

This Project Can be Upcycled Where Facilities are Available: An Adventure Through Toronto's Food/Waste Scape

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Abstract

At the intersection of food, regulations, and subjective experiences is a new way of understanding the intersection of wasted food—a new category of edibility. This project investigates the reasons for, and impacts of, politically-motivated dumpster diving and food reclamation activism in Toronto, Canada. The research incorporates ethnographic participant-observation and interviews with politically-motivated dumpster divers in Toronto, as well as that city's chapter of Food Not Bombs. The project primarily asks how so much quality food/waste is thrown away and becomes, at times, available to be recovered, reworked, and eaten. My research constitutes a living critique of the hybrid experience of food and waste where the divisions between the two categories are not found in locations (the grocery store or dumpster), but rather in the circulations of actions and meanings that dumpster divers themselves re-invest in discarded edible food products.

My research objectives are: (1) to document the experience of dumpster divers in Toronto as connected to a broader movement of food/waste activism around the world; (2) to connect this activism to discussions of food safety and food regulations as structuring factors ensuring that edible food is frequently thrown away; (3) to contextualize contemporary food/waste activism within a history of gleaning, and in relation to enclosure acts that have left Canada with no legal protections for gleaners nor recognition of the mutually beneficial social relation between gleaners and farmers; (4) to explore dumpster divers' work as part of the circulation of urban culture within media networks. Ultimately, I isolate alternative gift economies as central to dumpster divers' critique of industrial food distribution within the commodity systems of global capitalism. This gifting relation proves to be, in part, a nostalgic view of an idealized past. Nonetheless, the gifting relation becomes an ideal linked to broader anarchist communities that

allows divers to create communal subject identities that exist outside of market relations, made global through communication networks of independent and self-published media.

By connecting globally, the small-scale, local actions of Food Not Bombs chapters around the world allow surprisingly few individuals to spread a politic with the potential to impact beyond their limited political circles. This project is theoretically situated at the junction of studies of material culture, food and food waste, and new social movements; I connect political experience in local communities to the circulation of food and waste through urban environments and media networks. For the dumpster diver, edibility is delinked from purchase price and is instead imbedded in systems of power and active resistance.

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Introduction: Food Regulations, Safety, and the Dumpster Diving Field

We came around the corner from a small market in the Annex neighborhood, nestled along Bloor between Spadina and Bathurst, Toronto, Ontario. Approaching the dumpster, the smell was one I came to recognize over time as the unmistakable, at times overpowering, scent of ripe and rotting food, cardboard, and dampness common to dumpsters. The late fall night calmed the smell that the following summer heat would make almost unbearable. The design of the dumpster was tall enough that I had to crane to see over the edge and one of my partners (in revolution or in crime?) lifted the lid as I edged my way forward. The scent, at that point, became much more intense and, despite my researched preparation, was shocking. The view of inside the dumpster was at first a jumble of bags and loose objects – a mass of visual noise.

Objects became clearer, coming into focus through the tangle and bags worth investigating began to stand out. One, filled with nothing but lettuce leaves not yet wilted and only in need of a wash; peppers, slightly dinged, but still reasonably fresh and certainly edible; potatoes, browning bananas, artichokes, mangoes, pineapple, squash. As I learned the world of the dumpster diver, I also learned that almost everything you can find on a store shelf will eventually, unavoidably, wind up in the dumpster where self-identified human raccoons can sort through the mess – our mess.

One of my comrades on this, my first dumpster dive shared recommendations about safe diving, but also lessons he'd learned the hard way. As he showed me how to navigate the world of the dumpster, he tilted his head towards mine and told me not to lean directly over the edge of the dumpster when wearing overalls, a favourite outfit of his; he had crushed a cellphone when

leaning over a dumpster and he joked that dumpstering can be risky for all sorts of unexpected reasons.

As we continued on our route through the Annex, hitting up both green bins and dumpsters, it became clear that the rules of dumpster diving are simple and based mostly on respect. Share what you find and leave the dumpster cleaner than you find it. Sharing was built into the common interest my first diving group had in redistributing food through Food Not Bombs networks in Hamilton and Toronto. Leaving the dumpster cleaner than we found it proved to be a bit more complicated. Not creating a mess around the dumpster seemed obvious at the time and it was only much later that it became clear how significant this rule can be. Fast forward eight months on a dive with my Food Not Bombs (FNB) friends – we came across a dumpster brimming not with the produce we were used to, but stacks of cardboard boxes that had been broken down and thrown away. Less than a foot away was an empty recycling bin. We sorted through the cardboard and put it into its rightful recycle stream location before we continued to forage the produce the cardboard had obscured. Here leaving the dumpster cleaner than we found it involved recovering not food but recyclable material.

During my time as an active dumpster diver, I dove with a lot of raccoons who travel through Toronto after dark looking for the ingredients for a meal, a sense of community they feel is lost in consumer culture, and the desire to be a part of combating the wasted food that is displayed in the dumpster world. Some of these raccoons are adventurous enough to hop into dumpsters, wearing heavy boots to protect themselves while standing on top of teetering bags. Some, like myself, prefer to avoid this particular adventure and reach from the side, using gloves and sticks to pull intriguing discoveries towards the edge for inspection. With steady hands and focus, food is recovered and sorted after it has been tossed, unceremoniously, into the dumpster

without consideration of the differences between a pepper rotten through and one with minor imperfections easily cut away, to recover the majority for a tasty salad, soup or stir fry. These moments of recovery are also moments of recognition of regular and rampant discard of edible food.

Thinking of the panhandlers we passed on our way into the alley, and the hungry people that visit with us at the park, line up at soup kitchens, go through dumpsters themselves and live amongst us as a regrettable feature of modern cities. As a dumpster diver, I came to see poverty, waste, and the city underground in a way that isn't visible in daylight or under fluorescents. Environmental critiques, social justice, and equal access to food were newly filtered through the staggering displays of wasted food that we encountered weekly. The questions I asked myself were those shared with my fellow divers and as we perused the Annex's dumpsters we shared information, concerns, and plans to change the world we were living in. The world I was introduced to was one bound by a do-it-yourself ethics of mutual aid that connected dumpster divers around the world in a shared commitment to social change.

Diving Through Cities and Lives

This project began with a question about a late night television appearance by a man named Adam, who defined himself as a freegan. At that time, the term was known only in certain underground political circles, but Adam's appearance signaled the rise of public knowledge and interest in the wasted food that freegans were at once depending upon and critiquing through their actions. After years of development, the project that sits before you has moved past a shocked personal response to one freegans' choice to eat garbage to an investigation of the reasons for, and impacts of, politically motivated dumpster diving. The project asks, firstly, what the circumstances are that allow so much edible wasted food to be thrown away and then

recovered. These circumstances are laid out through contemporary food safety regulations and their socio-legal history rooted in the enclosure movement in 18th century England. Ontario's legal roots in British Common Law and Toronto's global connections to networks of underground politics come together in a perfect storm of contributing factors that explicate dumpster diving in this city.

Looking to Toronto's Food Not Bombs group brings together the specific identity of Toronto as both rooted in socio-legal history and linked as a financial centre to the rest of the globe. In this city, the circulation of waste comes to connect dumpster divers to global movements of food and waste. Secondly, this dissertation asks how dumpster divers remake the hybrid of food/waste to produce social meaning. This questioning of the hybrid experience of food and waste – a liminal category I describe as food/waste – reveals distinctions are not made via location (the grocery store or dumpster), but rather the circulatory meaning that divers re-invest in discarded edible food products. This circulation links the structural pressures creating food/waste with the nostalgic gift economy that dumpster divers are drawing on. The history of food politics is often framed within communal and gifting experiences linking the activism of today to that against the enclosure movement.

The connection of activism to food and waste is also reflected in the communicative capacity of food that extends into waste, especially as actions like dumpster diving transform waste back into food. As a hybrid, then, food/waste works within its own liminality to create new meanings for the divers who consume it. Finally, this dissertation asks how individual dumpster divers utilize the category of waste to build individual and communal social relations that can continue beyond global capitalism. The shift is not only communal, but allows divers to create subject identities that exist outside of market relations and recover a gifting relation that is

presented as an ideal relationship for these divers and linked to the broader anarchist communities they work within. This local community and the focus on local relations is then linked to global networks through the use of independent and self-publication through zines and digital means that shares alternatives to market relations.

Across these experiences is an understanding of contemporary political dumpster divers through the lens of new social movements where political organizing has moved onto questions other than class and into different kinds of expression and critique. By connecting globally, the small-scale, local actions of FNB groups around the world have the potential and in reality connect to bolster the movement of relatively few individuals to spread a politic with the potential to impact beyond their limited political circles.

The overarching questions motivating the research of this dissertation are: (1) What are the circumstances that allow so much edible wasted food to be thrown away and then recovered?; (2) How do dumpster divers remake the hybrid of food/waste to produce social meaning?; and (3) How do individual dumpster divers utilize the category of waste to build individual and communal social relations outside global capitalism? These questions also foreground the broader intervention of this dissertation into the food/waste of Ontario, Canada. At the time of research and writing, this project is the only large-scale, academic study of wasted food in Ontario. In 2012 and 2013, *Cut Waste, GROW Profit* (Gooch, *et al.*, 2013) has drawn attention to wasted food as a problem of the food industry, but has not extended to a study of how and why edible wasted food comes to be through the lens of communication and cultural studies.

Understandings of both food and waste have slowly begun to enter into communication and cultural studies, but have not been addressed as connected through circulation. Theoretically,

bridging this concept through the actions of politically motivated dumpster divers reveals a layer of urban circulation and informal economy that requires more attention (Ferrell, 2006). This dissertation uses participant-observation and an interdisciplinary theoretical structure to more fully develop a picture of food/waste in Toronto.

Across these diverse areas of study are a shared interest in understanding the political work of individuals and groups within their everyday lives. Food/waste exists in a juncture of individual and community experiences whereby meaning is made through the communicative action of individuals through their food in their urban spaces. The circulation of food and waste through the city creates the medium by which individuals make meaning both in their own lives and those they share with others. The politics of the everyday explored by cultural studies and the concern of urban studies with cities as a key location of social organization, both made by and making human beings, meet when food and communication studies come together. For food studies scholars, the experience of food is seen as central to human life and communication studies continue this concern by focusing on the meaning made by individuals to produce sense of self and community through the media that filter through their lives. Through these four disciplines, food/waste and politically motivated dumpster divers meet to produce a social relation that seeks first to build community and second to critique the content of neoliberal capitalist organization. By drawing from these four disciplines, food/waste and the circulation of the dumpster diver and the food they recover is highlighted as a central object and experience of the city. The next sections outline the background for this project and theoretically situate this dissertation at the junction of cultural, urban, food, and communication studies.

Diving Through Regulation

The questions that were raised as I travelled the world of the dumpster with fellow divers inform the conclusions and understandings of my dissertation. Collectively, we had a basic concern that so much food was being thrown away while people were starving. While the direct action of dumpster diving won't rescue all of this food and it won't feed all hungry people, it is a provocative action taking a stance against unnecessary waste while offering a reminder that it exists. As I sought the answers, the questions we were asking about wasted food and inequality brought me into unexpected explanations. As a movement, dumpster diving also has the potential to continue to spread and offer up the surprising result of modeling new ways to think about food and waste. Thinking beyond the circulation of food and waste, it is also clear that dumpster diving comes into being because of how our food system is regulated. Regulations mandate wasted food, which opens an opportunity for a new kind of anti-consumer subject to rise.

This anti-consumer subject is one that exists in the liminal spaces of consumption and forges through the world balancing on the edge of legality, cultural appropriateness, and revolutionary potential in everyday life. Diving undercuts years of cultural and social training to treat garbage as dirty (Douglas, 2002a). Going into the dumpster and moving through affective experiences poses bigger challenges than personal inhibitions. The solution is not just seeing the quality amongst the rubbish. Rather, the category of rubbish as a catchall obscures a deeply broken food system where quality food is thrown away instead of eaten while agrosience tells us that we must produce more in order to feed a growing population.¹ At the intersection of food, regulations, and subjective experiences is a new way of understanding the intersection of wasted food as a new category of edibility. For the dumpster diver, edibility is delinked from purchase price and is instead imbedded in systems of power and active resistance (Williams, 2009).

1. See Shiva (2000) and Patel (2007) for more detailed critiques of this rhetoric.

The reasons for dumpster diving are varied and a number of motivations will be detailed in this dissertation. I refer to the broad group of divers whose activities I joined as political dumpster divers to set them apart from presumptions of desperation that lead to diving for food. As a choice, it is explicitly political and paired with the work of Food Not Bombs, and for the key group I worked with during the research process diving is always a political act. My own relationship to diving and to the divers I joined stems from a different motivation. I came to diving first as a researcher, second as an activist; I will on occasion refer to this process as academic diving to highlight my specific research pursuit. As will become clear in later chapters, however, the distinctions between political, academic, and need based diving prove to be muddy.

This dissertation will further explore the political critiques divers make and how the regulation system in place has created a circumstance within which food must be thrown away and been ascribed meanings of contagion that are rooted not in natural processes, but in regulatory structures. These regulations create a system of definition for the food consumer subject that are then refuted by the actions of dumpster divers who work outside of regulatory systems to creatively piece together an understanding of food safety and food consumer behaviour. In response to regulatory and social circumstances, dumpster divers are emerging in growing numbers to question the failures of this food system and suggest, through their action, that a different world is, in fact, possible.

Commodifying Food

The personal experience of food and trash is structured through regulatory governance that exists beyond individual control. The field is mapped out (Bourdieu, 1990) in a way that structures not only what we can find in stores (and dumpsters), but also contributes to the amount of food that is found in the dumpster at the end of its circulation. As noted by food waste

researchers, regulatory structures increase the level of wasted food that occurs in many countries, including Canada (Stewart, 2009; Gooch et.al., 2010; Bloom, 2010). When thinking through the contributing factors for wasted food we can first look to the influence of food safety and security, global trade practices, Canadian food regulations, and the specificity of food commodification.² These constraints encourage a specific kind of consumer, one who engages with food commodification as an ideal purchaser (Bauman, 2004). An ideal purchaser is one that doesn't question larger systemic challenges, is satisfied by greenwashing, and accepts that food regulations are in place to protect eaters. However, these regulations and commodification do not always account for the specificity of food as a commodity.

While food is structured and treated as a commodity by various levels of regulations, it remains challenging to consider what it means to call food a commodity. It is a product for sale like many others and is, as we shall see, treated as such. Yet, it is also deeply interconnected with our bodies. Winson (1994) understands this kind of connection as the 'intimate commodity' and reminds us that:

...if food and drink have become commodities, they are 'intimate' commodities like perhaps no other. In the process of their consumption we take them inside our very bodies, a fact that gives them a special significance denied such 'externally' consumed commodities...unlike so many other goods...food is an *essential commodity*, we can literally not live without it... (4, italics in original).

Thus, food must be understood as a commodity, but not necessarily under the same conditions or theoretical understandings as goods.³ However, the processes by which other objects are commodified have much to lend us in an understanding of why and how food

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2. McCrae (1999) highlighted the failures of the Canadian food regulatory system when considering the lack of an overarching Canadian food policy. He points to a lack of integration between the various regulatory bodies that is replicated in how wasted food is understood, defined, and managed.
 3. This is significant as food commodification follows similar trajectories of the privatization of other intimate commodities. The most well known is water which has become one of the most contested intimate commodities in the face of privatization and Bolivia's water wars (Shiva, 2002).

production, distribution, and consumption practices have changed in light of broader economic changes. Harvey's (1990) discussion of post-fordism and the impacts of the reworking of the global economy are reflected in the rise in commodified food and the increased globalization and corporatization of food production and distribution. Under this new system, food must be understood as both a product and a basic need, a tension that is expressed both through the rampant amount of wasted food built into the distribution system and the seemingly universal horror people have at this rate of waste. The interconnections of two seemingly disparate experiences – the deeply personal and the globally regulated – result in a set of circumstances that lead to specific responses within the individual role and a new kind of subject experience of the dumpster diver. This tension plays out in many of the challenges faced by food activists as we seek to undertake ways to challenge industrial and corporate food systems, but simple solutions are not available to a problem so intertwined with global economic, governmental, and corporate power.

These tensions can also be reflected in how food itself is defined. Winson notes that not all that is defined as food is necessarily nutritious or healthy and debates over how to define quality food are common (Pollan, 2008; Mudry, 2011). The influence of commodification moves food away from its traditional existence as sustenance towards a product that can be adjusted, adapted, and engineered in order to increase stability, longevity, and portability (Barndt, 2008). Increasingly, what we can buy in a store no longer resembles what would have been considered food only a few decades ago. More and more packaged foods with lengthy, often unpronounceable, ingredient lists are finding their way onto store shelves.⁴ Thus, the notion of

4. Pino (2011) has created a flow chart drawing attention to the number of non-food ingredients found in packaged food products. Amongst the questions raised by her flowchart are "does it have a label" and "are the ingredients in latin or sciencesese", and "does it have more than five ingredients".

junk food is distinct from wasted food or those food products that find themselves in a dumpster for reasons other than contagion or spoiling. This is supported by Clark's (2004) findings that for his dumpster diving participants, it was corporate food that was rotten and it was only through the purification of the dumpster that it could be cleansed for ingestion.⁵ Instead, quality and value of food is wrapped up with its commodification, a commodification that defines value through monetary exchange rather than value defined through the ability to meet basic needs. As Hawkins (2006) notes, "...the short life of the commodity defines transience *not* as renewal but as endless disappearance and replacement." (italics in original, 129) The translation of meaning is confounded by the nature of the commodity itself and it must be thrown away to make space for its replacement. However, this function of the commodity is obviously not complete and the value and meaning inscribed in meaning moves along much more complex trajectories (Callon, 1998).

Therefore, the disposability of food derives from a change in the meaning of food itself. As a reflection of an increasingly complicated global exchange system (Shiva, 2000; Patel, 2007), the commodification of food invites us to consider food products in ways similar to mass-produced goods (Appadurai, 1986). Supermarkets report their need to have fully stocked shelves in order to satisfy consumer demand, but this consumer demand coincides with larger changes in availability and marketing impacts on consumer expectation and behaviour (Krishna & Elder, 2010). Our experience as consumer subjects has trained us to find meaning within the context of constrained choice whereby the availability of systematized and standardized options reinforce the way we are understood by the market and can thereby understand ourselves (Dunn, 2010).

5. Clark draws on Lévi-Strauss' (1983) culinary triangle and notes that punks prefer food that is raw (closer to organic, less processed and so on) or rotten (by American standards, i.e. discarded or stolen) (Clark, 20).

Even the displays now found in grocery stores reflect the way our relationship to food has changed. Store shelves are stocked with multiples of all items, organized and facing front. Stock personnel are responsible for ensuring that these shelves appear uniform and precise and, when products run out, notes of apology are left for any inconvenience caused. This uniform patterning is even more pronounced when it comes to produce displays where, particularly within higher end stores, each individual item is placed to provide a pleasing display of uniform shapes (Koch, 2012). The natural, or at least biological, diversity of produce is removed during distribution and processing and the variety that will be seen in a farm, home garden or farmer's market is erased in the blank sterility of the grocery store. The shelves we face reflect the consumers we should be, those who accept difference only within carefully prescribed choices and will not deviate from the uniformity that we have been trained by factory produced goods to know and accept (Bauman, 2004).

As a product, then, food can be subjected to regulations that seek to create legalized categories that communicate edibility and inedibility. In addition to consumers being structured to expect a certain kind of product, commodification of food requires an engagement with trade relations and large-scale regulations (MacRae, 2012; Lang, *et al.*, 2009). These trade relations and regulations, like the history of our commodities, are obscured. As such, we are unlikely to be aware of the networks of paperwork, trade agreements, food safety regulations, and inspections that define the food system we have and subsequently create the framework within which those commodities are reframed as discardable (Smith, 1990). Yet, this framework defines our food, what we eat, and who we are as consumers.

The institutionalizing of food is evidenced through the regulations surrounding quality, edibility and uniformity. Commodified foodstuffs are presented as all other commodities and

consumers are encouraged and socially trained to understand them as such. The impact of this expectation and specific set of regulations contributes to the ease with which edible food can be discarded (Gooch, *et al.*, 2010). The pressure to provide replicable, perfect examples of a variety of foodstuffs contributes to a global food commodity system that ensures discard as crops are preselected based on cosmetic appropriateness and processing strives to reduce any significant distinctions between food item to food item (Wies, 2012). These processes then trickle down to the retail level, the level of waste that engages with the dumpster diver. In retail stores the desire to protect the sanitized version of food we have become accustomed to, and associated dating practices, construct a framework that has filled in for individual senses and food knowledge used to guide our understanding of edibility.

Food Safety

One presumption often at the forefront of concerns or external critiques of dumpster diving focuses on the dangers and risks of taking food from the garbage. However, the work of active dumpster divers and food waste activists points to more reasons for food being placed in dumpsters than it becoming garbage. It becomes clear through investigation that food safety is politically motivated and regulations often better serve business and trade relations than individual eaters. This is evident in the relationship between dumpster divers and retailer regulations, which are often the focus of food waste activists. However, the larger role of regulatory relations is important to consider when building a nuanced understanding of the wasted food system. While dumpster divers are much more likely to be aware of the regulations at the retail level, as with all food activism, interrogating the systems that build the background of this experience is necessary.

At the highest level, food regulations are negotiated through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its trade agreements (Josling, *et al.*, 2004) to manage safety and security while supporting the global movement of foodstuffs.⁶ These regulations extend the concerns of many anti-capitalists to look at the change in regulatory and safety structures that result from the move away from locally produced and consumed foods. Food safety regulation comes under the umbrella of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. Traditionally, food regulation has been a collaborative effort between a number of key actors, including government departments, producers, distributors, and retailers. In fact, much of Canadian food regulations have been placed in the hands of producers, a source of contention for food advocacy groups such as Food Safety First. The rationale for leaving regulation in the hands of producers is that they are faced with the dire market consequences if they fail to provide consumers with safe and quality food.⁷

While it is necessary to focus on the Canadian regulatory system, it becomes clear that the interdependence of the global food system has made borders more permeable. As is pointed out by Food Safety First, lax regulations in the United States put Canadians at risk when consuming imported food. In this way, the translation of dumpster diving across national borders

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6. The most common approach to contemporary food safety is the WTO's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), which aims to guide food safety while supporting global trade. This agreement is based on a risk analysis assessment where risk is managed rather than eliminated. This agreement also allows countries to refuse imports from any country with lesser food safety regulations. This invariably penalizes poorer nations who may not have the same access to technology and sanitation facilities that are considered commonplace in richer countries (Josling, *et al.*, 2004; Unnevehr, 2003). Stuart (2011) has noted that the introduction of basic storage technologies would greatly improve the ability of poorer nations to not only maintain their crops, but also prevent food from rotting as a result of improper storage.
 7. However, this approach to regulation is not satisfactory to all and with growing occurrences of food outbreaks, activist groups are increasingly concerned with responding to the limitations in regulatory systems. Concerns have become even more prevalent following the 2008 listeria outbreak in Maple Leaf Meat plants when it became clear that the use of self-regulated food safety did not prevent the deaths of 22 people (<http://www.foodsafetyfirst.ca/>).

is subject to differential regulatory circumstances, but we remain connected through the regulation of the foods that travel across borders.

Josling, *et al.* (2004) lay out a history of food regulation and its connections to trade agreements and the increasing globalization of food systems. As food began moving across borders it became necessary to build in understandings of how to regulate these foods for safety and quality, as well as to protect from specific outbreaks crossing national borders. These debates, managed through the WTO, are reflected in ongoing trade negotiations and concerns where different countries struggle to protect their exports from being what they see as unfairly denied and the need to protect one's people and local crops from imported disease or contagion. These scholars are also explicit that economic assessments of regulation are primary and should guide future regulations. However, this approach holds great concerns for a fair, safe and equitable food system.

The general frame of reference for food regulation is ostensibly to protect consumers from unsafe food and increasingly to improve food quality, but it is clear that the role of regulation is about more than consumer protection.⁸ This regulatory framework is also that of the food that goes on to become waste. The overproduction and rationale of commodified foodstuffs, as well as the global movement of food ensures edible food will be misdirected into the waste system. At all stages, food is selected for aesthetic qualities that have little to do with edibility and instead provide a framework within which idealized versions of items are conserved while un-idealized versions are discarded.

8. The limitations of food regulation to ensure food safety are also reflected in growing numbers of outbreaks and the challenge of differential concerns from specific companies when it comes to monitoring their own food safety. As there is a lack of an overarching, wholly systematic way of testing for all sorts of contaminants, outbreaks do occur and people are not always protected. Yet, at the same time our food regulatory system is safe enough that the food that is thrown into the trash is thrown there invariably not due to quality concerns, but due to overstocking or retailer specific best by dates.

While governmental regulations are focused on admirable ideals such as food safety and quality for a country's residents, food safety and quality, as noted above, are political and increasingly defined by industry themselves.⁹ In the example of aesthetic quality, the meaning of quality is in consistency, presentation, and regularity. None of these things define how nutritious that food item is, but the inherent misunderstanding of quality in this example makes clear that regulations privilege different indicators of quality than eaters necessarily would (Lang & Heasman, 2004).

The realm within which food safety and quality is defined, therefore, does not necessarily have room for voices that are concerned with edible wasted food. Within regulatory structures, this category does not exist – wasted food is stripped of its meaning as food because it does not meet strict aesthetic guidelines or adhere to arbitrary dates. In a strange, circular, definition food thus becomes waste because it does not meet the governmental standards laid out for food. However, the limitation of regulation in general is that it presumes that set categories can be defined that signal edibility and contagion, or as Douglas (2002a) would call it the pure and impure. Ecological reality disputes this categorization and edibility is clearly more complex than can be accounted for in a public policy document. Further, individuals and regulators will have very distinct versions of what edibility means.¹⁰ The ability of regulators to deal with overproduction allows more stringent choices be made that allow for edible (and often high quality) food to be tossed under the guise of protecting safety and quality.

9. <http://www.foodsafetyfirst.ca/the-issues/>

10. Many of the traditional foods we now enjoy are a result of dealing with food that was not only going off, but actually rotting. The making of mincemeat, for example, was a way to use heavy spicing to cover the taste of rotting meat.

Canadian Food Regulations

Beyond concerns around the political nature at the heart of regulatory definitions, our food regulation system has also proven insufficient to provide food safety.¹¹ The contamination supposed in the dumpster is instead sold in stores to unsuspecting consumers. The challenge then becomes how to untangle a regulatory system that does not protect against contamination and outbreaks and can also not account for a way to reduce the disposal of edible food. Wasted food activists argue that this could be addressed by re-regulating food labeling practices to limit the amount of edible food that is being thrown away (Stuart, 2009). This possibility is supported when, as Gooch, *et al.* (2010) note, Canadian policy and regulation deter the reduction of food waste.¹² Food safety and wasted food reduction are both key to improved food security, yet the regulatory discourses that surround the two work at cross-purposes. One way this contradiction is being circumvented is through a disregard of governmental regulations and policies exhibited by dumpster divers who engage in daily reclamation of edible food from dumpsters in Toronto.

Challenges also arise from the complex ways that food is managed in Canada. While Toronto has an official food policy, we do not have a national policy or strategy which impacts the way food moves throughout the country. For those concerned with wasted food, there is also not one organization that is responsible for the multiple reasons edible food may be thrown away. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for ensuring food safety, based on Health Canada policies, and for issuing food recalls (Canadian Food Inspection

11. A growing number of food outbreaks over the last 20 years has resulted in an additional \$51 million over two being allocated for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (2013).

12. Of interest is that Stuart (2009) feels that Canadian regulations are strong and does not develop his global study with any focus on our country. It is my feeling that with such limited information on food waste in Canada, particularly hard numbers on waste levels, his study couldn't account for the level of food waste that is filtering through our section of the global food system.

Agency, 2013). The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), through the Centre for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, is concerned with food and waterborne illness outbreaks.

In addition to these federal level agencies, food safety and management in Toronto is also guided by legislation and agencies at the municipal and provincial levels (Thompson, 2009). These intersecting acts and agencies include provincially: The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), responsible for regulating meat; the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC), responsible for the Food Safety Regulations in the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA); and the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), responsible for the Fish Inspection Act. Local Toronto monitoring falls under Toronto Public Health whose officers conduct inspections of local restaurants, cafeterias, and other food service activities. These intersecting responsibilities manage food safety, but are not directly responsible for determining edible food being thrown away.

Best before, use by, and expiration dates fall under guidelines from the CFIA. These dates are guided by policy, but are determined by the producers of specific packaged food products. Best before dates are placed on packaged products that will maintain freshness for less than 90 days and the CFIA is clear that these dates should not be read as an assurance of food safety. Use by can replace best before dates and communicates freshness and top quality, rather than food safety. Expiration dates are only used for:

...formulated liquid diets (a nutritionally complete diet for persons using oral or tube feeding methods); foods represented for use in a very low-energy diet (foods sold only by a pharmacist and only with a written order from a physician); meal replacements (a formulated food that, by itself, can replace one or more daily meals); nutritional supplements (a food sold or represented as a supplement to a diet that may be inadequate in energy and essential nutrients); human milk substitutes (infant formula) (CFIA, July 2013).

These dates are then further complicated by the Ontario Donation of Food Act (ServiceOntario, 1994), which allows for food producers to donate close-to-code and otherwise surplus food and be protected from liability. The intention of this Act is to ensure that food donors are donating in good faith and ensuring edibility, but at the same time understanding that the dates and regulations Ontario food is bound by do not ensure that only inedible food is discarded.

Thus, the challenges of regulation are a part of the broader concerns held by many anti-capitalist and anti-globalization activists and the site of the dumpster is a result of broader debates that may not seem at first evident in the action of dumpster diving. Diving is made possible by regulations that allow edible food to be thrown away and also by debates around regulation that have bred increased suspicion of food corporations. In the face of these, dumpster divers demonstrate a desire to move beyond implicit acceptance of these trade and regulatory relations by consuming in prescribed ways that accept the dual dilemma of rising amounts of wasted food and increasing numbers of food outbreaks.

The suspicion and growing disregard for governmental food and waste regulations begin to make sense as an obvious response to trade and production relations that have been moved so far from individual control or input. For practical purposes, it is necessary to regulate food to protect people from contamination and ensure that the quality, quantity, and ingredients specified are in fact a part of the products we purchase. Supporters of current food regulations look to how these processes, particularly around food safety, offer businesses a competitive advantage related to their own performance (Toma, *et al.*, 2011). The rationale for the business advantage argument is that much of the information reported to Canadian agencies is through self-report, the onus is on individual companies to protect their reputation by ensuring their internal inspection and review processes are strong.

While political debates range around food regulations, the challenge for dumpster divers is that food regulations depend upon clear distinctions between the category of food and waste. Food regulations, unlike divers, do not see the movement of food and waste as circulatory or connected, but rather view the edible and inedible as definable, categorizable, and separate. Thus, the moment food is regulated at the state level it is ensconced in a discursive structure that distances individuals from learning the cycles of food to judge for themselves what is edible and what is not. The rules for how food is determined to be waste in retail stores are not always transparent and are rather the result of interpretations of many other regulations, preferences, store rules and common practices. Dorothy Smith (1990) reminds us that our lives are structured through rules and regulations that are often invisible to us. The biopolitical limitations placed upon consumers by these institutional structures are a point of intervention that divers draw upon (Foucault, 1995).

