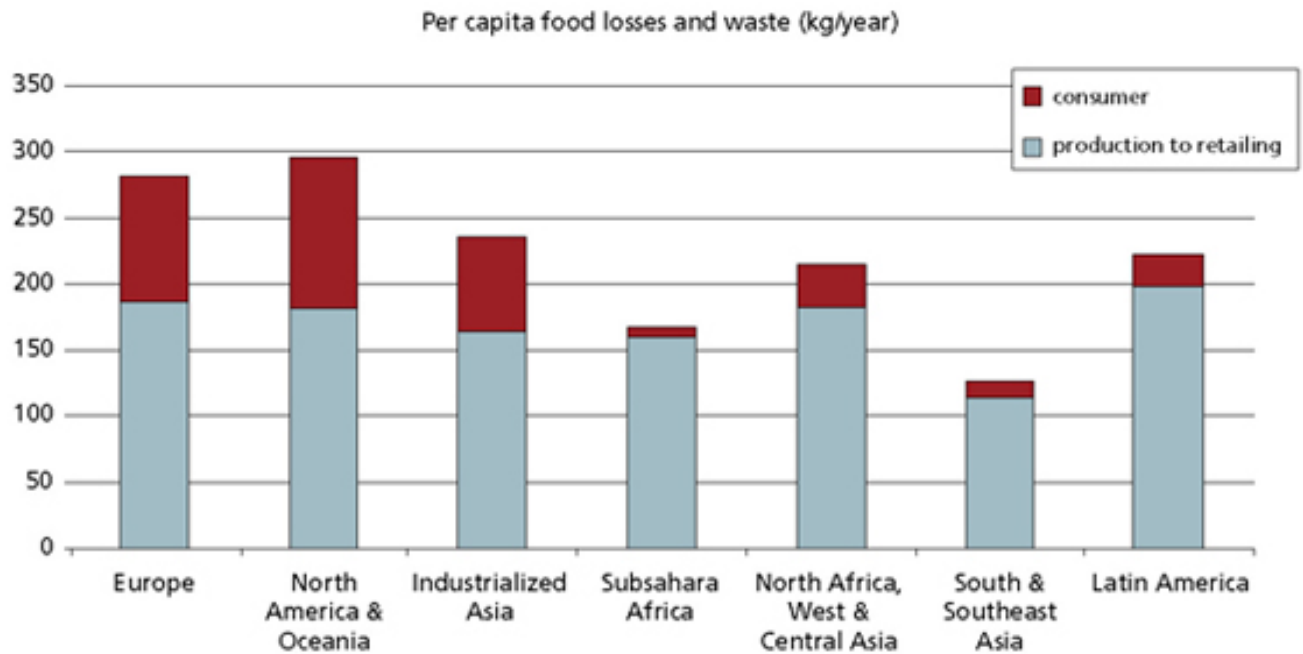
Figure 2 FAO, 2017

Another factor contributing to food waste in the United States, particularly of produce, is the cultural expectation of aesthetically pleasing food, with 25 percent or more of all produce thrown out due to minor blemishes that make it unsellable at the grocery store (Goldberg, 2016). In some places, especially in Europe, the ugly food movement is combating cultural expectations of produce perfection and creating a market for blemished and unsightly produce. "U.S. supermarkets generally reject produce that doesn't meet their standards for appearance or earn top U.S. Department of Agriculture grades, leading to waste" (Park, 2016). However, some start-ups and in the U.S. have started to realize the value in selling imperfect produce at a discount price. This market has the potential to address food insecurity by distributing this high quality produce to food insecure areas at a significantly reduced price (Park, 2016).

Food Deserts

According to the USDA, a food desert, or low-access community, is when at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract's population must reside more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (USDA, 2017). In Baltimore, the food desert definition has been refined to better fit the local context. "Our definition of a food desert is an area where the distance to a supermarket or supermarket alternative is more than ¼ mile, the median household income is at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, over 30 percent of households have no vehicle available, and the average Healthy Food Availability Index (HFAI) score for all food stores is low" (Baltimore Food Environment Report, 2015).

Baltimore City Food Policy Director Holly Freishtat and her colleagues at the Office of Sustainability identified the need for a Baltimore-specific definition for a food desert because they found that the federal definition did not capture most of the people who were actually struggling to acquire fresh, healthy food on a regular basis within the city. Thus, the Baltimore definition defined in the previous paragraph identifies significantly more of the population to be food insecure, which helps better inform policies and programs.

Figure 3 illustrates the racial and class divide between the food secure and insecure in Baltimore City. Only 8 percent of the city's White population is defined as food insecure, whereas 35 percent of the African-American population fits the criteria. This means that nearly 140,000 African-American residents do not have access to adequate food, as opposed to 15,000 White residents, a rate nine times less (Baltimore Food Environment Report, 2015).
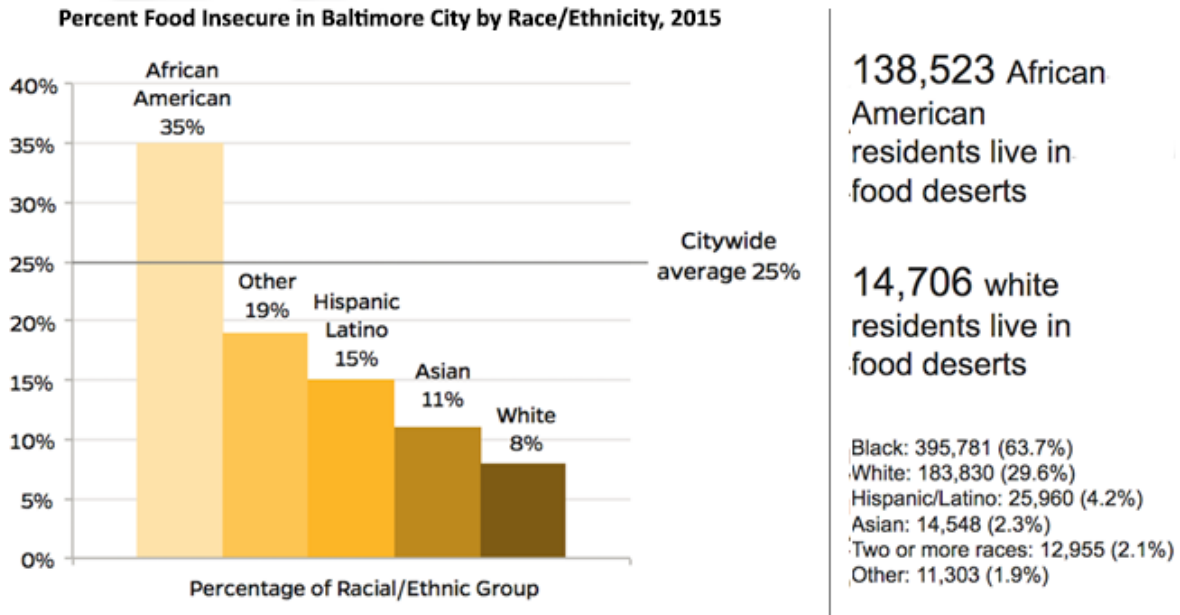
Percent Food Insecure in Baltimore City by Race/Ethnicity, 2015

African American 35%
Citywide average 25%
Other 19%
Hispanic Latino 15%
Asian 11%
White 8%

Percentage of Racial/Ethnic Group

138,523 African American residents live in food deserts

14,706 white residents live in food deserts

Black: 395,781 (63.7%)
White: 183,830 (29.6%)
Hispanic/Latino: 25,960 (4.2%)
Asian: 14,548 (2.3%)
Two or more races: 12,955 (2.1%)
Other: 11,303 (1.9%)

Figure 3 Baltimore City Food Environment Report, 2015

Baltimore City Food Security Initiatives

Urban Agriculture

Due to its existing food culture and temperate climate, Baltimore has become a prime city for promoting urban agriculture. There is adequate rainfall throughout the year, reducing the threat of drought and high water-related costs, which is a setback to food production in many cities. Available land is another characteristic that makes the city a unique place for urban food production. As of 2015, there were more than 14,000 vacant lots and over 16,000 vacant buildings across the city (Baltimore Housing Roundtable, 2016). This empty land opens the potential for farms and green spaces across Baltimore City.

In order to encourage urban agriculture, Baltimore City officials adopted the *Homegrown Baltimore: Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local* plan in 2013, which was part of a larger sustainability plan that was adopted in 2009. As part of *Homegrown Baltimore,* building codes were updated to allow for impermanent selling structures, known as hoop houses, during growing seasons and implemented

policies for tax breaks for growers meeting certain criteria under certain condition. For example, the city offers a 90 percent credit on property tax for urban farms.

Additionally, urban agriculture was added to the newly updated zoning code to help ensure that urban farms are recognized as acceptable land uses as a way to encourage the permanence of urban farm land. Finally, the plan also now allows for the raising of goats in addition to chickens, rabbits, and bees within the city limits. Prior to the plan, goats were only allowed within the surrounding county.

Food Sustainability- City Initiatives

In 2015, the city released its most recent Food Environment Report. The mayor at the time, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, stated that the report and analysis would guide the city "in creating and expanding specific food access strategies that will promote equitable access to healthy affordable food for all residents" (Baltimore City, 2015). The report was an inter-governmental collaboration between the Office of Sustainability, the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD), and the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), also known collectively as the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI). This initiative was "founded in 2010 to improve health outcomes by increasing access to healthy affordable food in Baltimore City's food deserts" (Baltimore Sustainability, 2017). A timeline of recent work by BFPI can be found in Appendix A.

Along with the BFPI, the Baltimore Food Policy Action Committee (PAC) was also established in 2010. "Food PAC members work actively to improve food access and the food system. Food PAC has grown from 18 to over 60 members, representing nonprofits, universities, farms, businesses, hospitals, and residents" (Baltimore Sustainability, 2017). The idea behind the Food PAC is to include community members into the conversation about food in the city as an incentive to "adopt plans that are driven directly by community input…These plans will play an

important role in shaping the food environment on the neighborhood level" (Food Environment Report, 2015).

The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative also aims to reduce the number of people living in food deserts and grow the economy using five key approaches through the Food Desert Retail Strategy, by: "1) expanding and retaining supermarkets, 2) improving non-traditional grocery retail options, 3) improving healthy food availability in the public market setting, 4) expanding *Homegrown Baltimore* to serve food desert neighborhoods, and 5) developing a transportation strategy" (Food Environment Report, 2015).

Part of improving food access is the Virtual Supermarket, as part of Baltimarket, Baltimore City Health Department's community-based food access program (Appendix B). The virtual market is available to residents online and delivers food at no-cost. This is especially useful for the elderly residents living in food deserts. Because of this service, "more than 200 households in neighborhoods classified as food deserts no longer have to invest a disproportionate amount of time and resources to travel to a supermarket, because the Virtual Supermarket brings groceries directly to their housing complexes" (Baltimarket, 2016).

While the Baltimore City government has been working to identify the food resources and needs of residents and improving policies, outreach, and programming in the last decade, the food insecurity rate in the city remains significantly higher than the national average at 25 percent, as opposed to 15 percent nationwide (Feeding America, 2017). Thus, in addition to city efforts, community-led organizations and entities have been working to compliment and supplement the work being done by the city order to achieve greater reach for programming, involvement, and results.

Apples and Oranges

In 2013, frustrated by the lack of grocery stores in poor, mostly Black areas of the city, Michele Speaks-March and her husband opened up a small grocery store specializing in fresh, healthy food, called *Apples and Oranges*. Surrounding the grocery were blocks of vacant row-houses demarcated by big red "X's" across the doors. While the grocery store was meant to serve the people still living in the houses that had not yet been spray painted, its doors were closed within 2 years of opening (McCleary, 2015).

Although Speaks-March had the best of intentions for the community, the food was too expensive and she later found out that many of the residents in the area did not have stoves in their homes, meaning they could not cook most of the food she was selling unless it was microwaveable. Thus, she discovered the hard way that Baltimore's food insecurity problems were more than just issues of access, but also about the prevailing culture of these neighborhoods (Dawson, 2017).