Methodology

The field of this project and of dumpster divers moves away from state regulation and circulates through public – often illicit – spaces. My entry into this field began by joining an anarchist reading group and led to almost a year roaming back alleys, serving meals in Allen Gardens, getting to know other divers over shared meal preparation, and seeing my adopted city, Toronto, through a new vantage point. This project is an ethnography, a method rooted in early anthropology (Malinowski, 1967; Mead, 1961; Geertz, 1995) and influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology (Park, 1967; Cressey, 1932; Becker, 1964). Ethnography as a method and as my own experience has been influenced by the early work of subculture theorists, often housed in sociology who looked increasingly to youth cultures and their urban experiences (Hebdige, 2002; McRobbie, 1991; Thornton, 1995). The interest of sociologists, particularly early Chicago

School work, redirected the ethnographic gaze towards one's own cities. In the 1980s and 1990s, this early move to reconsider more localized cultures was then brought even closer to the researcher with the rise of autoethnographic work that placed the researcher in the centre of their data gathering and analytic work (Ellis & Berger, 2002; Foley, 2002).

While participant observation is commonly understood as distinct from, rather than synonymous with, ethnographic fieldwork, it is absolutely central to what is broadly referred to as ethnography. As Dewalt & Dewalt (2002) clarify, they see participant observation as part of the broader field of not just ethnography, but qualitative research more broadly. In this way, the approach can be utilized in ways that reflect projects that do not benefit from years immersed in a foreign culture. The development of ethnography and the widening of the types of data gathering and research questions it could answer has broadened and made it ideal not only for examining foreign cultures, but also as a means of placing the researcher – myself – at the centre of finding meaning in local cultures. This shifting in participant observation and ethnography is also revealed in the opening up of the methodology outside of anthropology where it remains central to the work of that discipline, for example in Geertz' (1973) well-known approach of “thick description” as the basis for the interpretation of cultures. As Rabinow (1977) noted many years ago, anthropologists became anthropologists in the (ethnographic) field, preferably one far away from the researcher's everyday life.

For this project, the desire of cultural studies to understand a culture is rounded out by drawing on communication studies and its focus on utilizing a strong understanding of discursive meanings and practices to trace meaning through Smith's (1990) ethnomethodology and focus on discursive meaning. By drawing on participant observation techniques of field notes, as well as conducting and analyzing interviews, dumpster divers are not only cultural actors, but also

specifically and intentionally communicative. This intentionality is explored by looking to the self-produced texts of the dumpster diver as a form of this communicative work that builds meaning across localities. This approach follows Becker's (2007) assessment that telling the story of a culture comes not only through ethnography, but also through the analysis of artistic texts that reflect the meanings made of a given culture.

This project, as all projects, started before it officially started. During my time in Toronto, I slowly began exploring the local anarchist activist community through reading groups, joining a magazine collective, and ultimately, in spring 2010 joining the local Food Not Bombs group. My interest in exploring the meaning of wasted food and the significance that dumpster diving had to redefine both food and waste as circulatory systems and actors in a larger network required personal involvement in this local activist work. In this interest, I spent ten months working directly and consistently with FNB as a volunteer and leader in not only diving and serving, but also, with the help of other FNBers, in arranging to have the co-founder of Food Not Bombs speak at York University during his "The Change We Knead" speaking tour.

My role in relation to the FNB group was overt and I announced my research role repeatedly to ensure there was no confusion that I was not only a participant in FNB, but also conducting doctoral research (Adler & Adler, 1987). This transparency also follows anarchist methodologies that focus on revealing the structure of research while also providing more give and take between researcher and group (Graeber, 2009; Clark, 2000). During my fieldwork, my involvement also grew following a typical trajectory as laid out by Adler & Adler (1987) and also reflecting the building of intimacy that comes with working with a group of activists over a longer period of time (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). This was not a straightforward experience,

however, and at times I realized that I had either over – or under – presumed my membership role.

As I was withdrawing from working with FNB on a regular basis and had put what I thought was analytic distance between myself and the group members I had grown to know and enjoy, I received an unexpected Facebook wall post from another member wanting to see me. We were unable to sort out our schedules and I didn't see her until we were together at an event. I followed up with the question she had had for me – unspecified in our digital communications – and was told that she had wanted to see me socially to say goodbye before she moved out of the city. My experience of what I had thought was a clearly bound field shifted in that moment when I was jettied out of my self-absorption to recognize that as an FNB member I had become more than a researcher and had become a friend.

Yet, this same woman had responded in a revealing way a few weeks earlier when we were organizing a visiting speaker. When I was getting her number and unthinkingly asked for her last name (to satisfy my need for proper organization in my phone's address book), she responded with simultaneous surprise and suspicion that revealed a key difference in our social coding. In that moment, I was asking a question as my professional organized self which came into direct conflict with the security culture that influences and dominates much anarchist organizing.¹³

The constant fear of police presence, sometimes verging on paranoia, is a very real structuring device that I was cautious to respect during my time with the group. While FNB work is not the site of larger anti-statist planning, the weeks leading up the G20 saw a lot of overlap between activist intentions and I would purposely remove myself from conversations that moved

13. Anarchist communities are often targeted by or infiltrated by police. In response, a security culture has been developed in order to protect activists (Deep Green Resistance, 2001).

into illegal organizing activities. After the G20, FNB work returned to a focus on food redistribution and I was no longer privy to conversations about potentially illegal organizing.

After my primary fieldwork was completed, my membership slowly waned in response to a need to step back from the field, but also reflecting the common anarchist trajectory Graber (2009) lays out when considering the deep involvement and subsequent withdrawal common amongst anarchist organizers. This experience was reflected in interview data where it became clear that FNB volunteers had experienced an ongoing flux of membership in response to the high level of burnout associated with the group. It also became clear that Food Not Bombs and dumpster diving serve as a background for other kinds of anti-authoritarian organizing. Mentioned in other studies of anarchist protests, it becomes clear that dumpster diving is an activity that sustains many within the anti-authoritarian movement (Gautney, 2010; Gordon, 2009; Graeber, 2009). Thus, to answer the question of how the experience of dumpster diving changes a person and changes the movement of food and waste, ethnographic participant observation is ideal in revealing the experience of group members.

The process began by undergoing an ethics review with York University. As a part of this application, the project was designed to protect the confidentiality of participants through informed consent, explained through a consent letter introduced at the beginning of each interview (see Appendix B). Balancing ethical understandings of research subjects was complicated by the integrated nature of ethnographic research. Individual participants were given pseudonyms during transcription with the exception of Keith McHenry. His professional role as FNB co-founder precludes a possibility of anonymity. However, personal details that were not also shared in public forums were not recorded in this dissertation. The individuals I interviewed became my friends during my time in the field. Similar to many ethnographers, the line between

researcher and subject was blurred as my participation became a part of the larger research goal. Ironically, the concern of the ethics board was less about safety for diving participants and more directly related to protecting identities in a research group. This was achieved by introducing my role as researcher at all Food Not Bombs meetings or when greeting new volunteers or visitors.

My personal level of involvement shifted this ethnography to consider how my personal experience, in line with autoethnographic approaches, explicates an understanding of the individual impact of dumpster diving on a person (Ellis, 1995). After each event – serving, protest, dive, or meeting – I would return home and write up my field notes either the evening of or the day after. In this way, my weeks were structured by Monday morning coffee over my computer as I transcribed my memories from the previous weekend when most of our activities took place. Memory is a flawed system, but the invasiveness of a notebook in so much of the work that we did as FNB made it challenging to both participate and observe simultaneously. Diving, cooking, and serving are all too active to allow for me as a researcher to step back and write up field notes as they happened, even in point form. Thus, in order to maintain my involvement, I have sacrificed immediacy for a fuller, hopefully more enriching engagement with the role I was taking on as an FNB member (Emerson, 1995).

The course of my involvement also allowed me to contact key informants and interested persons for individual interviews about six months into my fieldwork. Interviews with individuals – and in one case three individuals – aligned with my interest in respecting the anarchist principles of the movement I was working with and allow FNB volunteers to speak for themselves as much as is possible in an interview format. These interviews also occurred later on in the research process in response to two circumstances. First, months of observation and participation developed a guiding list of questions I was working with. Second, the familiarity I

developed with the group in general allowed these conversations to be just that – an opportunity for me as a researcher to clarify the questions I was asking and for my FNB comrades to talk more directly about their politics, their diving habits, and their work with FNB.

This work follows the focus from participant observation to observation of participation (Tedlock, 1991). Rather than disconnecting myself as researcher, this is my story embroiled with the other anarchists, activists, and anti-authoritarian people I had the pleasure of working with during my time with this community. It does, however, raise a final consideration of the blending of ethnographic methods and my relationship to the field I am documenting. Unlike many, particularly founding, ethnographies, my field was within biking distance from my home, but remained distinct from my personal life. I entered the field on a regular basis as I moved between my life as a professionalizing graduate student with teaching responsibilities, public press interviews and conference presentations, and the field of dumpster diving and FNB activism. The two areas of my life of course overlapped as the work I was doing with FNB informed and was the source for so many of my professional activities. However, the distance between myself and the FNbers I worked with on a weekly or biweekly basis was further than I realized at the time.

The average age of FNber was around 21, mostly students, but a few were in their thirties and into a working stage of their life. The popularity of FNB work with students signaled that the lifestyle of diving and serving was a good match for political students who were looking for off-campus activism. Many of the people I worked with would identify as punk and would certainly be recognized as punk by others. The anarchist uniform of Docs, narrow legged jeans, and political t-shirts of my earlier years have changed slightly. The pants remain, but the hair has become more asymmetrical than dyed, and the Toronto heat makes summer boot wearing unbearable. Many of the FNbers I met during this project were deeply committed to a political

life that brought them away from the mainstream and they were seeking to build communities to support and care for one another. Class background was varied and while many of the people I interviewed came from self-identified middle-class backgrounds, this wasn't the case of the group as a whole.

One weekend in February, 2011, we had an anti-oppression workshop that revealed the complications of class and social background. Standing in a straight line with our eyes closed, our facilitator asked a series of questions about experiences with abuse, poverty, gender or sexual difference, education, childhood medical care, and citizenship. In response to each question we were to step forward or back as a way of thinking through intersections of privilege and oppression and to sensitize ourselves to the topic of the workshop. After the questions, we were instructed to open our eyes and look around. I was close to the front and had to turn and look at people I had come to think of as friends fall behind for any number of reasons that we had never talked about.

The movement of food into waste and back again, accompanied by the movement of bodies (mine) through forbidden (culturally or legally) spaces opened up a new way of traversing city spaces that was not limited to, or rather by, the appropriate uses of spaces, bodies, or identities. Instead all of these became subject to the impact of what it meant to be a dumpster diver in the world of Toronto's streets. Starting in October 2011, I conducted specific interviews with seven key Food Not Bombs volunteers with questions developed from the themes that had been emerging in the field notes I had been keeping after every FNB or activist event I was a part of. Interviews varied between 45 minutes and 3 hours, depending on the circumstances and the interest of the interviewees. The selection process was based on a combination of interest from other members and their role with FNB. I selected members who had been key organizers at

some point or who had expressed interest in my research process and talking about the way the project was developing. These two criteria often overlapped and likely had more to do with the comfort level between those of us who had worked more extensively together. (See also Appendix A – Interview Subjects).

By the time I moved into the interview stage of this project, I had developed comfort and familiarity with the group and had discussed my research and the work of FNB while participating in dumpster diving, cooking, and serving activities. This process allowed for key questions, themes, and concerns to emerge from both participant observation and from open conversations with FNB volunteers. Over the months leading up to interviews, I discussed the texts I was reading and the research I was conducted with other volunteers. During this process, themes of interview questions emerged. Rather than detailing prior to research the questions I would ask, my research process developed from both my individual experience as a researcher and the conversations I was having with other volunteers. This process also ensured that a level of comfort developed with FNB volunteers that ensured that interviews could develop, along the identified thematic questions, in accordance with more familiar and comfortable conversation.

My desire to provide a safe and respectful experience for everyone I worked with was highlighted in informal requests for interviews. If an individual expressed interest in taking part in a more formal interview, I followed up with a private message and presented the approved Letter of Consent (Appendix B) to explain more formally the research process. All interview participants were informed that they could end the interview at any time and were free to follow up with any questions or concerns they may have during and after the interview.

The comfort level between myself as interviewer and those that agreed to interviews was also supported by ongoing review of fieldnotes recorded after every FNB event I attended.

Emerging themes of repeated interest of other volunteers and revealed as pertinent through library research I was conducting during this time. Rather than drawing on a set group of questions, then, each interview was loosely guided by an overarching theme of questions. What brought each individual to Food Not Bombs? What was their history with dumpster diving? How did they communicate their politics with non-divers? How did their diving interlock with their politics more broadly – both food and otherwise? Following these four thematic questions, conversations would extend based on individual interest, experience, and the interchange that happened between us. This focus on open-ended approaches was designed to allow full interaction with each interviewee and leave the opportunity for individual experience to inform the research process.

My first interview took place with Adam, Erin, and Sandra. Adam and Erin were both students – he of global politics and she of nutrition – and Sandra worked in childcare. All in their early 20s, they came to FNB for a variety of reasons that will be discussed later on, but their work was central to the organizing of FNB during my research time. Adam was key to a number of projects related to FNB and committed much of his time to anarchist organizing in general. Both Erin and Sandra were involved in other projects, but their interests were specifically in food related activism.

Abigail met with me on her own and we wound up having a thoroughly pleasant 3-hour conversation about diving, FNB, her food politics, and my work. In her early 20s, she talked at great length about her commitment to animal rights and veganism and also discussed previous education and interest in fashion design. When we met she was working in a local health food store and spending much of her spare time organizing with FNB.

Daniel was a key member in starting the iteration of FNB that I worked with and had recently left his studies in political science at one of Toronto's universities. He talked at length about the various projects he had worked on including the local zine library, a research collective, and starting a punk house. He was making his money in the kitchen at a local restaurant.

Benjamin was the last Toronto FNBER I interviewed. He continued on in a central role with FNB long after I wrapped up my research and many of the others had moved on to other projects. In his early 20s, he was a student of political science and philosophy of science but withdrew from university during the time I knew him. He was exploring various ways of bridging his political commitments with career directions and continued to be directly involved in FNB.

Such, such are the facts. Or, anyway, so I say. The doubts that arise, whether in me or my audience, have only very partially to do with questions about the empirical basis upon which these accounts, or others like them, rest. The canons of anthropological 'proof' being what they are (mimicries of sterner enterprises like mechanics or physiology), that is, indeed, how such doubts are most often phrased and, to the degree that they are, most often quieted. Footnotes help, verbatim texts help even more, detail impresses, numbers normally carry the day. But, in anthropology anyway, they remain somehow ancillary: necessary of course, but insufficient, not quite the point. The problem – rightness, warrant, objectivity, truth – lies elsewhere, rather less accessible to dexterities of method. (Geertz, 1995, 17)

These are the facts of this project – the outline of the field and the players I came to know during my time with Toronto's FNB. It is through the work that we did together that this dissertation became possible. As an exploration it is not only about this group of people, but the macro level critiques they make and problems they reveal through their commitment to question the meaning of the dumpster.

Plan of Present Project

The following chapters will detail the experiences and findings of this research process. Chapter One, “Food/Waste: Liminal and Mutable Categories of Commodified Food Stuff”, outlines the theoretical field of this dissertation and develops the hybrid category of food/waste that dumpster divers reveal in their actions. Drawing on the categorization introduced by Douglas (2002a) defining dirt as a symbolic category, this chapter considers how food/waste comes to be not only materially but also symbolically. Rather than seeing food/waste as simply an object, then, the action of divers reveal a mutability in organic substances and use this mutability to produce social critiques and as a framework for more macro-scale activism. This new category also sets the stage for a lived resurgence of the gift economy, an economy that exists independently from the structuring framework of capitalism and serves as a nostalgic touchstone for FNB activists who seek not only to rescue food, but also to remake social relations around the dinner table.

Chapter Two, “Freeganism & Food Not Bombs: History, Distinctions, and Spaces”, lays out current activism within a history of gleaning practices as interrelated with the enclosure of the commons. The enclosure movement began roughly in the 17th century when previously common lands were privatized. The rights of peasants to grow food, graze their animals, or forage from these common lands drastically reduced their ability to (Neeson, 1993) themselves. Additionally, gleaning rights were steadily revoked during this time. Gleaning is the process whereby farmers were instructed, by the Christian bible, to leave a portion of their crops at the end of harvest which would then be gathered by peasants (gleaners). This social relationship was, prior to enclosure, inscribed in legal regulations and cultural practices. However, this chapter reveals that gleaning has never been legally protected in Canada as a result of the privatization

that arose after the enclosure movement. In this context, gleaning as a social relation does not exist and was steadily eradicated with the rise of private property. This history also provides a broader socio-legal framework for the contemporary actions of FNB volunteers. Rather than seeing the existence of food/waste as a surprising evolution, this chapter will argue how a long history of foreclosing on communal relationships and food rights have guaranteed the existence of food/waste and prefigured the work of FNB activists. The foreclosure of communal rights was also central to how food systems were developed and the movement of people and food into urban spaces. This chapter will also introduce the key global movements – Freeganism and Food Not Bombs – that work against these socio-legal structures to redefine the meaning of food/waste.

Chapter Three, “The Social Movement of Food/Waste”, looks to the action of political dumpster divers organizing primarily through Food Not Bombs. By interrogating and redirecting food and waste circulation in the city, the divers are producing a counterpublic that appears every other Sunday in local park spaces and food/waste becomes the key ingredient for a temporary collective to arise. These counterpublics work to bound collectives through actions of recovering food and reproducing meaning (Warner, 2002). This is not without complication as it becomes clear that, regardless of this collective, the individual actors come to the table, so to speak, from differential relations to power that are not eradicated through a shared meal. The redirection of the circulatory city opens up different spaces for food consumption and gathering. Divers engage with dumpsters, home and shared kitchens, and public parks as ways to reconnect food/waste and reinscribe meaning into the food they consume and share.

Chapter Four, “Reclaiming Subjects: Dumpster Diving”, directly considers the subjectivity and identity constituted in the act of dumpster diving. As political action, dumpster

diving changes the diver and creates new social relations with other divers and systems of power (Graeber, 2009). Divers are able to change their relationship to money, labour, and time in order to produce models of being that offer freedom from the alienation of wage labour. FNbers are interested in using anarchist concepts of mutual aid and dual power to enact a free-ness from overarching capitalist structures. Free-ness is an understanding of liberty from wage labour, dominant ideology, and recalls the gift economy that is put forth as a model for new ways of organizing social relations.

Chapter Five, “Reading Against Regulations and Creating Counterpublics”, takes as its starting point the way so many divers learn about the practice in general and FNB in particular. Where this dissertation starts with the global movement of food, it ends with the global movement of communication. The form and production of self-publication – zines, blogs, and websites – shares a commitment to political dumpster diving across geographic difference. In this way, communication technology is used to bind the counterpublic introduced in the city around the world. This chapter frames the work of dumpster divers as connected across time and space and draws on the loosely connected multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004) and new social movements. Divers join other contemporary activists in seeing the challenge of capitalist society not only in economic terms, but also in the denigration of social relations and the privatization and commodification of food.

To start with food and end with communication presents this project through a kind of chronology. Moving from a discussion of food/waste into a history of gleaning practices serves to set up the material grounding of the work of political dumpster divers. This work then plays out in specific urban experiences and environments that are historically and culturally constructed to allow for the movement of meaning and food/waste to be questioned and

represented in the FNB serving. Food activist history is presented in this dissertation as a continuity that has been deeply embroiled with shifts in capitalist organization that have shifted with the rise of post-fordism and require an understanding of dumpster diving as both globally shared and locally individual experiences.

Structural and localized levels of analysis must be simultaneously explored to connect the experience of Toronto's FNB group with the global network of activists they collaborate with, the global movement of food into waste, and the connectivity made increasingly possible through digital communications. Dumpster divers not only make food/waste meaningful through reclamation, but are also invested in sharing this meaning making across geographic divides. But, before this meaning can be reinscribed, we must first turn to an understanding of how food and waste become the liminal hybrid I define as food/waste.

Chapter 1: Food/Waste: Liminal and Mutable Categories of Commodified Food Stuffs

It was a sunny Sunday in May and I carefully picked out my fieldwork outfit – jeans, a plain t-shirt, and black boots – hoping to blend into the group I was about to meet for the first time. I'd been in contact with various Food Not Bombs group members over the previous month, spent time talking about my research with an anarchist reading group earlier in the fall, and been to a number of local activist events. But, joining an FNB serving seemed different and I was nervous about where I was going – Soybomb ... I had an address and directions to find the door and walk up to the second floor – but didn't yet have a sense of what kind of space I was going into. The Facebook group was inviting, but without a background in FNB servings I was unsure what kind of social environment and physical space I was about to enter.

A 20-minute ride cleared my nerves a little bit and I would learn after close to a year of regularly making this trip that Sunday mornings are lovely on a bike, not too much traffic and the streets are quiet at 11 am. I find the address, lock up my bike and, as instructed, open the door and head up unfinished stairs. With no railings and a slightly higher rise than I am used to, my nerves return as I reach the top of the stairs to find a wooden door without a door knob. Taking a deep breath I open the door only to find a space unlike any I'd seen before, or since. My sense of the category of living space was confronted by a loft, previously an artist work/live space, dominated by a half pipe that I later learned served as the living room and we would have meetings or watch movies by pulling chairs and cushions into the centre and take over the skateboarding space. As I move past the ramp, I hear conversations from the kitchen and walk in to introduce myself to my fellow volunteers, some who will become integral to my life over the next year and some that I'll never see again.

With introductions made, I look to Daniel for instructions. We had been in contact over

email and he is at this point central to FNB work and seems to have a handle on how to go about best helping with the preparation. Food is piled on the large concrete island in the centre of the kitchen, lit by the sun streaming through a room-sized window, and must now, again, be sorted through, cleaned, and prepared into meals to be transported to Allen Gardens.

The process for distinguishing food is complicated by the intersection of tastes, backgrounds, and food knowledge and I quickly realize that this group does not have a uniform definition of food. It is made clear that whatever we make will be vegan, but specific dishes have not been specified so as we sort, wash, and chop, ad hoc recipes emerge. The selection will ultimately become a stew, grilled eggplants, and garlic bread, bolstered by an assortment of packaged goods donated by a local health food store. During this preparation, it was clear that the definition of quality food was not shared and one incident has stuck with me for three years. While the group was debating how to sort through produce that had moved into a questionable quality range, one man who I only saw that day, attempted to dismiss a discussion around quality when he said that what could anyone expect, it was from a dumpster.

This one misunderstanding, when I reviewed my field notes two years later, was still evocative of the mix of horror and sadness I felt at the time. It became clear in later conversation that he was having a rough personal time, did not have secure housing, and was depending on dumpstered food for all of his sustenance. Forced by need he had extended his perception of dumpstered food into the FNB cooking. Daniel quickly pointed out that the point of the servings was not to feed people garbage, but to use the good food available. The other FNBers nodded in agreement and the topic was quickly changed. The end result was a delicious meal that the volunteers and people in the park thoroughly enjoyed, but one that had been made in the crux of meaning between food and waste where, despite seemingly strict cultural categories, quality is

dependent on the intersections of individuals, regulations, and material realities of food quality.

Categorization

In English-speaking cultures, the key word is the ancient, primitive, and still current 'dirt'. Lord Chesterfield defined dirt as matter out of place. This implies only two conditions, a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Thus the idea of dirt implies a structure of ideal. For us dirt is a kind of compendium category for all events which blur, smudge, contradict, or otherwise confuse accepted classifications. The underlying feeling is that a system of values which is habitually expressed in a given arrangement of things has been violated. (Douglas, 2003, 109)

Dirt or dirtiness unlocks the distinction made between food and waste. As Douglas discussed originally in *Purity and Danger* (2002a), the category of dirt structures the category of clean, or pure, and reveals the violation of this structured order. As Douglas notes, our culture sees dirt as a compendium category, but when taking on the case of wasted food, a sub-category of dirt exists. It exists in the moment when food is placed in a waste receptacle – the dumpster – but the container's meaning shifts with the action of the dumpster diver. Cooper (2010) intervenes in the use of dirt as a useful category and argues instead of a separation of the categories of dirt and waste. Dirt as a conceptual category is limited in three ways:

There are, however, important limitations with the analytical deployment of dirt and hygiene. The first is temporal. Dirt and hygiene, as presented to us by these perspectives, risk becoming universalised means of imposing social hierarchies ... Second, as a social category dirt's ecological placement is surprisingly uncertain ... dirt's need to remain uncomfortably close to the human body undermines its capacity to engage with the wider questions of ecological transformation, unequal material flows or the social metabolism ... Third, the marginalisation of social conflict which often occurs in the application of dirt is troublesome. (1116)

Instead of following with the limitations inherent in 'dirt', he argues that drawing on the concept of waste adds a specificity of meaning. Waste refers directly to that which need not be thrown away and enters into a moral economy where the ethical responsibility of reducing discard is actualized (Scanlan, 2005). While waste, by its very definition, is mutable – waste refers to

objects that do not need to be discarded – it is no less significant that waste carries with it the anxiety Douglas (2002a) points to. In waste, the anxiety of the impure is wrapped up with an anxiety around when waste appears, how it can be reduced or hidden, and particularly in the case of organic waste, when it will rot beyond identification.

The way food and waste are separated are rather culturally specific, liminal, and changeable according to material circumstances. The role of decision-making in terms of which food to take, serve, re-discard is one that belies the seemingly simple categories of food and waste. The experience of dumpster divers draws on the intersections of meaning that connect commodities (food) and waste (Gregson, *et al.*, 2007). This chapter will look to the specific intersections between the categories of food and waste that the dumpster diver encounters and examine how these cultural meanings are constructed. By drawing on waste cultural studies and building an understanding of the integral intersection between waste and food commodification, it will become clear that dumpster divers reveal a distinct category of food/waste. This category works within the liminal experience of food and waste to understand that symbolic structuring of waste – that which is placed in a dumpster – is not dependent upon material decomposition of foodstuffs. Rather, commodification has ensured that the value of food has been disconnected from its edibility and instead reflects the capitalist structure that impacts even the most intimate of commodities (Winson, 1994).

As Evans (2012) notes, food and waste are deeply embroiled in categories of meaning wrapped up in status and social placement (Bourdieu, 1984). Specifically,

As such they [studies of waste] do not locate waste beyond the boundaries of the social, position it as the redundant afterwards of cultural and economic organization, nor allow it to stand as a metaphor for all manner of ecological crises. Instead, they recognize waste as a dynamic social category that needs to be understood in relation to the contexts through which it has been put to work and the relationships in which it is embedded. (Evans, 2012, 1123)

Related to the connection Thompson (1980) draws between status and value, the category of waste cannot be separated out from commodity cycles, food systems, and global trade relationships that have come to define North American food and waste circulation. Douglas' (2002a) categorization – if not always her core conceptual frame – translates across disciplines that study food and waste as a way of interrogating the meaning of waste.

Moore (2012) suggests that waste can be considered not as a category, but as a disruption. As a parallax object (Zizek, 2006) waste is neither object nor subject, but rather meaning is constructed in the movement between categories of meaning – food and waste, subject and object, commodity and discard. Further, the symbolic meaning of material objects shifts according to cultural location:

... what is polluting waste in one society may not be treated so in another time and place. From this it flows that categories and social orders use materials but are not determined by those materials. This liberating move from waste as a self-evident category to waste as a social construction therefore begs the question of how different matters matter differently. (Gregson & Crang, 2010, 1027)

The categorization of waste is socially specific and requires attention to be paid to the broader social construction that makes 'different matters matter differently'. The meaning of waste thus intersects with subjectivity and the ability of individuals to act within their world and to create meaning from the social relations presented (Goffman, 1959). Bauman (2004) connects this symbolic aspect of waste and subjectivity to understand that modern capitalism has extended the construction of waste onto human bodies whereby roles as consumers define the value of humans. For him, it becomes clear that those without disposable funds "...in a society of consumers...are 'flawed consumers'...lacking the money that would allow them to stretch the capacity of the consumer market..." (39). Surplus populations can therefore not participate in a system that only allows for one role, that of consumer. The process of commodification that

values food through purchasing further confounds the categorization of food and waste where it becomes clear that it is not through materiality that food is defined in supermarkets, but rather through its exchange.

Multilayered social, material, and economic strategies produce wasted food that is deeply embroiled in an ethical reluctance to accept that edible food is so easily thrown away. This reluctance reflects broader anxieties around waste that structure and detail our everyday experiences with what we throw away (Hawkins, 2006). As Evans (2012), following Gregson and Crewe (2003), notes about the household experience of wasted food, individuals do not throw food directly away, but rather have a series of strategies, including wrapping up leftovers and forgetting about them, that puts distance between the individual kitchen production of food and the wasting of that food. Ethical responsibility is shifted as concerns around contagion take over and make it appropriate to throw food away after it has moved into the social category of inedible (MacClancy, *et al.*, 2007).

For the dumpster diver, this ethical experience is shifted as the site of wasted food is not defined by the individual herself, but rather by a slightly different political economy that removes responsibility for wasted food from the individual and houses it within an institutional structure defined by global trade relations and food commodification that are outside of individual control. Instead of individual strategies that determine how food is thrown away in homes, at the grocery store level the ethical anxiety is not acted upon and instead the ethical responsibility is shifted onto redistribution actions by organizations such as Toronto's Second Harvest¹⁴, or by dumpster divers whose recovery reinscribes edibility onto discarded food stuffs.

14. Toronto's Second Harvest is not related to America's Second Harvest (now known as Feeding America). The American organization has a tense history with FNB and as a result of unpopular practices (the details of which are not publically known) rebranded into Feeding America.

The intersecting and folding back of meaning that connects food and waste connects social categories of edible and inedible with the ethical responsibility certain individuals take upon themselves. Choices are made to discard food that can still be used (or be put aside for another organization to pick up) but they are choices made within institutional structures. “Where there is dirt [waste], there is a system...” (Douglas, 2002a, 44) and in this case the system is one that is structured by commodification, global trade relations, various regulatory structures, and a series of individual labour choices.

The introduction of a system to understand waste as a bounded category has proven central to waste cultural studies that have been written since Douglas’ (*ibid*) groundbreaking work. Considering waste as a category in relation to other meaning systems:

The simplest definition of waste is discarded, expelled, or excess matter. But...this doesn't get anywhere near the minefield of emotions and moral anxieties that waste can provoke. Waste is much more than what we want to get rid of. (Hawkins, 2006, vii)

Food, waste, communication, commodities, globalization, and circulation are all complex, at times inherently personal aspects that influence how food/waste and the actions of the dumpster diver can be understood. The complexity with which Hawkins understands waste filters through these concepts as it both connects and circulates as it becomes fodder for the dumpster diver. The divide between food/waste can only be understood through these complex intersections that broadly draw on communication and cultural studies to critique the failures within food commodification and waste circulation. The next section will build upon this understanding of the systemization of waste production by considering how food itself can be understood. Understanding food as both commodity and communication system clarifies how it is possible that something so integral to human survival can be remade into an object so easily discarded. It is through the process of commodification that we can observe the cultural significance of food

in everyday life (de Certeau, *et al.*, 1998).

Food Spaces & Communication

The actions of dumpster divers change the circulation of food, waste, and communication in the city. They are able to do this not only through their actions, but also because of the specificity of food, waste, and communication, and the interrelations of the three. Food and waste follow communicative trajectories that intermingle and entwine to create a new way of understanding the meaning of both in urban spaces. Urbanity provides the connection between food and waste streams in a way significant to the dumpster diver. Structurally, the small grocer still common in inner city Toronto allows for a material intersection between the commodity recently disposed of and the diver looking to recover the still useful. Unlike other spaces, the regulatory structures of the city are as mutable as the distinction between food and waste. Dense populations support independent markets with unlocked dumpsters and urban anonymity protects illicit activities within dark alleys (Wilson, 1991).