The *Apples and Oranges* grocery store is an example of a top-down, privately-led effort to bring in wholesome food to an underserved neighborhood. However, it serves as an example of how the lack of community input and knowledge inhibited the grocery store's success. In neighborhoods as economically impoverished and as distrustful of outsiders as the North Avenue location of the store, a grocery store of its ambition stands no chance (Dawson, 2017). While fast-food and carry-out account for the majority of the retail in such neighborhoods, this was not the case in the past. Food was often prepared locally out of residential spaces, and carts of fresh fruits and vegetables were brought door to door. Today, food regulations ensuring proper preparation have made selling food out of a residential space illegal, and horse-drawn food carts are disappearing from the streets the more stringent animal stables regulations become (Community Law Center, 2015).

Baltimore's Historic Food Carts: The Arabbers

Walk down the street at the right place and the right time in Baltimore and you may be able to buy fresh produce from a horse-drawn street vendor. Termed "arabbers", these red and yellow carts covered in bells used to be a common sight in the city. A vestige of the past, only a handful of arabbers spend their days walking down the streets today, calling out in an indistinguishable song to advertise their presence and their produce. After the Civil War, African-American entrepreneurs adopted the arabbing business to create jobs for young black men and to bring fresh produce from the harbor to neighborhoods that lacked access to a nearby grocery store. By cutting costs by buying from a wholesale distributor, they are able to sell their produce at a discounted price, affordable to the residents that they have served loyally for over 100 years (Frey, 2014).

In recent years, the arabbers have struggled to continue their way of life due in part to increasingly strict laws regarding horse stables in the city, but the need for fresh food in underserved neighborhoods persists. The arabbers believe they are being unfairly targeted because they are poor (Cohen, 2015). Unfortunately, they are often viewed suspiciously by some, including government officials, who fight a losing battle with the drug market in the city. Although young, Black men selling goods invokes suspicions of illegal activities for some in the city, the arabbing job has actually kept many of the men from turning or returning to drug dealing (Cohen, 2015).

Figure 4 Frey, 2014

Controversy and Lawsuit

Following an inspection of the Hollins Market stables by the Baltimore City Health Department in 2015, the last of the operating arabber's stables was raided by Baltimore Police, leading to confiscation of the remaining horses and other small farm animals on site. City prosecutors charged the six men running the stable with more than 160 criminal counts, many of them related to animal cruelty (Fenton, 2016). According to the city's director of the animal cruelty division, the stables were dirty, containing cobwebs, and the horses had not yet been given water on the day of the inspection. Before the trial was concluded, the horses were sent to a rescue farm over 30 miles outside of the city (Rodricks, 2016).

A year after the lawsuit, the charges against the arabbers were dropped. "Defense attorneys contended that the conditions had been exaggerated and that the stalls simply had not been mucked out when a city inspector arrived. Eric Berman, an attorney for one of the arabbers, said the charges

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never should have been brought (Rodricks, 2016). However, after charges were dropped, the horses were not returned to the arabbers, but were instead given up for adoption (Rodricks, 2016).

Opportunities for the Future

Several months after the controversy, other agencies began to have a renewed interest in maintaining the tradition. "Ross Peddicord, executive director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board, expressed firm support for making the arabber stable on Fremont Avenue in West Baltimore an official Maryland horse discovery center" (Rodricks, 2016). The vision for the Fremont Stable in the Central West Baltimore neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester is to create a museum and functioning stable where can go to learn more about the arabbing tradition. In order for this educational opportunity to proceed, the stable must become licensed by the state of Maryland and become a certified discovery center. According to Peddicord, "you have to have airtight liability insurance—if you bring children onto your property, or anyone—you have to be handicap-accessible. There's a whole list of things you have to comply with to become a horse discovery center" (Rodricks, 2016). There has been interest from donors and the project will take several years to complete (Warren, 2016).

Arabber Preservation Society

"Founded in 1994, the Arabber Preservation Society brings together the local community to support Baltimore's generations-old horse-cart vending tradition" (Arabber Preservation Society, 2017). The society has continued to gain support and membership over the years, and now consists of over 27 directors, board members, and other members of the Baltimore community. The society works to improve awareness and improve funding for the arabber's stables and horse-care costs.

Currently the Society is working closely with the Fremont Street horse "discovery center" project. Part of the Fremont Stable project will include an Arabber Preservation Center, which will be partially a functioning stable, and partially a museum documenting Baltimore's unique arabber history (Cohen, 2015). Although the preservation society has been instrumental in keeping the practice alive for the sake of nostalgia and tradition, they focus more on the goal of historic preservation rather than food distribution productivity.

While the arabbers provide a glimpse into past history, they still serve the practical purpose of bringing fresh produce to neighborhoods that are underserved by grocery stores, a service that may be able to measurably impact food security in some areas if the numbers of arabbers distributing regularly were to increase.

Conclusion

One in four Baltimore residents lives in a classified food desert area, while that number increases to one in three for African-American residents of the city according to Baltimore's definition of a food desert. In order to address food insecurity, top-down efforts have been made which include the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative which addresses food insecurity from a big-picture planning perspective through promotion of supermarkets, access to transportation, and improved policy for urban agriculture and food distribution through markets. In addition, the Baltimore Food PAC meets to discuss food insecurity initiatives and invites community members to join.

At the same time, existing infrastructure for food distribution networks exist in the cultural fabric of the city through community-led initiatives and markets. The historic arabbers are one example of a distribution mechanism in place that has traditionally increased food availability across the city, especially for low-income, African-American neighborhoods. While the arabbers have faced difficulties in recent history, there has been a renewed interest in preserving this tradition for both

the sake of historic preservation as well as for the possibility of impactful food distribution at a low cost economically and to the environment.

The following chapters will further examine the food climate of the city and the relationships between top-down efforts for improving the food environment and community projects that have emerged to address needs that have not yet been met.

Chapter III: Research Design

Methodological Assumptions

The combination of top-down policy making with bottom-up initiative can allow individuals in food insecure areas the means to create a sustainable urban food network that understands and serves local community values and cultures. The goal of this research was to implement methods that not only shed light on why current conditions exist but also reveal possible recommendations based on multiple factors. Critical pragmatism is the research paradigm of this study, which is a combination of pragmatism and critical theory. Pragmatism focuses on the practical application of ideas, whereas a critical theory framework seeks to understand and critique society in order to uncover hidden values and biases that shape that society. "Critical pragmatism provides a line of analysis and imagination that might contribute both to academic planning theory and to engaged practices as well" (Forester, 2013).

Several other assumptions must be taken into account in order to better interpret and understand research findings. One assumption made by the researcher is that the greater social and political context is preventing some areas of the city from gaining access to healthy food regularly, creating the need for such a study to address failures of past and current regulations and organizations to help ameliorate food insecurity at the city scale. Another assumption being made is that there are many factors contributing to the perpetuation of food deserts in Baltimore and thus the research methods attempt to address this complexity through triangulation, or the use of multiple data sources to produce findings (Patton, 1999). By looking not only at top-down regulations and programs but interviewing city officials, citizens, and other involved stakeholders in addition to studying the cultural systems and values of the city, data and knowledge from

triangulated methods were used to inform each other to provide a more complete understanding of the context and situation, leading to more accurate conclusions.

Baltimore has a specific context, but the methods used to produce findings for Baltimore in this study could be used to inform methods for studies of other cities and regions. Contextual findings can be made relevant to other populations through "force of example" (Flyvbjerg, 2007). "One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas the force of example is underestimated" (Flyvbjerg, 2007). Such case studies are useful for both generating and for testing hypothesis. It is also assumed here that context is crucial and that a set of "best practices" cannot be defined but instead recommendations should be flexible and open to interpretation depending on the local context to which the study is being applied.

Research Limitations

Time and proximity were substantial limitations to this research, as the research was focused on Baltimore but the researcher was located in Austin, despite having previously lived in Baltimore. If more time and resources were available for this research, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach would have been taken to better build relationships within the community and to gather more observational and narrative data from interactions and interviews.

PAR is an approach to community engagement research that emphasizes participation of the researcher, rather than observation only, which encourages active listening and flexibility of outcome. The PAR practitioner becomes part of the community, developing deeper understanding and empathy in order to work alongside community members. PAR practitioners help encourage

and facilitate dialogue or offer expertise when needed, but learn to take on the role of a listener while community members remain the authority over projects, programs, and outcomes.

While this research was inspired by PAR, the involvement of the researcher for an extended period of time was limited. For future research, a more active PAR approach could be taken to better identify where areas of opportunity for collaboration currently exist based on analysis and understanding of social networks. However, for this study, only several days were actually spent directly in the field.

Another limitation to this research was the ability to conduct a more extensive survey of actors to produce a networking map. A comprehensive study would use GIS to physically map locations of existing community gardens, food distribution sites, groceries, churches, etc. and pair this data with information collected regarding interactions between actors as well as how resources are distributed from each of these locations. Such a project will be discussed in more depth in the Future Recommendations section of this report.

Research Methods

The data and information was collected using a triangulated theoretical approach to inform multiple methods of knowledge gathering (Figure 4). The three methods used are practical, narrative, and design reasoning. The information gathered through practical reasoning methods includes archival and current data about city policies, regulations, programs, and initiatives regarding urban agriculture and food distribution aimed at reducing food insecurity.

Additionally, a case study focused on a specific neighborhood, Sandtown-Winchester, was used to understand a neighborhood-specific context of Baltimore's food insecurity climate as a way to analyze the challenges and opportunities for reducing food insecurity in one of Baltimore's most underserved areas. A case study is defined as an "in-depth investigations of a single person, group,

event or community. Typically, data are gathered from a variety of sources and by using several different methods" (McLeod, 2008). In this case, information was gathered through research of data and media articles, as well as personal observation of the researcher.
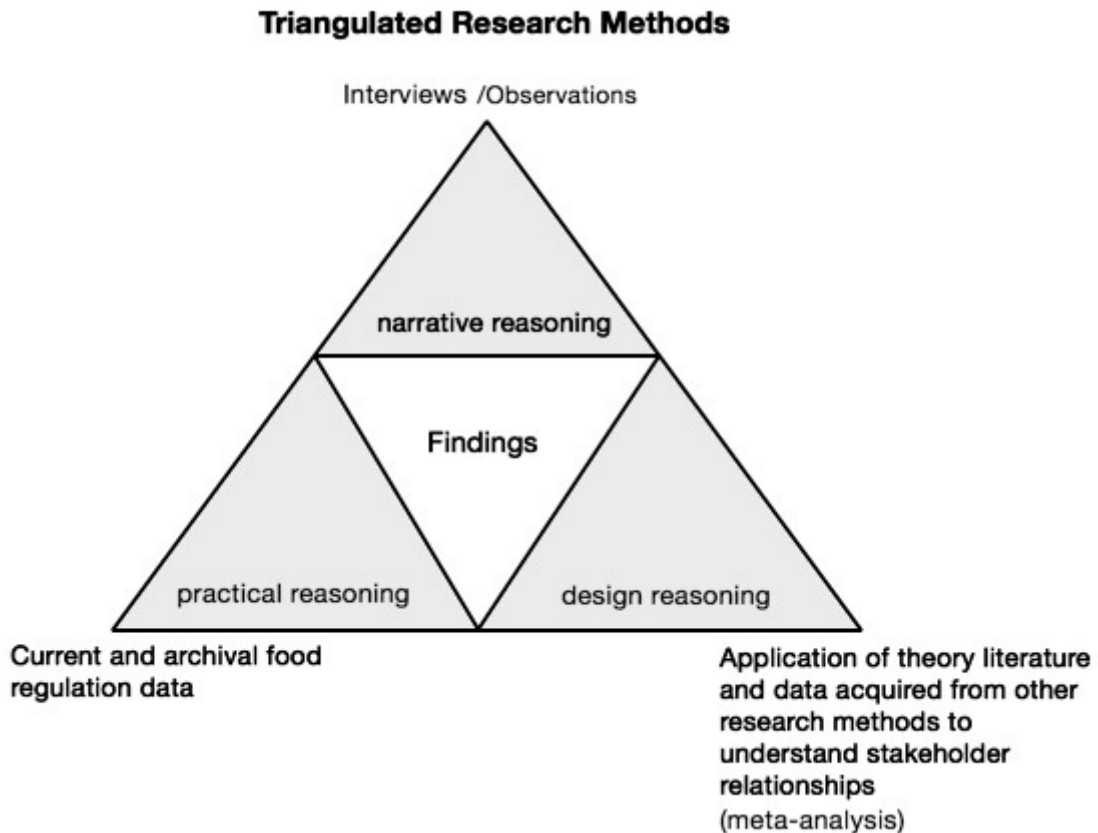

Triangulated Research Methods

Interviews /Observations

narrative reasoning

Findings

practical reasoning   design reasoning

Current and archival food regulation data

Application of theory literature and data acquired from other research methods to understand stakeholder relationships (meta-analysis)

Figure 5 Liskey, 2016

Interviews were used to gather supporting information using narrative reasoning as a framework. Five interviews were conducted over the phone and included Baltimore City employees and members of local grassroots and non-profit organizations focused on urban agriculture and food security issues, including the Arabber Preservation Society. Interview questions were carefully constructed in order to reduce influence on the answers of the interviewees to the point of skewing

the validity of the information gathered. Due to limitations, no arabbers or community members not directly involved in an organization were interviewed for this study. Future research would include a more intensive interview process that would include a greater range of participants. For this research, IRB exemption was granted.