Soja (2000) argues that agriculture was possible because of the development of urban settlements. In contrast to previously common wisdom that agriculture predated urban development, his understanding points to the importance of density of settlement and organization as central to the development not only of agriculture, but also other features associated with ‘civilization’. This argument of the centrality of urban development to agricultural settlements prefigures the necessity of urban spaces for the emergence of food/waste. This category, suggested in this chapter and utilized by dumpster divers, is foregrounded by the distancing of urban dwellers from direct and local food production as a result of shifting national relationships and urban development (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). This history will be more detailed in the next chapter, but the significance here lies in understanding cities as spaces of

food/waste directly connected to global economies and commodity circulation.

Within these urban spaces, the movement of food has been disconnected from a farm to fork experience more common to rural areas, but does not disconnect the cultural significance of food within urban cultures. The significance of food in defining the person who eats has become commonplace and inscribed in commonsensical understandings through the oft cited Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's 18th-century statement, "Tell me what you eat, I'll tell you who you are." The food we eat, have access to, and cannot or will not afford defines who we are and remains a sign of status and meaning within everyday life. Bourdieu (1984) drew extensive connections between class enculturation and food tastes. From type of food preferred to table manners to the bodies that resulted from food choices, his work made clear that food is a marker of class and status. Food choices and food cultures remain marked in this way and food studies scholars continue to develop what it means to place food so centrally in defining individuals in connection with their broader culture (Johnston & Baumann, 2010).

The connection of people through food highlights its communicative capabilities and it is through this capacity that food/waste is possible (Henderson, 1970). Simply, wasted food can be made meaningful only because of the significance of meaning making central to food in human lives. An interest of studies across diverse disciplines, food studies incorporates understandings of communication about food. This communication about food moves the ritual of food beyond the production and consumption of these items to another layer of meaning that is communicated through a variety of communication processes and technologies. These studies take up reviews of film (Harris, 2008; Rawnsley, 2008; Parasecoli, 2011), food television (Cramer, 2011), recipe books (German, 2011), and policy (MacRae, *et al.*, 2012) as ways of understanding the significance of food within everyday lives. Beyond this is the importance of food as a structuring

device, one that builds community (Barthes, 2008), is a form of rhetoric (Greene & Cramer, 2011), ritual (Visser, 1988; Vannini, 2008; Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; Lévi-Strauss, 1983), and ancestral connection (Cheng, 2011). Food draws culture together, creates discourses of power (Probyn, 2002), and ultimately creates meaning in a way that cannot be found in other commodities that structure human life (Appadurai, 1996). Instead, as Appadurai notes, the complex way that commodities circulate through social life highlights their significance to individual lives. However, food as an intimate commodity brings with it a sense of meaning making that is absorbed directly into the body in a way not shared by other aspects of material or commodity cultures.

As Greene & Cramer (2011) note, while communication scholars have increased their interest in studying food, it remains an underdeveloped consideration within the field. Leaving food to the anthropologists, communication scholars rarely look towards developing an understanding of food through a communications lens. In the context of political dumpster diving, the communicative aspects of food laid out by communication scholars follow Douglas' (2008) interest in how food systems define and structure culture, and thus are inscribed with, and hold the capacity to produce, meaning and power structures (Foucault, 1980a). As we are defined by the food we eat and the regulated way food plays out in our lives – not only regulated through governmental policies and regulations as laid out in the introduction, but also in the way the ritual of food create and maintain culture (Lévi-Strauss, 1983).

For Lévi-Strauss (1983), cooking formed civilization and provided the grounding, and impetus, for early technological development. In later work (Lévi-Strauss, 2008), he developed an understanding of the culinary triangle where food could be distinguished as cooked, raw, or rotted. This triangle is less interested in the food itself and takes its focus on human intervention

in preparation processes. Clark (2000; 2004) took up this triangle and noted that for punks, any corporate intervention in food production automatically rotted food and they instead looked to the dumpster to bring them closer to purer, rawer forms of food. It was through the recategorization of food as waste that food was brought back into acceptable consumption. As Thompson (2011) notes, "Food allows social and cultural values to be communicated openly yet under a veneer of mundane everyday living." (179) It is through the mundane nature of both food and waste that the dumpster diver interrogates food systems and reworks the communicative capacities of both.

This communicative aspect is also rooted in the way food not only structures everyday lives, but is also a form of writing as developed by de Certeau and Girard (2008). For women who did not have control or access to other forms of historical meaning making, "[w]omen bereft of writing who came before me, you who passed on to me the shape of your hands or the color of your eyes, you whose wish anticipated my birth, you who carried me...I would like a writing of words and letters to correspond to your writing of recipes and tastes." (69) The ritual of food is passed from generation to generation and connects us to a longer cultural history than may otherwise be available. For the dumpster diver, this history is a direct connection to a 20th century environmental movement that has been attempting to protect traditional food systems since the publication of *Silent Spring* (Carson, 2002) and the subsequent ongoing concern over changes being made to the food system. Control of food is power over others, and it is through an ongoing struggle against corporate control that political dumpster divers have structured themselves through the political intentions of their work.

Corporate control over food systems is not the only way that food is critiqued and obscures other forms of power division. While de Certeau and Girard (2008) point to the

dilemma in seeing cooking as writing where women are able to access a kind of control in the kitchen, but it is their limitation to the kitchen that exposes another, adjacent power structure that limits access to other domains. In the case of struggles over farming and food production, power systems are no less dualistic and problematic. The farmer's market has become an emblem of the predominantly white response to environmental degradation and loss of traditional food production (Johnston & Baumann, 2010).

However, the appeal to the white middle class is also found in the "white farm imaginary" (McCullen, 2011, 219) that is enacted by California markets that place white faces at the market in a way that obscures the predominance of workers of colour who are responsible for the production of this food. The production of food is separated from most consumers to such an extent that labour practices, race, gender, and ethical production are accessed through mediators that rarely represent the reality of the production and distribution sites. Probyn (2000) notes that when we eat, we are consuming power relations. The processes at play behind the scenes in our food system have made food central to environmental and social justice work that seeks to address the inequitable distribution of power (and nutrition) in the food system.

It is through drawing on a systemic understanding of food, rather than seeing food as something disconnected from its production, that dumpster divers are also using their actions to critique the food system. As will be clear in later chapters, knowledge of these inequalities in multiple stages of food systems and food cultures are recounted and structure food/waste as a category of critique. Food is not accepted as a disposable item and instead is reclaimed and recirculated through urban spaces to create new meaning. Dumpster divers are not alone in their concerns regarding food production and interventions into the food system through political eating is a feature of many different kinds of contemporary food activism.

This focus on a specific intervention into the food system to benefit one group of people over another – common in concerns around migrant labour (Barndt, 2008) – reflects the status inherent in food. Bourdieu's work (1990) considers the cultural meaning inscribed in how, where, and what we eat. It is not enough, and not possible, to look to food as simply quantifiable in terms of calories, nutritional content, or some sort of inherent quality. Rather nutritional standards are part of a system of utilizing science as a way of regulating people into certain eating patterns, supporting certain agricultural industries (Mudry, 2011).

As has been documented elsewhere, the connections between agri-business and nutritional guides complicates how we look at food quality. The status of food is somewhat different and quality food in that sense is often linked to other cultural status indicators that link cost, quality, and class in a way that produces a clear link between how and what a person eats with other, less tangible qualities. The foodie culture that is inextricably linked with food activism creates the challenge of separating out privileged perceptions of food from ensuring quality food for everyone (Johnston & Baumann, 2010). The significance of food choices is central to self-identified foodie culture, but it remains painted with the inequality that perforates industrial food cultures. An exemplar of the problematic relationship between privileged food choices and food activism can be seen in clearly in the Slow Food Movement. As a social style the movement, along with many other foodie movements, reproduces the hegemonic structures it ostensibly stands against (Greene, 2011).

Status reflects access in ways that have come to define the structuring of the food system. The way that food travels from farm to fork (and often to bin) is far more complicated than a staged process could reveal. Instead, these steps are conflicting and complex and are able to connect and circulate far more than may at first seem evident. Part of Barndt's (2008) study of

the commodity cycle of the tomato looks to the challenges faced by lower income supermarket workers who are forced into impossible choices between labour time outside the home and producing quality food and eating with their families in their homes (165 – 168). In this work it becomes clear that the intersections of inequality are seen both through labour, food access, and time poverty. Adding to this consideration is work on food deserts and the significant challenges faced by people living in disadvantaged areas and those who are unable to reach large big box grocery stores (Larsen & Gilliland, 2008). Movements working to improve nutrition and access to quality food have often been central to food activism and a turn towards food redistribution is a way of narrowing down this activism, which is wide ranging and takes on diverse forms.¹⁵

Examples of food redistribution efforts make evident the historical precedents of the struggle to make food available and accessible to all people: the English working-class rioted against rising food prices in the eighteenth-century (Thompson, 1980); the Black Panthers developed inner city school food programs in the 1960s (Cleaver & Katsiaficas, 2001); gleaning practices referenced in the Bible were built into French law (Stuart, 2009). Yet, despite this history acting against food insecurity, we still have a culture that does not distribute food to all citizens and the wealthy continue to eat well while the poor continue to have access to substandard food.

Patel (2007) most clearly untangles this tension when considering the reasons why the richest nations in the world have growing problems with obesity while much of the world starves (see also Shiva, 2000 and Winne, 2009). The shift in global models of trade in the 1970s with structural adjustment programs and the failure of the Green Revolution ensured food would become scarce in many areas of the world (Koc, 2009). The capitalist models that dominate food

15. Nutrition and nutritional science has defined our current food regime and has dictated food systems for the last 100 years (Dixon, 2009).

production, the use of profit motives, rather than human needs, determine how, where, and when food will be grown and where it will be sold. This paired with the subsidy systems (Bittman, 2009) that encourage cash cropping ensure that there is more than enough food in the world, but it is the wrong kind or in the wrong place.

Roosevelt (1987) considers how “cultural subsistence evolution” has historically benefited the powerful and wealthy in ways that are reflected in current systemic inequalities (567). Changes in food production and systems throughout human history point to the ongoing privileging of the elite who were better fed despite growing populations that did not nutritionally benefit. Control over food has been fundamental to retaining wealth with control over edible resources being central to economic organizations. Further, "...food distribution is embedded in the prevailing pattern of social relationships, both reflecting and helping to reinforce status and power" (Ross, 1987; 19). More specifically, where he is looking to the history of food evolution and habits, it is clear that food is a source of power that has been held by different groups, through different means throughout recorded human history.

The rise of food commodification through industrialization has changed the relationship between food production owners and the rest of the world refining and further solidifying inequitable divisions of food access. Increasingly, food has moved away from its sustenance qualities where gleaning laws and religious regulations dictated the sharing of food as central to good living (Stuart, 2009). Instead, while culturally, and biologically, it is still clear that all people need food, the amount of hungry people has overridden the moral and charity structures that previously would have re-distributed waste.¹⁶ Instead, waste practices and a move away

16. See, for example, Patel (2011) who when critiquing the Green Revolution points to the inherent moral economy that existed in India's previous feudal organization. This process of removing the moral economy has become commonplace in neoliberal restructuring of global economies.

from mutual support, community aid, or redistribution has replaced filling plates with increasingly bloated landfills.

The significance of food communication and the ability to use food redistribution to critique broader economic problems is central to the work of food/waste activists. As should be clear, this work is distanced from much mainstream food activism which looks to purer forms of food rather than highlighting the misplacement of food in the dumpster. This meaning making draws out the inherent communicative capabilities that cannot be immediately discarded and instead remain with food even while it spends a short time in the dumpster. However, it is not only through communicative capabilities that food/waste is meaningful, the communicative capabilities are also linked to the commodification of food. This commodification, which will be detailed in the next section, is the economic background for how food/waste comes to exist. While food/waste activists critique the disposability of food they are also revealing the end result of decades of food commodification.

Commodification & Global Movement

As with food as communication, food as commodification is dependent upon status and taste, as well as the circulation of foodstuffs through global food markets. Food taste exists as both status marker and material experience when food is tasted and ingested (Lupton, 1996). The ingestion of taste complicates the way the food commodity is understood. This commodity is not only a source of status and personal meaning, but also an object that, if not consumed through sale or in a meal, is subject to similar circulation to other commodities that will, ultimately, be discarded (Benjamin, 1999; Hetherington 2007).

However, despite this treatment of food as a commodity, it functions also as sustenance on a level that many other commodities do not. Winson (1994) points to the intimate commodity

as a way of understanding that the basic needs we consume, such as food or water, function differently than less intimate commodities. Food is, at once, deeply personal and inextricably communal as is evident when considering the way foodstuffs circulate through the physical spaces of our lives and how it, as an object changes meaning as those spaces are traversed. As ritual, food defines communities and cultures (Lévi-Strauss, 1983) and bridges across bodies to bring people together in a cultural act (Montanari, 2006). This intimacy also highlights the social significance placed on the sharing of food (Miller, *et al.*, 1998). Food bounds us to others and the sharing of food is situated within Mauss' gift (1990) where the reciprocal nature of gifting brings not only social relations, but bodies linked through shared ingestion and subsistence. This linkage extends into the conception of gifting and market economies examined in the next section, but these bodies, linked through ingestion do so across urban space and through commodity chains.

The immediate concern of the urban circulation of food and waste extends beyond the individual city and invites a consideration of a much longer and broader set of circulations. This is explained in food studies through the lens of food regimes (Friedmann, 2012) where food circulation, global trade, and global capitalism are understood as inherently connected. Friedmann also points to the crisis within which our current food regime exists as connected to the crisis of capital. An understanding of food regimes works its way through recent conceptions of food in activist or advocacy cultures. For example, the global movement of food has been taken up by a recent project, *Food: An Atlas* (Nicola, 2012), a collaborative work of 'guerrilla' cartographers documenting food circulation from all over the world. In this project, food is traced through global trajectories by the work of people drawn from diverse geographical areas and educational backgrounds. This diversity builds a way of thinking through food systems

that highlights looking at food commodification as not only a problem, but also a structuring device for global food experiences.

In this vein, Barndt's (2008) work on the trajectory of the tomato digs below and across commodity movement and looks to the complicated networks of foodstuffs through global capitalism. Tracing the tomato from its field in Mexico to its sale in Ontario, Barndt interrogates the social impact of political and economic changes that have led to a globalized and interconnected food commodity distribution system. She outlines the travels of this specific commodity and offers compelling arguments detailing the interconnections of inequality across borders connected through the food we consume.¹⁷ The movement of food as a commodity behaves in predictable ways when looking to the global circulation of food as a good through a global commodity chain (Gereffi, & Korzeniewicz, eds., 1994; Hughes & Reimer, eds., 2004). Food commodities move as other commodities do, mobilizing, or rather being mobilized around the globe.

While the easy discard of commodities is less frequently dealt with in studies of consumption or consumer culture, waste culture is implied in any critique of rampant consumerism or planned obsolescence (Packard, 1960; Turner, 2010). This concern with inherent disposability of food is built into understandings of anti-capitalism and environmentalism that seek to combat the amount of consumer waste being produced, an amount that seems to grow every year. However, the commodity chain is not so straightforward at this stage, as with any other stage. Rather, the everyday relationship to the commodity is far more complicated and questioned than may at first appear.

The everyday relationship between consumer and commodity is central to the work of

17. For similar studies, see also Mintz (1985) on sugar or Friedland, *et al.* (1981) on lettuce.

second-hand culture literatures that seek to question how consumers decide to discard their commodities (Gregson & Crewe, 2003; Straw, 2011). Instead of being a simple experience, it becomes clear that individuals experience a great deal of anxiety around the goods and food they throw away and, as a result, they engage with a series of mitigating actions that redirect goods to other people or into donation streams. For food, the anxiety is worked through as was laid out in the opening of this chapter, utilizing techniques that ensure rotting occurs to protect the individual from claiming responsibility for the discard of edible food. Also revealed in these studies is the diverse nature of consumption spaces where consumer culture lives not only in the shopping mall or supermarket, but further extends to second hand good shops, flea markets, garage sales, and, ultimately, dumpsters. The diversity of consumption spaces found by moving outside of a simplified commodity chain opens up the opportunity to critique the space of the commodity.

The commodification of food is linked to the communicative nature of food as expressed through its ability to be a status marker. Commodification becomes possible when a good is imbued with meanings that redirect and reconfigure exchange value (Appadurai, 1996). In this reconfiguration, food moves away from sustenance to a commodified market that allows for easier disposal, not only of the food but also the meaning invested in it. The cultural capital of being able to negotiate commodity culture in a recognizable way is clear in food cultures when looking to foodie culture dependent upon specific intersecting knowledge, income power, and free time (Blue, 2009; Johnston & Baumann, 2010; Greene, 2011). The ability to access farmer's markets, high end luxury foods, and the skills and time to cook with these ingredients remains central to the habitus and capital central to foodies. Food commodities, either as purchased or sold, are key to wealth and are one way of defining social class and economic security, the

combination of which is most often referred to as food security (Koc, *et al.*, 1999).

Through global relations, food systems connect us to one another and to markets and meanings that we cannot see or account for when we sit down for dinner (Friedmann, 2012). These systems of regulation structure our access to food, but also structure the significance of disposal to not only food, but to commodities in general. For Benjamin (1999), death-laden imagery of the arcades was a reflection of the limited life cycle of commodities. The discard of the commodity was its ultimate death when it was removed from history but remained as a graveyard for that history (Buck-Morss, 1989). The space of shopping was the space of ultimate death of the commodity and while the contemporary food market may not hold the same tragedy of the arcades, they are locations that are the final transportation stop for food commodities. The market is the space whereby food can either move out with customers, be donated through various food collection agencies, or be thrown into the dumpster. This ultimate disposal of consumer culture links the globe (Goldstein, 2012) but, more immediately, in the interactions between dumpster and diver, meaning can be returned to disposed food.

Public concerns around waste crisis(es) imply that consumers' behaviour is directly correlated with production changes (Rathje & Murphy, 1992; Melosi, 2005). However, the work of second hand goods scholarship draws attention to the diverse areas where consumers access the goods they purchase or barter for. In this sense, spaces of consumption are interrelated but do not exist as mere backdrops for consumption (Shields, 1992b; Bell & Valentine, 1997). Rather, like the arcades, they structure a specific social relationship and expectation for, and by, the consumer. The significance of consumption within studies of consumer culture also moves an understanding of dumpster diving away from Debord's (1994) society of the spectacle, a means of understanding consumer culture that remains influential for anticapitalist activists.

The society of the spectacle (Debord, 1994) presumes consumers are blinded by the culture that surrounds them and that they are unable to work against or outside their subjugation (Adorno, 1991; Gunster, 2004). This presumption is refuted by Gregson & Crewe (2003) who find that:

...those shopping in second-hand arenas are neither heroes/ines nor dupes, but women and men who – in their shopping practices – demonstrate their agency through shopping. Second-hand shopping experiences are not simply about constituting identities through goods, nor are they just about the materialization of social relations, nor are they prescribed as in the spaces of the first cycle. Instead they have to be forged... (107)

Outside the spaces of first cycle, shoppers and divers are creating new relations to capital in order to redefine their consumptive experience. However, the ability to work within capitalism against this structure is not accounted for in the society of the spectacle. Instead, Debord created a sense of consumer culture that only allowed the avant-garde minority to stand against the spectacle that blinded everyone else (Roberts, 2006). The popularity of this idea is evident in the non-academic success of the Situationist International (SI) and it continues to be influential in activist circles (Hetherington, 2007). Since the 1960s, the spectacle has remained relevant and continues to influence popular, activist, and academic understandings of consumer culture.

Debord and the Situationists redeployed Benjamin's revolutionary potential for the refusal of commodities towards critiquing capitalist culture through a critique of the spectacle. This spectacle continued Marx's work through its critique of the alienation inherent in commodity culture. This work was not necessarily directly concerned with the commodity as an object, but rather considering larger critiques of commodity culture as a whole. Debord's (1994) concept of spectacle, drawing Benjamin's writing on the revolutionary potential of refusal, understood it as the pleasurable aspect of capitalism that obscured the totalizing power of capital. Following the work of SI, studies of consumer culture have continued to utilize the spectacle as a

means of understanding contemporary consumerism. However, Hetherington (2007) challenges this prevalence and notes that within consumer culture studies:

...(i) society (after Debord) is seen as one dominated by spectacle as a form of mediation, (ii) Debord is mentioned but there is little systematic analysis of his arguments, (iii) Debord is taken to be right (at least superficially) and the idea of a society of the spectacle has become commonplace in understanding consumer society. (34)

One of the further challenges Hetherington directs at Debord is the lack of empirical work conducted when developing *The Society of the Spectacle*. Rather, as Debord's intent was a revolutionary critique of capitalism, the totalizing nature of the spectacle model was a necessary revolutionary tool (37; see also Roberts, 2006). Addressing this limitation is key to Hetherington's own project and he points out that as consumers we treat commodities in multiple ways and they should therefore be theorized as such (184). Further, “[t]o take possession of a panoramic spectacle within which one is constituted is also to take possession of oneself as a subject. We might say that this is a defining feature of a modern consumer society.” (24) Within Debord’s project, the consumer is situated as passive whereas Hetherington argues that consumption is deeply embedded in the revolutionary aspect of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984). Particularly when considering the nature of dumpster diving, the act of consuming is never passive and requires a direct confrontation with legal structures, physical barriers, and social regulations (Ferrell, 2006).

The consumption of waste draws on a consumer culture that leaves open spaces of circulation beyond first hand goods, spaces that are the focus of second hand culture studies detailed earlier as well as the illicit movement of the dumpster diver. The focus on production at the expense of consumption has been a central concern of scholars who look to address the significance of consumption and the subject identity of the consumer (Miller, 1998). The focus on production is not always a limitation, but does provide a specific political economic

framework which does not account for the complicated meaning making at play within consumer culture, particularly one as individual as food consumption. Drawing on Hetherington, then, it becomes clear that the spectacle that Debord proposes can only partially understand the complex method of meaning making consumers engage with.

Instead, we must continue to consider the global economic relationships that define the movement of food, waste, and food/waste. Any food commodity can be traced in a similar way to Barndt's work on the tomato and it is through these global exchanges that the framework for waste is ensured. With so many goods moving around the world, the treatment of food as a commodity like any other, is tempting, but deceptive. Food is treated, sold, purchased, and moved like a commodity, but it relates to individuals and bodies in a way that Winson (1994) discusses as 'intimate commodities'. More specifically, he reminds us that:

...if food and drink have become commodities, they are 'intimate' commodities like perhaps no other. In the process of their consumption we take them inside our very bodies, a fact that gives them a special significance denied such 'externally' consumed commodities...unlike so many other goods...food is an essential commodity, we can literally not live without it... (4).

The integral nature of food to our intimate lives connects studies of food consumer behaviour to studies of everyday life that look to the banal (de Certeau, *et al.*, 1998). Thus, food must be understood as a commodity, but not exclusively under the same conditions or theoretical understandings as other goods. This is clear from the above narrative as we watch what happens when edible food is brought back from waste and to become a host of nutrients, communications, and communities. However, the processes by which other objects are commodified has much to lend us in an understanding of why and how food production, distribution, and consumption practices have changed in a post-fordist economy.

Post-fordist production has deeply impacted the way food is produced and circulated

across the globe. Harvey (1990) has famously theorized the rise of flexible accumulation and flexible production and this process has not left food production untouched. This has had the local impact of changing how much access North American consumers have to wide varieties and lower priced food, particularly produce, from around the world with an ongoing focus experience of “bilateral and multilateral trade arrangements and international institutions” defining the global food system (MacRae, Abergel & Koc, 2012, 2). Post-fordism has also set the market grounding for changes to global trade relations that have shifted how globalized commodities circulate across the planet (Flusty, 2004). By looking to the complex relationships of transnationalism, it becomes evident that the flattened view of global commodity chains obscures the complex flows of goods and ideas around the globe (Appadurai, 1996). Instead, commodities must be understood as both constitutive of, and resulting from, global processes while being subject to deeply individual relations and treatments. Thus, we must be attuned to the nonlocal aspect of global relationships where there is no one location, one commodity, or one production relationship, but rather a complex intersection of meaning, relations, and material realities (Flusty, 2004, 10).

These tensions can also be reflected in how food itself is defined. Winson (1994) notes that not all that is defined as food is necessarily nutritious or healthy (4) and debates over food quality are easily found (Patel, 2007; Bittman, 2009; Mudry, 2011). As discussed in the Introduction, food commonly available in supermarkets has changed from previously understood food categories. Thus, the notion of 'junk' food is distinct from discarded food tossed for reasons other than contagion or spoiling. Instead, quality and value of food is wrapped up with its commodification, a commodification that defines value through monetary exchange and is structured through global trade relations rather than value defined by nutritional need (Mudry,

2011).

Disposability of food derives from a change in the meaning of food itself. The shift in what is edible and what is not edible is materially specific and while we currently live in a time of abundance that allows for easy disposal of food, this can be reversed according to circumstance. Famine and poverty directly impact how food is valued and what then qualifies as food, including taboo animals, pushing the limits of food going off or practices of dumpster foraging (MacClancy, 1992; MacClancy, *et al.*, 2007; Black, 2007; Matalas and Grivetti, 2007). As a reflection of an increasingly complicated global exchange system, the commodification of food makes us more likely to consider food products in ways similar to mass-produced goods (Patel, 2007).

Supermarkets report their need to have fully stocked shelves in order to satisfy consumer demand (Stuart, 2009, 27), but this consumer demand derives from larger changes in the availability through mass production that has framed consumer expectations (Zukin, 2004).¹⁸ The actual diversity of food is selected out of the mainstream food system when food that does not meet weight, size, or shape requirements are discarded prior to harvesting or during distribution and processing (Stuart, 2009, Part II). As a result, the variety seen in a home garden or at a farmer's market is deliberately erased in the blank sterility of the grocery store (Zukin, 2004). As fordism inspired regularly shaped produce and the dependability of factory availability, post-fordism shifted the consumer desire from a set of expected products to an increasing diversity of global food availability (Flusty, 2004). Moving away from natural growing cycles or local food ecologies, the post-fordist supermarket consumer can find items from around the globe in their corner store. Thus, increasingly, the sustenance aspect of food is

18. Historical treatments of shopping spaces (Zukin, 2004) detail that goods availability and direct social relations between seller and consumer defined consumer behaviour.

replaced, for the privileged North American consumer, with the ideal of diversity and exoticism (Goldfrank, 1994, 267-8) made available through global commodity flows (Appadurai, 1996).

These commodity flows are interrelated and overlay the circulation of not only the city, which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 3, but also commodified circulation. Food consumers have been disconnected from food production and we are more frequently gathering food information through marketing rather than personal experience and knowledge (Knezevic, 2012). The designation of separate categories for food production (rural) and food consumption (urban) echo the distinction made between food and waste whereby the reality of consumer experiences are subsumed. Instead, dumpster divers reveal disposal as a moment in circulation that can be temporary. As such, "...disposal [can] be seen as a continual, recursive practice of engaging with making and holding things in a state of absence, and of understanding how something can be in a state of abeyance and be 'at your disposal' at the same time" (Hetherington, 173). The productive ability of recovery then shifts the meaning making of culture whereby dumpster divers draw on disposed consumer goods to provide the building blocks for activist interrogations of not only food spaces, but also public spaces.

This section has looked through multiple lenses to consider how commodification of food creates the circumstances for food/waste to exist. While commodification has defined food as a status marker, it also moves food around the globe and connects the world of food production through this movement. Looking to commodification and global movement also highlights the dual nature of the food commodity as a good in movement and as a deeply internalized personal experience. The next section looks to how social and geographic relations provide the final piece to the theoretical puzzle of food/waste. Not only material to be discarded, a communicative stream, or a commodity movement, this category is also the means with which dumpster divers

create counterpublic and exchange relationships that refute neoliberal restructuring and dominance.

Meaning and Remaking Meaning in the Counterpublic

Appadurai (1986) makes clear that the social life of things determines that exchange is not central to commodification. As was laid out in the last section, the commodification of food is central to the experience of eaters and also defines the everyday framework for urban dumpster diving (Roberts, 2006). Considering commodification through movement and meaning, as well as exchange, opens up opportunities to consider in more detail social relations and markets revealed by dumpstered food and built by dumpster divers. For Appadurai, the commodity must be extended in order to account for the complex ways that goods circulate. Specifically, “...*the commodity situation in the social life of any ‘thing’ [is] defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature.*” (italics in original, 13) Central to his argument is extended temporality, inspired by Bourdieu (1984), and the significance of circulation to understanding commodification. Here, the anthropological literature on the gift as being distinct from Marx’s understanding of the commodity is directly questioned and opens up the opportunity to consider the different ways markets function within dumpster diving communities. Exchange becomes more than recompense of Mauss’ (1990) gift or monetary exchange and instead is a system of circulation and social relevance.

Douglas (2002b) notes that “Mauss’s fertile idea was to present the gift cycle as a theoretical counterpart to the invisible hand” (xviii) and serves as a corrective to presumptions of market economies. Opened up with this sense of the circulation of goods is the opportunity to consider other means of exchange where commodities can circulate beyond the narrow regions

of the market economy. Gifts are also dependent upon giver and receiver being in a relationship that bonds them beyond monetary exchange, though value is not only found within exchange.

Instead:

When idealized, the ‘uncalculating’ gift operates in the imaginary as the last refuge of a solidarity, of an open-handedness which is supposed to have characterized other eras in the evolution of humankind. Gift-giving becomes the bearer of a utopia (a utopia which can be projected into the past as well as into the future). (Godelier, 1999, 208)

Gift economies offer an alternative to market economies and thus reveal a social relation that for many has been lacking. In the case of dumpster diving, the process of reclaiming food/waste not only questions the distinction made between food and waste, but is also then moved into an economy of gifting food to local communities. The slash of food/waste is directly related to the produced social relation that exists when groups like Food Not Bombs take discarded food and produce meals that are shared.

This gift, however, is not quite how Mauss laid out and the necessity of return is discarded. As will become clear throughout this dissertation, the idealized gift economy does not easily lay over the work of political dumpster divers and Food Not Bombs groups. Key to gift economies is the movement of the gift where goods are not owned and instead in movement reflect the ideal nature of the gift which ceases to be so when its circulation is blocked by ownership (Hyde, 1999). This ideal nature also aligns with the anarchist beliefs that underlie political dumpster diving. Sharing meets mutual aid and the excess produced by capitalist production is used to feed the hungry. This mutual aid also reveals the other side of gift economies which produce a set of social relations that are actively drawn upon by activist dumpster divers who seek to bridge their intervention into commodity cycles to the urban spaces they work within.

Clarifying the nature of categorization, commodification, and gift economies highlights

the broad social world that direct action activists are seeking. Direct action is not only a response against neoliberal restructuring or capitalist waste, but are also productive and model alternative social relations through counterpublic organization (Warner, 2002). Counterpublics exist in addition, and often in response, to state power and work to create collective meaning through direct and mediated communications. Where Habermas' (1989) bourgeois public was one rooted in specific geographic locations and theorized a civil society that excluded many members of society. The exclusions identified by Fraser (2000) are foregrounded within counterpublics. The counterpublic is structured through inward and outward address where communicative acts simultaneously resist state power and internally bound collectives (Asen & Brauwer, 2001). Studying politically motivated dumpster divers is a means of accessing the connections between these studies and anarchist theory. The activists of the dumpster diving world seek to not only theorize different ways of being in the world, but to produce these ways so that the end of current economic and social relations are easily bridged with smaller scale projects developed with consensus, anti-oppression, and radical democracy at their centre (Gordon, 2009; Graeber, 2009).