In addition to interviews, information was also gathered during a Food Environment Analysis Stakeholder meeting held on December 15th at the Office of Sustainability in Austin, Texas. The City of Austin is working closely with the City of Baltimore to replicate a similar data collection process conducted by Baltimore's Office of Sustainability and the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future which produced the Baltimore 2015 Food Environment Report. During the meeting, presentations were given by Baltimore's City Food Policy Director, Holly Freishtat, and two employees from Johns Hopkins: Caitlin Fisher (Data Analyst), and Carrie Burns (Education and Advocacy Coordinator).

Data Interpretation

Content from interviews was recorded and interpreted in conjunction with observations. The interviews and research were part of an iterative process, where the content of the interviews was used to support the practical research gathered and to provide further direction for the research being conducted. One intentional outcome of the interview process was to find other individuals or organizations that interviewees perceived to be involved in the local movement to reduce food insecurity. While many of the people suggested were not actually contacted for interviews, this information provided insight into the network of people working together or perceived to be important stakeholders by others. This information was used to help inform a preliminary database of stakeholders involved in improving food security, particularly in the Sandtown-Winchester

Neighborhood case study area. A more extensive mapping project would be conducted as part of a future research project.

In conjunction with these interviews, observation yielded valuable knowledge, especially for the purpose of understanding the nuances of social values. Body language can reveal perceptions of all parties in social interactions. Spatial patterns of habits, such as where people choose to walk or drive based on context, provide insight about social values. These qualitative observations were used as data in addition to quantitative observations made during two site visits during the month of January, 2017.

Using information gathered from online resources about food related programs from statewide food initiatives (macro) and city wide programs and non-profit organizations (meso) and content analysis was performed using the Nvivo word cloud generator was used to run a word frequency query. The purpose of the content analysis was to do a basic language comparison between organizations to understand the similarities and differences in the language being employed to explain food related initiatives and goals. Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis software for researchers (QSR International, 2017). The word cloud generator counted the amount of times a word was used throughout the document. Then, the word lists were placed into an Excel spreadsheet and conditional formatting was used on the first 20 most frequently used words to determine which words were used by two or more organizations. Duplicate words were highlighted, whereas un-highlighted words were unique to the specific program.

Finally, design reasoning helped produce recommendations for future collaboration between micro-level and macro-level actors through meso-level actors and processes. The study of literature, past research, and news media helped inform how the culture industry in Baltimore produces and reinforces value systems that permeate regulations related to food systems. Triangulation of research methods produced a meta-analysis of the data collected from an amalgamation of the three methods

(Neill, 2006). This meta-analysis was then used to inform recommendations, which were condensed

into a one-page report intended for the City of Baltimore.

Chapter IV: Findings

The following section presents the main findings from the research conducted. First, a case study of one of Baltimore's most impoverished food desert areas is presented. Interviews with both city employees and community advocates were conducted. Additionally, maps, reports, and new media articles were analyzed to determine the current food and cultural climate in Baltimore. This information, as well as initial background research of city policies and programs, was used to identify potential opportunities for collaboration between actors to promote increased food access.

Case Study: Sandtown-Winchester Food Desert Area

West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood is one of the lowest income and most food insecure areas in Baltimore. Along with food insecurity, the area is notorious for low-employment rates, high crime, high housing vacancy, etc. There have been copious resources spent focused on addressing the problems of the neighborhood from the top-down over the years through various well-documented initiatives. However, despite the attention, very few problems have seen much, if any, improvement. Although $130 million dollars was spent to revitalize the neighborhood from 1989 to 1999, very few of the problems have seen significant, measurable improvement. One factor effecting this lack of noticeable impact was a failure of accountability—there was little documentation as to where the funds were actually distributed, and thus their impacts remain unknown (Wenger, 2015).

Recently, growing national attention to inequalities, particularly in regards to race, have increasingly led to the creation of internally organized movements seeking to address the problems rather than finding coping mechanisms for them. In the wake of Freddie Gray's death, the community members of Sandtown-Winchester are in a position where they can channel their social

pain through meaningful dialogue that not only has a local impact, but resonates nationally as well through movements like Black Lives Matter. Through self-empowerment, networking, and social cohesion, communities can reduce problems like high crime, homelessness, and food insecurity by creating a strong local support system and a system of resource accountability.

Background

Sandtown-Winchester is a neighborhood located in Old West Baltimore covering and area of 72 square blocks (Live Baltimore, 2012). In the late 1800's, the Pennsylvania Steel Company moved into Baltimore and began providing thousands of blue-collar jobs. For the first time, lower-class, African-American families could afford to move into the suburbs, closer to jobs at the steel mills and shipyards. Old West Baltimore became a cultural hub for the African-American community. Pennsylvania Avenue, which borders the neighborhood, became a main entertainment district and was nicknamed the Harlem of Baltimore (Crowhurst, 2016). Artists such as Billie Holiday and Cab Calloway grew up there, as did Thurgood Marshall. In the 1950's and 60's, the neighborhood was thriving, with one of the nation's most famous African-American theatres and a prominent jazz club. However, in the 60's, the steel mills closed their doors and left thousands without jobs. A third of Sandtown-Winchester residents moved out, leaving the neighborhood blighted (Crowhurst, 2016).

Starting in 1989, a "decade-long project brought together developers, religious and community leaders, nonprofits and elected officials" in what was forecast to be an innovative model of urban renewal (Wenger, 2015). Despite the effort, which pumped over $130 million dollars into the development, the neighborhood remained stagnant. Recent reports examining the effort have attributed the lack of accountability for the funds as one of the main detriments to its success. Although a few hundred vacant properties were restored during the 90's, boosting home ownership

in the area slightly over the ten-year period, the neighborhood continued to be drained of its resources (Wenger, 2015).

Today, about 9,000 people live in the area. Ninety-seven percent of the residents are American American. According to data from 2010, 21% of those residents are unemployed, and 55% make less than $25,000 per year. Out of every 1000 residents, the juvenile arrest rate is 252. About 25% of the buildings are vacant. Additionally, the life expectancy in the neighborhood is 65 years on average, 6 years less than the entire city average of 72 years (City of Baltimore, 2011). The neighborhood has one of the highest crime rates and drugs are prevalent. Once a cultural hub, Sandtown-Winchester is now one of the most impoverished and dangerous areas of the city.
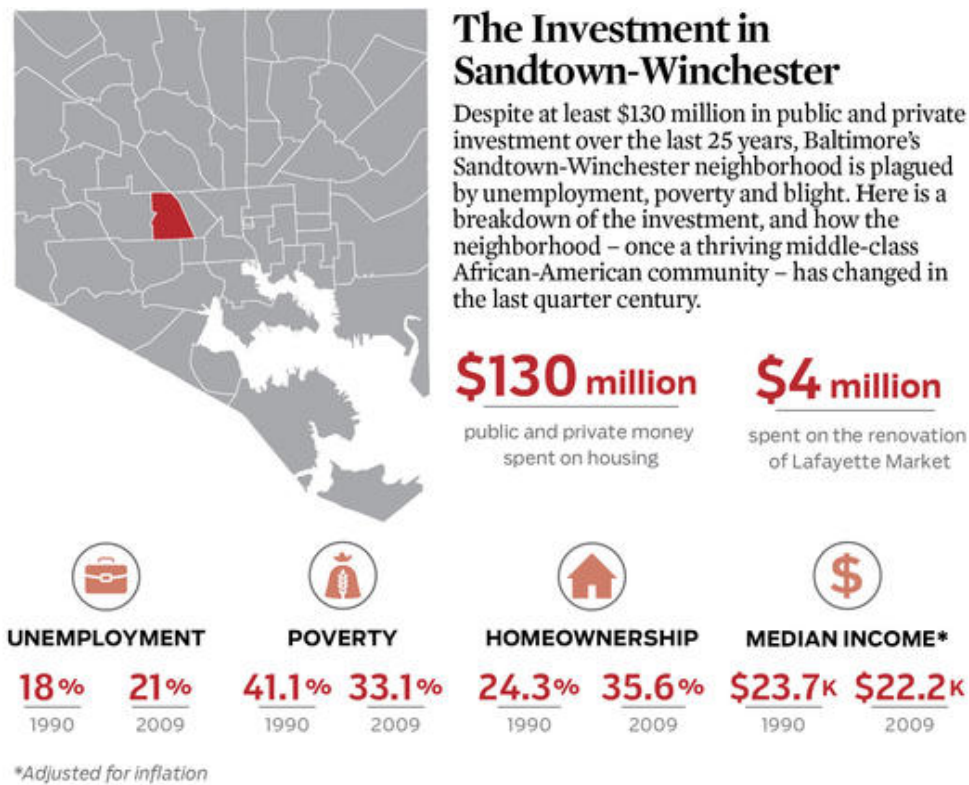

The Investment in Sandtown-Winchester

Despite at least $130 million in public and private investment over the last 25 years, Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood is plagued by unemployment, poverty and blight. Here is a breakdown of the investment, and how the neighborhood – once a thriving middle-class African-American community – has changed in the last quarter century.

$130 million
public and private money spent on housing

$4 million
spent on the renovation of Lafayette Market

UNEMPLOYMENT		POVERTY		HOMEOWNERSHIP		MEDIAN INCOME*	
18%	21%	41.1%	33.1%	24.3%	35.6%	$23.7K	$22.2K
1990	2009	1990	2009	1990	2009	1990	2009

*Adjusted for inflation

Figure 6 Wenger, 2015

Recently, the neighborhood has gained national attention after the death of Freddie Gray, a resident who was arrested and subsequently killed in the hands of Baltimore police officers.

Additionally, Maryland's governor Larry Hogan has focused on the neighborhood as part of Project C.O.R.E. (Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise), "a four-year partnership to demolish thousands of vacant buildings to serve as the catalyst for redevelopment, reinvestment, and stabilization in Baltimore" (Project C.O.R.E., 2016). Project C.O.R.E. will use $700 million state dollars to demolish 4,000 vacant properties citywide and encourage redevelopment. In Sandtown-Winchester, Hogan is advocating that the empty lots created from the demolition be turned into parks. However, residents have expressed that parks are not what the community needs at all. In fact, there are already parks available to residents, which are often used as spaces for drug deals and are often littered with trash due to lack of city resources for cleanup (Cox, 2016).

Residents of Sandtown-Winchester have expressed concerns that the parks created by the demolitions will only be placeholders for new development that will be too expensive for current residents. In effect, residents see the development as state-sponsored gentrification (Cox, 2016). In response to the abandonment and insensitive efforts from the government, some local groups have turned their attention to rebuilding the community from the ground up.

Community Organizations

In response to the persistent conditions of poverty, there are several grassroots organizations and community advocates established in and emerging out of the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood. Church groups are particularly active in the area, providing a stable social network, especially for older residents who have lived there for many years. The majority of grassroots organizations active in the area are citywide organizations that focus their efforts on particular neighborhoods. Because Sandtown-Winchester is one of the most troubled neighborhoods in the city, it falls under the scope of many different grassroots efforts. Table 1 lists the most active local organizations impacting the neighborhood currently. Neighborhood groups are those that are located in and focus specifically on

the Sandtown-Winchester area, while Community groups are those that also operate in other areas

of the city in addition to Sandtown-Winchester.

Table 1. Groups Active in Sandtown-Winchester (Liskey, 2017)

Neighborhood Groups	Baltimore Community Groups
Sandtown-Winchester Community Center	Community Building in Partnership
Sandtown-Winchester Community Coordinating Council	Healthy Start
Sandtown-Winchester Improvement Association	Habitat for Humanity
Saint Peter Claver Church	Baltimore Green Spaces
Lilian Jones Recreation Center	Baltimore Housing Roundtable
Pennsylvania Avenue Merchants Association	
Resident Action Committee	
No Boundaries Coalition	

Additionally, groups both from within and outside of the community have become

increasingly interested in the area's rich African-American history. In the last few years, non-profits

like the Royal Theatre & Community Heritage Corporation have taken interest in restoring some of

the former landmarks in order to preserve the history and provide an educational experience.

Although funding is short, the Royal Theatre Corporation has made it a goal to rebuild the historical

theatre brick-by-brick while engaging the community in the process, helping to foster a sense of

accomplishment that will be lasting (TRTCHC, 2013). . The Corporation's mission is to not only

recreate some of the old landmarks such as the Royal Theatre, but also restore community pride.

Redeveloping and nurturing love for the community is the key to community work, and it should

happen from within the residents (Westoby, 2013).

Food Climate in Sandtown-Winchester

Within the neighborhood boundaries of Sandtown-Winchester, there are two businesses that sell

food, both of them carry-out corner stores. In addition, there is one urban farm that was founded in

2013 that grows produce during the spring, summer, and fall and sells its food at local farmer's

markets, colleges, and a local market and corner store "in the Sandtown area" (Farm Alliance of

Baltimore, 2017). While some of the produce is sold nearby, none of it is actually distributed within

the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood currently. In addition to the two carry-out stores and the urban farm, several corner stores are present in the neighborhood, mostly serving as liquor stores, although they do stock some food products (Figure 6).

The nearest store labeled as a grocery store is the West Carry-Out & Grocery, a small, dark retail space resembling a liquor stores. Stores such as West Carry Out and the corner stores from Figure 6 appear on the Baltimore City Food Desert map as sufficient enough food retail to keep much of Sandtown-Winchester from being labeled as a food desert. The next closest grocery stores are two Save-A-Lots, each slightly over a mile away from the neighborhood. The Save-A-Lots are discount stores and, while an upgrade from corner stores, sell mostly canned and highly processed food and low-quality produce. The closest full-scale grocery store is a Safeway located about 3 miles away. According to Google Maps, to access the Safeway from Sandtown-Winchester, it is a 12-minute drive (3.3 miles), a 57-minute walk (2.7 miles), or 35 minutes by bus (one transfer, no direct route). Even with the improved food desert definition created by the Baltimore Office of Sustainability, on paper, neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester do not appear to be severely lacking in food resources. However, images and visits to the neighborhood tell a different story.

Figure 7 Google Maps, 2017

Because of the economic status of the area, enticing a full-scale supermarket into the area would be nearly impossible, and keeping it open would be even more difficult (Dawson, 2017). According to Kristin Dawson, Food Retail Economic Development Officer for Baltimore City, the city only has room for two, maybe three, more full-scale supermarkets. Any more would force existing supermarkets to go out of business, based on economic models (Dawson, 2017). Thus, areas like Sandtown-Winchester will not likely attract full-scale grocery stores anytime in the near future. Instead, there are small-scale opportunities for healthy food to enter the neighborhood through the existing corner-stores, churches, and informal retail such as food trucks and food carts, like the arabbers.

The Middle Ground

Top-down initiatives like Project C.O.R.E., which has been focusing on demolishing vacant buildings in neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester, provide large amounts of funding and can produce noticeable results on a larger scale over a shorter period of time. If used wisely, funding of this magnitude can effectively catalyze redevelopment and create a segue to further development. From a top-down perspective, this is almost always seen as positive change. However, when these projects fail to hear the voices of community members, they also open the floodgate for gentrification, where current residents are forced to move and let wealthier members of society benefit benefit from the redevelopment. This process is one of the main concerns of the residents of Sandtown-Winchester as more vacant units are turned into lots, awaiting their turn to be redeveloped.

The Baltimore Housing Roundtable, a coalition of groups focused on community development, has been working on figuring out how Baltimore City can invest in future development of neighborhoods without displacing people. "We believe that the incoming tide of development can lift all boats only if it is principled and based on human rights values" (Baltimore Housing Roundtable, 2016). The report produced by the organization asks that the "Baltimore city government entrust more resources to nonprofits and housing organizations aimed at building community land trusts" (Mock, 2016). Community land trusts give more power to the residents to control housing costs so they are not priced out of a neighborhood when new development moves in (see Appendix C).

Promoting tools like community land trusts can help create a partnership between top-down projects and the communities they affect by allowing residents to maintain control over their domain. "With city assistance in transferring property and providing seed money through municipal bond proceeds, the City can provide motivated neighborhood residents with concrete

tools to be change agents. Vacant properties can be demolished, renovated, and converted to green spaces through a process that brings the community together, and builds community wealth" (Baltimore Housing Roundtable, 2016). It is in this middle space practitioners can work to find ways to empower residents while collaborating with groups that traditionally have access to power and resources (Figure 7).
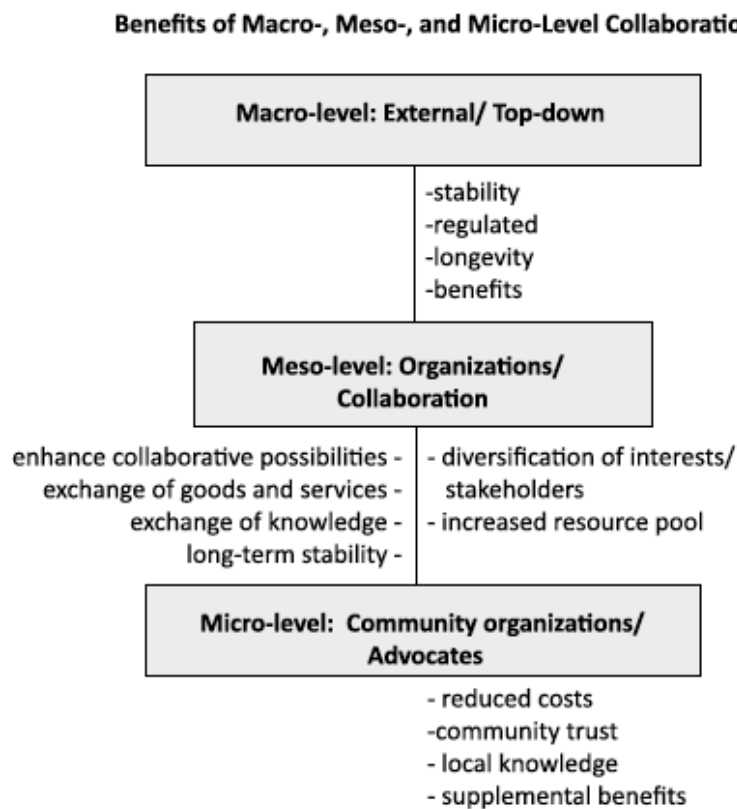
Benefits of Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Level Collaboration