Following Robinson (2008), dumpster diving gifting connects through Kropotkin's (1989) anarchist principle "mutual aid." (234) Foregrounding mutual aid allows anarchist communities to develop social relations that work against presumptions of modernist capitalist communities. Rather than focusing on competition and individualism, mutual aid is based on the community working together for the good of all. Following a post-structuralist model of power, it is complex and multi-sited, allowing individuals to be actors seeking to remake their relationships to food and exchange (Foucault, 1995; Lupton, 1996). Following Probyn (2000), we consume relations of power every time we eat. Food is a site of domination and resistance that allows for a reconsideration of how structures of power are balanced between the inherent

and invisible, but also open to critique. Through critique it becomes possible to begin building new relations of power with food/waste that are then shared to the purpose of increasing social justice around hunger and satiation (Heynen, 2010).

Conclusion

Simply, the action of dumpster diving achieves three things: it highlights the communicative aspects of food (Greene & Cramer, 2011) and waste; critiques the discard of food commodities (Stuart, 2009; Bloom, 2010); and, finally, reconnects processes to question the distinction made between food and waste (Clark, 2000 & 2004; Barnard, 2009). Through these processes it becomes evident that a new way of thinking about wasted food is necessary, one that connects the circulatory movement of food and waste to produce the category food/waste.

While many could see this understanding of the ritual of food in the context of dumpster diving as extending into the field of gift economies (Appadurai, 1986; Mauss, 1990; Bataille, 2007), the communicative aspect of food extends to wasted food to construct not only a different economic relationship, but to also highlight the significant connections between food and wasted food circulation. Food and waste are symbolically constructed to exist as separate, but the two cannot exist without each other. Rather, the distinctions between aspects of the circulation stream are not inherent, but rather cultural, and the connection between the two cannot be separated (Douglas, 2002a).

This unpredictability, both of people in cities and of cities themselves, layer space and time to allow opportunities for temporary collectives akin to Warner's (2002; see also Ferguson, 2010) counterpublics to appear. These circumstances of the urban framework point to the importance of understanding the interconnectedness central to circulation processes of the city. Rather than seeking to separate out and make distinct, it is necessary to see these as overlapping,

interconnecting, and mutually constituting aspects of food, waste, and communication.

At the dumpster stage, time and space are shifted in response to the action of the dumpster diver. Dumpsters are reworked as a space for food that has been temporarily stripped of meaning and, in many cases, mistakenly timed as inedible. The public-ness of the park within which servings take place reworks the expected and, at times, regulated meaning of the park space (Mitchell, 1995). Free lunches are offered outside of the context of a soup kitchen and instead brought into the open air where they are not only public in the sense of visibility, but also in their lack of restriction. The park space of loitering, travel or leisure is resignified as eating space, time for a surprise lunch and the experience of the temporary collective where a meal bonds disparate people together (Probyn, 2000). This connection is therefore not only the connection associated automatically with food, but also an act of resistance.

In contrast to the meaning emptied from food when it is thrown away, the reclamation of food back from waste and its subsequent consumption during public servings writes a new meaning on the park space (de Certeau, 1984), onto the meal, and onto the people who share it. Food commodification and the emptying of value it allows for is reworked and, rather than hunger, satiation is made available from foodstuffs when the need for monetary exchange is refused (Heynen, 2010). Further, during a serving (or other radical acts of food reclamation), the right to food and proof of edibility is not found in monetary exchange.

Straw (2011) notes that while there are significant differences between physical and commercial lives of objects, commodity cycles are neither clearcut nor static. The distinction between physical and commercial life is equally pertinent to clarifying the movement of commodified food into waste and back again. The amount of edible food found in dumpsters is clear proof that more than its physical attributes determines the 'food-ness' of food. Rather,

commercial pressures and profit motives, as well as an undervaluing of food, conspire to allow for food to be thrown away. It is when these pressures combine to determine a commercial life for food separate from its physical life that purchasing power as proof of quality becomes pertinent, that meaning is commodified, and subsequently meaning becomes disposable. Therefore, while the dumpster has come to mean the place of the inedible, of what Douglas (2002a) calls the impure, the placement of food in the dumpster also moves it out of the category of foodstuff because it can no longer be sold and thus confirmed as edible.

It is in this moment that the valuing of exchange is clearest; the inability to obtain cash exchange for the foodstuff is the reason that the value of edibility is disposed. However, moving this waste back into the category of food through reclamation and the subsequent free serving of the meal disputes defining quality through price. When considering wasted food, it is clear that multiple pressures and considerations come to a process whereby good food is thrown away. But it is the ending of food in the category of waste that becomes a potential opportunity to restructure the way food and waste systems are understood.

It is the root of edibility in saleability that serves as one of these breaks. While commodification is partially based on value being inscribed through the price that can be exchanged for the commodity, inherent in this is the end found in disposability. Commodification requires that meaning be emptied through disposal, but the failure of this disposal of meaning becomes clear when edibility and the importance of feeding hungry people is foregrounded against profit motives. Yet, as is clear from the amount of work being done in re-conceptualizing human relationships to waste, the disposability that capitalism requires is not reflected in the everyday life of either humans or their waste.

This chapter's work has been to clarify how food and waste are connected as food/waste

and set the grounding for the rest of this dissertation. Food/waste defines not only an edible ingredient, but also a new social relation and gifting exchange that is necessary for the ongoing political work of dumpster divers. The next chapter will outline the history of food production, food activism, and food regulation that has produced our contemporary experience of dumpster diving activism. It will flesh out the longer economic shifts that have led to an era of disposable food and the various interventions that have been attempted over the last few hundred years to counteract these changes.

Chapter 2: Freeganism & Food Not Bombs: History, Distinctions, and Spaces

When you're angry with someone,
Fernando insists,
never call him garbage.

Anger is nothing to garbage:
garbage eats anger for breakfast.
It eats all of us in the end.

And we'll be lucky
if anyone remembers us
as the earth
remembers our garbage.
(“Uncle Fernando's Garbage Triptych”, Priscila Uppal, 2007)

Garbage lives on after us even as it proliferates throughout our daily lives (Rathje & Cullen, 1992). Despite the desire to avoid dealing with it, evident in the methods by which our waste is sanitized, hidden, and avoided (Douglas, 2002a; Hawkins, 2006), it remains a part of daily life and urban spaces (Melosi, 2005). The memory of the earth recognizes the final resting places of our landfills and plastic islands, as our dumpsters work to ensure that we do not have to remember the waste produced by our daily lives. For dumpster divers, this ignorance is turned on its head and the steel walls and alley locations are not to be avoided, but to be explored for food and goods. While the Oxford English Dictionary cites the first occurrence of the term dumpster diving in a *Life* article from 1983, the process of taking food from the trash and the political history of the modern dumpster diving activist goes back much further. This history also highlights the significance of the politics within dumpster diving where it is not only about the practice, but is also connected to a radical history seeking to protect the commons (Donahue,

1999; Boal, *et al.*, 2012), fight for food security (Stuart, 2009; 2011), and the struggle for economic equality by the multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004).

Dumpster diving is, broadly, the process of retrieving food or goods that have already been relegated to a dumpster (industrial garbage bins).¹⁹ The dumpster offers easy containment for the diver, and subsequently the use of other people's waste for one's own needs proliferates in urban spaces. The commonplace means by which goods are recycled from curbs, alleyways, and public spaces are evident in many city streets where goods can be moved into an informal economy of exchange and collection. Despite the common nature of the informal economy of waste (Ferrell, 2006), the distinctions between curb diving (picking up household waste goods from the curb where they are left for pick up) and dumpster diving are significant.²⁰ Shared amongst all of these ways of utilizing waste is an ethic that is interested in ensuring that usable goods are not wasted and can be redirected from landfill streams into homes that need them (McHenry, 2012).

Thus the dumpster diving ethic is one that shares a concern with environmentalists and waste activists who seek to redefine value to consider usability in a practical, material sense that is often not accounted for in traditional consumer culture. Graeber (2001) considers how the

19. Shortened from Dempster-Dumpster, this style of waste repository revolutionized garbage retrieval in North America during the 1930s. More specifically: "...refuse packer trucks were first beginning to gain favor by the late 1930's, but refuse storage methods left much to be desired. Particularly troublesome were businesses and apartments, which generated large concentrations of waste in densely populated areas. This was further exacerbated by a trend toward disposable packaging used with all manner of consumer products, which greatly increased the volume of refuse. Rows of overflowing trashcans were not an uncommon eyesore, a blight on many otherwise modern cities. Another method was the refuse vault, which had to be shoveled out by the collectors, was not only unsanitary but a tedious waste of manpower." (Voytko, 2006). 80 years later, the use of hinged, enclosed containers for large-scale garbage needs has become commonplace and the term dumpster has long since been disconnected from its history.

20. Harris & Fruchter (2007) detail the response of guests to their curb finds. They note that while some find it distasteful to pick up goods from the street, in general disgust is saved for more intimate objects, such as food recovered from the waste stream.

three general theoretical understandings of value – sociological, economic, and linguistic – obscure the experience of value central to anthropological undertakings. Value here, and by divers, is understood as a complex intersection of qualities that move across disciplinary understandings. The value the diver seeks is one that moves beyond the strictly economic or status generally allowed for by consumer culture. This shift moves away from these restrictions to redefine use value. Value is disconnected from price or exchange and provides an opportunity to refute the intentions of consumer culture to ignore the ongoing and much-touted waste crisis that requires a drastic and definitive change to reduce how much is sent to landfills.

Calls for attention to be paid to increasing waste crisis have been going on for decades. As a precursor to today's interest in waste reduction, the rise of recycling in the 1980s (Melosi, 2005) resulted from concerns that landfills could no longer hold the amount of waste that people were producing. Today, diversion practices through recycling, reduction, and composting are becoming a common part of urban waste management policies. Concerns around landfill use and resulting marketing of reuse as a key component of waste reduction are related to the use of second-hand goods (Gregson & Crewe, 2003), but within the dumpster diving community, the intention is to directly counter disposable culture by reusing and refuting the production-consumption-discard stream.

This chapter will explore the meaning of dumpster diving in contemporary activism through Freeganism and Food Not Bombs. Understanding this activism requires a review of the recent history of the groups themselves and will then detail a genealogy of the dumpster rooted in 18th century enclosure and the impact these legal changes had on gleaning practices. The enclosure movement increasingly insisted on private control over land and property and eradicated social relations that bound people across class distinctions. The work of contemporary

political dumpster divers is drawing on the gift economy outlined in the last chapter to produce a grassroots society of mutual aid that counters state control and also serves as a model for future social organization.

Contemporary Dumpster Diving

Dumpster diving, in this research project and for many who use the term, refers most specifically to diving for food from grocery store or fruit and vegetable market dumpsters. To many non-divers, this action is only ever undertaken by the most destitute, an understanding that draws on many cultural assumptions about the nature of garbage and what it means to be a person involved with it. While admonitions around eating from the garbage are common, those who eat waste due to extreme destitution exist, in this understanding, as flawed consumers. As Bauman (2004) notes:

In a society of consumers, they are 'flawed consumers' - people lacking the money that would allow them to stretch the capacity of the consumer market, while they create another kind of demand to which the profit-oriented industry cannot respond and which it cannot profitably 'colonize'. Consumers are the prime assets of consumer society; flawed consumers its most irksome and costly liabilities. (39)

To be a flawed consumer is to exist in conjunction, or rather dis-conjunction, with consumer culture and its expected subject positions and, thus, those who eat garbage are literally ingesting their failed role (Probyn, 2000). Flawed consumers, like waste, are categorized as problems. However, for the dumpster diver, this process does not necessarily mean a dive into poverty, or signal their existence as flawed consumer. It can also open up a series of understandings of the political nature of the dumpster dive. For the political diver, the rampant amount of waste is more horrifying than the act of entering a dumpster in the first place (Clark, 2000; 2004). As a refutation of corporate power and roles of flawed consumers, political

dumpster divers instead become anti-consumers. The experience of the political dumpster diver as anti-consumer is more directly addressed in Chapter 4, but cannot be fully explored without considering the history of disposability and the historical context of Freeganism and Food Not Bombs.

The rise of disposability and the frequent experience of retrieving edible food and usable goods, particularly from retail dumpsters, becomes a political stand against capitalism, corporate irresponsibility, and unethical production and consumption (Ferrell, 2006). While dumpster diving is an umbrella term, divers have a wide variety of politics, reasons, and intentions that can not be understood as uniform through their shared action. Further, the challenge of determining the complicated ways that people around the world work and live with garbage would be impossible. Globally and historically, the figure of the dumpster diver is prefigured by gleaners (Varda, 2000), collectors (Benjamin, 1999; Hetherington, 2007), and ragpickers (Benjamin, 1999; Strasser, 2000).²¹ However, here I am developing an understanding of dumpster diving in a way that is specific to the Western world.²² The history of that context includes punk movements (Hebdige, 2002; O'Hara, 1999), communal living (Miller, 2012), and squatting cultures (Webster, 1993) that had people organizing to support themselves with limited employment and against capitalist norms and influenced by anarchist versions of mutual aid (Kropotkin, 1989).

Despite these historical routes, the disgust and abjection of dumpster diving is understood very differently by experienced divers and those who are first learning about the activity. For

21. Hetherington (2007) specifically notes that in Benjamin's work the spaces of the collector were significant. Specifically, the underground spaces of disposal (sewers, tombs, and museums) are "...spaces that were perceived as ones of abject horror and cultural dread not simply because they were associated with pollution, diseases, and decay, but also because of their synecdochical association with a loss of control and uncertainty associated with the world of the capitalist marketplace." (161)

22. By this I am referring primarily to North America, Western Europe, and Australia where research and public outreach around political dumpster diving have been conducted.

Kristeva (1982) the abject and the source of disgust draw us towards collapsed meaning and threaten our desire for meaning. In this moment, our sense of self is degraded and we must find a way to reason our way back to a symbolic order. In Bataille's (1989) general economy, discussed in more detail below, disgust is incorporated within the intersections of other aspects of the general economy (Plotnitsky, 1995). Disgust is related directly to vicariousness where the relationship to vomit is used to understand the desire to contain, both symbolically and physically, excessive (Derrida & Klein, 1981). For the dumpster diver, however, this experience is refuted through a ritual of cleansing and translation. Recounting Douglas' (2002a) focus on the significance of ritual in making categories of pure and impure, divers do not understand dumpstered food as a sole category of disgust. Instead, and as will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4, the divers I worked with have complex means of re-inscribing meaning into the food they recover. Washing rituals and translation results in a social and symbolic category of the dumpster being that of plenty, not abjection.

This shared approach to re-categorizing the dumpster and food it contains is reflected in the use of communal approaches to living and the reuse of discarded commodities common across communal living, punk, and squatting movements. These are directly related to a longer standing history of acting against ongoing enclosure and neoliberalism and will be developed throughout this chapter. As Miller (2012) notes, the rise of communes in California in the 1960s were not an aberration and were, in fact, directly connected to previous political and communal movements, including famed activist Gerrard Winstanley's Diggers (11). Ongoing responses to the foreclosing on personal and communal freedoms have led, specifically in North America, to a desire by the counter culture that Roszak (1969) drew on and influenced in the late 1960s. While Hall, *et al.* (1990) were studying youth subcultures in the UK, the counterculture of the United

States was bringing together educated middle class youth to engage with struggles against the State that reflected their desire, and ability, to create separate communities.²³

This history helps ground general political intentions, but it also highlights the importance of the act of dumpster diving itself. While the use of waste streams to support oneself can be understood through various roles throughout history, these roles are also materially specific and bound by local spaces, regulations, and histories. The intersection of the privatized collection of so much North American supermarket waste, legal histories of private control over property, and the fractures between the two create the circumstances within which dumpster diving can rise as a more common activity. The fractures of the capitalist system (Hardt & Negri, 2004; 2009) allow for structural and material breaks within which it becomes possible to survive without money exchange, but through siphoning off the inevitable excess.²⁴ Where Bataille's (1989) general economy sees excess as necessarily destroyed, dumpster divers greet this with refusal. Bataille is focused on historical examples of destruction as means of dealing with excess, food/waste refutes this process and instead continues to exist in a liminal space. Stoekl (2007) takes up Bataille's work and reconsiders it in the context of the energy crisis that changed the way energy and religion can be considered in the Western world in the 1970s. The question becomes one of reconsidering not only the meaning of energy, but also the theology within which a more contemporary understanding of energy expenditure can be understood. More specifically, Stoekl notes:

Against this energetico-theological model is arrayed an ecoreligion, one that would defy the 'comfortable' or 'free' (and nonnegotiable) lifestyle of consumerist humanism, not

23. The desire, however, to create a separate community was not simplistically achieved. As Hebdige (2002) and McRobbie & Garber (1993) argue about youth subcultures, they are inextricably linked with their parent cultures.

24. There are sustainability models, such as cradle-to-grave design, that seek to eradicate excess through design. In this case, excess would be eliminated and obscure this fracture in capitalist organization.

through a recognition of the literal truth of the divine Word but through a religiously inspired cult of austerity, simplicity, and personal virtue. Such a cult refuses certain basic human urges to consume or destroy, and in the process involves the affirmation of yet another humanism (the self as virtuous in its austerity) and, after consumer profligacy, yet another model of nature as a standing reserve to be protected largely for its value to Man. (2007, xv)

Here it becomes clear that questions of Bataille's work lead us to question the connections between human (consumer) lifestyles and environmental concerns. Limited resources are a natural fact that, Stoekl notes, are also constructed as human creations where human ingenuity is increasingly shown as a way to avoid the limitations of energy available that changed the global economy of fossil fuels beginning in the 1970s. Whereas Bataille had imagined a future of extravagant gifting and opulence for all, the reality of limited resources and a need for ecological sustainable lifestyles are becoming more and more evident (*ibid*, 117). Thus, dumpster divers enter the sacrificial fire and take back the excess to be absorbed through use and ingestion.

This theoretical history is also connected with specific social relations through mutual aid and charity structures that serve as another layer of background for political dumpster divers.

Chapman & Seeliger (2001) note that:

...many communities, though by no means all, adopted a fairly generous attitude towards the landless and allowed them to exercise some rights which, in strict legal terms, they did not possess. When the moment for enclosure came, this could become a major cause of dispute. The desire to exclude outsiders who were misusing rights or squatting on the common was often the trigger which set enclosure in motion but, if the rules were imposed sufficiently rigidly to exclude them, there was a great danger that genuine local users might lose their entitlement. (15)

This long history of battling between rights to access and private control echoes to contemporary experiences and a disconnection between rights (defined through a protected social and legal relationship) and charity (offered through institutional structures). In Toronto, institutional non-

profit and charity groups working towards food security are numerous. Within the realm of food/waste and gleaning, Not Far From the Tree and Second Harvest are popular local organizations. However, their ongoing connections to existing charity structures – food banks, shelters, and so on – distinguish them from the work of political dumpster divers. For political dumpster divers, mutual aid refutes institutional or state control over support and draws upon communal sharing as a way of providing for everyone by taking control over distribution of reclaimed food.

The influence of these material, theoretical, and political histories have shaped the nature of dumpster diving and over the past few decades, two movements have emerged that use the action of dumpster diving to somewhat different ends. Freeganism is a primarily individual approach to anti-consumerism that involves seeking as much as possible to support oneself without engaging with capitalist exchange. Food Not Bombs is a global network of volunteer groups that gather food – often through dumpster diving – that would otherwise be wasted and publically serving free vegan or vegetarian meals.

Freeganism and Food Not Bombs share histories of influence and politics (K. McHenry, personal communication, February 14, 2011; Edwards & Mercer, 2007) that continue to connect them despite the often times disparate intentions and outcomes of their actions. While it is acknowledged that these movements also draw heavily on discarded objects, the special case of the use of wasted food highlights the specific political purposes of these dumpster divers. In these movements, edible food being thrown away is something to be directly combatted by pulling that food back from the brink and using it for meals. The rise in these activities and more specifically the growing attention paid to the Freegan community of NYC (Barnard, 2009) has changed the way dumpster diving and waste reclamation are being understood.

With the rise in mainstream attention and growing number of vocal supporters has also seen an increase in the academic attention paid to the action of those involved in what Ferrell (2006) calls the empire of scrounge. The spaces within which waste products travel are where empire of scrounge scavengers are able to work within an informal economy to support themselves. Other scholars have turned their focus to the specifics of food waste systems and have turned to look more directly at food dumpster diving communities (Edwards & Mercer, 2007; Barnard, 2009; Heynen, 2010), whereas I focus on the broader implications of the action by building on an ethnographic study to consider the socio-legal structures and histories that structure the way food/waste activists are re-understanding food systems.

Freeganism and Food Not Bombs are bound by the act of food waste reclamation that serves to ground the various politics and practices that stem from it. Bourdieu (1990) defines lifestyle as being rooted in a combination of objective class identities, fields, and social capital and subjective social relations. However, in the case of dumpster diving, the role of background and socio-economic status are complicated as political dumpster divers are drawn from diverse backgrounds. Lifestyle anarchism is also critiqued as a way of not engaging in the broader political intentions of anarchist organizing (Bookchin, 1995).

In this context, dumpster diving is not quite lifestyle, but rather changes the way the Freegan or the Food Not Bomb member can be in the world. It embodies an anti-consumption that addresses, albeit on a small-scale level, broader concerns with capitalist economic cultures. While dumpster diving is in the political realm of this action, dumpster divers invariably extend their political engagement into other aspects of anti-consumerism and dumpster diving is also seen as a background activity to other, more public, anti-capitalist work (Graeber, 2009; Gautney, 2010). This is especially clear when considering the wide-ranging practices that

Freegan websites, such as freegan.info, present as a part of intersecting practices that are organized not through their relationship to food/waste, but rather through their relationship to capitalist culture experienced through the re-use of waste.

Food Not Bombs utilizes food/waste as a way of calling for social justice through self-organized refutations against mismanaged government spending. The anti-consumerism expressed in this political framing of dumpster diving merges protest with direct action to make food/waste and human suffering visible enough to be, briefly, critiqued through encounter. The specificity of these protests and actions draw upon a much longer history of social (re)organization and cultural experiences that have allowed for a contemporary collapsing of food/waste and human needs into dumpster diving practices.

Waste Management & the Pure Food Movement

With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, the site of struggle over food and wealth increasingly shifted from rural to urban areas (Briggs, 1968). As more and more disenfranchised peasants moved to the city for employment opportunities, the cities themselves became spaces of pollution and environmental danger to residents (Melosi, 2005). Barely livable buildings lacked access to water and large-scale waste management that would provide hygienic spaces for tenants (Riis, 1890; Kaika, 2005). Soja (2000) has made clear that the links between urban and rural food development exist from the earliest city settlements, the Third Urban Revolution (Industrialization) had such an intense influx of migration that urban spaces could no longer depend upon previous waste management systems. As urban spaces prohibited the keeping of farm animals, rural means of absorbing organic refuse, generally through goats and pigs, was eliminated and an immediate solution was delayed (Westendorf, 2000). Women's Leagues began

organizing for a change in waste management systems that would provide residents of tenements living spaces free of refuse.

The Industrial Revolution also saw changes in food production where the rise of food adulteration spawned a corresponding Pure Food, Drink, and Drug movement from Women's Leagues concerned with the impact on the health of their families (Goodwin, 1999). As more information regarding adulteration and slaughtering practices became known, concerns over how to address these were introduced through grassroots movements and changes to legislation (Sinclair, 1906). In Canada, reform movements were modeled on British and American examples, although with underlying presumptions that Canada remained purer than their counterparts (Valverde, 2008).

The relationship between urban waste and pure food highlights the shift in household management that led to a need for shared waste management and food regulations. Strasser (2000) documents a social history of trash that details the complex movement of goods that characterized waste culture prior to the rise of mass production. Instead, goods were rarely thrown away and instead an economy of reuse and preservation was predominant (112). Most importantly, her work makes clear that disposable society is a recent invention and previously the economy of waste that had rag sellers and donations as key ways of redistributing objects allowed for goods to be moved around, reflective of their value in a society that did not have the access to cheap consumer goods that dominated North America after World War II.

The rise of populations, mass production, and urbanization are also key moments in the history of waste management and, as an extension, the way we can think about waste in everyday lives. The management of human waste (Laporte, 2000; Melosi, 2005; Hawkins, 2004, 2006), wasted lives (Bauman, 2004), industrial waste (Nasmith, 2007; Thomson, 2009) and household

waste (Strasser, 2000) is a history of solutions to material problems that have also lead directly to the current situation of food and waste regulations. While the early work of Women's Leagues in introducing urban waste management and food regulations was responding to a crisis of hygiene, contemporary needs have changed. Industrial farming has increased the rate of food contagion, overall the regulations of the Pure Food movement ensure that our food system can be trusted and that our waste will not, under normal circumstances, gather on our doorsteps or within our local areas. Yet, our waste seeks to overpower us as conspicuous consumption and easy access to goods overwhelm us with our need to dispose and the increasing use of packaging and objects made of non-biodegradable materials threatens us with mountains of discarded objects that refuse to disappear. The waste crisis has shifted the movement of waste in Toronto as the rise of diversion methods responded in the mid-1990s to the imminent loss of landfill space for the city.

The garbage that Melosi (2005) tells us about is that which was not hidden from view, and his history is one of North American cities before the concept of mass pick up and external disposal was invented as a solution to the city cesspool. As a part of the service revolution (Melosi, 2005, 9), garbage pickup became a way of sanitizing city spaces and addressing the significant public health problems resulting from industrialized cities. However, he is clear to note that:

What distinguished the American experience with sanitation problems from the European experience during comparable period of growth were factors of space and magnitude. In the American colonies, the abundance of land and natural resources such as water supplies mitigated massive sanitation problems even in cities and towns. (*ibid*, 10)

Further, as no city in North America swelled the way London did, the scale of well known challenges faced by the UK were not experienced on the other side of the ocean.²⁵ However,

25. Charles Dickens' social commentary documenting the experience of workers in Industrializing London is popular example of this time period.

despite this, and as is clear from *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis, 1890), the lives of North American city dwellers, particularly the poor, drew the attention of social activists, city representatives and advocates who developed mass pickup and disposal systems.

It was simply impossible to expect any individual to deal with all of their own waste and, instead, “[cities] could either contract the service by taking bids from private scavenging companies or establish a municipal service” (Melosi, 2005, 23). While originally the contract system was privileged, this preference has shifted and we now have cities that either have city owned services, private services, or, in the case of Toronto, a newly emerged mixed system. Regardless of the model of pick up, the introduction of waste management ensured that it would be privatized in the same way that food had been first by the enclosure movement and then with the rise of industrial production. This privatization is clearest in examples such as Thomson’s (2009) study of the circulation of trash where, within US legal structures, the transport of trash is unrestricted by Congress because it is treated as commerce (26). Thus, in the same way Congress cannot interfere with the transfer of commerce, trash can be transported across state lines. The significance of aligning trash movement with the movement of commerce has two levels. First, it reminds us of the business of waste – in 2008 Canadian expenditure on waste management reached \$2.6 billion (Statistics Canada, 2008). Second, the conflation of circulation, a point that will come up repeatedly in this dissertation, harkens to the networks of movement required by global capitalism and reflected in the movement of goods, money, people and, of course, waste.

Food and waste have been moved into the purview of capitalist and private interests in ways that conspire to ensure edible food is thrown away. The system of easy discard of edible food, whether in the field, at a distribution centre, or in the supermarket is in line with the ‘financialisation’ that Burch & Lawrence (2009) identify as a feature of our current food regime.

In response to the history of regulatory changes and activists working both within and without the state system, current political dumpster divers are responding to rampant food/waste as a means of not only subsisting, but also producing models for how food and waste circulation could function differently.

Introducing Freeganism

Different countries exist within separate, though interconnected, socio-legal frameworks for food/waste activism and dumpster diving activities. Within North America, despite the use of the metaphor of gleaning by a number of scholars, activists, and organizations, we have differential experiences of waste and food activism. In this context it is worthwhile clarifying the interrelated, but nevertheless distinct histories of the two food/waste activist groups I am studying: Freeganism and Food Not Bombs. Freeganism is a term defining a broad based anti-capitalist identity that encompasses numerous means of avoiding complicity and involvement in consumer society. The dumpster diver politics of withdrawal and refusal are supported by tactics of survival often based on their waste consumption (de Certeau, 1984). Freeganism is rooted in a specific activist, anti-globalization, political punk/DIY history and was first identified as a movement in "Why Freegan?" (koala!, 2000).²⁶ This zine details the variety of activities that can be understood under the umbrella of freeganism, including dumpster diving, reference to Food Not Bombs, table diving,²⁷ shoplifting, asking stores for surplus before discard, wild foraging and gardening, barter, workplace theft, and returns.²⁸

26. Authorship of this zine is disputed, but some point to Warren Oakes, drummer of the band Against Me! (freegan.info, <http://freegan.info/what-is-a-freegan/freegan-philosophy/why-freegan-an-attack-on-consumption-in-defense-of-donuts/>)

27. Sitting in a restaurant, food court, or cafe, and collecting scraps other patrons leave on their plates.

28. Returning packaged goods found in the dumpster to the store. This depends upon stores that offer returns without receipts, an increasingly uncommon policy practice.

These various activities had been informal features of punk lifestyles going back much earlier than 2000, but the zine signals the introduction of a shared umbrella term to encompass the political stance embedded in seemingly disparate aspects of economic refusal. These actions are also situated in a radical ecological stance that connects anti-capitalist behaviour with environmentalism and concern for resource protection and use reduction (Merchant, 2005). Freeganism moves beyond a food ethic and focuses on all manner of consumer behaviour and with dumpster diving for food a key, but not exclusive, feature. However, the role of dumpster diving in the community is one that connects the action to a broader set of political approaches to dumpster diving that are variably focused on radical anti-consumerism.

In 2004, Freegan.info, a group of individuals working together in New York City, formed out of a loosely connected group of local activists who founded the freegan.info website (Barnard, 2009). Freegan.info is the internet presence and online meeting place of the New York freegan group. As a resource, it includes a series of essays on freegan politics, resource lists, and links to other likeminded organizations. It, like foodnotbombs.net, is the most well known and detailed source for information about freegan politics, but can not be understood as speaking for all freegans, and most especially not all political dumpster divers. In fact, as Barnard (2009) notes, many of his participants in freegan.info were initially reluctant to identify with the term (53). As will be developed in more detail in a future chapter, my participants were not at all comfortable with the term freegan and were careful to draw distinctions between FNB work and that of freegans. The strength and publicity of Freegan.info is also linked to local waste management practices. Markets in Manhattan bag up their organic waste for daily pick up every evening. A lack of alleyways also means that these bags are picked up from directly in front of a

given market. The combination of access and visibility shifts the action of divers from invisible spaces and requires a more direct interaction with both storeowners and passersby.

This website included a series of informational pages that help solidify the movement, consider the implications of their actions, and also provide an outreach opportunity for the group. As a result of this media attention and group decision to engage with it, including hosting monthly press friendly trash tours, has contributed to a rise of the profile of Freeganism in mainstream circles. Freeganism moved from a term known only amongst radical activist and vegan circles to being increasingly featured in global mainstream media sources, most certainly as a result of the global media attention New York City's group has received. While mainstream attention has highlighted the rampant amount of waste appearing in New York and differential ideas about consumer identities, it also has the potential, and sometime outcome, of deflating the radical acts of freeganism.²⁹ As an introduction, the website defines freegans as:

...people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources. Freegans embrace community, generosity, social concern, freedom, cooperation, and sharing in opposition to a society based on materialism, moral apathy, competition, conformity, and greed. (What is a freegan?, www.freegan.info)

As an overall ethics for living, Freeganism's anti-capitalism is expressed through opting out and creating an alternative to contemporary consumer capitalism. While built into this opting out is a dependence on the waste of others, the movement is not limited to procurement and instead encompasses a larger scale challenge to the human experiences structured by capitalist relations. The Freegan.info definition also historicizes the radical action of waste reclamation and makes reference to a history of attempting:

29. One of the concerns raised in interviews was that freeganism lacked a broader social critique and refrained from developing beyond vague critiques of capitalism. This, however, is a presumption based on mass media attention as none of my participants had been involved with the freegan.info group directly. In contrast, Barnard's (2009) work noted that all of the participants he worked with in freegan.info were nuanced and political about their dumpster diving and other organizing work.

...to boycott products from unethical corporations responsible for human rights violations, environmental destruction, and animal abuse, many of us found that no matter what we bought we ended up supporting something deplorable. We came to realize that the problem isn't just a few bad corporations but the entire system itself. (*ibid.*)

The opening definitional page of the website is a history of how to move from boycotts and consumer choices, to more complete and extreme opt out options. The frustration within the discussion is that working within the system has been determined to be insufficient to address large-scale economic disparity and structural inequality. While this website cannot necessarily be understood as a definition for a coherent movement, it does provide a solid framework to begin this discussion. The authors of the site have been significant in the rise of attention freeganism has received from mainstream media, not least because of their active use of outreach, including their monthly tours, to spread information about food waste, anti-consumerism and alternatives to capitalist dominated lifestyles. This lifestyle is a challenge rooted in a specific history lacking any shared archive or historical organization. Instead, it can be understood through oral history available to researchers and a part of broader cultural trends that have increasingly focused on food activism challenging problematic food systems. The New York group and the attention it has received has also drawn academic interest as more and more, primarily graduate student projects are conducting research into various dumpster diving communities around the world.

The rise of attention for freegan.info has also inspired global connections being made with the term. Researchers from the United States (Barnard, 2009; Ferrell, 2006; Heynen, 2009), Australia (Edwards & Mercer, 2007; Rush, 2006) and the UK (Stuart, 2009; Partridge, 2011) review and reflect the spread of freeganism, as act and as umbrella term, around the globe. However, this connection is tentative and may be overly utilized to refer to all dumpster diving and divers, regardless of their intentions, politics, or self-identification. It is necessary to therefore be wary that the term freegan does not become a catchall term for alternative ways of

dealing with waste which would risk losing the political potential and edge of the term and the actions it defines.

Freeganism in Australia has been documented by Edwards & Mercer (2007) who note that:

These lifestyle choices go beyond 'sustainable consumption' options, such as green or ethical consumption, to participate in 'anti-consumerist' activities, choosing to reduce their consumption by transforming their housing, transport, work practices and social values, rather than simply purchasing 'environmentally friendly' products. (281)

By connecting freeganism to a lifestyle choice, they are also highlighting the significance of consumer behaviour to defining freegan lives. However, what is missing in this study is a focus on specific socio-legal structures as well as diversity within those who identify as freegans globally. The consistency implied by freegan.info is not one shared by the movement globally and instead is an attempt to solidify what are actually complex, nuanced, and frequently contradictory political stances. The variability in the original "Why Freegan?" can still be seen in individual divers who may or may not be using the term to mean the same thing. The content of this website appears consistent, but this was developed in response more to external questions than an implied consistency amongst freegans. Due to mainstream attention, freeganism has predominantly come to refer to those who choose to subsist, as much as possible, on the waste of others.³⁰

30. However, in radical circles, freeganism has another meaning, one that refers to the word's roots in veganism. Within radical vegan circles, to be freegan is to be a vegan eater (no animal products) unless the animal product is to be thrown away, being offered by someone else or is otherwise not purchased by the freegan. The political intentions of these actions are based on the idea that it is better to consume the animal product than to let its life be wasted through disposal. However, the responses vegans have to these practices are complex and can result in deep disagreements on the intentions of veganism.

Freeganism is also used more extensively in the UK and has been publicly popularized by the work of Tristan Stuart (2009) and *This Is Rubbish*.³¹ Stuart's work as an activist has produced the first look at global systems of food waste. His work started with his own experience as a skip diver and self-professed freegan and has resulted in growing activist work regarding food/waste worldwide. *This is Rubbish* is a blog that details ongoing food/waste activism in the UK, culminating in Feed the 5000, a 2009 event that used reclaimed fruit to serve smoothies in Trafalgar Square. This group now hosts events called "Feasts" that "...set up a popup food waste café to host workshops, games and a programme of creative events followed by evening food waste feasts, from locally sourced surplus".³² These events occur at food festivals and are opening up the audience of food/waste activism to the food advocacy and consumer communities. The engagement between these groups and the state is also a key distinguishing feature from early understandings of freeganism and the New York group. What these two iterations share is a focus on outreach that moves beyond the small audience of a zine to much larger scale information sharing and public education.

Toronto's freegans do not share a community the way groups in New York or the UK appear to. Locally, there are individuals who call themselves freegan and are organized through Facebook and meet up groups. However, the people I worked with at Food Not Bombs did not identify themselves this way and saw strong distinctions between the actions of freeganism and the political work they were doing with FNB. In terms of contextualizing political dumpster diving, the dual importance of the publicity Freeganism has garnered and the infamy of Food Not Bombs resulting from state intervention and persecution has linked these two ways of

31. The directors of this organization are all women, an interesting shift in the predominantly male culture of dumpster diving. While this group has moved beyond a focus on dumpster diving, their roots lie in freegan behaviours. (<http://www.thisisrubbish.org.uk/>)

32. <http://www.thisisrubbish.org.uk/project/feast/>

understanding dumpster diving as irrevocably linked in both the public imaginary and theoretical undertakings.

As is evident in the connection between political punk and "Why Freegan?", in authorship, the use of the traditional punk media, and a DIY ethic, this activity was originally built in communities disinterested in or disconnected from state regulations. However, the significance of growing food/waste and food insecurity has created a situation within which radical ideas are bubbling up into more mainstream discourses. The actions are more widely known, but through a series of intersecting moments of self-publishing, mainstream attention, and activities that will be detailed more extensively in Chapter 5.

There are also links between freeganism and Food Not Bombs that are more than the shared action of dumpster diving. Keith McHenry, co-founder of FNB, claims to be the creator of the term Freeganism (personal communication, February 14, 2011). As he tells the story, the term Freegan stemmed from a dive he went on with Edmonton's FNB community in the early 1990s. Upon finding a large wheel of expensive cheese, Keith suggested that in light of such a pricy find they "forget vegan, let's be freegan." As a creation myth it pulls up much of the dilemma to be found when considering the Freegan movement as connected to, but fragmented from the FNB movement. Freeganism allows for easy sound bites, but it may in fact be the editing of FNB into sound bites that has obscured the worldwide movement and inferred, through publicity, that the strength of Freeganism is greater than it is. Further, McHenry has noted the frustration many activists have had communicating the complexity of Food Not Bombs to mainstream media journalists. The focus of freeganism on more specific, individualized actions by mainstream media may in fact be directly linked to the limitations of the kinds of stories mainstream media sources can tell.

Food Not Bombs

Food Not Bombs is a global network that uses a volunteer, consensus-based model for addressing hunger and wasted food while connecting these social issues to broader anti-capitalist, environmentalist, and anti-oppression activist frameworks.³³ Most simply, FNB groups come together, gather, cook, and serve vegetarian or vegan food, without restriction (through required payment or personal information), in public areas. Over the history of the movement, the connection between capitalist excess, neoliberal policy decisions and subsequent increases in global food insecurity and poverty is central to the critique FNB is making. It is not enough to consider any of these concerns independently but, rather, FNB seeks to assess the broader social circumstances that interplay between food/waste and hunger. At this point, FNB is a global movement with a history of a DIY ethic resting in the hands of volunteers.

Co-founder Keith McHenry's continued involvement with FNB until the present day has provided a consistency in accessing information following the growth of FNB over the last 30 plus years. During this time, he has written two books (with Butler, 2000; 2012) and continues to maintain foodnotbombs.net, all of which detail the evolution of FNB. As a movement without an archive, McHenry has become the keeper of knowledge of FNB, but this role also places limits on the information available. Tracing back other histories of FNB (Heynen, 2010; Edmonson, 2001; Parson, 2010), they all come back to McHenry and his understanding of the movement.³⁴ As a key informant, his knowledge has been published and has also become a part of the oral history of the group (Rieger, 2007). McHenry emerged as an unexpected key informant when he travelled through Ontario on a speaking tour and I became involved in setting up an event for

33. Both Gautney (2010) and Parson (2010) cite Food Not Bombs as a prime example of successful anarchist organizing work.

34. McHenry co-authored his earlier histories with fellow co-founder C.T. Butler. While he recently emerged at Occupy events, Butler's involvement in FNB waned for a number of years.

him at York University.³⁵ During his time in Toronto I was able to spend a couple of days with him socially and informally as well as conducting a more formal recorded interview. His knowledge, memory, and ongoing involvement proved instrumental in providing a materialized perspective of FNB history.

However, as much as this history is a part of the experience and work of FNB activists, the orality and informality of the history reflects the flexibility and changeability of the model.³⁶ This also raises particular methodological concerns when looking at Toronto's Food Not Bombs group that, while deeply influenced by its connection to the global FNB movement, has its own unique history. However, without a narrator, this history has become a combination of urban legends, oral tales, and half remembered histories.³⁷

The story of FNB is one of innovation, accident and happenstance stemming from 1980 protests against the then proposed Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant in New Hampshire. Massive protests were mobilized to stop the building of the plant and the seven founding members of Food Not Bombs met during these actions. The name Food Not Bombs emerged from the frustration with government military spending that coincided with increasing numbers of people going hungry and homeless on the streets of America. At the same time that this was happening, McHenry was a produce worker at a local supermarket and was seeing, first hand, the amount of

35. McHenry has been a public speaker and author since the early 1990s and has travelled the world speaking about the FNB project.

36. One communication studies approach, rooted in Innis (2007) and McLuhan (1995) would explore how the oral nature of the history of FNB impacts its social structure. However, this dissertation is more interested in the symbolic understanding of food servings rather than a detailed analysis of the nature of their oral storytelling. Further analysis of internal communications is undertaken in chapter 5 which looks at the self-production of texts within dumpster diving communities.

37. Amongst FNB Toronto members, discussions of past iterations occasionally come up. Generally coming down to no more than gossip, members of the group are particularly proud to have a flag that was passed on from a previous Toronto chapter.

food being thrown away on a daily basis. The connection between government decisions, rising visible poverty, and food/waste crystalized.

As a form of direct action, the evident need for food by many residents and the amount of excess food available came together in what has become over 30 years of anti-capitalist, anti-globalization, and anti-military organizing. The anarchist ideologies of mutual aid and direct action against hunger within the political response to nuclear spending provided an activist framework that continues to exist and evolve in contemporary cities around the world. The FNB model is one that takes advantage of food/waste (or food that would be wasted without FNB intervention) to feed the hungry.³⁸ Each incarnation of FNB is slightly different and local design is kept under the autonomous control of local activists. The strength of this model is one that is rooted in local understandings of how the base model can function with the flexibility required by specific circumstances.

The use of waste food and what is designated as waste food shifts from one FNB chapter to another. Increasingly over the development of FNB work, chapters engaged with dumpster diving and gathering edible food from food market dumpsters. This food is then cleaned and prepared for public servings. However, originally, and still for many chapters, the food used is donated by local grocers, supermarkets, restaurants, and so on before it is thrown away.³⁹ Here, the meaning of waste food is obviously different and subsequently the meaning of FNB changes. For groups using direct donations, the movement of food from edible space to the inedible space of the dumpster is circumvented and instead food is recirculated directly from the sales floor

38. In practice, FNB servings feed everyone and lack of food is not a requirement to receive a portion.

Rather, as Heynen (2010) notes, the FNB model enacts a right to food inherently open to everyone.

39. Keith McHenry's 2012 history and guide to FNB clearly outlines the FNB stance on not using dumpstered food. Rather, he has always advocated forming relationships with local grocers and retailers to garner donations. It raises a dilemma, however, to claim an FNB stance as all chapters are free to make decisions based on consensus amongst themselves.

(Coyne, 2009). Regardless of food gathering practices, central to the work that FNB groups do is that they are volunteer run, based on an ethic of mutual aid, offer food without restriction and frequently use this activism to support other related anti-poverty, anti-capitalist, and anti-oppressive projects (Heynen, 2010).

These seemingly innocuous groups have increasingly come under attack from local police officials in various cities. The most well known historical case is that of San Francisco where, over the course of seven years (1988 – 1995) FNB activists were under constant attack by local police and city officials (Parson, 2010). The ongoing battle garnered much attention and ultimately resulted in Amnesty International speaking out against ongoing arrests and persecution of FNB activists (*ibid*, 3). While in its early years, FNB work was celebrated,⁴⁰ the last thirty years of organizing has seen increased regulation, persecution, and police attention to local activists. In North America, police violence, arrests, and shut downs are common, but in other countries, the results have even more dire consequences.⁴¹ While changes in American law since September 11, 2001 have increasingly cracked down on activist work, these actions do not only emerge in the 21st century.

Persecution of FNB work has spread across the United States with more and more cities attempting to put punitive laws on the books that would prevent the sharing of food by

40. Examples of public recognition still exist, such as the awarding of the Danish Peace Prize to Copenhagen FNB (McHenry, 2012, 107).

41. FNB Philippines have utilized FNB models, mutual aid, and autonomous organizing to support themselves. Using Youtube, they have shared their story and their activism in "Workers of the World Relax - Projects of an Autonomous Filipino Collective." (<http://youtu.be/VfIRKD4VCLM>). One activist notes that the posting of a video is not unique as these FNB groups explicitly organize through technology to overcome the geographic challenges of living in an archipelagic country. During interviews, activists wear masks for their own protection as 900 activists have been murdered or abducted since 2001.

volunteers.⁴² Under the guise of protection and safety, these laws serve to punish the poor and control grassroots groups from organizing to support themselves and their communities. As the intention of mutual aid groups such as FNB is to address failures in state and charity systems by legally suppressing the ability of volunteers to share food with hungry people, the state again removes sustenance from poor people. The continued work of FNB, with new chapters cropping up on a regular basis, speaks to the need for work such as this. Hunger has not eased and waste has not been reduced. The continued prevalence of the FNB model has it appearing as key to a number of related movements. As the example of FNB organizing after Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy show, grassroots work continues to be necessary to gather food and materials where and when institutional structures are unable (South End Press Collective, 2007; Crow, 2011; Long Island Food Not Bombs, Fall 2012).

These examples are emblematic of the strength of grassroots organizing and serve as examples within anarchist communities of how self-organization and consensus can, under specific circumstances, take over where state governments fail. Yet, the grassroots nature of the organization has not produced mass change despite ongoing struggles against globalization, capitalism, poverty, and oppression.⁴³ Their continued rise in popularity and familiarity may speak to the growing need to look to anarchist organizing to correct the impact of governmental and corporate policies resulting in increased inequality at the expense of the many for the benefit of the very few. FNB's use of food/waste lends a specific political edge to the dumpster diving

42. Attempts to foreclose on FNB actions in Canada have occurred, but with far less frequency. Most recently, FNB Kitchener-Waterloo came under attack by the owner of local David's Gourmet who filed a complaint with the local City Hall in 2008. A boycott of David's Gourmet followed the complaint. The difference between this and the extensive attacks on FNB groups across the United States is striking and likely related to the distinct socio-legal contexts of the two countries.

43. While wide ranging structural change has not occurred in a broad way, the impact of FNB organizing cannot be denied. As a part of the rise of more anarchist and anti-authoritarian activism demonstrates, success can be found in social shifts (Carlsson, 2008) and collective action such as Occupy being able to bring challenges to dominant structures into more mainstream view.

that many groups engage in. They are sending a message for social justice and against mismanaged government spending. The actions of reclaiming and redistributing waste is central to this message and the significance of sharing what is reclaimed also sets them apart from the more diverse and variable work of Freegans.

The distinction between Freegans and FNB chapters are not the only differences to be found within political dumpster diving communities. These groups are at once global and local and a turn to the local specificity of each group requires a materially specific socio-legal history of the regulatory and state structures that these anti-statists are working against. In order to understand how these groups came to be, both legally and culturally, a return to the roots of food/waste is necessary. The contemporary experience of the diver can be explored through a genealogy of the dumpster and the alley rooted in the removal of the commons (Foucault, 1980).

Removal of the Commons

This chapter thus far has detailed the recent history of dumpster diving, Freeganism, and Food Not Bombs. For the North American dumpster diver, where Food Not Bombs started (McHenry, 2012; Parson, 2010) and is arguably strongest, the history of the removal of the commons – both socially and geographically – effectively plays out the contemporary experience of waste activism. This activist history was directly taken up by the 1960s, San Francisco-based activist group that took the Digger title (Doyle, 2012). While this predates the creation of Food Not Bombs, McHenry traces his understanding of the activism of FNB through the actions of this group (2012, 18).⁴⁴ The recalling of the original Diggers work against enclosure was reworked against the industrialization and increasing environmental degradation of farming ecologies. The

44. Thus, the roots in the enclosure movement become meaningful for FNBers, divers, and researchers. One of the key challenges that the reclamation of food/waste is making is against the privatization of food, an act that has its historical beginnings in the social and legal changes that resulted from the enclosure movement.

history of 20th century activist practices reflects the tension that began during enclosure between owners and peasants. Mutual aid as a means of refuting or correcting state power has roots in the rise of state intervention into the social relations between economic and social classes that are rooted in this period of history.

By the 20th century, open access to land for everyone had already been eradicated by the enclosure movement (Neeson, 1993). The consolidation of ownership was then increased by the introduction of more intensive industrial agriculture in the mid 20th century steadily eroding small-scale community farming (Shiva, 1992). Shared across the centuries that separate the movements is a focus on protecting communal rights to food and addressing the specific legislative and systemic challenges in each time to equitable access to food production and distribution. The roots of dumpster diving politically in this history is balanced out by looking to the history of the commons and gleaning as a way of understanding a long historical and cultural background to food/waste. The patterns of changes that occurred during the enclosure movement are also reflected in current restructuring where the consolidation of property into fewer hands is at least partially achieved through the penalizing of the poor. In this sense, rooting this history in the enclosure movement explores the dumpster and collective food serving through the socio-legal experience of political dumpster divers (Foucault, 1980).

Neeson (1993) details the shift in social relations that resulted from the enclosing of ‘communing economies’ in England between 1700 and 1840. Enclosure restructured these communing economies by redefining shared spaces and the introduction of private ownership over previously shared land, changing field shapes, and tilling previously unused lands for agricultural uses (Chapman & Seeliger, 2001, 15). The removal of the commons as a result of the

enclosure movement signaled a sea change in public space and common rights, particularly when it came to food politics.

Mingay (1968) notes that the agrarian changes of the enclosure movement led to a drastic decline in small farmers, defined both as owner-occupiers and tenant-farmers. While land management and ownership patterns were shifting (Mingay, 1997), an indelible mark was made on the social relation of food production and accessibility, one that was also increasingly marked by private ownership (Cheyney, 1971). Chapman & Seeliger (2001) note the importance of understanding that the early, open geography of rural England prior to enclosure was not necessarily a coherent ownership system. Rather, lands without fences could be owned and enclosed at any moment, but the Commons were both in geography and legality open to everyone. They also note that informal processes of enclosure had begun in the Middle Ages and, while Parliamentary Acts were the most obvious examples of enclosure, these Acts were supported by much less formal acts of privatization of land. Kirafly (1989) clarifies the complex legal relations when he notes that what is commonly referred to as enclosure is actually two distinct legal relationships:

...the enclosure of common or waste land of a manor over which residents had incorporeal rights of grazing and the enclosure of land over which residents had corporeal proprietary rights, involving such things as possession, right to transfer and eventually right to make a will. (25)

In these distinctions, the current situation is revealed as it becomes clear that not only were common rights to access waste and grazing lands removed, but also the ability to trade land was ensured through the redefining of property rights which anticipate current commodification of not only land, but also the food produced on it.

The future history of radical food politics was sparked when peasants' rights to produce food was curtailed and removed, along with their literal eviction as depopulation of poor

members of the community was increasingly enforced (Tate, 1967). However, while history gives the appearance of swift change, enclosure and its impact on the poor were controversial. Tate (1967) notes that the concern over limiting peasants' ability to feed themselves was the reason why enclosure had been legislatively refuted during Tudor times and that clergy continued to stand against it (167). During this time in history, gradual changes in social and legal structure came to redefine social relations through a restructuring of space.

Increasingly, land that had been held in common trust for the use of grazing was enclosed, both legally and physically, and shared access to this land resource was removed from non-owners. The enclosure of common wastes – spaces previously not used for agricultural purposes – increased the acreage of productive land by using these spaces for growing crops rather than leaving them to indigenous foliage (Chapman & Seeliger, 15). Further, these methods of enclosure helped reshape and standardize the layout of fields from strips to more consolidated rectangular shapes (Slater, 1907). These changes not only changed social relations, but also literally remade the land into a series of privatized sections (Blomley, 2007). This patterning was then inherited through common practices and Common Laws when English colonizers moved through North America.⁴⁵

This process was dependent on a series of changes that, in retrospect, conspired to create a new way of being for the entire population. During the time of enclosure, a series of actions were taking place that were changing the previous agrarian relationships to others and to the land. Sharman (1989) notes that over 4000 Acts in the UK changed the shape of land law in a relatively short space of time. Changes were not restricted to the legal structure, however, and

45. Pue (2001) notes this influence, but is clear that it was not as simple as a mapping of British law onto the Canadian landscape. Rather our legal history is one of many founding cultures and distinct provincial areas that took up laws in unique ways.

Mingay (1997) notes that enclosure occurred in a variety of ways with varying levels of engagement with legal structures. The first, 'enclosures by agreement' involved agreement between owners in a parish to consolidate and enclose fields, commons, and waste areas. The second, 'piece-meal' enclosure was a much more gradual process where owners would agree to take smaller portions of land. These kinds of agreements are those that are available in legal histories and served to solidify the private control over land. However, more informal methods of enclosing were also at play and had much more to do with local communities than with legal structures. In this sense, the changes on the English landscape were not only written in legal statutes, but also signaled changing social relations within individual communities.

The ability of the poor to access land had been removed for a variety of reasons related to increased productivity desired by landowners. Early examples of this are found prior to the 15th century when the pressure on these grass lands had not existed, and it was only with the rise in sheep-raising as a replacement for other kinds of agriculture that undo pressure was put on communal resources (Cheyney, 1971, 23).⁴⁶ As commons were first being enclosed, areas that used to be thriving communities had forced people out to make room for pastureland, and increasingly there was no space left for squatters and peasants (Tate, 1967). These pressures were further exacerbated as landowners sought to consolidate and increase productivity of their land over the next two centuries.

Mingay (1997) notes that the debate over enclosure continues to be based on the dual factors of loss experienced by the poor and the tangible increase in productivity achieved by enclosing farm spaces (148). These tensions are similar to those that play out in contemporary

46. Cheyney (1971) notes this shift resulted from higher wages being required for hired labour without an increase in the sale price of crops, the demand for English wool, and investment available that was easily applied to developing sheep farming.

discourse around food and food systems and the focus on increased yields evident in these early agricultural changes have rippled to in many ways create our contemporary food/waste crisis. This discourse of increased yield can now be seen through the rise of the Green Revolution and continued discourses used by agro-industries to defend their scientific interventions into the food system (Shiva, 2002). Further, these processes also link the subsequent enclosing and privatizing of waste resulting from the privatizing of food. As coexistent factors, food and waste are both subject to increased privatization and this privatization is directly linked to access that is inextricably tied to the ability to exchange cash for food.

In response to the enclosure of the commons and in protection of the rights of the poor, various uprisings occurred. The most well known one group was the Diggers under Winstanley who protested enclosure through (temporarily) reclaiming previously common land for food production (Shulman, 1989). The other significant movement, that of the Levellers, focused directly on tearing down the hedges that were being used to create barriers to the now unwelcome peasants and non-landowners (Blomley, 2007). However, it was not only the mark on the land that was significant, but also key to new social relations was the removal of the right to common land for the peasantry. The removal of the commons is seen by Bauman (2004) as the root of current global systems whereby some human beings have themselves become waste or have been reduced to things. The removal of the commons was the beginning point of a system where human life was devalued and the privileging of mutual cooperation was first challenged. As an example of the kinds of uprisings that were occurring, the distinction between parliamentary law, social contracts, and tradition is evident. These actions are also generally understood as a reasonable response to a direct infringement on traditional rights of commoners

(Neeson, 1993). While ultimately the work of the Diggers was unsuccessful, the demand for food production spaces as common property has continued to influence social justice activists.

Beyond the privatization of the public commons, the social relations of commoners shifted. Whereas the commons had provided wide-ranging supports for commoners, the removal placed them in an increasingly vulnerable position. As Neeson (1993) notes:

Living off the produce of commons encouraged frugality, economy, thrift. Productive commons had always been the insurance, the reserves, the hidden wealth of commoners – they were the oldest part of an ancient economy. They gave commoners the fuel, food and materials that kept them out of the market for labour and out of the market for consumption too. And the more productive the common the more independent the commoners. The habit of living off commons made the habit of regular employment less necessary...This is not to deny the existence of wage labour; earning wages was necessary, but until they became the lion's share of income they were supplementary not central to a commoning economy. (177)⁴⁷

Instead of being able to continue to draw on open, common resources, peasants increasingly found themselves pushed to purchase or go without. Current communal dinners as conducted by Food Not Bombs groups harken back to a time when wage labour was not a requirement to access food. Foraging, mutual aid, and the right to food are expressed despite this lengthy history of foreclosure on access to food independent of money or state intervention. Yet, for contemporary dumpster divers, the history lies not only in the radical social changes of the enclosure movement, but also the restriction, specifically, of gleaning practices.

47. One could presume that, while not necessarily intentional, the enclosure movement which is seen as a way of maximizing productivity in line with capitalist economic structure also produced surplus labour in the form of poor individuals who could no longer feed themselves and had to enter into a wage relationship.

Gleaning

Despite the degradation of gleaning rights during enclosure, they continue to be used as metaphor for and literal understanding of the social relationship between farmers and poor populations. The Old Testament of the King James Bible specifies:

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger. (Leviticus xxiii, 22.)

Gleaning of crops is neither new nor surprising as a way of addressing co-existing surplus and poverty. Legally protected in France until the late 1990s (Stuart, 2009),⁴⁸ the importance of gleaning crops is rising again in North American contexts (Stoekl, 2007).⁴⁹ Vardi (1993) traces the history of gleaning in France from the Middle Ages. In her historical study it becomes clear that gleaning was originally treated as a stage in harvest. It was through state intervention that gleaning became directly associated with the poor, and later with women. Of interest when discussing gleaning in a contemporary context is a reference back to the biblical pronouncement that excess should be left to the poor.

The reality of this as a connection to Freeganism is laid out by Badio (2009), who points to the continued use of gleaning strategies in hunger easement and food security projects in North America. This model is current in Toronto with Not Far From the Tree, a group that organizes volunteers to pick from urban fruit trees and bushes in local neighbourhoods. Run with volunteer labour and homeowner consent, the program offers multiple levels of engagement with

48 The reason for this change is unclear and despite extensive research the reason for this change remains obscured. In fact, much contemporary public research still points to gleaning as legally protected in France.

49. "Gleaning stories, gleaning change" is a collaborative project from UC Santa Cruz that details recent experiences of gleaning in the Salinas Valley. This project collects stories from those who glean to varying capacities, but is also clear that this activity is in no way protected by California or US law. The gleaner narratives collected come from various actors, ranging from charity group volunteers to grown children of migrant labourers (Harraway, *et al.*, 2008, 2009).

aspects of food security. By pairing concern with reducing wasted food and subsequent foraging efforts, they educate participants about the kind and location of edible foods within the city.

Further, this kind of gleaning is cleaner than dumpster diving and thus is far more accessible to a broader range of people who may not be ready to engage directly with food/waste. Urban gleaning also brings an awareness of food production within city spaces. However, this model of gleaning removes the charitable aspect of the gathering by focusing on the desire to not waste food, rather than the drive to ensure food grown locally is picked and utilized.⁵⁰ While gleaning practices are facing a contemporary resurgence, they are working within a legal landscape where these practices have been disconnected from their history.

The enclosure movement directly impacted the traditional right to glean offered to the poor. As King (1992) noted, the Great Gleaning Case of 1788 had ties and connections to enclosures. However, he stresses that the law suit against gleaners was not brought on by Cornwallis,⁵¹ or at least that can't be confirmed, but instead revealed tensions between farmers and the labouring poor (20). While landowners did not at first support the restriction of gleaners, they did ultimately benefit from the removal of gleaning rights and the shift of social support into bureaucratic charity structures. More specifically:

... judges argued, among other things, that gleaning was not a universal common law right because it was unknown in some places; that it was uncertain who could claim the right; that the law should not turn acts of charity into legal obligations ... that granting the right to glean would "raise the insolence of the poor" as well as being against their own interests since, by reducing the farmers profits, it would reduce the rate payers capacity to contribute to the poor rates; and finally that...'it was inconsistent with the nature of property which imports absolute enjoyment.' (King, 3)

50. This raises the ongoing question of what it means to waste food in a moral sense. Is it only abhorrent to waste food when people are hungry or is it inherently immoral to waste food?

51. Cornwallis was well known as changing the local landscape through direct and aggressive enclosure and purchasing estate lands, however there is no evidence that he used an attack on gleaning to benefit his land conglomeration.

The process by which the legal structure was cemented to eradicate the traditional right of the poor to glean was thus rooted in a Protestant ethic of hard work and ultimately the protection of property over human rights. Blomley (2007) further notes about the introduction of hedges:

The hedge did important practical work. Most immediately, it made it difficult for human and nonhuman bodies to move as they had done in the past. ... As tenure turned to territory, the movements of the commoner took on a different meaning. Gleaning and grazing over common land became construed as theft and trespass. ... Thus other forms of corporeal violence had to be put to work. The thorn hedge sought to protect private property from the bodies of the poor and became an instrument of class discipline, put to work in socially directive ways. (8)

The hedge became a symbolic structure that rhetorically enforced enclosure long before it was legally supported. As a physical barrier, the common was reduced to private space and the previous access of gleaners to common land was barred. As one form of disciplining, the reduction of access is also one that continues to ensure that only some people's hunger is warranted and allowed for in modern structures. To be hungry is not to go to the field and eat; it is to be again regulated and oftentimes prevented from addressing this basic need. This connection between the enclosure movement and the impact on legal structures around gleaning are necessary to consider the way gleaning has been taken up to understand contemporary waste reclamation and redistribution. In contemporary times, the enclosure of the dumpster recounts the hedge where the steel walls are designed to symbolically, if not physically, bound people from their contents. Waste, though not legally private, is enclosed into a private container where trespassing is enacted to bar entry and the reclamation of food/waste.

Traditionally, gleaning was a rural activity and the rise of urban gleaning is different in means and ways from original iterations (Stoekl, 2011). Gleaning was a symbiotic relationship as a process of clearing fields and providing for those who had less access to food. Now,

technology and supermarket standards allows for leftovers to be easily plowed under into the field, but in some circumstances groups are working with farmers to prevent this from happening (Stuart, 2009).⁵² The move of the concept of gleaning is a problematic one. The use of *urban* gleaning signals the shift in social and agricultural relationships where an individual connection to food production has, for many, been severed. Here, harvest was brought to the experience of city dwellers who may have limited knowledge of the process of farming.