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Macro-level: External/ Top-down    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                    │ -stability
                    │ -regulated
                    │ -longevity
                    │ -benefits
        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │ Meso-level: Organizations/│
        │       Collaboration       │
        └───────────────────────────┘
enhance collaborative possibilities - │ - diversification of interests/
    exchange of goods and services -  │    stakeholders
       exchange of knowledge -        │ - increased resource pool
          long-term stability -       │
        ┌───────────────────────────┐
        │ Micro-level: Community     │
        │ organizations/ Advocates   │
        └───────────────────────────┘
                    │ - reduced costs
                    │ -community trust
                    │ - local knowledge
                    │ - supplemental benefits
```

Figure 8 Liskey, 2017

Meso-level collaboration opens up new opportunities for everyone and has the most potential for creating a sense of place that reflects the culture and provides for the needs of the community. Because of the newly gained national attention, Sandtown-Winchester is in a prime position for gathering new collaboration partners interested in socially just redevelopment. The role

of meso-level practitioners can be especially useful during this early phase to ensure that the partnerships being established will have the community's best interests at heart. Additionally, practitioners can help the community establish a clear, unified vision and goals for how they would like to see the community in the future.

Collaborative Opportunities

> "When organizing, please remember to do with and not for. As residents and leaders of this community we have been working on these issues before they were in the national spotlight and will continue to work on these issues after the cameras roll away" (No Boundaries Coalition, 2015).

When Freddie Gray, a 25-year old Sandtown-Winchester native, died in the hands of six Baltimore Police Officers in 2015, many residents in the city became enraged and motivated to protest on behalf of those subjected to social injustices. For several weeks after the event, protesters and groups of volunteers took to the streets to find ways to become activated in oppressed communities. During the first week, Sandtown-Winchester was completely blocked off by police barricades. Residents living in the area had to provide valid identification to the police in order to enter or leave the neighborhood. Volunteers from other communities could not enter or leave the neighborhood. Volunteers from other communities could not enter in order to help in the efforts to clean up after the rioting and looting that occurred. In addition, some residents of the neighborhood did not welcome the outsiders, sparking online dialogue about the role of volunteers, who often come from a place of higher privilege.

In reaction to the growing conflict between residents and outsiders, the No Boundaries Coalition, started in Sandtown-Winchester, stepped in and published an article called "Please Do With and Not For", encouraging those interested in helping the community do so in a way that was

not too heavy-handed and prescriptive. As Guthman (2009) wrote, there is danger in the idealism of privilege, which can have the tendency of being ignorant to the real needs of underserved and vulnerable communities. Aware of this dynamic, the No Boundaries Coalition asked outsiders to ask residents of the area what they want before planning events and to make sure that the voices of the residents remain the most heard in the midst of conflict. Since then, the No Boundaries Coalition has provided an open door for people outside of these communities who are interested in working with and for residents. The coalition holds weekly meetings, hosts volunteer activities, and is also politically active and collaborated with other social justice movements nationally. Organizations such as the No Boundaries Coalition provide the essential link between residents, who might often often be unaware of other resources, and the larger community of researchers, practitioners, planners, volunteers, students, and city government officials. Thus, they act as community gatekeepers in the meso-level, protecting the community while connecting them to resources (Sixsmith, 2003).

The No Boundaries Coalition has started addressing a complex web of issues affecting the well-being of the residents of the neighborhood, and food security is one of them. They launched a weekly produce market at the Avenue, which incorporates from the local urban garden located in Sandtown-Winchester, the "Strength to Love 2" garden. Although the market is located just outside of the neighborhood boundaries, it serves many of the residents and has been hugely successful (No Boundaries Coalition, 2017).

Additionally, the Fulton Street Stable is located within the bounds of the neighborhood, where the upcoming Arabber Preservation Museum and upgraded stable project will be. This project, with the attention of many macro-level actors, has the potential to have a significant impact on the community. There are potential opportunities for the arabbers to work alongside the No Boundaries Coalition as well as the "Strength to Love 2" urban farm for access to produce, which would allow them to be less reliant on trips to large-scale, wholesale produce distributors located

miles away. While this project remains in the beginning stages, there are yet unrealized networking opportunities between neighborhood and community organizations and advocates that could empower arabbers while at the same time significantly improving access to and distribution of fresh food in the neighborhood and across the city (Black Yield Institute, 2017).

Conclusion

Sandtown-Winchester has been struggling for decades, unaffected by past city efforts of revitalization. However, recent national attention to growing inequalities in communities like Sandtown-Winchester, plagued with social inequality, is acting as a catalyst for social change. Community traumas (social pain), such as the death of Freddie Gray, have sparked community-led, bottom-up social movements focused on creating lasting solutions.

There is an opportunity for practitioners to collaborate with community organizations to empower them and connect them to outside resources by identifying potential collaboration opportunities, locating resources, and developing allies. Opportunities like Project C.O.R.E. can be channeled in a way that includes and benefits community members rather than prescribing a system for them. In the wake of these recent social events, the climate in Baltimore's most underserved neighborhoods is one of hope and eagerness, facilitated by decades of frustration, with residents actively searching for ways to improve their spaces and create a lasting sense of place.

Content Analysis

Through the Nvivo word frequency analysis query, six documents from both city/state programs and community-led programs were analyzed. The top 20 most common words were then identified and inserted into the table. Using conditional formatting, all columns were analyzed against each other to determine which words were used by whom. The words not highlighted in the chart are

words that were used uniquely to a particular group. Although each group works to promote food access, the way in which the issues and solutions are discussed differ.

Table 2. Content Analysis (Liskey, 2017)

Maryland Dept. of Planning-Planning for the Food		Food Access Market Analysis for Maryland		Baltimore Food Policy Network		John's Hopkins Community Food Assesment		No Boundaries Coalition		Black Yield Institute	
787	Food	62	Areas	34	Food	14	Food	13	Food	35	Food
232	Maryland	27	Maryland	19	Baltimore	12	Baltimore	11	Produce	23	Black
208	Local	26	Population	14	Policy	4	Community	9	Residents	21	People
196	County	22	Food	12	Access	4	Market	6	Coalition	10	Baltimore
193	Community	21	Access	10	BFPI	4	Public	5	Resources	8	African
117	Farmers	19	Baltimore	6	City	4	Health	5	Low-cost	8	System
107	Agriculture	18	Low-income	5	Support	3	Information	5	Campaign	7	City
106	Land	18	Leakage	5	Federal	3	Community	4	High-quality	5	Insecurity
104	Baltimore	15	Million	5	Urban	3	Hopkins	4	Purchase	5	Land
99	Farm	14	Living	5	Department	3	Healthy	4	Healthy	4	Transformation
96	Agricultural	11	Communities	4	Assistance	3	Policy	3	Baltimore	4	Sovereignty
86	System	11	Healthy	4	Retailers	3	Center	3	Market	4	Institute
84	Planning	11	Prince	4	City	3	Johns	3	Access	4	Community
81	Urban	10	Residents	4	Tax	3	Tool	3	Stores	4	Necessary
76	Development	10	Block	4	Collaboration	3	CFA	3	Corner	4	Building
73	Department	10	TRF	3	Comprehensive	3	Used	3	Local	4	Problem
72	City	9	Development	3	Supermarket	2	Neighborhoods	3	Fresh	4	Descent
70	Agriculture	9	Estimated	3	Development	2	Policymakers	2	Opportunities	4	Control
67	Healthy	9	County	3	Stagies	2	Assessments	2	Organizations	3	Structural

While the sample size for this language analysis is small, the most notable difference in the language was between all of the organizations versus the Black Yield Institute (BYI). The BYI focused on language very specific to African-Americans and is engaging in the food sovereignty movement. This language indicates the audience of the organization, targeting Black community members and Black engagement. Although the organization works closely with White allies, their goal is to become self-sustainable because other efforts continue to fail the community. This language signifies a need for language which engages the community, rather than language that talks about it from an outsider's voice.

Language barriers inhibit collaborative efforts across the city (Dawson, 2017). According to Baltimore City employees in the Sustainability Department, it is often difficult to engage community

members and have them attend meetings because the language gap is significant. While many of the city employees have degrees of higher education, many community members have only graduated through high school levels. Although usually unintentional, high-level language directly excludes the community members it is being used to discuss, perpetuating the gap. It would be useful in future research to do a more rigorous language analysis that could then be used to help engage community members and promote programs and opportunities for collaboration that invite, rather than alienate, the population they are intended for.

The Language of Food Sovereignty

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations" (Declaration of Nyéléni, 2007).

The Black Yield Institute (BYI) and other community-led organizations in Baltimore have adopted the word sovereignty as a way of taking ownership of the food security and independence. Eric Jackson, founder of the institute, once worked for Baltimore's health department assisting with the creation of the virtual market, Baltimarket, but through his work, identified the need for Black-led initiatives in order for lasting change to be made.

Jackson and several other members of the Baltimore African-American community came together in 2015, in the wake of the death of Freddie Gray, in conjunction with the burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement to create the Black Yield Institute. The Black Lives Matter movement is founded on the idea of unity in order to affirm the contributions and values of Black citizens to the American society (Black Lives Matter, 2017).

"Black Yield Institute is an emerging Pan-Afrikan institution based in Baltimore, Maryland. We endeavor to build independent power by establishing an action network and incubator with a community of and for black people and entities in pursuit of Black Food Sovereignty. We are a Black-led institution, utilizing Afro-centric, Pan-African, and human rights frameworks to anchor our thought and works toward liberation through food" (Black Yield Institute, 2017).

Movements like Black Lives Matter work to build and nurture a community to promote equality for all people. In order to do this, they use the principles of equity and fairness, and identify the lack of power and representation in conjunction with unequal treatment through systemic and intentional racism. Thus, the movement promotes Black initiatives, which have been historically undervalued in the United States (Black Lives Matter, 2017). The Black Yield Institute has taken these principles and applied it to the matter of food security, adopting the growing language of food sovereignty being used increasingly to describe urban situations where communities aim to become self-reliant as opposed to subject to the prescriptions of macro-level organizations (Block, et al., 2011). The following describes the Black Yield Institute's mission:

"Black Yield Institute is on a mission to create a self-determined and self-reliant community of Black institutions, Black-owned businesses and people of African Descent in Baltimore's poor and Black food environments. We endeavor to define and govern all aspects of our food systems, including black food politics, economics, agriculture, culinary practices, community, wellness and knowledge creation" (Black Yield Institute, 2017).

The ultimate and long-term goals of the food sovereignty movement, BYI, the Black Lives Matter movement is to end a cycle of oppression of minority groups through system unequal power dynamic.

"Black Yield Institute envisions a healthy, cooperative and powerful black community where black people in that community govern the politics, economics, health, land and development around food, from seed to waste (and beyond). We also imagine food environments, where Black people work cooperatively to continually reduce dependence on White and other People of Color for food and overall sustainability, while restoring connection traditional Afrikan foods and practices" (Black Yield Institute, 2017).

While many top-down initiatives are well-intentioned, they are usually created by White and/or privileged members of society who do not understand the needs of the communities they create for.

The idea of food sovereignty embodies the core ideas of collaboration between all levels of actors in order to empower micro-level actors (communities) and increase understanding between the micro- and macro- levels. Although food is the tool through which the organization aims to empower communities, the external benefits include increased job opportunities and a rich and celebrated culture expressed through the preparation and celebration of traditional food. Thus, the Black Yield Institute functions as a meso-level bridge between policymakers and underserved communities.

Black Churches

> "The black church is a lasting institution in the black community and general community that specifically is vested in the life of black people. What better institution to address a problem that negatively impacts so many blacks?" (Blumberg, 2015).

Baltimore is a parochial city, meaning its communities are heavily influenced by and tied to its churches. Through online research and a discussion with Kristin Dawson, *Food Retail Economic Development Officer* with the Baltimore Development Corporation, it was revealed that Black churches are entrenched in food networks across the city, from food pantries to community gardens. These churches historically have an enormous impact on African-American communities and wield a great deal of power and influence within their communities.