Of more interest is the bridging of urban and rural areas where the at times inaccessible farm fields come into contact with urban dwellers. There is a double passage here where the urban and rural are brought together, as well as the hungry and satisfied. The volunteers are not traditional gleaners and would not fit Leviticus' description of the role. Instead, volunteer labour is brought in to allow leftovers from harvests to be reclaimed and then be moved through a redistribution process to reach those in need. This foregrounds the complicated ways in which the metaphor of gleaning is taken up and how we can reconsider what gleaning reveals about contemporary society. As Stoekl (2011) notes, "[t]o glean is not only to take what others no longer want and make use of it, but to reflect quite openly on the limitations of a contemporary society of individualism and consumerism." (4)

Within the gleaning model, waste food is still treated as food. The meaning of food is not emptied as it is when it enters the dumpster, it is rather the method by which food can be harvested and consumed that is different. However, despite these legal differences, or the

52. One local example is the Ontario Gleaners Network where donations are accepted from local farmers and are then made into dried soup packages that are sent overseas to those in need. In another example, in 2009, the Ontario Association of Food Banks collaborated with Direct Energy to bring volunteers from the city to glean a Markham farm. This program was cancelled in 2012 or 2013 and links to the press release for this event – previously at <http://www.oafb.ca/1012.html> – is no longer live.

overlapping of ownership and individual, personal responses to waste are different. Specifically, Stoekl (2011) further notes:

The refusal of gleaning is the refusal of the limits to possession, to consumption, not to mention growth: it makes quite clear that without gleaning the idea of possession and consumption is incoherent. What does possession mean when the object possessed has been cast into oblivion? It means everything, and nothing. (2)

In this sense, ownership and possession overlap with more deep-seated concerns with privacy and protection of one's own waste. Despite discard, the sense of ownership extends and the reclamation of one's own waste becomes a seeming violation. It is worth considering, though, how this extends to industrial dumpsters which are far more likely to garner the attention of urban dumpster divers. Good food thrown out by supermarkets remains in many cases edible in a way often unimaginable by the individual who will throw away based on perceived rotting and a move into inedibility (Evans, 2012). Here, the gleaning model's popularity makes more sense as the ample discards are a result not of inedibility, but rather excess that is not absorbed by consumer practices. The spectacular destruction of excess does not exist in this example and the analogous sacrifice or warfare Bataille (1989) refers to is drained of symbolic meaning. In the case of wasting food, the landfill serves to render excess invisible and thereby of little use to society in general. In fact, the processes by which the landfill functions produces excesses of toxicity that can do nothing but poison the air, soil, and water that surround them (Rathje & Murphy, 1992).

There is a risk, however, in taking up gleaning as an explanatory concept for dumpster diving in North America as has been undertaken in a number of studies of 'urban gleaning' (Stoekl, 2007, 2011; Ferrell, 2006; Heynen, 2010). The use of the term renders it into the realm of metaphor. As metaphor, this use of the term gleaning obscures the specific historical reality

that gleaning is not protected in Canadian legal statutes or our cultural history. As should be clear from the discussion of this chapter detailing the specific socio-legal histories leading to dumpster diving, gleaning is bound not by action but by social relations dictated by legal relationships.

Little is available in critique around the legal shift from the traditional to new penal code in France, but the 2000 film *The Gleaners and I* (Varda, 2000) offers documentary evidence that gleaning remains an ongoing cultural feature and the gleaning communities central to the livelihoods of many disadvantaged people in France.⁵³ Legal protection in England, which serves as a grounding for the legal structures of Canada and other commonwealth nations, was eliminated much earlier and coincided with other shifts towards private property during the enclosure movement. Karsten (2002) notes that the British diaspora that settled Canada, Australia, and the United States adapted Common Law brought with them from Britain. This is reflected in the different way Poor Laws, gleaning rights, and common ownership were detailed. It is evident that the right to food and the right to grow food on common lands had already been attacked and eroded in British law and this was reflected in the increasing privatization of food in North America. It is also significant that the distinction between law and practice allowed for situations such as the practice of gleaning being made illegal, but the practice continuing on for another century (*ibid.*, 530) (see also King, 1989; Neeson, 1993).

In Canada, gleaning rights have never been legally protected and much could be said about the colonial history of this country as a direct refutation of communal rights to food, or

53. The presumptions of common rights in contradiction to penal codes reflect the enclosure history which details the complex ways that gleaning rights were protected even after being removed from legal protection in 1994 (Stuart, 2009, 338).

anything else.⁵⁴ Rather, Canadian history has featured privatizing land, resources, and food related to trade agreements that have and continue to commodify basic needs through legal statutes and international agreements. The challenge then comes when we think of the traditional Christian history of gleaning in this governmental history. In France, gleaning laws have protected and in some cases idealized communal rights. North American laws and cultural history are dominated by an entrepreneurial individuality that is irreconcilable with the communality of gleaning social relations. To truly glean is to expect a portion of the harvest, and to accept that this social contract means no one can privately control food. Thus, trashpicking is not an extension of historical gleaning but, in North America is a confrontation with private ownership and one that only occurs in the most dire circumstances that are sometimes economic but, in the case of politically motivated dumpster diving, ethical.

Therefore, gleaning has limitations as a metaphor for North American dumpster diving and indeed serves to obscure the intersection of legal, historical, and cultural forces. To draw on the metaphor without complicating an understanding of the legal structures and historical specificity unnecessarily limits a discussion of the process of garbage picking. Within North America, legal structures vary from city to city and across national borders. For the most part, North American legal structures draw on liberal understandings of private property that allows for the concept of trespassing where the container for garbage signifies ownership. Thus, while the dumpster or bin has its ideological roots in the hedge, dumpster divers have not recreated modern gleaning practices. Instead, the calling of these practices gleaning reveals how deeply entwined food/waste and private property laws have become.

54. The history of Canada laid out in this dissertation is one that begins with the introduction of British Common Law. Another project would benefit by considering the interactions between First Nation practices and the introduction of private property and legal restrictions at this time. Canadian law is modeled on English law (Guth & Pue, 2001) and without gleaning protection in England, similar protections did not translate to Canada.

While dumpsters and garbage bins are private property, this does not extend to a right to privacy for the owners of those containers. As is clear from some very high profile cases claiming trespassing, personal trash once disposed of is no longer under private control (Young, 2009). The battle between Bob Dylan and A.J. Weberman points to the public nature of individual trash. Weberman's *My life in garbology* (1980) documents, in detail, the trash he found in the personal garbage bins of Bob Dylan and other notable figures. While he is clearly documenting his extensive stalking of public figures, later legal decisions pointed to the lack of privacy that exists within trash bins once they are put out for pickup. Individuals cannot reasonably presume that what they throw away at home will be protected by ownership rights and legal decisions in both the US and Canada have confirmed that trash cannot be understood as private.⁵⁵

However, the public-ness of trash in this sense does not extend to privately managed dumpsters. This is not to say that the contents are private property, but rather the container is treated as private with the extension of trespassing bylaws to protect its inner spaces. In Toronto, dumpsters are protected through trespassing bylaws where the dumpster has private property rights extended to it. The container then becomes protected from unwanted attention (from divers), but this does not extend to that which is held inside. Rather, in the case of food the significance between the gleaning legal structure and the private property legal structure is one of containment. Food, once privatized, can be contained and perhaps more importantly restricted from others. Food/waste is not owned, does not have a legal status, but it is contained within a box that is owned and controlled by a private company or a public service. Thus food is treated

55. *California v. Greenwood*, 486 U.S. 35 (Legal Information Institute, 1988) in the US found that Fourth Amendment rights do not apply to trash left out for pick up and a 2009 Canadian Supreme Court decision that a man convicted of ecstasy trafficking did not have his privacy rights violated when police searched his trash (CBC News, 2009).

the same as any other disposable item until the actions of the dumpster diver begins the translation of food/waste into food. Steel hedges attempt to block access to the dumpster diver but, like the Levelers before them, they refuse to accept a state container of private ownership.

Further, the social relations structured by this legislation redefine connections between gleaner and farmer, or their urban counterparts, diver and storeowner. The notion of gleaning has within it a presumption of a relationship between the landowner and the gleaner where both parties are defined through that relationship. In the charity structure, the social relation between giver and receiver cannot be equated with the symbiosis of gleaner/farmer. The gleaner need only hear the bell and head to the field to fulfill their role.⁵⁶ The charity receiver is required to perform deservingness by entering into the institutional structure and bureaucracy to gain access to the support they need (Schneider, 2010).⁵⁷ Not entering into this institutional relationship, for whatever reason, places one in a circumstance to have no other options. This person becomes the failed consumer and, without proving desire to gain access to a proper consumer subjectivity, is left without a place to exist in the world. Attempts to support oneself directly through the dumpster, for example, becomes a sign of the depth of desperation or a full removal from sane life.

It is the same as the relationship that defines the charity giver and charity taker, a relationship that does not question the notion of excess or control, but rather includes an ethic of

56. It was common practice to ring the parish bell to signal gleaning hours (Glennie & Thrift, 2009).

57 At a panel discussion in early 2013, I was discussing this chapter with the Toronto Food Policy Council. One audience member noted that the North York Harvest Food Bank does not insist on proving deservingness. The limitation that remains is based on address and having photo identification for all who will be partaking in the food. Proving deservingness is being addressed within social service structures, but remains a challenge to ensuring respect, dignity, and support are offered to all who require support.

sharing and caring that is not common in privatized legal structures.⁵⁸ While French legal history has inscribed the relationship between owner and gleaner, English legal history did the opposite and instead disconnected a relationship between the two. When the commons were enclosed it was not only a removal of access to land but the beginnings of a new kind of position for those who did not hold control over land. Their ability to care for themselves was increasingly put into the hands of intermediaries who no longer had an ethical responsibility inscribed in law. Rather, the law privileged privatized control and disconnected humans from the ethics laid out in the Bible.

This is made even more significant when this history of food control is laid alongside the history of waste control where it becomes clear that the privatization of waste as both problem and solution has left the concern for food/waste in fewer and fewer hands without a corresponding ethical responsibility. Individuals do not condone food/waste, but the legal history of privatization does not allow corporate entities to care about this. Rather, the structuring of the food system through a privatized model discounts the ethical responsibility to allow gleaners access to food/waste. In this way, it is absolutely necessary to consider how these legal histories are related to and constructed through the privatization of space. It was the space of the commons and the time of the harvest that were reconstructed through the enclosure act to be private spaces and times and thus controlled by private interests.

58. Smandych (2001) explores the dual contradictions in Upper Canada that led to the choice to refuse to take up English Poor Laws. While there were charities put in place and Upper Canadians "...were fully prepared to accept [that] human beings could fall victim to poverty through no fault of their own. However, 'Providence' set limits on the extent to which this occurred and in such cases it was the obligatory duty of all Christians to offer some form of relief. At the same time, and without the slightest feeling of self-contradiction, Upper Canadians often viewed poverty to be the product of some moral failure on the part of the individual." (217) This dual sensibility is reflected not only in legal structures, but also many cultural tropes around poverty that exist today.

Conclusion

Property may be enacted through persuasion, but it is also enacted through compulsion, force and violence. (Blomley, 2007, 8)

This chapter has detailed the longer genealogy of food/waste that connects the recent history of Freeganism and Food Not Bombs to their roots in the work of Levelers and Diggers. Shared across these histories is the significance of private property and how it is enacted by the state onto the body. Commonplace understandings of private property are revealed in this history and in contemporary actions of dumpster divers to be culturally and legally developed in a way that deeply impacts a relation of social structure that through gifting dumpster divers seek to remake. The new category of food/waste that is the tool of dumpster divers exists without legal status and is therefore mutable and mobile for broader, systemic critiques. The roots of Freeganism and Food Not Bombs are intermingled and the continued rise of dumpster diving for food outside of the confines of desperation is a testament to the impact these two movements continue to have. Yet, as will become clear, these two are offering seemingly similar, but actually quite distinct uses of food/waste. While the two share similar actions and a shared history, their distinctions are significant.

Freeganism is individualistic, explicitly flaunts legality, and draws on a punk ethic that looks to withdraw from mainstream society. The individuality, called lifestyle anarchism by critics, limits the impact the action can have (Bookchin, 2005). Rather than taking on structural change or developing new models of social organizing, freeganism by its nature is small scale and cannot be expanded to building a new kind of future. In contrast, Food Not Bombs is communitarian, draws on mutual aid, and attempts to create autonomous space and structure. Inherent in the model is the desire to construct autonomous, consensus driven community solutions to social injustice. However, this is not to claim Food Not Bombs as infallible.

Amongst anarchist communities, the role of Food Not Bombs and its strengths have been critiqued and argued. This argument most famously came to a head in 2009 when "Open Letter to Food Not Bombs" detailed a critique against FNB as inherently white supremacist because of its reproduction of white models of charity.⁵⁹ Other writers have discussed the move away from the charity model of FNB because of its roots in mutual aid (Heynen, 2010), but the letter does highlight challenges around who is typically a member of FNB and the power differentials that are found between volunteers and visitors to many servings.

The work of dumpster divers is historically grounded, geographically specific, and locally fixed. It also brings political divers into connection with each other. The spaces that food/waste traverses is as diverse as the spaces of the diver and it is in these spaces that regulations map onto bodies. It is through the previous discussion that is possible to ground the micro experience of Toronto dumpster divers in the macro regulations and practices that define the food/waste they encounter and the spaces they traverse. Over the next three chapters, the lived experience of divers, the actions they undertake, and the documents they produce about themselves are understood as implicated by the regulations that so few of us – divers and non-divers – consider as we go about our daily business of feeding ourselves.

59. Retrieved April 6th, 2013 from <http://anarchistnews.org/node/8785?page=1>.

Chapter 3: The Social Movement of Food/Waste: The Circulation of Food Not Bombs

The first time diving is a heady confrontation with social stigma, personal discomfort, and hidden spaces of the city. It is also an opportunity to consider the meaning of trash, or rather the way discard into a dumpster can empty the food commodity of meaning (Graeber, 2001) so that it may be properly entombed (Hetherington, 2007). Responding against this emptying of meaning, the dumpster diver seeks out the hidden, ignored, and illicit spaces of the city (Cresswell, 1996). Entering the alleyway and peering into the dumpster in the dark, decisions are made by flashlight. As was evident in Chapter 1, food/waste moves through categorical definitions that are open to transition for multiple and materially specific reasons.

Toronto's Food Not Bombs meets the Friday before our Sunday servings to collect ingredients. Organized via Facebook, a group of soon to be divers who may or may not know each other in person, meet outside Bathurst (subway) Station to begin our tour through the Annex alleys that provide so much sustenance for so many people. Finding the right group is often done by accident while new divers suss out the dress and presentation of the loiterers who hang around the front of the station. Friday at 9pm is an interesting time at the station as it is not only divers temporarily meeting, but people come and go for the fun that the Annex also holds on a Friday night. Once the group is gathered and we've waited 15 or 20 minutes to ensure that no stragglers are left behind, we walk and bike to our first dumpster stop. The Annex is an ideal neighbourhood – so ideal in fact that after almost two years of steady servings, the dumpsters were suddenly being picked by more than FNB volunteers – for the dumpster diver. It has a number of the preferred small fruit and vegetable markets that are less likely to invest in large fences or compactors so common to the larger chain supermarkets. Instead, the dumpsters here

are low enough to be easily accessed from the ground and brim with food/waste ripe for the picking.

The neighbourhood is also the site of a specific kind of urban experience that Jane Jacobs is famed for having protected when she moved from New York City. The neighbourhood was not razed for an expressway in the 1970s and instead houses a combination of rental and owner-occupied property, student housing, families of all ages, and a smattering of local celebrity and literati. Bringing together the complexity of the city offers an anonymity in the alleyways that allows for illicit activities steps from young professionals enjoying Friday evening drinks on a patio (Wilson, 1991). These boundaries are not impervious and our gang of divers walks through the streets carrying bags of food/waste. The bustling area covers us, and while we are occasionally approached at the dumpster itself, our existence in the area is not questioned. Instead we circulate, with the other city dwellers around us, through brief encounters and intersecting meanings.

In between our bodies' circulation through the streets, we hop the dumpster walls to begin the process of retrieving food/waste that will become our Sunday afternoon meal. Interacting with food/waste is a series of decisions and when we dive we engage with evaluations and decisions that separate the garbage from the food/waste. We make these choices by determining what was tossed because of cosmetic bruises, due to arbitrary expiry dates, or that which is rendered inedible through contagion or rotting, rather than a mistaken shift in category. With practice, these become surprisingly easy decisions and the skills are easily and quickly learned. Avoid food that collapses in your hand, that smells of chemicals rather than the pungent and distinct scent of dumpster, anything that has been punctured or otherwise lost its protective skin. After these choices are made, bags are filled, bikes are mounted, and we return to

our respective kitchens to take up the next process of remaking waste into food: Washing up, confirming flashlight decisions, cleaning off germs food encounters through its travels through processing, distribution, store shelves, customers' hands and, finally, its short time in the dumpster. Washed and dried, its source erased, food can be put away. Through the bruises and imperfections emerge ingredients for a meal: brightly coloured peppers, tomatoes, bananas, squash, and so on.

The translation of meaning that has begun traverses the metabolism of urban spaces and commodity movements (Heynen, *et al.*, 2006). Unlike fixed urban infrastructures, food and waste travel flexible paths open to intervention when the dumpster diver sees the breaks in those trajectories (Ferrell, 2006). These interventions bring food and waste closer by extending the circulation of food and shortening that of waste. Through a refusal of arbitrary categories that do not respect the inherent quality and usefulness of food products, divers connect the circulation of food and waste through their reclamation. At this point, the circulation can move in multiple directions. For the individual diver, the food may be made into a meal the next day, possibly shared with others, but certainly eaten. Sometimes the food gathered will be treated as communal in the house. Sometimes it will be brought to a potluck. Sometimes it will be a midnight snack. Our diving and conversations reinforce the complex ways that food, purchased or not, is experienced by individuals (Lupton, 1996; Rubin, 2008). Whenever possible, it will be consumed and made meaningful by the body that consumes it (Probyn, 2000). However, for FNB groups, the reworking of food circulation creates different experiences of the city, community, and one's relationship to food.

The next step for FNBers and the movement of waste to food is in the collaborative cooking. Meeting late Sunday morning, foodstuffs and volunteers come together to make a meal,

and to make a meaningful connection not only to each other, but to those who will soon join us. Over heat the spices and natural flavours mingle into a meal, ideas are exchanged and the counterpublic is lived (Warner, 2002; Ferguson, 2010). Once the food is cooked, it is loaded onto bike carts, along with utensils, plates, cups, and any donated packaged foods. At this point, bikes are mounted and we ride, en masse, to arrive for a Sunday afternoon serving in Allen Gardens. Our kitchen on Bathurst and Richmond requires that these meals must travel through the congestion of traffic, flying a flag to identify ourselves as more than a bike gang (or minor bike traffic jam) and signal our political intention to those who recognize the FNB logo.

Once at the park, the change in meaning is completed when food is unpacked and the serving begins. The most outgoing of our group begins to yell out that we have free food to share and we offer a meal to everyone who walks by. When our servings became more regular, we had return visitors who recognized us when we arrived. Before I joined FNB, the group had served in Moss Park, in the middle of a rougher area and activists reported being threatened during their time there. Allen Gardens is a larger park and also features a much more diverse population. Young families, dog walkers, visitors to the botanical greenhouse, and street-involved people all coexist here and all sorts of people join our meal. During these servings, food has been brought back from waste, meaning is re-inscribed, and food can again speak through us, for us, and with us. A forum for exchange takes over the problematically public space of the park (Mitchell, 1995) and the meal displays the rhetorical aspects of food (Greene, 2011). Relationships, temporary or lasting, are solidified over a shared meal and the conversations sparked help us create our collective and individual identities. The act of sharing a meal brings us closer together as the individual act of consumption is shared (Bell & Valentine, 1997). Everyone eats, no one pays, and the meaning created is, potentially, produced across social difference.

In past chapters, I have looked at the theoretical and socio-legal historical framework that the work of Toronto's Food Not Bombs exists within. In this chapter, I will directly explore the experience of Food Not Bombs and food/waste within the urban framework of Toronto, Ontario. Toronto's metabolism translates the meaning of food/waste as it traverses the circulatory structures not only of the commodity and communication, but the city itself (Swyngendouw, 2006). In the movement of divers, food/waste remakes the meaning of the city and utilizes specific urban qualities of density, poverty, and overconsumption to create new economies of meaning and edibility.

The politics of FNB activists are not only about the action itself – taking edible food out of the waste stream – but also a profound questioning of the nature of food and waste, and their circulatory patterns in city spaces. Instead of accepting food and waste as separate categories, the dumpster diver, no matter what label she takes, is redirecting circulation, reconnecting meaning, and fundamentally shifting the meaning of these categories. The category of food/waste, laid out in my first chapter, is central to the work of Toronto's FNB group. Within the circulatory and metabolic functioning of Toronto, food/waste is mobilized and reinvested with meaning and edibility. This is achieved through the action of dumpster diving, the recirculation of food/waste, and the conflicting understandings of food/waste that circulate from within and outside the dumpster diving community.

I will trace out these circulations to map the texture of Toronto as a metabolic city and the way the counterpublic is produced by the reclamation and servings of Toronto's Food Not Bombs meals. The history of the enclosure of the commons laid out in the last chapter has created the contemporary framework for North American cities and it is within this framework that the specificity of FNB actions can be understood as contributing to the use of food/waste as

the key ingredient for new social relations being actively produced by the work of FNB. I will next proceed to discuss the specific theoretical background of the circulatory city and how the flexibility of circulatory pathways allows for the reclamation of food/waste and the production of an FNB counterpublic in bi-weekly shared meals.

Urban Circulation

...Cities are constituted through dense networks of interwoven socio-ecological processes that are simultaneously human, physical, discursive, cultural, material, and organic. Circulatory conduits of water, foodstuffs, cars, fumes, money, labour, etc., move in and out of the city, transform the city, and produce the urban as a continuously changing socio-ecological landscape. (Swyngedouw, 2006, 21)

The limitations of attending only to global commodity chains restrict the circulation of commodities not only globally, but also throughout specific urban spaces. Commodities circulate through urban spaces and bring with them complicated sets of meanings and relations that require equally complex approaches to the mapping of overarching meaning. The metaphor of circulation could imply set pathways, but it is rather the variability and interconnectedness of circulatory systems in cities that offer strength to resistance movements to redirect urban metabolism. Urban space is defined and developed in response to that which passes through it and so much of a cities' identity can be seen as rooted in these passages (Soja, 2000). Whether it is through concepts of cultural meaning (Blum, 2003), the movement of second hand goods (Gregson & Crewe, 2003; Straw, 2011), or infrastructure (Kaika, 2005), the metabolic city has a main artery of food turned to waste, and, in the case of dumpster diving, using food/waste to remake the social experiences of the urban public park.

Ferrell (2006) sees the circulation of cities through the circulation of waste systems, spaces, and places that make up the empire of scrounge. Specifically, "America's engorged

Dumpsters confirm what many already suspect: the culture and economy of consumption runs on waste." (28) It is through the interconnections that are flexible and make distinctions mutable that the transgression of categories is made possible. Extending the commodity cycle to consider the significance of waste also brings circulation into the realm of political ecology, a realm that helps us understand the way cities function as an ecosystem rooted in metabolism and circulation (Kaika & Swyngedouw, 2000). As Merchant (2005) notes:

An ecological perspective challenges hierarchy in nature. An ecosystem in a food web, not a food pyramid with humans at the top. Each species is equal to every other species and to the abiotic elements that keep its cycles of life and death and predators and prey in motion (150).

The food web is a way of reconnecting nature and culture and refusing to privilege one species over another. This can also extend into a consideration of food and environmental justice so central to rethinking our relationships to food and waste. As the city exists in both nature and culture, the intertwining is reflected in how we can think about the movement of food and waste through the ecosystem of our cities (Bennett & Teague, 1999). While the two are symbolically constructed to be separate categories, as nature and culture are, they are rather joined through their movement through cities, bodies, and lives (Evernden, 1992).

As Barndt (2008) makes clear, the movement of the food commodity of the tomato ripples into other aspects of social and political life to make more of the seemingly simple movement of food. The same can be said of waste. Activists, such as Stuart (2009), make clear that not only do we need to question where our food comes from and how it gets onto our plates, but also where it goes. Stuart makes clear that the global food chain has led to increasing levels of wasted food directly related to production relations. The ethical challenge for food/waste activists is that these waste levels do not represent food that is rotten or otherwise inedible, but

instead edible food is discarded or destroyed to protect profits (Stuart, 2009) or as a result of industrialized overproduction (Stuart, 2011).

The immensity of wasted food is possible because of how and where we treat all manners of waste. Socially and symbolically removed, hidden, and refuted, the dirtiness of waste is paired with a system of circulation that ensures that throwing things away is easy and accessible. Following Douglas' (2002a) work it becomes clear that the hidden waste areas of the city are ripe for the reworking of the dumpster diver who, through her action, resets and refutes the circulation of food from commodity in store to discarded commodity emptied of meaning (Benjamin, 1999). Further, the circulation of food is paralleled and interconnected with the circulation of meaning and it is in this connection that the communicative aspect of food and, subsequently, waste are illuminated. The refusal of political dumpster divers working with FNB to accept discard interrupts the circulation of food to waste to bring food back to communicate community, fairness, and equal access.

For FNB divers, the act of reclaiming food/waste addresses a significant failure in urban circulation. As was made clear in Chapter One's theoretical discussion, the distinctions between food and waste are flawed and represent necessary symbolic distinctions that, when removed, change the way we can think about the circulation of communication, food, and waste. Meaning can be reinscribed into food/waste and the circulation of the metabolic city is reconnected (Swyngedouw, 1996). The communicative action of food and waste, as slightly separate systems, are thus reconnected and reinvigorated with meaning (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996).

Circulation theories of media (Boutros & Straw, 2011) and within political ecology (Keil, *et al.*, 1998; Heynen, *et al.*, 2006), make clear that the circulation of people, goods, ideas, objects, natural processes, and so on contribute to the construction and meaning of the city and

offer a way to understand the intersections of commodities, lives, and meaning within urban spaces. It also forces a theoretical move towards interrogating how new interventions and activist political work can be understood both through an analysis of their communicative aspects, and also through the way they form through urban frameworks. The seeming regularity and predictability of expectations in the urban frame is, in fact, one laden with imperfections and opportunities that allow interjections to be made to the circulation of, in this case, food stuffs and waste to re-inscribe the ability to mean and, subsequently, create new meanings. This process works because of the way the city works, bringing together space, time, human actors, and commodities in to provide an opportunity for a new political and social direction. The intersections of human actors with commodities plays to the creativity of urban dwelling and, as Boutros and Straw (2011) note, "People do not simply move through the city in predictable ways but sometimes coalesce into momentary and temporary collectives" (11).

Recirculation and food security

The work of Food Not Bombs in remaking the meaning of discarded food signals a communicative model that responds against food insecurity. According to Anderson (1990), "...food insecurity exists whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain" (1576). Recently, debates around how to address food insecurity have pointed to the glut of food that is being thrown away and the failures of the food distribution system to prevent this (Patel, 2007). While Suschnigg (2012) see the anti-poverty perspective of discussions around food security to be short sighted, the strength of Food Not Bombs work lies in the work it achieves outside of these food debates. Food Not Bombs utilizes direct, local action to demonstrate and address food access inequality while reintroducing meaning into food/waste. This direct action

model of food advocacy changes the way the communicative structure of food and waste circulation can be understood. Taking the surplus food commodity out of its expected cycle – store to dumpster to landfill – means that the translation of food back from waste becomes a critique against global capitalist structures that privilege profit models over human sustenance. By disrupting the circulation of food and waste, FNB activism offers an opportunity to illuminate the communication models of both food and waste. The disruption of these models re-imagines food security independently from an ability to pay.

As Greene (2008) noted, and was discussed in Chapter One, food is a communicative and rhetorical practice. It is through the practices of food – eating, preparing, sharing – that we are able to interact and form relationships. Further, Greene looks to the importance of food as a conveyor of social style whereby we can create our identities. In this sense, the movement of food back and forth between edible and inedible as well as its pertinence within the dumpster divers' political work adds a further layer to the communicative aspect of these shifting fields. Food, even if it were not embroiled within a commodity cycle, will always become waste, though outside of commodity cycles this moment of waste is just that, momentary. Instead of a permanent category, waste moves through ecological cycles between food of one sort (for humans) to another (to be made into soil).

Swyngedouw (1996; 2006) details the connection between nature and culture in the city and through this urban ecology the centrality of circulation and translation is clear. For Soja (2000), the translation of meaning found in the circulation of commodities through city spaces also changes the meaning of urban spaces. As locations for transition, translation also occurs as the move from nature to culture is muddied by the interconnections between the two. As food, it moves from its own growth, through harvesting, into other systems when its nutrients and

components are separated out and broken down for other uses. The remnants then move from the body into our personal waste where the excess components of our consumed meals are expelled.

It is waste of a different kind when it is allowed to follow biological processes than when it finds its final rest in a landfill or other such human made location that inhibits its translation into fuel for another process. Food produced into waste through the human body has the potential to become energy for something new. Thus, ecologically, waste as human engineering has created doesn't exist. Instead, in this sense waste is a temporary step before becoming a new kind of energy and is thus productive of a new stage working in ongoing, mostly regular, cycles. Urban circulation is dependent upon the movement of food and waste as key arteries that structure city spaces and fuel city markets.

However, the ongoing separation of food production and consumption spaces, broadly delineated along rural and urban lines, ensures that the circulation of food into ecological waste is disrupted (Swift, *et al.*, 1979). As Rathje & Murphy (1992) note, landfills are spaces of archeology and the sites for their work in what has become known as garbology. The lack of oxygen and the human made materials that build up ensure that our garbage remains for future generations. Once compressed, garbage – defined as that which reaches the landfill – cannot easily and fully decompose. Instead, what does break down is more likely to become methane gas and leachate – toxic by-products of a system that has no ultimate solution other than burial or attempted destruction through burning (*ibid*, 117 – 122). It is at this moment that it becomes clear that the inherent circulatory aspect of ecological waste is shifted to a permanent state that denies ecology to fix waste with no purpose but to continue to exist as unusable from either side. Instead, food/waste when not recovered becomes stalled as a non-category and remains meaningless.

Swyeygedouw (2006) lays out a history of the concept of metabolic circulation and points to the significance of transformation at play when considering the city through these processes. The interconnections between metabolism and circulation are rooted in the history of modernity. He makes clear that metabolism and translation of commodities occur as a result of "...the complex processes and heterogeneous relations of its making at some point in the past" (Swyeygedouw, 2006, 26). Within these relations is a resulting system, but it is a system ripe for intervention and shifts. Circulatory flows can shift and it is these shifts that make meaning when considering the translation of food to waste and back again.

The processes by which global structures of food systems lead to this existence of stalled calories can be seen through Heynen's (2006) work on urban hunger. Noting that external storage allowed for accumulation ultimately also produces surplus. Thus, the global commodification of food provides the infrastructure necessary to produce more food, but also creates an inherent flaw. The refinement of storage and distribution capacity leads to an inefficient system where too much food is directed to too few places which cannot contain, or rather absorb, them. Instead the overflow, akin to Bataille's (1989) excess, must be expelled into the dumpster.

The trajectory to the landfill is interrupted by the dumpster diver as she intervenes as food/waste passes through city spaces. The spaces of food circulation, consumption, and reclamation frame the way in which we can understand the processes that guide not only the movement of food and waste, but also allow us to consider these interconnections with bodies. Human bodies move through trajectories of the daily eating that connects us to others (Probyn, 2000). This understanding extends to food/waste that ensures we are all, always, drawn together by a need for, a lack of, an abundance of the food and waste that moves through our lives.

The spaces of food/waste are multiple: the dumpster, the home kitchen, the shared kitchen, the food market, and the public park are amongst the most common. But connecting and extending from these are other spaces – the unseen spaces of the garbage truck and the dump or the transitional spaces where food moves to waste and back again. These spaces also extend beyond our lived experiences as the food system extends, globally, across national borders, as well as rural and urban spaces in its journey (Barndt, 2008). And, finally and firstly, the space, of course, of the body. Without the body to eat, the body to gather, the body to translate the meaning of waste to food, the spaces of waste and food cannot make sense (Bell & Valentine, 1997).

Dumpsters

The dumpster is preconfigured through its connection to the supermarket, a space intentionally unimportant and materially unavoidable in the search for food/waste. It is the supermarket, the fruit market, and the food retail outlet that serve to fill dumpsters with waste that becomes the diver's next meal. The design of these spaces makes dumpster diving for food possible, but they do not come into play in the movements of the dumpster diver through her evening. But the retail space cannot be ignored because it is only in the specific interchanges of these locations that is possible to understand what is going on behind the scenes as food is removed, restocked, shifted, and moved to the backstage of dumpster spaces (Goffman, 1959). As a space of capital (Harvey, 2001), the supermarket is a microcosm of how the circulation of the market works to ensure a steady supply of waste food to be recovered while also displaying the failures of capitalism itself.

The primary space of food/waste, and dependent on the market, is the dumpster. While alleyways and dumpsters differ from store to store, after months of diving it became clear that

there are certain predictable encounters in these locations. Dumpsters are metal boxes, wheeled, with slots on the side to allow the mechanical arms of the garbage truck to pick them up. Flip down covers, often split through the middle, are metal or plastic and always have a slot for a chain and padlock. While the ability to lock up a dumpster is occasionally used, the dumpsters the diver is most likely to visit leave their doors open.⁶⁰

On a dive in late Spring 2010, Abigail and I came around the corner to a dumpster we were familiar with and often visited. We were surprised to see that a new kind of dumpster had been put in place, one with a much more obvious slot for a padlock. This sparked a conversation where Abigail speculated that the intention was to begin locking up the dumpster at night. She referred to her speculation as a conspiracy theory, but the common use of padlocks that frustrated divers mentioned on websites, in zines, or in conversation has this moving beyond conspiracy to self-evident intentional design choices.

This intention and potential exists as a reminder of the illicitness of the action we undertake and the fear that our access could be hindered based on someone else's choices. We never know who makes these choices, though. The contact between diver and market is usually limited to a chance encounter with a staff member taking out the trash or taking a smoke break, two activities that are normalized around the space of the dumpster. Of more interest, and perhaps less familiar to non-divers, are the other senses of the dumpster space. There is a particular smell of almost rotting, combined with cleaning supplies and the intermingling of waste that combine to create a specific smell of the dumpster. The smell of garbage is undeniable, surprisingly familiar, but never quite uniform. Depending on the day's throwaways

60. Frustration with the locking of dumpsters receives attention in *Evasion* (Anon., 2003) where the author recommends a series of responses, including bolt cutters and inserting glue in locks to refute the supermarket's decision to lock up the dumpster.

and the length of time since the last pickup, the dumpster smell shifts. Often the smell of garbage intermingles with wafting smells of watermelon, berries, and apples which are amongst the most fragrant of commonly thrown away fruits and peels. Early on in my dissertation process, while I was working on the proposal for this project and prior to beginning my fieldwork, a student journalist at Ryerson University joined me on a dive. At one point we popped behind one of the chain stores in the Annex and opened one of the organics bin. Food/waste was limited as this bin was filled with the remnants of pre-packaged fruit salad production – a pile of delicious smelling, but ultimately useless fruit rinds, berry tops, and cores. In these moments, the smell of the dumpster brings it closer to the produce section that has fueled it – organics not yet decomposed smell as fresh and delicious as if they were newly purchased.

Dumpsters are not the only waste spaces the dumpster diver comes into contact with. Rather, in Toronto we are faced with many choices of waste receptacles. In addition to the industrial dumpsters owned and operated by companies such as Waste Management, Inc. and BFI, the City of Toronto provides smaller scaled rolling bins to some businesses. City bins are classified as recycling, garbage, and organics and it is possible to come across decent food finds in the organics bins. As organic bins, the use of garbage bags is avoided and that which is disposed often is mixed regardless of whether it is food/waste or the truly inedible. Sometimes, however, one kind of food will be so prolific that the need for separation is not required. My first time diving found these large rolling bins filled, six deep, with butternut squash – the result of the Thanksgiving glut of overstocking and early tossing to clear shelves in time for the retail holiday. While these bins spare the diver from having to hop into the container, the discards are never separated in plastic bags. The squash, it would turn out, would be a rare occurrence where the intermingling of food/waste with waste was prevented and instead the organics bin comes

with its own limitations. The diver will not have to step in unspecified squishiness, but she will have to pull through a wider collection of organic waste to find her way to food/waste.

One of the first ways we learn to recognize waste is through its location in our daily lives. Waste is that which does not appear, except for temporarily, in our lives and most certainly not generally within our spaces of consumption. Instead, waste is adjacent to these places of consumption or readily and aggressively hidden from view. The dumpster is the key location of waste at the centre of this study and also stands apart from other locations of waste that appear in daily lives. In Toronto, the green bin, recycling bin, and garbage bin dominate domestic waste practices. As a part of waste reduction and diversion practices, Toronto has an extensive household waste management system that allows individuals to separate out their organics, recyclables, and garbage to reduce the amount of household waste going to limited landfill space. However, while this model is the most familiar for individuals, it is not always the model followed by supermarkets and discards in the dumpster will ultimately find themselves en route to a landfill.

Businesses make decisions on how to discard material in ways different from those of individuals (Koch, 2012). For individuals, the relation to waste is usually more personal and the connection to one's own waste clearer. The leftovers from my dinner are clearly mine, the empty container that I both empty and place in recycling, the seeds from my pepper all require my personal responsibility in disposal (Hawkins, 2006; Stoekl, 2011). This is not to say that every individual experiences their waste in the same way. Some may dispose thoughtlessly while others agonize over everything they place in a waste receptacle. Emotional attachment may shift for different kinds of waste. But, it is clear that individuals experience their relationships with goods in a far more complex and meaningful way than is presumed in assumptions around

disposable culture. It is mine, I throw it away, I make a choice about what to do with what I no longer want.

This ethical responsibility is confronted with business waste decisions at the site of the dumpster. This responsibility then extends to servings where discussions over responsibility for waste differ between diver and passersby. As Benjamin recounted:

... the way people are conditioned these days I'm not surprised to see all that food go to waste. But that's what drives me in Food Not Bombs ... when I see [food/waste] in the garbage it just reinforces my beliefs...

As a part of a broader set of political beliefs, Benjamin is expressing the moment of connection between his ethical stance and his actions with Food Not Bombs. This moment of revelation was shared by other divers who recount how powerful it is to confront food/waste directly in the dumpster and that knowledge spurs on their actions.

These ethical concerns also reframe the meaning of the dumpster in a food/waste circulatory system that takes over from the dumpster/landfill circulatory system. For those who are not dumpster divers, the space of waste cannot be the space of consumption and instead is part of urban infrastructure that can be ignored. However, the FNBER looking for ingredients for their next communal meal bridge the separation of circulation through their actions. The dumpster location becomes a reasonable space for gathering edible food and the diver is undeterred by social norms. The diver reveals the hypocrisy of defining dumpstered food as lacking in edible meaning when this meaning is merely inscribed by placement. This response to dumpster diving is also reminiscent of what one FNBER said during an interview. When considering the significance of where food comes from and how to respond to questions from non-divers regarding where the divers' food comes from, Adam explained:

A really common reaction [of non-divers] ... is they say you don't know where that food's been and [I respond] I know immediately where it was before, it was on the shelf but then

what really kind of like messes them up is I say do you know where the food came from before it was on the shelf? I probably know more about food in the dumpsters cause I know it came from that shelf and now its here. If you go into the supermarket and you buy an apple off the shelf do you know where that apple came from? Do you know the conditions it was produced in? Do you know if it was safe or sanitary or anything ... we don't really know anything about our food at all. The fact that it was in the dumpster is not so bad because before it was put on the shelf who knows what place it came from ... It looks nice on the shelf but it could've easily been not in a dumpster but in some nasty, dirty truck on the way here ... its just under the bright lights of the supermarket ... it looks perfect and great but there's a hidden side to all of our food ...

At the same time that Adam is clearly aware that the contagion available to food during its entire lifecycle is far more complex than may appear in the fluorescent glare of the supermarket, the dumpster also serves as an opportunity to reset concerns around production relations. Dumpster diving, or punk cuisine, cleanses food of the contamination of corporate production (Clark, 2000; 2004). In this case, corporate food is rotten and it is only by working outside of the monetary exchange system that divers can refute the contagion inherent in commodified food. Knowledge is also understood in a different context, one where outsider knowledge is privileged. Adam is clear that he knows more about food transportation and distribution than the people who respond to his diving. Thus, the knowledge of food production relations and the almost magical understanding of the dumpster reveals a complex understanding of what dumpstered food can mean.

Evidently, purity and cleanliness differ between divers and non-divers, but the distinction is one worth working through in more detail. By this point, it should be clear that the purity of food is far more complex than purchase price, location or regulatory standards hold, but the understanding of the circulation of foodstuffs is also significant. Many people, regardless of how they access their food, are unlikely to view the entire circulation system, from field to fork, and instead can picture the history of food through a number of mediations that either market things like safety and quality or make us suspicious of the circumstances within which our food came to

our plates (Knezevic, 2012). These, of course, are not the only subject positions that one can take up in order to understand food systems. However, it is clear that one individual is unlikely to be able to see the entire map of the history of their own food.

Despite this complicated interaction of individual motivations and end practices, the dumpster carries with it the meaning of the no longer wanted, the disposed of, the unneeded, and the unusable. It is the space to dump a stolen wallet or a body, evidence of unethical purchases or embarrassment of the original owner of the purchase and/or disposal. For the diver, it is a space of excitement, adventure, potential, and a meal. One of my earliest diving mentors was a young woman who told me a story about diving late at night, alone with her dog. She was harassed by a man travelling through the alleyway, but her dog scared him away. When she was telling the story, her lesson was the importance of having a dog, not that she shouldn't have been in an alley late at night. Feminism and the circulatory city come together and it becomes not only possible for divers to change the meaning of food/waste, but also traverse dangerous urban spaces for their own pleasure. This young woman's claim to the city confronts the way urban spaces continue to be constructed as dangerous, particularly for women (Wilson, 1991).

Rather than a space of danger or of discarded value and meaning, the dumpster holds potential meaning and value which is only revealed once a diver begins to dig around the dumpster to reveal its treasures. It is therefore unsurprising that dumpsters are so frequently placed in illicit areas of the cityscape, where we are culturally trained to not enter lest we be drawn into these activities. For the dumpster diver, this illicit space is treated as a space of discovering and seeking, rather than a space of fear (Harris & Fructer, 2007). It is through the intentional traversing of these illicit spaces that the dumpster diver herself also reworks the circulation of urban spaces. Taking to the hidden spaces of waste opens up the city to a new way

of exploring where the hidden is revealed and the secrets we attempt to hide from ourselves are exposed.

Kitchen

If the dumpster is the space of food/waste, the kitchen is the space of transformation. While the moment of recovery is significant in determining the new meaning the food object will have when the potential for edibility is reclaimed, the transformative process is not yet complete. When recovering food from the bin it is necessary to go through a process of selection and determination to ensure the safety of the food that is taken. In the same way that not all food removed from market shelves is inedible, not everything found in a dumpster is recoverable. A complex series of selections and uses of specific knowledge sets are necessitated in order to sort through the mass of potential food. Once these selections have been made, the process is not completed and it is necessary to retreat to a clean space – a space of preparation and of new meaning making.

For many of us, this is the home kitchen where overhead lighting allows for a better look at recovered food and an opportunity to use soap and water to clean what was left for garbage. It is under the home lights that the scars and blemishes muted by darkness may reveal that what was thought to be food/waste has already become inedible. This is also a space of meeting where the smell one has picked up, on clothing, in bags, and on food, seems out of place (Douglas, 2002a; Cresswell, 1996). In the dumpster spaces, the smell slowly wafts into the nuance of scent that allows a nose to pick up the fragrance of prepackaged food and ripe produce, but taken out of that context smell is more pungent and its dislocation apparent. My own process is simultaneously soaking all of the vegetables recovered in vinegar water while addressing my own hygiene. I leave my dirty clothes in a pile as I shower before putting them into the washing

machine off my kitchen. As the food is baptized into edibility, I am shedding the identity I temporarily take on ... the smell of garbage lingers as I wash my hair and skin and I am reminded of the distance that those garbage spaces have from my home. I am able to come home and wash away the garbage scent. I leave behind the waste space as its last remnant washes down the drain and I can go on without the unavoidable reminder to those who surround me that I do not belong. Once my shower is done and I've put on clean clothes, I can wash my dumpster uniform and complete the work needed to wash the vegetables I have gathered. This transformation is thus of both food/waste and diver. I shed the dumpster for my life in the home where I do not exist as a diver. The external meaning of my body changes as it moves through these different spaces but it is my senses, my experience, and my understanding that travels through these areas.

Rinsing, drying, and discarding are the final moments of this stage. If I'm diving for FNB, I will re-bag the food for the serving and find room in an already full fridge and freezer. If the food is for personal use, invariably a plan must be made to consume the food while it remains good. While vegetables, specifically, are thrown away before they are inedible, their time is short when taken from the bin. At this point, it becomes necessary to determine how quickly cooking must occur to halt the final demise of collected food. On a good night, it will wait until morning, but planning must, at some point, occur.

The challenge of managing dumpstered food/waste is one well known amongst divers and features prominently in the documentary *Dive!* (Seifert, 2009). The filmmaker displays the quality and quantity of food that can be found in the dumpster, but notes that this abundance can simultaneously become a burden. Already arriving late at night, cleaning can take hours and he fears his wife, who does much of this work, will not be happy when he returns with a particularly large load of berries. Assessments made based on what has been gathered, what is in the

cupboards, and what might be delicious to have for dinner the next day will determine what will be made. And then the food must be prepared. On nights when a large amount of the same item are found can mean delicious culinary surprises, but often also leads to extensive prepping after cleaning has been completed. This is especially true when the location of cooking is the FNB kitchen.

Soybomb, the location of communal cookings for much of my time with FNB, is a large loft space in downtown Toronto. A space built for play, the living area is dominated by a mini (skateboard) ramp that the original resident built. Taking advantage of an old artist live/work space, the warehouse scaled space has been renovated over the past decade to house, at the time of research, five people, two cats, various house guests and visitors, bikes, punk shows, and FNB cookings.

For FNB, the large kitchen, with hand-poured concrete counters and central island, offers enough space to easily accommodate the many cooks that come together every other Sunday. But it isn't only cooking that happens those Sunday mornings: conversations fly, new friends are made, and politics are debated. Not everyone who comes to an FNB cooking or serving fits a uniform political stance and instead it becomes clear that the reasons for coming are diverse. It is over the stove and the counter that these discussions can be had while debates flourish and dialogues begin in a way encouraged by a shared kitchen. While one hand is distracted chopping, stirring, and combining, the other is freed to form allegiances, friendships, and fissures.

Servings & Direct Action

Food Not Bombs finds its roots in direct action activism, a model that rather than the depending on liberal individualism or traditional governmental structures seeks to address social problems and create direct solutions through an anarchist political culture (Gordon, 2008).

CrimethInc's *Recipe for disaster* (2005) defines "Any action that side-steps regulations, representatives, and authorities to accomplish goals directly [as] direct action" (12). Within the circulatory city, direct action connects the separated circulations of food and waste caused by food regulations, supermarket choices, and socio-legal histories. While direct action is more commonly associated with the property damage of animal testing labs or windows during G20 protests, the misrepresentation of this activism by mainstream media also serves to dismiss the far more common use of direct action to directly impact social problems (Potter, 2011). Graeber's (2009) extensive ethnography of direct action planning during the early 2000s is an excellent example of the depth with which direct actors seek to critique not only G20 or WTO meetings, but to also enact a more democratic form of organizing protesters. For Graeber this democratic decision-making is the most significant aspect of direct action organizing, but it is also the aspect that is rarely seen outside the movement. Thus, the strong association between direct action and violence obscures the strength of direct action and also the meaning of direct actions for activists.

Direct action also merges with waste and food activism through what Reed (2005) defines as 'environmental justice ecocriticism.' Writing from a literary history of ecological criticism within the context of direct action activism, evident in Reed's work is the need to understand a parallel history between literary ecocriticism and environmental justice. His objective is to:

...bring together theoretical tools from political ecology, cultural studies, Marxist theories of the production of nature, racial formation and critical race theory, postcolonial theory, and multiethnic literary theory, among other sites. (237)

He comes to this determination after the burgeoning mid-1990s environmental justice movement and argues compellingly that it is necessary to bridge theoretical frameworks and

undertakings to move both environmental justice and ecocriticism forward. It is only through bridging what had previously been treated as separate concerns that a “cognitive praxis” (218) can be achieved and an influence on a broader world by academic work can be achieved. “True transformation would entail a rethinking of all the premises of the field [ecocriticism] through the lens of social justice, not the mere addition of such concerns” (230).

Reed's academic understanding grounds any environmental activism in a history of developing ideas around how best to enact change in order to achieve environmental and social justice. In line with this, the goal of political dumpster divers is not merely to reclaim food/waste for the hungry, but to also directly interrogate and intervene towards eradicating the need to reclaim food/waste in the first place. These environmentalist connections ring loudly within the circulatory city as scholars and activists attempt to bridge modernist thinking about the separation between urban and rural to devise sustainable living models and spatial justice (Harvey, 2009; Soja, 2000).

Of course it is possible to dumpster dive without a broader intention for social change.⁶¹ However, it will become clear that the strength and potential of dumpster diving actually lies in its ability to address the discursive and cultural reasons why it has become commonly acceptable to throw away edible food, to let people go hungry, and to ignore collective responsibility for protecting ecosystems. Further, it is only through these larger scaled critiques that it becomes possible to deconstruct and disempower arguments that actively and aggressively undercut the feeding of human populations (Patel, 2007).

61. *The Art of Dumpster Diving* (Hoffman, 1993) is a perfect example of this. As a text, it is well known amongst diving circles and is frequently cited by resource lists regarding dumpster diving. However, at its centre are recommendations on how to survive on waste not based on a social justice critique, but rather on an opportunistic and selfish approach to waste. Hoffman argues not to reclaim waste for better lives for everyone, but rather as a way of improving one's own individual circumstances. This is then also reflected in the rumoured hubris he had in response to the minor celebrity he achieved as a result of the book.

The strength of FNB work and the significance of direct action to redirecting food/waste circulation in the city are linked to Reed's understanding of ecocriticism. One February evening in 2011, we held a screening of *Dive!* at Soybomb in honour of Keith McHenry's visit and the significance of macro connections of politics came up in our conversation afterward. As I wrote in my field notes:

We watched *Dive!* again and it was interesting to hear Keith's response to the film. I had [previously] noticed that the film uses the FNB model of food redistribution, but never acknowledges that it is the FNB model. Rather, he [Seifert] frames the idea as one of his son's to highlight its simplicity. Of interest, the stores that he approaches are ones that, according to Keith, are partners with FNB already. It occurs to me that this is one of the problems with addressing food [waste] within the social reality structured by liberal individualized consumer capitalism – the onus is put on the individual to come up with a solution when in actual fact, individual solutions are part of the problem. They only work to reinforce the oppressive structures already in place. (Field Notes, February 17, 2011)

The difference between the consumer subject and anti-consumer subject will be detailed in the next chapter, but the separation between individual and communal solutions is central to direct action and the circulation of FNB. It is also key to how FNB reworks the city differently from the director of *Dive!* Keith's insider knowledge revealed that the underground circulation of FNB was alive and well in Los Angeles, but had not been revealed to the small group of divers the film documents. Rather, the recirculation of food/waste can easily remain unseen and the challenge of individual action I noted in my field notes becomes clear in this example. Without the ongoing outreach and circulation of ideas the movement of food/waste will serve to only temporarily bridge the divide between the two categories. It becomes necessary to contribute further outreach in order to ensure that the knowledge divers carry with them is not lost in the underground nature of their actions.

FNB recirculates through the city with food/waste in order to produce new models of sustainable connections between people. While the overt work of FNB is not to bridge the

distinctions between consumption and production that food sovereignists focus on, the model is easily transposed onto food production. While the above example speaks to a disconnect between divers in Los Angeles, the Food Not Bombs project is well known and continues to influence urban activists and their spaces in expected and unexpected ways. The salience of FNB is seen in the emergence of groups like Food Not Lawns who seek to directly counter the removal of food production from the cities. Within Toronto's FNB group, the acting on local food/waste systems to create communal meals extends to broader food politics where discussions that occur over a meal in the park involve critiquing current food systems, global capitalism, seeking information about the experience of street-involved people we meet, and extending political discussions into well-fed and open aired common ground.

By drawing on direct action techniques, political dumpster divers achieve a synthesis of symbolic (Thompson, 2011) and material action against food/waste (Heynen, 2006). Direct action takes up the spectacular nature of protest and bridges it with mutual aid and commitment to a community that for many divers is key to their dedication to FNB. For Abigail, this understanding of direct action was key to her joining the Toronto chapter:

I had no idea about Food Not Bombs until I met [another member] who told me about it and [it was] right up my alley for [many] reasons ... I think there's so much waste in the world and all these grocery stores are throwing out all this food and I think it's disgusting how much food we waste ... I just wanted to get involved with Food Not Bombs because it's direct action in my opinion that we're going directly to these dumpsters, we're taking this food that would have been put to waste and doing something useful with it so I feel like it's reducing and reusing and recycling in its true sense.

As direct action, the process is both simple and obvious as a way to directly impact two concerns Abigail lays out. Rather than focusing on the larger political messaging and connections as some other members did, Abigail is concerned with the simplicity of the action and the impact of FNB. FNB work immediately recirculates food/waste and delivers it to people

who need it. There is no need for institutional structure and the ethical responsibility, she feels, for reducing wasted food easily pairs with her desire to live environmentally.

Direct action can also be about outreach and education, aspects of which are made evident in this exchange:

Adam: ...Food Not Bombs is also very much connected to that [being raised to not waste food] because it's based on the idea that there is a system in place that's restricting access to food for people so how can we subvert that system, how can we create, how can we give access to those people who don't have [access] and the main strategy ... that we employ ... is to go out and reclaim food from dumpsters and then serve it to people ... because we don't have the money to go and buy food to serve people...

Erin: ...that's one of the major reasons I got involved with Food Not Bombs ... because I'm really passionate about food security and food policy and ... there are so many people who have to live on five dollars a day and they can't afford to eat healthy and they don't know how to eat healthy and being able to provide these people with access to healthy food and let them know that it is possible ... I think it's great...

Sandra: ...that not even just people who can't afford it but people who can afford food but just also bringing awareness to the issue that so much food gets wasted. [Erin: yah, exactly] So just letting people know that all this is really good food left and ... they keep producing more food and it gets shipped in so frequently ... there's so much food that gets wasted and ... just bringing awareness to that issue I feel is really important...

It is not only about reclaiming food or DIY politics, but also about a specific social justice concern regarding not only accessibility to healthy food, but also knowledge about healthy food production.⁶² This lengthy exchange hits upon the complications and possibilities of the FNB model in the circulatory city. Bringing together various knowledge sets around food availability and healthy food making, these divers seek to strengthen the connections between all people and more natural eating practices. All three are clear that they feel everyone should have access to

62. *Resetting the table: A people's food policy for Canada* (People's Food Policy Project, 2011) lists access and food knowledge as key areas for improvement in a Canadian food policy. Many food activists also focus on the loss of food knowledge to growing food related health problems (Bittman, 2009; Maharaj, 2009). For FNB volunteers this is added to the nutritionally lacking food that is available to food insecure people.

food and that drawing dual awareness to the amount of food wasted and providing healthy meals at servings are a part of a broader project to engage with food in the city.

The meaning of healthy and good food is also implied, but not necessarily highlighted in this discussion. FNB serves only vegetarian or vegan meals and all the divers I worked with or interviewed saw this as central to the work FNB does. As Benjamin noted:

I'm very concerned about the way agriculture works on a global scale. There are organizations ... that ... for the last 60 years [have] been doing their best to change things from the organic to synthetic ... when you have something that has been completely designed by man then we're able to privatize it, we're able to price it [at] whatever price we choose and it's not that same ... powerful thing that it was once before. An orange that was made in a laboratory is not only devoid of its natural beauty, but devoid of its inherent belonging to [the category of food]. Now it's a numbers game so if there is more synthetic stuff on your shelf in the grocery stores then there is organic not to mention the fact that the organic stuff is more expensive, then the game is rigged. So ... you're most likely going to pick the cheaper ... food ... Why do we go to a grocery store and find cheaper prices for junk food ... rather than ... apples and fruits and vegetables?

For Benjamin, the connection between global food systems and agriculture is central to his understanding of FNB work. The basic concern with availability of food to all is extended to a concern with the kind of food that is being made available. The organic and natural are treated as interchangeable and accessing a direct connection to food grown, rather than produced (here in a laboratory), becomes a key component of the food system Benjamin imagines.

Within this focus on healthy and natural foods is an additional dilemma for the FNB volunteer. While the food politics and knowledge of the group in general are very high, the significance of dumpstered food to the work muddies the outreach exchanges and the way food/waste circulates through the city. As Sandra detailed:

I think that's why it's really important [that] as conflicted as we are to tell people that it's from the dumpster ... that's one of the issues that Food Not Bombs tries to confront is this food [/] waste so when you tell people and you confront people and get them to ask questions about why they feel that dumpster food is gross or whatever they say then you're ... getting people to think twice about their decisions ...

When FNB activists serve soup they are displaying wasted food in a way more compelling than statistics. This display of the food that is so easily reclaimed from the dumpster is displayed and shared and outreach is presumed to bring awareness. As Sandra makes clear, the conversation can be challenging and draws on a series of preconceived notions and misunderstandings of dumpster diving and food/waste.

Within the context of the city and public spaces that FNB serves in, these conversations have the potential to happen with anyone and everyone. In fact, during the above conversation, Erin and Sandra discussed a recent action they had taken offering muffins on Ryerson University campus. They were very upfront with passersby that the muffins had been made with dumpstered ingredients, most specifically berries, in order to draw attention to food/waste problems. They were delighted to report that while some people refused, most did not, including then Mayor David Miller.

As is clear from the various ways direct action activism plays out amongst FNBers, the act of reclaiming and serving food/waste is connected to a variety of political projects and with a number of purposes. At the centre of these is a defense of the right to food and an understanding of food/waste as directly connected to broader social inequalities and concerns (Heynen, 2007). As a disruption to food/waste circulation, FNB puts on display the failures of the food system. It leaves far too much food left to rot and far too many mouths are left empty. Taking advantage of the specifically urban spaces they organize within, FNB volunteers utilize their ability to reconfigure these circulatory structures to display food/waste and bring delicious meals to public parks.

Bodies Following Food/Waste

All of this brings us to a more careful consideration of food/waste and FNB activists. As laid out above, through the circulation of food and waste FNBers serves to connect separate movements into an interdependent system. Ostensibly, lived experience tells us that these two categories must be different, separate, and contained, but as is clear through the work of political dumpster divers, these categories are much more liminal and permeable than they may at first appear (Douglas, 2002a; Hawkins, 2006). They challenge the categories that Douglas (2002a) has already defined as part of a larger cultural symbolic system and instead work with the circulatory city to critique the failures of food systems to provide sustainable cities and food to all of their residents.

The spaces of food/waste are occupied by bodies – bodies of divers, passersby, and visitors to servings – as they move through urban circulations. The trajectory of movement outlined above moves even further as dumpster diving is connected across broad global territories where the actions of divers are understood as connected. Rather than only looking to the process of moving food and waste, dumpster diving moves people through cities, from city to city, and shifts ideas about food and waste. For the anonymous author of *Evasion* (2003), whose pursuits bring him from city to city and dumpster to dumpster as he (the author is most presumably white, heterosexual and male) seeks to live by evading mainstream society. As he tours the country, often via hopped trains, he finds a way to support himself through the transferable skill of dumpster diving. Each town or city has its own cartography of waste and he follows these, along with his musical and romantic pursuits. He also names names and it becomes clear through the text where good dumpster finds are available. In the United States, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods are both well known for ample edible food/waste and provide a

good place to start for any dumpster diver new to an area. They also bring the country together, as he notes:

I wasn't sure if it [Mobridge] was still America, and I had to check the grocer's dumpster just to be sure. There was always the consistent and confounding thread running through each town and region in America: edible trash (25).

This is, of course, not to say that it is only America that throws away edible food – clearly it is not – but rather that a sense of belonging exists in understanding a commonality of end experiences of commodified foodstuffs. For some, the space of the dumpster, the bin or the skip is a way of understanding circulation through larger parts of the globe. While *Evasion* sees America through its dumpsters, other divers are able to support their travels by using the cartography of food/waste streams to support themselves without using money. As a cashless alternative to subsistence, dumpster diving opens up the experience of life as somewhat distinct from the structuring of paid employment. This is central to the use FNBERs made of their dumpstering and recirculation skills. While many first came into contact with dumpstering through their involvement in FNB, it became clear through conversations and investigating dumpster diving communities further that the act provided a freedom from employment and money. For example, Erin spoke about early adventures in dumpstering that freed her from needing money, but also took her on the road. Not only did she dumpster with friends further out from the city and was therefore able to take advantage of factory dumpsters because of a housemate's car ownership, but dumpstering allowed her to travel without having much money.

...the first time I started dumpstering food was a couple years ago and I started to meet these really great people who ... dumpstered all the time and I went out with them one night and one of the people ... drove so ... sometimes we'd drive to Etobicoke and go to these really great dumpsters. And I don't know if you know Shasha cookies ... we would always go to their factory and ... they'd have the single packets of cookies – the machine would malfunction so it would just be this big long tube of ginger cookies. So we'd fill up my friend's car with ginger cookies and bring them back to the house and have them for months and months. And then once we did that ... I would always go out and dumpster

because I thought it was amazing that we found so much great stuff. So that's when I started and then when I was traveling it came in handy because I didn't travel with a lot of money ... I started helping out with some of the [FNB] servings when I was traveling cause I would stay in places for a good amount of time and then when I came back to Toronto I wanted to get involved.

The use of FNB as a way to aid travellers was not unique to Erin's experience and also came up in many aspects of this research. We were often joined by travellers and geographic movement is central to the broader anti-authoritarian and activist communities within which dumpster diving is a central activity. Cities are connected not only internally with the circulation of food/waste, but across the globe as these circulations extend beyond discrete, municipal borders.

Erin specified that she had engaged in these activities in the first world, thus pointing to significant differences of waste resulting from heavily industrialized food systems. However, within industrialized nations it becomes clear that a related and similar relationship to wasted food can be experienced. Central to Erin's traveling is work with FNB, work that also signals a further way of understanding the circulation of food and waste that bind cities. Beyond being a worldwide activist movement, it also provides a landing place for the traveller who can join a serving and be reasonably certain to find connections with people locally who share her politics, her ideals, and her way of understanding community life. Thus, it is not only about the communal activism of sharing food, but also a way of sharing a way of life and a broader political understanding of the world for the like-minded traveller passing through.⁶³

The global circulation of these ideas also, in some cases, has the idea predate contact with the FNB model directly. Daniel experienced his first FNB serving as a younger man while

63. Daniel notes that this can also be a detriment to considering one's own political stance. He mentions having surrounded himself with like-minded individuals who reproduce his own way of understanding the world. The limitations then become the insular nature of community that do as much to exclude as they do to include.

traveling to another Ontario city to see a punk show. On his way to the show, he came across a serving without a sign and remembers thinking it was exactly the kind of activism he had been looking for. It was only years later after much more research into anarchist politics that he realized that the punk kids he met were part of a much larger movement, rather than seeing it as an ingenious yet obvious way of dealing with food waste. The outreach that McHenry (2012) sees as so central to the work of FNB and the literature table (39-43) is a way of connecting the direct action of the food recovery and sharing model with people who pass by the public spaces of the serving. For Daniel, the serving seemed like the most obvious idea in the world, one he was surprised he had never thought of before and it was through the obviousness of the display that he was able to take the activist ideas home with him and change his own growing understanding of, and relationship to, food and waste. Outreach as a way of combatting rates of wasted food is central to another way that food/waste communicates and is communicated about.