One pioneering leader, Reverend Dr. Heber Brown, head of Pleasant Hope Baptist Church, has spearheaded the Black Church Food Security Network "in conjunction with the Baltimore Food and Faith Project of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future and Black Dirt Farm, a local group of urban

Figure 9 Blumberg, 2015. A Pleasant Hope church member tends to the church garden.

farmers who grow food on the historic land of Harriet Tubman on Maryland's Eastern Shore" (Blumberg, 2015). Each season, Brown's small churchyard garden produces 400-500 pounds of fresh produce which is available by donation after the church's service each Sunday. The idea behind the network is to unite Black churches and Black farmers so that they can better serve the Black community with healthy, nutritious food. This initiative is part of the growing movement to achieve Black food sovereignty (Blumberg, 2015).

In 2016, pastors from Black churches across the state of Maryland convened to discuss ways in which the church can promote environmental activism and land stewardship. There has been a growing trend in many religious communities to return a focus to environmental justice issues. "Discussions [at the meeting] included how to make the case with parishioners for "green" church facilities, pressing state legislators for stronger laws protecting God's creation and preaching a 'green Gospel' in black churches" (Dance, 2016). Also, the churches have recognized the lack of representation of the Black voice when it comes to policymaking and have been making an effort to

elevate church leaders to political offices in order to "help connect the church leaders with the larger movement for environmental policy and justice" (Dance, 2017).

Baltimore's many churches are a valuable meso-level network that promote the sense of community well-being and bring people together. As most churchyards have available land and many youthful volunteers at hand, promoting the collaboration between churches churches and higher-level organizations could have a profound effect on food resources.

Salvation Army Grocery Store Pilot Program

The Salvation Army is a Christian organization founded on the single principle of "Doing the Most Good" (The Salvation Army USA, 2017). In the fall of 2017, the organization will be launching a pilot program using Baltimore as a case study in order to test the viability of neighborhood grocery stores with subsidized, healthy food in low-income neighborhoods (Dawson, Interview, 2017). The testing model will open in East Baltimore and its success within the first six months of operation will likely determine its longevity as a program. Despite initial success, the test store will be given several years of operation at minimum to allow for necessary changes that may enhance success over time. If the project is determined to be successful, several others will open across the city, and then across the region.

The first store will be 6,000 square feet (Figure 9) and will be stocked with simple, but fresh, ingredients which will be locally sourced from different tiers of suppliers. A portion of the food from the Maryland food bank, which will be given to the store as donations or for a low cost. Other food will be donated or sold to the store by local farmers and businesses. The store will increase buying power by two or three times because 1) the prices will not be marked up, 2) the Salvation Army will own the building, further reducing costs, 3) non-profits do not pay tax, and 4) the store will tap into existing food networks and connections to get low prices. Additionally, the store will work to actively involve the community by gathering input about what products are desired (Dawson, Interview, 2017).

Although the pilot project is being created by a top-down organization from outside of the community, it is actively working to engage all levels of the Baltimore community by listening to and receiving regular feedback from customers. It is also using innovative strategies to minimize costs on

healthy food by tapping into local farm supply and by embracing the "ugly food movement" and selling produce that has not passed supermarket standards in terms of looks, but is otherwise fit for consumption (Dawson, Interview, 2017). If successful, the program could be a turning point for the retail of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods unable to attract large-scale supermarkets across the United States.

The Arabbers

The arabbers currently represent a micro-level actor in the city. They are community members who work independently to preserve their tradition but currently have little influence or impact other than sentimental value for some who remember a past where an abundance of arabbers walked the streets with produce. However, the increased support that the arabbers are seeing from different actors across the city could elevate them to becoming valuable contributors to the food network, especially in the food desert communities where they have historically served in the past and remain a trusted and reliable source of food, especially for the elderly who are less mobile.

The following map (Figure 10) is the typical route of a single arabber in one day, as described by Yusuf Abdullah "BJ", currently the only remaining active arabber (Warren, 2017). The route passes by roughly 82 blocks. On average, there are roughly 15-20 individual rowhouse structures per block. A typical rowhouse in Baltimore is then split into two or more apartments. Thus, based on these numbers, it can be estimated that a single arabber passes by around 3,000 residents in a day. This figure does not account for factors such as building vacancy, a rate which is currently around 14 percent across the city, a figure that could significantly impact the amount of residents passed depending on the area of the city. While this number may vary widely, it can be assumed based off of this map that if one arabber has the potential to reach each a thousand or so individuals in one day, a network of arabbers could have a significant presence in the city.
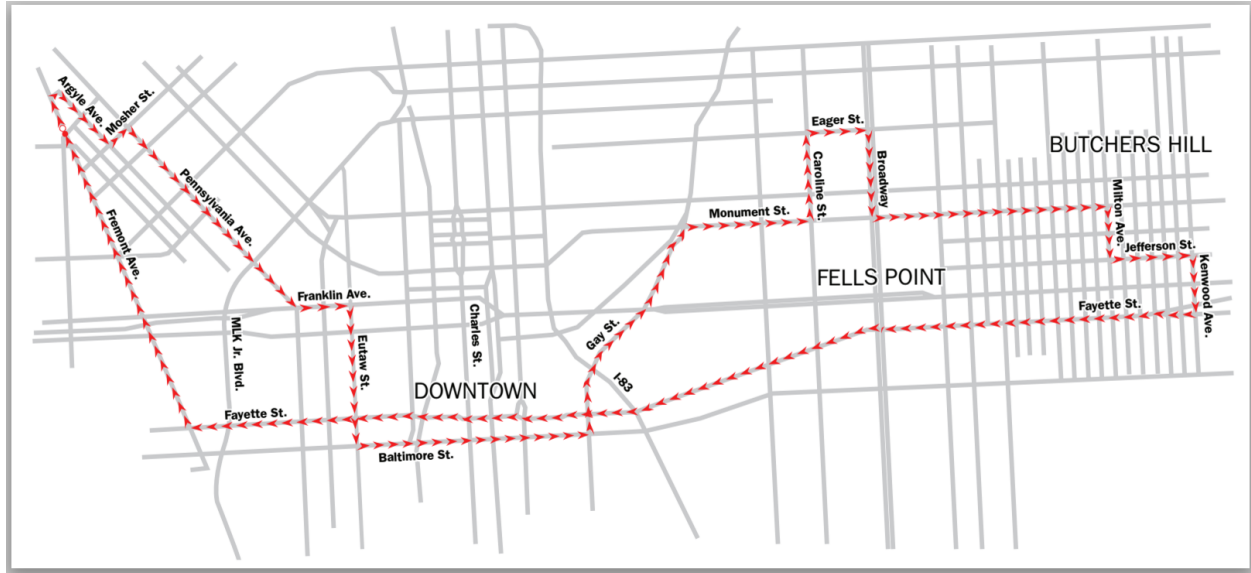
Figure 11 (Warren, 2017) BJ (Yusuf Abdullah) is one of the most active arabbers in Baltimore.

While increasing the number or arabbers on the streets would significantly increase the number of potential customer interactions, there is no guarantee that presence will ensure sales. However, existing food infrastructure in the city could provide arabbers with more plentiful and diverse food sources as well as a larger network of customers.

Maps of Baltimore's current food infrastructure compliment Baltimore City's Food Desert Map (Figure 6). The mobile food carts, restaurants, markets, and farms tend to be concentrated in the center of the city and fan out to the north (demographically White and wealthy areas), leaving the east and west food-barren (demographically poor, African-American areas). While it is apparent from these four maps that there is an abundance of food farming and vending locations, there is a persistent misallocation of resources.
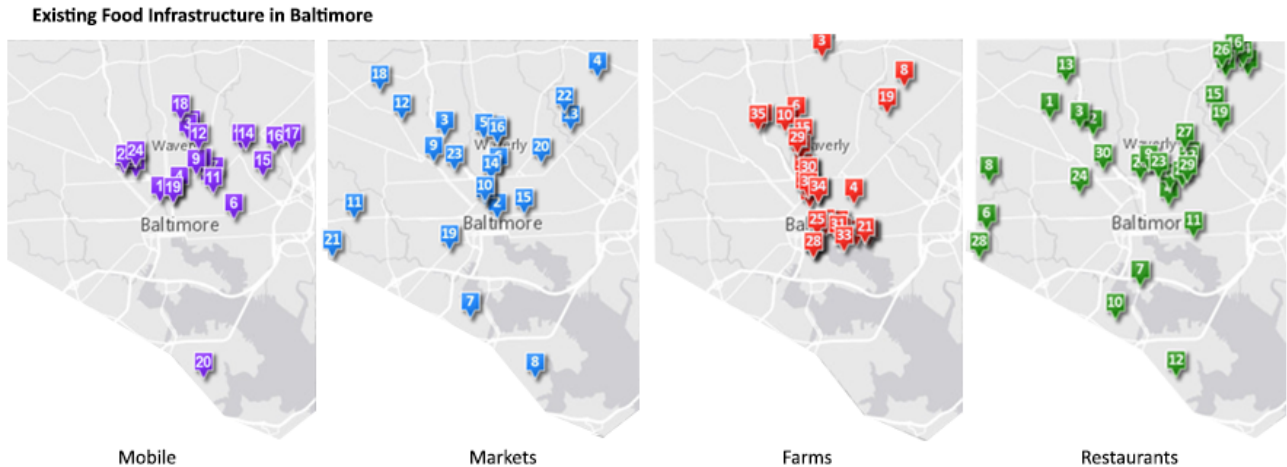
Figure 12 Maryland Food System Map, 2017

Pairing the vending capabilities and mobility of the arabbers with existing food trucks, markets, farms, and restaurants could effectively move shift the distribution of food out of the "White corridor" of the city and into the east and west regions where the food deserts are concentrated.

The Korean Community

While the Korean population in Baltimore was in the hundreds the in the 1960's, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolished the national origin and racial quota system, directly increased the population size significantly (Kunst, 2007). "The new law encouraged the immigration of skilled Korean workers, including mechanics and engineers for the city's industries. Many Korean immigrants founded groceries, dry cleaners, and other mom and pop businesses" (Gambill, 1991). Today, there are over 35,000 Koreans living in the Baltimore metropolitan area (U.S. Census, 2015).

Of the 435 corner stores located throughout the city, the majority are Korean owned (Dawson, Interview, 2017). Despite the prevalence of Korean owned corner stores serving the city, there remains a distinct cultural divide between communities.

"Koreans in Baltimore report anti-Korean bigotry from the city government and African-Americans. Cultural differences and language barriers, resulting in lack of communication and collaboration, have contributed to animosity between African-Americans and Koreans. At the city-owned Lafayette Market, the government cancelled the leases of Korean shop-owners in order to increase the number of African-American shop-owners, a move that has been accused of being discriminatory to Koreans" (Carlson, 1995).

Additionally, the Korean community has traditionally harbored a deep-seated distrust of the government. "Language barriers, lack of political representation, fear of retaliation when criminal court cases fall apart, and lack of police response contributes to distrust for the criminal justice system" (Neufeld, 2003).

According to Kristen Dawson of the Baltimore Development Corporation, there have been many efforts made to try to create a better relationship between the city and the Korean community, although a significant language barrier remains. The Korean Grocer's Association (KGRO) has a statewide chapter in Maryland. Dawson has been meeting with the association regularly over the years to discuss policies and provide information about programs that may be accessible to them. Despite imparting useful knowledge, Dawson admits that there has been little response from the community and the association in the past.

However, a recent change in the Baltimore city zoning code may cause KGRO to reconsider their relationship with the rest of the city. The new zoning code has effectively zoned many liquor store corner stores out of the city. At least 72 Korean owned liquor stores will no longer be able to operate as alcohol vendors, as the city has identified them as places that attract crime in residential areas. Thus, these stores are being forced to either change their products, turn into residential properties, or close. The Baltimore Development Corporation has seen this recent change as an opportunity to help Korean businesses remain open while at the same time address the shortage of

food in many of the neighborhoods serviced by these liquor stores. Thus, as many Korean store owners wonder what to do next, the city will be working more closely with these store owners to assist them in shifting over to corner store grocery stores. These liquor store corner stores have two years to comply with the new zoning regulations, which gives Dawson and others time to properly build relationships and train store owners to convert to selling food products. If the conversion is successful in a majority of these stores, the amount of food available in Black neighborhoods will significantly increase, as the liquor stores are currently disproportionately located in these neighborhoods (Dawson, Interview, 2017).

Additionally, a shift from alcohol sales to groceries may also improve the race relations between Koreans and African-Americans, which has often been one of animosity. During the 2015 riots following the death of Freddie Gray, 100 of the 380 businesses destroyed were Korean-owned, which some took as racially motivated destruction and violence. Despite this suspicion, others believed the businesses to be targeted purely for economic reasons. Motivations aside, after the riots a performance titled "Bmore Seoul to Soul" was held in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District featuring both African-American and Korean-American dancers in an attempt to relieve tensions between the two communities (Lee, 2015). Such performances and the changing food culture across the city hopefully foreshadow a decrease in racial tensions between these communities and a new partnership in creating healthy options for all residents.

Impact of Freddie Gray's Death on the Food Climate

When the violence broke out following the death of Freddie Gray at the hands of police officers in April, 2015 the reality of food deserts became painfully apparent. "Many corner stores were affected during the uprising and out of commission. Entire neighborhoods were hungry and without food" (Blumberg, 2015). Since then, the media has jumped on the opportunity to highlight the poverty in

the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood where Gray lived and others like it. While some news sources portrayed the neighborhoods as victims of violence from the rioting, local sources quickly cleared up this misconception by calling attention to fact that Sandtown-Winchester and other neighborhoods like it looked that way long before the rioting took place. This has spurred a huge uptick in media attention towards the problems plaguing the area, such as food access problems, dilapidated housing, drugs, etc.

Though the event was tragic, the aftermath of the rioting has led to swift action across the city to hone in on the most impoverished areas and promote economic growth and equip entrepreneurs and business owners with the tools to be successful in underserved areas. While it is extremely difficult if not economically impossible for full-size supermarkets to move into neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester, efforts to create small vendors are increasing. City Council recently passed a proposal by Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake to offer substantial tax breaks to supermarket owners who invest in underserved city neighborhoods. "Under the plan, the city would cut the taxes grocery stores pay on personal property like cash registers, freezers and other equipment by 80 percent. That's a significant incentive that could pay big dividends if it entices business owners to locate in any of the two dozen or so Baltimore neighborhoods presently without easy access to fresh meats, fruits and vegetables" (Baltimore Sun, 2015.)

Conclusion

While the city of Baltimore has recently taken significant measures towards improving the rate of food security, there are many areas, such as in Sandtown-Winchester, where liquor stores suffice as food sources. Although the efforts made by the city may help reduce food insecurity, possibly significantly, it may be many years or decades before the effects of new policies and programs can be

seen and measured. For this reason, community members and organizations have identified this need for community-led programs to help reduce the time that it will take for food to be available and to also ensure long-term self-reliance that improves community resiliency. While top-down policies and programs may change at any time, a resilient community is one that does not rely exclusively on these resources but is diversified.

Additionally, meso-level actors such as church groups, gatekeeper organizations like the No Boundaries Coalition and the Black Yield Institute strengthen communities by connecting the local knowledge and voices to the macro-level resources that may be available. People like Eric Jackson, who have worked for the city and has worked for the community, are invaluable to the success of community organizations because they can speak the language of policy and the language of the community. Thus, meso-level actors provide the bridge between the macro- and the micro-level actors. Additionally, short-term discord can act as an agent of quick change in an urban setting. Thus, the events that took place during the arrest of Freddie Gray, while tragic and complex, also producde the silver-lining of community-led action in response to such an event. Gray's death and subsequent riots catalyzed a pre-existing movement and activated meso-level actors to engage more deeply as community leaders and within macro-level systems.

Chapter IV: Analysis & Recommendations

This study has attempted to identify the current food culture in the city of Baltimore and to understand the major actors at three different scales: macro-, meso-, and micro- to understand how these three different groups of actors influence and are influenced by food access levels in the city, as well as how they currently interact with each other and where there may be opportunities for future interaction.

The four main findings produced were:

 1) There were language differences between city programs/policies and community members;

 2) Community groups are working to fill gaps left by top-down programs;

3) There is an increased interest from broader community to promote arabbers; and

4) lack of collaboration between groups perpetuates food insecurity.

Language barriers perpetuate unequal resource distribution

A content analysis revealed a distinction between keywords used by macro-, meso-, and micro- level actors within the city. Macro-level actors have adopted the top-down language of planning, development, and giving access to resources. While this language is useful for describing specific goals and outcomes of initiatives, it is not language that is easily accessible or inclusive to the public.

An interview with the Black Yield Institute co-founder Eric Jackson supported the language use trend of food sovereignty that is being adopted by many community-led groups to describe self-sufficiency and empowerment of the communities. While the use of the phrase "improving access" insinuates that there is currently a lack of access through unequal resource distribution, it also invokes the idea of charity. While charity is inherently a beneficial and selfless act that a privileged

entity does for a less privileged, it perpetuates a power dynamic where people with resources give to those with less resources. However, the resources given in charity are generally not enough to lift an underprivileged person or group out of the situation, but instead to ensure that basic needs are met.

Thus, the consideration of language when approaching food distribution conversations is essential to how successful policies and programs are in the long-term. If a top-down policy or program aims to give food *access* to a community, it leaves the control of resources to the privileged, which will prevent the nuanced and culturally specific needs of underserved communities from being sufficiently met. However, striving to help a community become food *sovereign* implies empowering them, letting them dictate their own needs and use resources in the most appropriate ways based on individual needs. In the long-term, sovereignty creates stable, self-sufficient economies, which reduces the need for top-down intervention and also helps to improve all conditions in a community including health, crime, housing, and the environment. *Sovereignty* brings resources to a community from within, helping to ensure more equal resource distribution.

Community groups are supplementing the work of top-down programs

It was found that across the city, many community-scale (micro-level) organizations, programs, and individual advocates are working to improve food security in their communities in response to both fast system disruptions like the Freddie Gray riots and slow system disruptions such as uneven development that have affected communities over time.

The food sovereignty movement is supplemental to top-down programs focused on improving food access to vulnerable communities and has the potential to improve community resiliency by providing jobs and increasing economic diversity within communities. The No Boundaries Coalition works to train community food advocates who help ensure that retailers are providing healthy options in food desert areas. Additionally, these community groups are creating

unconventional distribution centers such as weekend markets and mobile distribution options like

the arabbers, who can transport large amounts of produce across the city at a minimal cost with the

added benefit of preserving history and providing entertainment with their horses.

In Baltimore, because of the high rate and number of African-American citizens living in

underserved communities, Black institutions such as the church have started becoming increasingly

active in the movement to improve the amount and quality of resources available in Black

communities. Additionally, Black Lives Matter has provided a unifying voice to the movement of

Black sovereignty, not only in Baltimore, but in cities across the U.S. It should be noted that while

Black Lives Matter promotes the success of Black people, it embraces all lives while addressing the

need for more value given to Black lives by society as a whole. The movement is open to everyone

and collaboration between allies is supported and encouraged (Black Lives Matter, 2017).

Increased support for arabbers across the city

> "Never make a problem out of an opportunity. Instead of seeing arabbers as walking
> anachronisms or public nuisances, we should find a safe, sustainable way to maintain and
> celebrate their existence, see that the horses are treated well, and that the arabbers are able to
> make a decent living selling fresh fruit and vegetables around the city" (Rodricks, 2016).

Several years ago, the number of arabbers began dwindling as lack of demand and support increased

across the city. However, in 2015, after having the charges of animal neglect dropped, the arabbers

began receiving widespread interest from the Baltimore community. Currently, the Arabber

Preservation Society and its members are working to promote the arabbers by holding meetings and

events to bring awareness and acceptance from the greater Baltimore area community.

Figure 13 Fulton Street Stable site visit (Liskey, 2017)

As the amount of interest in mobile food retail, such as food trucks, increases, there has been an interest in also bringing back vestiges of the past: horse-drawn carts. With the support of the Maryland Horse Industry Board to turn the Fulton Street Stable into a horse discovery center, the arabbers have been moved from a place of suspicion to a place of nostalgia in the hearts of Baltimoreans (Rodricks, 2016).

The map of one arabber's typical day working shows that the carts have potential to reach a significant amount of people across the small, dense city. With renewed interest in the tradition, a fleet of arabbers could be an effective food distribution network. In neighborhoods like Sandtown-Winchester, where the tradition had a historical presence, the rekindling of arabbing could help employ a number of young men in particular, who would otherwise be unemployed. Finally, arabbing can be paired with existing food production and distribution centers to help create a sustainable food system by valuing local production and local food culture. Promoting innovative,

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supermarket alternatives like local markets and street carts increases the number of residents exposed to culturally appropriate and healthy food options.

Lack of collaboration between groups perpetuates food insecurity

Finally, in support of the hypothesis, it was found that a failure of communication between macro- and micro- level groups in the city perpetuates the unequal distribution of resources. Programs like Project C.O.R.E. by the Maryland state government, while well-intentioned from a city-wide perspective, ignores the concerns of the local residents in the target neighborhoods, who knows that more open space does not meet their needs. Projects by community outsiders, like the Apples and Oranges grocery store, fail to understand the cultural nuances surrounding food preferences or the limitations to food preparation in extremely impoverished areas. "The achievement of social justice within local food systems requires an effective democratic process, including the empowerment of those who are most vulnerable and have benefitted the least from current arrangements" (Allen, 2010).

Top-down initiatives should aim to include community engagement as part of a planning process, whether it be for the creation of a business or for the shaping of policy or programs. Communication builds relationships which leads to understanding between socio-economic groups and cultures. In a city as divided by race and class as Baltimore, it will be imperative for micro- and macro- level efforts to engage in communication in order to begin to break down these divisions to ensure that food and other resources move into areas of the city where they are needed most. The equalizing of distribution is an effect of the strengthening of networks, with the meso-level actors acting as the gateway and bond between them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended for top-down actors such as the City of Baltimore's Office of Sustainability, the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, policymakers for the state of Maryland, and private entities. Top-down actors by nature approach food insecurity issues from a privileged perspective, armed with monetary resources, data, and expertise. However, while it is easy to become prescription from a top-down position, statistics and examples have shown that creating solutions for reducing food insecurity without understanding the needs of the target communities can inhibit the success of such initiatives. Thus, the following recommendations suggest ways to help ensure that resources are applied in ways that not only produce measurable impact, but can potentially amplify that impact.

- *Empower Community Food Advocates*

    The city should reach out to communities and identify key individuals who would be willing to take a more active role as educators and advocates for food justice, or the right to have healthy, affordable food. These individuals would collaborate closely with the city, attending meetings and serving as representatives of their communities. They would have the trust of neighbors and friends in their communities in order to collect local knowledge while building relationships across neighborhoods with other food advocates. Food advocates work on the meso-level at an individual scale to create strong neighborhood-level networks that can help efficiently identify needs and distribute resources.

- *Invest in culture*

    Food is not only a necessary resource for life, but it is an expression of culture, religion, tradition, etc. While ensuring that communities can meet their most basic food needs is an important goal, the way in which communities are able to interact with their food is important to the longevity of food security in the city. Investing in bottom-up efforts, where

communities decide what food they produce and how they prepare and distribute it, will allow for the cultivation of an appreciation for food as well. When food is celebrated rather than seen as a base-level necessity, health and well-being are also promoted. Ways to invest in culture would be to create and promote opportunities for cooking class, promote urban gardening, support small-scale food distribution operations such as the arabbers, and improve policies to allow more opportunities for certain street-level food production and distribution to occur without the need to obtain expensive business licensing.

- *Engage in Participatory Action Research to inform policies and programs*

Participatory methods can be used to more deeply understand a community. The city could engage in Participatory Action Research within Baltimore communities in order to gain firsthand local knowledge as well as an appreciation for conditions. Because Baltimore remains highly segregated, often social classes and cultural do not mix or have any contact from one neighborhood to another in the city. Wealthier people tend to stay in the central city corridor while the poor tend to be concentrated to the east and west. The city could invest in a program to have city employees live and spend time in east and west neighborhoods in order to begin to dissolve this stark barrier between social groups, which would produce useful insight to be used to inform policies and programs.

Opportunities for Future Research

Future research could include a more interactive Participatory Action project where the researcher would spend long periods of time living in and engaging with the community to better understand the social networks at a neighborhood level. This would lead to a better understanding of how knowledge and resources are distributed through micro-level interactions.

One of the Black Yield Institute's future projects and opportunity for collaboration involves using this ground-level knowledge and GIS mapping software to produce a spatial network map. If time and resources had not been a limitation of this thesis, a similar network map would have been an ideal deliverable. Understanding the networking taking place at the micro-, meso-, and macro-scales in a city is invaluable to being able to understand where there are opportunities to improve connections where they are weak or have not yet been made. With so many actors working at different scales, often groups of people with similar motivations, or with needs that could complement each other, work parallel to each other instead of intersecting to collaborate. Future research could be used to understand where these potential connections exist. Figure 13 is an example of what such a network map could look like.
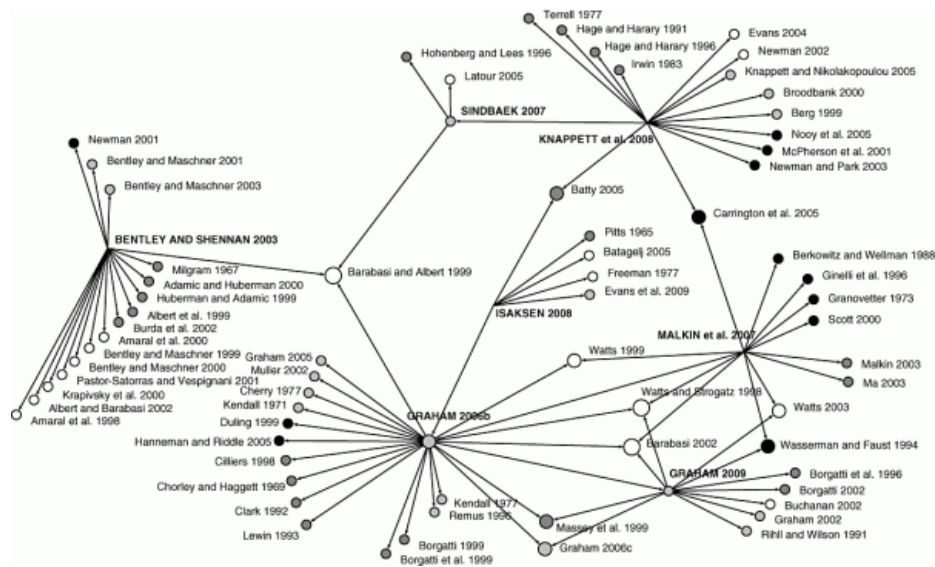
Figure 14 Example Network Map (Brughmans, 2010)

Organizations at all scales could then utilize such a tool to understand who the key players are in food distribution networking, to find other individuals and organizations with aligned values, and to connect to needed resources. Ideally, the network map would be interactive so that it could be constantly updated to remain current and could even serve as a platform for groups to directly connect with each other to exchange knowledge and resources.

Although this research has concluded, I intend on remaining involved in the ongoing efforts to improve food security in Baltimore, and have remained in contact with individuals from different organizations, including Eric Jackson from the Black Yield Institute, who is interested in possible future collaboration. While this context is specific the Baltimore, many cities and rural areas across the country, especially in the south, remain food insecure. There are many research opportunities in these communities that can produce a better understanding of the food climate in these areas to inform recommendations to policymakers, organizations, and advocates for improving food security based on the local networks that exist.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Despite top-down city efforts to improve food distribution, food insecurity remains a problem for a quarter of the total population in Baltimore due to unequal distribution of resources. The number of food insecure African-Americans, accounting for 60 percent of the population, is more than one-third. This unequal distribution is perpetuated by a lack of communication and interaction between social classes across the city, a problem exacerbated by the systematic segregation of race. This research investigated the opportunities and challenges for improving food security for vulnerable populations through collaboration between local community food advocacy groups and top-down governmental initiatives.

The main findings of this research were that language barriers perpetuate unequal resource distribution, community groups are working to fill gaps left by top-down programs, the Baltimore community is embracing more micro-level food distribution options like the arabbers, and lastly that an overall lack of collaboration between groups perpetuates food insecurity. A main takeaway from the research was that meso-level actors provide a gateway into communities for practitioners and others interested in improving food security and other socio-economic conditions for underserved communities. They work directly in, with, and for community members while using resources and expertise to connect to macro-level resources.

There are many micro-, meso-, and macro- level actors in the city working to improve food security. While this research highlighted some of these groups, more research needs to be done to identify all key actors and to gain a better understanding of how they interact with each other and influence the food systems in Baltimore. It was found that there is often a language and cultural barrier between micro- and macro- level actors and that meso-level actors can act as a gateway between these levels by improving communication and connecting resources more efficiently.

Future recommendations for Baltimore City include the promotion of neighborhood food advocates that can work to build strong relationships between communities and city officials, the promotion of culture to inform food policies and programs, and the use of Participatory Action Research for city practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of the communities they serve.

While food insecurity is a problem of scarcity in some parts of the world, the opposite case is true in the United States, where food is plentiful. Instead, uneven development in cities over time paired with the extremes of poverty and wealth between areas in cities have kept resources from moving evenly across these social barriers. Although top-down efforts can work to improve development, underserved communities are often put at risk of gentrification, where they are priced out of their homes as the value of property in a neighborhood increases. Thus, in order to protect and empower vulnerable community members, top-down efforts should be paired with community-led initiatives to ensure the interests of the community members are understood and valued. Top-down initiatives can be used empower communities so they become self-reliant, and thus more resilient, ensuring a more stable food climate that is equally distributed across social classes in the city.

Appendix A.

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative Timeline

Our History

2015

- Passed enabling language in state legislature to allow for personal property tax abatements for supermarkets to locate or renovate in or near food deserts
- Released 2015 Food Environment Map and Report

2014
- After ongoing advocacy, a provision to allow online SNAP benefits included in the 2014 Farm Bill
- Launched Homegrown Baltimore Employee Wellness CSA
- Food Access Planner and Food Retail Economic Development Officer hired.

2013
- Awarded a City Enhancement Proposal for the Food Desert Retail Strategy
- Mayor Rawlings-Blake led the USCM Food Policy Task Force meeting in Las Vegas in June 2013
- First two leases executed through Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing Initiative.
- Homegrown Baltimore Urban Agriculture Plan approved and released.

2012
- Launched SNAP benefits at the Baltimore Farmers Market and Bazaar
- Launched Healthy Carryout Strategy at Lexington and Hollins Market. Program grew to include Northeast Market and 34 vendors in total.

2011
- Change in state policy to allow first-year farmers' markets in food deserts to accept federal nutrition assistance
- Updated health code to allow residents to own chickens, rabbits, goats and bees

2010
- Mayor Rawlings-Blake released the Ten Food Policy Recommendations
- BFPI created and Holly Freishtat hired as Food Policy Director
- Food Policy Advisory Committee created

Appendix B.

Baltimarket: Baltimore's Virtual Supermarket

 "Working with Local Government to Solve Food Access Challenges with Virtual Supermarkets in Baltimore, MD Geographic proximity, transportation, and scheduling challenges can make it difficult for residents in low-income neighborhoods to access grocery stores for healthier food purchases. Those receiving SNAP benefits have to be physically present to make SNAP food purchases. In 2010, the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) identified buildings in the city's impoverished neighborhoods that could serve as conduits for online grocery ordering. The Virtual Supermarket Program started as a partnership between BCHD, a grocer, and a library. The program enables community members to order from the grocer online and Fixing Food 11 then pick groceries up at the library. Unlike other online grocery ordering services, customers do not pay for groceries until they are delivered. This structure provides customers multiple payment options, including SNAP, credit, debit, and cash. BCHD obtained a grant to cover the grocer's transportation costs so that residents do not have to pay a delivery fee. The Virtual Supermarket Program also provides training to residents so they can manage the program, giving the community greater ownership and control of the project. The program has subsequently expanded to four sites: one public library and three housing complexes. As of April 2015, more than 500 unique customers had placed over 4,000 orders totaling $132,000 (BCHD 2015). More in depth data collection efforts are under way, including tracking customer orders over time and quantifying the extent to which picking up groceries at a common location increases interactions among neighbors (Flamm, 2015). The Virtual Supermarket Program has overcome unanticipated challenges. The program was suspended for nine months in 2013 when the project's original grocer went out of business. However, the program was relaunched at two ShopRite stores. The participating ShopRite store in Howard Park opened in 2014 in an underserved community and is the largest grocery store in Baltimore; it was financed with funds from the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a federal program that offers grants and loans to retailers to establish venues in underserved areas (TRF 2014). This example highlights how community interventions and federal programs intended to promote healthy food can complement and reinforce each other. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR ONLINE REDEMPTION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS SNAP recipients have historically not been able to redeem their benefits online because of security concerns. However, due in part to the success of the Virtual Supermarket Program, federal legislation was adopted in the 2014 Farm Bill that authorized demonstration projects wherein approved retailers would test the use of online technologies to process Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) transactions. If these projects prove successful, online benefit redemptions could become more common. One of the key attributes of the Virtual Supermarket Program is that it combined the ease of online ordering with a positive social shopping experience. Baltimore's fostering of community engagement could be replicated by other agencies or institutions when implementing online benefit redemption program" (Baltimarket, 2016).

Mock,

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displacement/462387/

Appendix D.

Interviewees & Questions

Alice Huang, Food Access Planner, Baltimore Office of Sustainability
What initiated the process for creating the Food Policy Initiative?

Before the BFPI, what policies were in place to mitigate food insecurity? (local, state, and national)

What was the process for creating the Food Policy Initiative? Which stakeholders have the most influence? Who has been the most active?

How have residents been informed about the initiative? (What kind of outreach has been done? Where? Who?)

Has there been noticeable success? If so, how is this success measured? Where has it been measured?

What is the long-term goal for reducing food insecurity? What is the target rate of food insecurity (not the ideal, which would be zero, but what number is the city trying to achieve?)

What have been some of the biggest challenges to achieving set goals?

What are some future opportunities? Hopes for next steps?

Does Baltimore's independent-city status affect the success of policies and regulations and the process by which they are created?

Are there other groups/people you recommend to interview and/or research?

Kristin Dawson, Food Retail Economic Development Officer, Baltimore Development Corporation

What does the Baltimore Development Corporation do?

What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to reducing food insecurity in Baltimore? Opportunities?

What projects have been done/are being done to tackle food security issues?

How do you collaborate with different groups/people/communities/organizations across the city?

Are there other groups/people you recommend to interview and/or research?

No Boundaries Coalition, Director of Food Justice

When was the No Boundaries Coalition started and by whom?

Does NBC collaborate with anyone? (other organizations/city/schools, etc.)

What kind of outreach does NBC do? Are there particular target areas? Have there been areas more responsive/receptive than others?

What are some qualities of successful food groups?

What have been some challenges? What are foreseeable challenges? Opportunities?

I am interested in how the No Boundaries Coalition specifically works to address issues related to food, and who you partner with. Are there partnerships you would like to see happen?

What do you think are some of the biggest challenges to reducing food insecurity in Baltimore?

Are you all involved with urban agriculture projects?

What areas of the city does the NBC work with specifically?

In your opinion, has the City of Baltimore's changing policies/programs improved food security in a measurable way? (Homegrown Baltimore, Sustainability Plan, Baltimarket, etc.)

Are there other groups/people you recommend to interview and/or research?

Eric Jackson, Servant-Director, Black Yield Institute

When was the Black Yield Institute founded and what was the motivation?

What has been most successful? Challenging?

Is the BYI collaborating with other groups?

What are the plans/goals for the future?

Are there particular areas of focus?

What are some of the barriers for black communities/community members in terms of achieving food sovereignty? What are some of the resources?

What are some similarities that Baltimore shares with other cities in terms of food insecurity issues? (If known.) What makes Baltimore's situation unique?

What is the community structure of neighborhoods in Baltimore? Are they close-knit? Are they family-oriented? Individualistic? Are they related by location, or by other factors that transcend neighborhood borders?

Has urban agriculture been successful in food insecure neighborhoods? To what extent, or why not?

Are there other groups/people you recommend to interview and/or research?

Holden Warren Arabber Preservation Society

When was the Arabber Preservation Society founded? By who? Why?
How has the situation changed over the years, since the APS was founded?

What influence have policymakers over the years had on the presence of the arabbers? What other major influences have there been?

Have the new food policy initiatives had any effect?

What have been the greatest challenges? What are some future opportunities?

What has been the reaction to the arabbing culture in Baltimore? Is the history known?   Forgotten? Stigmas? etc.

Could there be opportunities for arabbers to tap into the urban agriculture community? Why or why not?

Who are the typical clients?

Are there other groups/people you recommend to interview and/or research?

*Is Baltimore's food climate unique? Why or why not, and in what ways?*

Is the preservation of arabbing for cultural purposes, or are there opportunities for arabbers to help address food insecurity problems?

Opportunities and Challenges for Improving Food Security for Vulnerable Populations through Meso-Level Collaboration in Baltimore, Maryland

Because of the conducive climate and high number of vacant lots and open spaces, Baltimore has a growing culture of urban food production. Despite the abundance of food, production and retail has continued to remain concentrated in food secure areas rather than being equally distributed across the city. Food insecurity in Baltimore is perpetuated by unequal distribution resulting from a lack of interaction and communication between socio-economic classes and racial/ethnic groups across the city. For the purpose of this research, three levels of actors are identified: macro, or top-down governmental or external entities; meso-organizations or individuals working both internally with a community and connected to top-down resources; micro- community organizations or individuals.

Benefits of Macro-, Meso-, and Micro-Level Collaboration
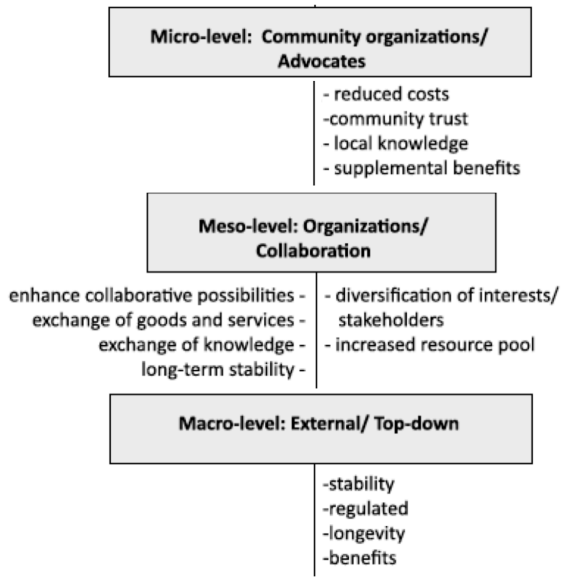
Empower Community Food Advocates
• Reach out to communities and identify key individuals who would be willing to take a more active role as educators and advocates for food justice.
• These individuals would collaborate closely with the city, attending meetings and serving as representatives of their communities.
• Food advocates work on the meso-level at an individual scale to create strong neighborhood-level networks that can help efficiently identify needs and distribute resources.

Invest in culture
• Invest in bottom-up efforts, where communities decide what food they produce and how they prepare and distribute it, will allow for the cultivation of an appreciation for food as well.
• Create and promote opportunities for cooking class, promote urban gardening, support small-scale food distribution operations such as the arabbers, and improve policies to allow more opportunities for certain street-level food production and distribution to occur without the need to obtain expensive business licensing.

Engage in Participatory Action Research to inform policies and programs
• Invest in Participatory Action Research within Baltimore communities in order to gain firsthand local knowledge as well as an appreciation for conditions.
• City employees would live and spend time in east and west neighborhoods in order to begin to dissolve this stark barrier between social groups, which would produce useful insight to be used to inform policies and programs.

Specific Programs
There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Black Yield Institute to begin a research project to map key actors related to food production, distribution, and access across the city and produce a network map that describes relationships as they currently exist and where there are opportunities to form new ones. This map could be become an interactive database that allows groups and individuals across the city to access resources and reach out to others who are doing similar work and to connect to resources across the macro-, meso-, and micro-level spectrum.

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