The connections across spaces is achieved through travel and FNB outreach, but these examples are also specific means of circulating within the dumpster diving community. While parks offer an opportunity for FNB activists to speak with a variety of people, the actions of the dumpster divers most often occur within spaces that are not traversed by many and are instead understood through vague considerations. Cities are bound through these actions and the ongoing appearance of FNB groups around the world remake food/waste and reaffirm the significance of their actions. Divers remake their own cities and bring the ability to interrogate food/waste circulation into their own movement through other cities and around the globe.

Conclusion

This chapter has worked through the way dumpster diving and Food Not Bombs action reconfigures the circulatory city. The spaces of the city that are not usually central to many

people's experiences are foregrounded for the dumpster diver and become the spaces they encounter the food/waste material that is collected, shared, and ingested. Building on the theoretical and socio-legal histories of the previous chapters, the contemporary city is a fertile field for the dumpster diver to produce new ways of relating to others and questioning capitalist structuring of food systems and urban eating behaviour. Divers, it should be clear, are part of a much longer history of urban food and common access to food production and food consumption. The FNB group I dove with are drawing on these histories and breaks in urban circulation to remake the spaces that surround them.

It is not only the spaces that are reconfigured, however, and in the next chapter I turn to a discussion not of how divers change their spaces, but how diving changes divers. It will become clear that this recirculation remakes the volunteers who take part and works with an anti-consumer subjectivity that at once questions food/waste and also reworks divers' relationships to consumer culture. Connected to the idealized gift economy that is implicit in the work of FNB, the shifted social relations central to the movement of food/waste provide a framework for divers to explore and produce alternative subject positions. The move away from a binary understanding of food and waste detailed in Chapter One is made possible by socio-legal histories of food activism and the circulatory nature of the city laid out in Chapters Two and now Three.

Divers are actively questioning their experiences of capitalist food systems and constructing an anti-consumer position that is not solely interested in shifting shopping behaviour. Rather, the anti-consumer subject position that is the focus of the next chapter is bridging material experiences and practices in order to produce new ways of being in the world. The social relations of the gift economy are ingested through shared meals and reclaimed

food/waste to shift individual experiences into a collective stand against a food system and connected economy, that values money over sustenance.

Chapter 4: Reclaiming Subjects: Dumpster Diving

When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist. (Archbishop Dom Helder Camara, qtd. Heymen, 2006, 130)

The distinction between the kind of questions anti-poverty and anti-hunger activists can ask laid out by Archbishop Camara is central to the challenge faced by Toronto's Food Not Bombs dumpster divers. Sharing food is supported and valorized, but the step FNB takes to connect this sharing to broader systemic critiques often results in aggressive persecution by the state.⁶⁴ Unlike the celebration of the individualized food heroes that so frequently stand as media celebrities writing bestselling books, popular blogs, and websites,⁶⁵ the direct action of dumpster diving food activists is more often greeted with suspicion.⁶⁶ This is partially explained by the intersecting political values of these groups that would likely lead them away from seeking celebrity, but also because their actions draw attention to inequalities in the food system that can not be resolved without radical intervention and reorganization (Winne, 2009). Instead, combatting unnecessary food waste requires multi-faceted assessments and changes to occur (Bloom, 2010; Stuart, 2009; Rathje & Murphy, 1992).

In previous chapters the history behind the production of such high levels of food/waste, the socio-legal framework for contemporary dumpster diving, and the intervention by divers to the circulatory city to use food/waste to produce new social relations have been discussed. In this

64. See, for example, the rise of persecution in the US focused on changing local laws with the direct intention of preventing mutual aid groups from serving food in public parks.

65. See, for example, the rise of Mark Bittman or Micheal Pollan. While they are both doing excellent public outreach work, they are also inherently speaking to a middle class identity that foregrounds consumer solutions rather than radical interventions as a means to address failures in the food system.

66. Despite the popularity to Stuart's (2009) text that began with his own identity as a freegan or the mass media attention freegan.info in New York has received, the public attention to dumpster diving has done little thus far to impact food systems. Some encouraging movements, however, can be seen in the success of Britain's *This is Rubbish* to impact UK legislative discussions and the launching of WRAP which has been replicated in Australia as a government run site focused on food waste reduction and education.

chapter, the subjectivity of individual dumpster divers will be discussed. Within Toronto's FNB who I worked with and whose members I interviewed for this project is a shared concern for not only feeding the hungry, but also following Camara's concern for why people are going hungry. Their activism is centred on responding against neoliberal restructuring that has increasingly downloaded responsibility for social support onto individuals. In fact:

As the choice of options for action is, or so the neo-liberal notion of rationality would have it, the expression of free will on the basis of a self-determined decision, the consequences of the action are borne by the subject alone, who is also solely responsible for them. This strategy can be deployed in all sorts of areas and leads to areas of social responsibility becoming a matter of personal provisions. (Lemke, 2001, 201)

In response to this, FNB volunteers seek to draw on the utopian gift economy as a way of not only countering the loss of social support resulting from neoliberalism, but also as a means of creating a new social structure that exists outside of the role of consumer (Bauman, 2000).

The dilemma between how structural critiques are taken up and responded to is one that contributes to the tapestry that radical dumpster divers respond to and exist within. If the mainstream foodie puts the individual first and runs the risk of reproducing neoliberal models (Johnston & Baumann, 2010), the radical dumpster diver works to create new models that directly critique the broader causes of both food/waste and hunger.⁶⁷ Radical critiques take on the imbedded, structural inequalities of a commodified food system. These critiques focus on global economic control of food (Shiva, 2000), argue for urban food security and production (Koc, *et al.*, 1999), and highlight failures by the Canadian government to develop a food policy (MacCrae, 1999).⁶⁸

67. This is further linked to a broader global social justice framework synthesized by Klein's (2000) *No Logo* which is central to the subject role dumpster divers take up.

68. The People's Food Policy attempts to provide answers to this gap in Canadian national policy and was developed through community consultation across the country. Despite extensive consultation with community members, professionals, and academics wasted food is mentioned only once as an environmental concern. Despite a focus on social justice in the policy, connecting high levels of

Radical food communities, particularly Food Not Bombs, feature what Heynen (2006) calls the reassertion of the right to food at the centre of mutual aid models of distribution. Reasserting the right to food also lies at the centre of the subject identity that dumpster divers seek to build. While volunteers present nuanced understandings of the intersections between this right and other aspects of their politics, the right to basic needs is central. For example, Benjamin notes:

... I believe that everyone has the right to eat, everyone has the right to have a warm bed at night, everyone has a right to clothing and books and basic necessities beyond [what] the wants and luxuries of our society can be delegated through ... I think that the mindset of people these days ... that when you can get everything that you [can] imagine then you don't have the appreciation for it so everything becomes valueless and meaningless and once you convert to building what you have, finding what you have, searching for what you have and actually sweating for it and appreciating it then these great luxuries of yours ... [they're] meaningless.

Benjamin connects his belief in the right to food directly to the broader failures of consumer culture to meet necessities and instead result in consumers focusing on meaningless luxuries. The meaning that divers reinscribe into food/waste is stripped not only in discard, but in consumer goods more broadly. For Benjamin, meaning is derived from the work put into not entering a retail space, but using one's labour to exist outside of consumer culture as much as possible. Daniel and I also spoke about the right to food and he found his own relationship to dumpster diving changing as his politics developed. More specifically:

...I was more comfortable dumpster diving when I started to internalize the social justice and class aspect of food politics like the idea that everybody should be able to eat ... the food system is broken and it needs to be fixed within this industrial capitalist framework ... I guess it was easier because I was surrounded more with really ideological radical thought ...

food/waste to food insecurity does not come out in the People's Policy. Toronto has had a food policy since 1992 and in 2010 released *Cultivating food connections: Toward a healthy and sustainable food system for Toronto* (McKeown, 2010). This report mentions, in passing, wasted food but does little beyond acknowledging that it puts a strain on a sustainable system.

Here, Daniel agrees that food is a right and has also become a way that he has changed as a result of his developing political understanding. This is not only the result of his own self-education and action, but also reinforced by a community of people asking similar questions and seeking to critique commodified food cultures together. One activist does not exist alone, but rather works with others both in direct action and political identity development. This development became clear when Daniel went on to compare his previous revisionist and liberal politics. The limitations to liberal engagement lie in a fundamental disagreement with statist politics.

I find people stop really actively learning a lot of things because why bother reading this 10 page policy statement when you know it's a load of shit. You know it's like that kind of stuff where its you're not really going to kill yourself poring over the details of what's wrong with food distribution if the answer is revolution.⁶⁹

Daniel's reference to revolution draws out the significance in the work FNB volunteers do when they produce new social relations. Instead of depending upon a state to organize them, they look to mutual aid, gift economies, and dual power as a means of producing preferred social relations. Dual power, drawing from Lenin (1917), argues for the gradual building of alternative institutions that will move dependence away from the state and ultimately take over through autonomous, non-hierarchical control (Holloway, 2002). Building in the shell of the old moves anarchist theorists and activists away from spectacular revolutions to an evolution towards new social, political, and economic organization.

While being concerned about food/waste and understanding why divers would act as they do, another step is necessary to bridge this concern with subsuming social training that dumpsters are dirty and dangerous. For some this happens in the moment when it becomes

69. Daniel also unintentionally highlights another similarity between himself and other divers I spoke with during this research. His reference to reading policy papers demonstrates an interest in engaging with state regulations and legal culture through self-education and careful study. This interest in self-education was not only focused on reading policy documents, but also is a central feature of DIY communities in general where members distrust mainstream information and prefer to investigate these processes themselves.

undeniable that the statistics of wasted food are, in fact, material in the dumpsters behind our grocery stores.

The three aspects of FNB Toronto's collective approach to anti-consumer identities and their direct action work broadly cuts across mutual aid, gift economies, and dual power. As a political umbrella, the experience of each individual diver is different and this chapter will go on to discuss how divers first become divers, then draw on mutual aid models, dual power, and gift economies to imagine a free-ness both of food and linked to their own liberty. Through these approaches this community is working together to create shared understandings of how new models of food distribution could take place outside of a capitalist framework.

Taking on the mantel and internalizing the anti-consumer politics of the dumpster diver is key to the way their actions can be understood in the broader context of food politics and food systems. The radical action of FNB members falls under the broader umbrella terms of anarchist, anticapitalist, and antiglobalization activism that is most commonly visible through G20 and WTO protests and associated with a specific kind of Black Bloc anarchism known mostly for a propensity to property damage (Yuen, *et al.*, 2004; Graeber, 2009; Gautney, 2010). However, the radical action of FNB members and political dumpster divers is one that can be understood as situated in a specific relationship to consumer identities and consumer culture. It is within these subject positions and cultural experiences that the direct action of dumpster diving takes the shape of an activist response rather than remaining an unusual personal choice.⁷⁰

Rooted in the socio-legal, cultural, and physical histories of Toronto and other urban centres, the dumpster diver is producing a social relation rooted in the gift economy. The diver

70. In contrast to my findings, Lewin & Williams (2009) found that DIY amongst their punk participants was first and foremost a means of creating an identity independent of mass produced goods (77). They do not discount that these punks also had political motivations, however self-expression took precedence.

produces these relations through the act of dumpster diving and reclamation of food/waste, but these acts also change the diver herself. Connected across time and space, diving remains simultaneously shared and individual. This chapter looks towards the individual subjective experience of the diver and the taking on of an anti-consumer identity. Rather than accepting the role of consumer, divers draw on their shared activism to exist as much as possible outside of capitalist relations. In this interest, this chapter details the distinctions made between dumpster divers and consumer culture, and more specifically between the role of the anti-consumer and the consumer.

Beginnings

To encounter the dumpster is to face the detritus of the consumer culture more commonly visible inside the store (Benjamin, 1999; Hetherington, 2007; Shields, 1992b). The spaces typically left open for consumer culture are all connected to this waste stream as their excess must be expelled somehow, but the physical separation of the two is necessary to maintain the illusion of the shopping space. In the supermarket, the array of options for purchased food allow the consumer subject to make decisions and presume independence in what they put in their grocery cart.⁷¹ The modern grocery store offers an array of foods from around the globe that allow the potential of a cosmopolitan eating subject (Flusty, 2004). Behind the store in the dumpster these choices, while impacted by the trade negotiations and changes to the global food market, are reduced to a different kind of availability (Josling, *et al.*, 2004). Instead of being able

71. Mintz (1985) notes the illusion of freedom within food purchasing through his history of the rise of sugar use in England. Specifically, "The proclaimed freedom to choose meant freedom only within a range of possibilities laid down by forces over which those who were, supposedly, freely choosing exercised no control at all. That substances like sugar could be changed from curiosities or adornments in English life into essential ingredients of decent self-respecting hospitality required that people weave them into the fabric of their daily lives, endowing them with meaning and teaching each other to enjoy their consumption" (119). Food consumption bridges requirement and desire and when mediated through consumer culture successfully produces a sense of control in the consumer.

to choose from around the world, the diver has the now more unusual experience of making do with what is available. Thus, the findings in the dumpster define the evening meal as the ingredients collected become soups, curries, casseroles, salads, and deserts. Shifting from week to week and season to season, the findings remove the sense of consumer choice and replace it with ingenuity and a different kind of food knowledge that offers an ability to flexibly respond to an ever-changing compliment of food choices. However, the position of dumpster diver is not inherent or easily entered into and for many it is possible to trace, through personal memory, a history of diving and the shift in one's own subject position.

Divers are often drawn to either the politically stated or lived understanding of mutual aid that is central to contemporary anarchist politics (Graeber, 2009; Gordon, 2008; CrimethInc Worker's Collective, 2005). In response to Malthusian economic writing that placed the responsibility for poverty on the poor themselves, Kropotkin (1989) responded with a detailed scientific study looking to the importance of communality and mutual aid towards driving evolution (Anarcho, 2008). The rise of consumer culture has removed communality and replaced it with the individual experience of the consumer, one who is denied entry if monetary exchange is not achieved (Bauman, 2008). In response, divers with FNB and other political groups seek to enliven Kropotkin's mutual aid as a counter to consumer culture. However, one is not born a dumpster diver, but rather becomes one through complex negotiations with governance structures, personal responses, and social circumstances.⁷²

72. Graber (2009) notes that the histories and backgrounds of direct action activists is varied and much more complex than is often presumed. The same observation could be noted with FNB activists: while the Toronto experience is predominantly students in their early 20s, it is not uniform and around the world FNB activists are more diverse. It remains, however, that FNB, like the protest movements Thompson (2011) studies are predominately white. All of this should lead the reader to question the presumption that background necessarily explains how one becomes a certain kind of activist.

The limitations placed on entry are an amalgam of competing social forces and cultural presumptions. In speaking with other divers, it becomes clear that the moment of diving for the first time fell on a scale of dis/comfort that allowed some people to easily step into diving without a thought. For others, myself included, the first step (dive) was heady and required longer preparation and adjustment. This adjustment is related to the strong cultural meanings ascribed to trash places and the social judgment that is so often applied to the action of taking waste for sustenance. As an extension of the deservingness that is built into charity structures, the dumpster diver is, to the outsider, displaying and performing destitution (Schneider, 2010). The social code against dumpster diving is so strong, that to move past it to choose to be a dumpster diver requires a shift in one's relationship to consumer culture and food spaces.⁷³

For the divers I spoke with, personal histories varied, but one thing that all of these stories have in common is that they did not dive for the first time alone. Rather, to dive was to become a part of a (sometimes temporary) community of divers where knowledge was shared, discussions were had, and the reclaiming of food/waste was a team adventure. Echoing the centrality of mutual aid, the interior experience of subjectivity (Hall, 2004) meets the desire to contain waste (Douglas, 2002a; Hawkins, 2006) and the grotesque becomes a means of building commonality and sharing an experience in transgressive spaces (Cresswell, 1996; Ferrell, 2006).

As Daniel noted about his first time diving:

I was really interested because I had heard about dumpster diving but I didn't really feel like it was something that I could do on my own. Because it's not something like ... I'm just going to jump into the garbage and figure it out. I felt like I really needed someone to

73. It also raises an interesting status within radical communities. A number of times over the course of this research, other radical activists who did not dumpster dive would comment that they really should be doing more of it. Thus, even if one is not a dumpster diver as a Freegan or FNB member, the role of dumpster diving circulates amongst other radical left-wing actions to serve as a kind of background behaviour. This is evident when reading texts such as Graeber's (2009) direct action ethnography where he mentions dumpster diving as a part of the activist community, but the focus of what brings them together is the planning of large-scale protests.

show me how to do it and ... I was unemployed and I was really low on money ... ****
[name omitted to protect anonymity], he was actually the guy that was there that brought me on the dumpster run that time [his first time dumpster diving] and had I not had that experience I wouldn't have practically been able to feed myself for the next six months ... I spent six months where every single thing I ate was dumpster dove and that was really important. And I remember thinking how important finding this group and having this thing [dumpster diving] shown to me was in my life because ... I wouldn't have been able to get by without it and after that point I just wanted to make that ... accessible to other people.

His way of entering into a community of divers is multi-layered and highlights the multiplicity of reasons for diving for various individuals. His story was one of moving from food security to insecurity in a very short amount of time that also coincided with his engagement with food/waste activism. While not every diver will find themselves so quickly in need of diving to support themselves, the relationship to food purchasing does change and a new consumption relationship becomes possible. The skills of diving are quickly learned and easily passed on to be used when needed either for activist work, such as Food Not Bombs, or personal sustenance, as Daniel quickly found. The way he was able to support himself was also wrapped into his sense of mutual aid and skill sharing and became a part of his broader political project. Rather than restricting the narrative to either his move into dumpster diving culture or the personal impact it had on his own livelihood, he was clear that these extended into sharing the skills he had developed with a wider community. While he spoke about growing up comfortably middle class and having support from his parents while he was in school, he was not immune to the challenges of unemployment and the specter of food insecurity that is a daily reality for so many Canadians. He went on to comment on the emotional response he had during his first dive and his surprise and pleasure at how much was available:

...there were just boxes and boxes of fresh produce and it was a really good introduction ... I was just blown away by it and the sense of empowerment inherent within the process of not only rescuing food that would otherwise go to waste and being able to offer it to other people but being able to supply yourself with your own food outside of capitalism or ... the

implication [that] you could collectively not only run a group but feed people and do anything you wanted without having funding ...

While others would talk about how shocked they were by the amount of food/waste, for Daniel the significance became the opportunity for free-ness and the ability groups would have to create a way of subsisting outside of a capitalist relationship. To create a mutual aid society outside of institutional needs for financing puts power back in the hands of individuals working with their local communities. In contrast to the charity model that requires recipients prove deservingness, Daniel is focused on skill and food sharing that circumvents a giver/receiver relationship. It also extends beyond the work of Food Not Bombs and food distribution. For Daniel, the lesson learned from the dumpster is that the possibilities for mutual aid and communal activity are endless.

The subject identity that Daniel describes is one that exists always in conjunction with others and moves away from the individuality of the consumer subject. The relationship to other dumpster divers and consumer culture is both an individual and community experience. Divers are aware of themselves as subjects constrained, to a certain extent, by the forces they exist within but also have a sense of autonomy that allows them to make changes within their immediate world. If the neoliberal consumer, as Sennett (2006) discusses, increasingly reads personal meaning into goods purchased, the diver looks backward. Recalling nostalgic versions of past community relationships, divers seek to rework their subject position not towards refining purchasing or purchasing differently, but rather to produce social relations separate from consumer culture. As poststructural subjects, divers work within their socio-legal structuring frameworks to question the nature of consumption (Shields, 1992a & 1992b).

For Soper, *et al.* (2009), the act of alternative hedonism defines the way in which ethical consumer practices are changing buying habits. Alternative hedonism – seeking pleasure outside

of purchased products – began in the counter cultural movements that are the antecedents of political dumpster diving, but are increasingly moving into more mainstream cultural experiences. Central to the concept, however, is a focus on living fully and richly with limited spending habits, ones that FNB presents with bi-weekly feasts. Despite this connection, political dumpster diving has not received a similar mainstreaming of voluntary simplicity or what de Geus refers to as sustainable hedonism (2009).⁷⁴

Despite more mainstream forays into ethical consumption, the anti-consumer is also working within a broader critique against monetary exchange in the first place. As Lury (2011) notes, consumer culture is not solely made up of production-consumption relations, but also encompasses a broader set of relations and activities not limited to the exchange of money for goods. While Bauman (2004) details the failed consumer who is unable, due to poverty, to participate in consumption, Lury (2011) responds that gift exchange, self-produced goods, and free services are also a form of consumption. This sense of consumption as differentiated from consumer behaviour is key to remembering the complexity within which humans are able to remake and rework their relationships to capitalist culture. Finally, "In short, while poverty restricts the possibility of participating in the consumption of commodities, it does not necessarily prevent – indeed, it may incite – participation in consumer culture." (*ibid*,12)

Various negotiations between financial means and participation in consumer culture are reflected in the histories of the divers I spoke with. The move from consumer to anti-consumer has its own history and many of the divers I spoke to discussed their previous relationship as often frequent consumers. Sandra noted:

74. Binkley (2009) develops an understanding of the bohemian habitus as a way of understanding newly emerging political consumption. He concludes by urging for a level of education necessary to build upon newer aesthetics into a political consumerism that could be translated globally (109).

I used to be such a consumer before and wanted to buy new clothes all the time and I notice now when I go into a store ... my conscience is just like 'but you know it was made in a factory' and you don't need this and you're giving into this consumer culture...

As a part of her own growth and involvement in various diving and anti-consumer activities, her knowledge and relationship to consumer culture changed. What had previously been meaningful in her life became an ongoing question of production relationships and ethical responsibilities.

Adam discussed his own complicated relationship with consumer culture when discussing both his past and his present experiences with purchased food.

...once you stop consuming [shopping] so much you actually stop going to those places of consumption. [For example] I haven't been to Yorkdale [shopping mall] in three years probably ... I used to go all the time. I love food so I'd just spend ridiculous amounts of money going out to eat ... I loved going to nice restaurants and ... once I became radicalized or politicized or whatever then I started thinking why do I do that? ... Even though now I still kind of think like yeah \$40 risotto at [local restaurant] would be fucking good right now I also think its just stupid ... there's no real reason to consume in that way.

For Adam there is a direct correlation between consuming habits and the spaces one spends time in. More significant, however, is his ongoing dilemma with his political choices. Rather than being a permanent change, desire for consumer objects still occurs, but within his new political framework satisfying that desire is not consistent with his anti-consumerism.

For Abigail a commitment to fashion played out in her desire to study clothing design and also interplayed with her growing identity as an anti-consumer. When studying fashion she became frustrated at the lack of concern her fellow students had for environmental and ethical concerns in their design choices, but it also extended into how she lived and ate within Toronto:

I used to go on [spending] splurges with clothing. So ... my love of ... clothes but since I decided I wanted to make my own clothing I ... got thriftier ... fixing things up or just borrowing from my friends or going to really really free markets and ... clothing swaps. So it's funny in the sense that once I started getting into Food Not Bombs and hanging out with the friends I have now all these cheaper, thriftier options became available ... which makes buying food, organic food, healthy food [easier]... I do want to say that before I moved to Toronto [from a GTA suburb] I was your typical suburban brat ... I would want to go to the mall, want to go to The Eaton Centre, Queen Street and spend money on

clothing and then the rest I would spend on shitty food from [chain supermarkets]. When I was working my [mainstream coffee shop job] my mom would help me out for food which I would mostly just use for TTC money to get downtown [to shop] ...

Abigail's journey was one of awakening as her pro-consumer lifestyle began to make less sense as her political life developed. She presents this journey as a narrative where she is aware of how parental support originally sustained a consumer lifestyle that she now rejects. She went on to connect the money she had been spending on TTC to her growing involvement with bike culture, which freed her to explore the city without being dependent on paying for transportation. She also connects her change in behaviour to moving away from spending money on 'shitty' food and becoming politicized not only about food/waste, but also the quality of food she had spent her time eating as she was developing into the person she was when I met her.

A circuitous route towards diving is not uncommon and Benjamin reported that it took him months before he was willing to head into a dumpster because of his perception of the dumpster as disgusting. From his story, making the move from politically aligned with FNB to actively involved in collection took a few months:

...actually ... in my first couple months of FNB I didn't dumpster dive at all cause I thought it was gross. I thought going into a dumpster and being near the disgusting smell and all that stuff was awful but I realized ... that is a complete knee-jerk reaction to my privilege [and] that I [had] to get past this mental block of what a dumpster is and realize it's just a box filled with food ... put in boxes and they're all nice and neatly separated.⁷⁵ I mean sure that smell is a deterrent but it's a completely superficial thing. Once you actually get that food and clean it and separate the good from the bad and everything you taste [is] better than anything you've ever tasted because one it's free, two its perfectly ripe and delicious ... I've had the best fruits and vegetables here than anywhere. I actually eat better at FNB than I do anywhere else. And ... I figure that if I was somebody that had a problem with going into a dumpster and overcame it then anybody's capable of doing it ...

75. In some ways this is a misrepresentation of the dumpster. While it can certainly be argued that the presumption of all waste mixed together reported in other sections is unrepresentative of the dumpster, it is also equally presumptuous to assume that all food/waste is neatly packaged. Dumpsters vary and the decision on whether to dive for food that has not been neatly separated lies with individual divers. For Benjamin, the desire to have neatly bagged or boxed and separated food is a necessity, while other divers have a different level of concern over contagion.

The quality of food available disproved his presumption, prior to joining FNB, of the meaning of the scent of the dumpster.⁷⁶ He is aware and thoughtful about where his presumption about the meaning of the dumpster comes from and expresses a self-reflexivity around his own privilege, a quality that is common amongst political dumpster divers.⁷⁷ The understanding of the containers within containers is also central to the way he talks about dumpstered food/waste. The smell is merely a deterrent and the food/waste is presented as categorized and separated in a way that tempers presumptions around the unavoidable mixing of garbage.

Benjamin also makes clear that the quality of food/waste is greater than that which one could find in a supermarket because it is 'first free, and second perfectly ripe'. The qualities of edibility are shifted and the relationship, or rather disconnection from capital exchange, is transposed into a higher valuation of dumpstered food (Clark, 2000). It also unintentionally plays to a theme in consumer culture of being a cagey buyer where the quality and free-ness of food supersedes any inconvenience or superficial 'grossness'. For Benjamin free-ness automatically ranks food/waste higher than other food options and he is clear to link this with higher quality food than he could afford were he purchasing instead of diving. The notion of free-ness came up in other interviews and underscores many of the discussions that happen around the nature of dumpster diving, the politics it engages with, and the way divers understand their reasons for diving. It is also interesting that, in Benjamin's case, his relationship with the dumpster translated so completely from the beginning of his narrative to the end. While he was very much against dumpster diving and took months of working with FNB before he joined a dive, it did not take

76. Black (2007) notes that humans are protected from ingesting rotten food through involuntary disgust responses. However, as she found in her participants and Benjamin discusses here, dumpster divers have a different "disgust threshold" (149) that shifts their response to food/waste.

77. This should not be interpreted as stating that divers are all similarly privileged. Rather, divers particularly and anarchist activists generally, often have sophisticated understandings of the intersectionality of power and oppression (Crenshaw, 2011).

long for his understanding of dumpstered food to then move towards a privileging of dumpster quality over purchased.

As he further noted:

Why do we go to a grocery store and find cheaper prices for junk food ... rather than buying apples and fruits and vegetables?

Looking back to a sense of traditionalism that is common amongst many kinds of food activism, Benjamin is pointing to the problem inherent within applying consumer culture economic models to our food choices. This is not uncommon as a key component of frustrations activists have with food/waste. Within critiques of consumer culture the increasing distance between consumers and production cycles is a point of concern. As Langnam (1992) notes:

While the expressions of consumption-based displays of self provide gratifications and indeed realms of personal power and meaning, in so far as desire and selfhood have been appropriated to secure certain social arrangements, the costs may very well be a deeper malaise and abandonment of concern for collective good. Some fear that an enfeebled selfhood located in a fragmented social order may be disposed to an amusing technofascism. (41)

The concern for Langnam, as well as those who seek to create a subject identity outside of the paradigm of a purchased identity is the way that consumption overrides a sense of some sort of more authentic selfhood that continues concern for collective good (Zukin, 2004). The role of the shopping mall in restructuring social relations has changed the way the individual can be understood and can, in turn, understand themselves (Shields, 1992b; Friedberg, 1994).

It remains, however, that the anti-consumer is specifically critiquing the purchased consumer self and seeking other ways of engaging the world. Lewin & Williams (2009) conducted interviews with punks and found DIY was a way of creating an identity independent from mass produced goods. For these punks, however, self-expression was more significant than their political stance. My participants who are most certainly connected to the punk subculture

and may be ascribed membership by others (and sometimes themselves) are drawn together specifically because of their political work, thus explaining the distinction between the meaning of DIY between the two groups. For FNB in particular, food consumption becomes an intersecting concern with addressing failures in food distribution, hunger levels, and spatial critiques.

This is no less true of food than it is of consumer objects as food has been increasingly commodified (Winson, 1994; Patel, 2007) and subsequently used as a means of signifying status (Johnston & Baumann, 2010). The spatialized consumption of food commodities has seen the rise of farmer's markets, specialized health food markets, and specialized restaurants as the consumptive spaces of middle and upper class eaters (Bell & Valentine, 1997). The purchasing of a class and status identity through food choice has long been documented by scholars such as Bourdieu (1984), but the shift for political dumpster divers is to first draw connections between food consumption and other forms of consumer behaviour and second to question this overarching structural framework. In the case of dumpster divers, what is often missing in critical considerations of spatialized consumption is the role of waste processes upon which these lifestyles are built (Strasser, 2000). It is in this lesser acknowledged aspect of consumer culture that Winson's (1994) intimate commodities are shifted further away from specialized spaces into dumpsters where they at once become lumped in with all waste, but for divers become the ingredients needed to produce an anti-consumer identity. As is experienced by the divers quoted here, the drive to focus on quality over location of purchase is clear in their decision-making.

Benjamin makes this clear in continuing his comment on the quality of food available in the dumpster:

[W]hat I like about Food Not Bombs is that always, every time I go dumpster diving it proves my point, the healthiest and best food is in the garbage and it's also a metaphor for

the way capitalism is structuring our mentality where we want instant thrills, we want that sugar high ... and then ... forget about the things ... that [are] really, truly important, that is passed on from generation to generation ...

The quality of the food that is thrown away, frequently fresh produce, in the context of rising food prices and the inaccessibility to fresh produce by so many people is particularly galling. Food as commodity is disconnected from values associated with nutrition and what Bittman calls 'foodness'.⁷⁸ Instead of looking to the bargain of nutritionally empty food-like products, Benjamin finds in the dumpster an array of healthy food that are increasingly less accessible than 'junk' food. Throughout this comment, we can read connections to a number of different concerns that percolate through food activism in general and for dumpster divers in particular.⁷⁹ Here, Benjamin has made clear that a wealth of concerns around food systems are proven through entry into the dumpster where the highest quality food is waiting for the diver. He also links it to a traditional knowledge that is erased in commodified food (Greene, 2011). It is not only about nutrition, but also a focus on knowledge that he implies is lost in current food systems. Knowledge of preparation, quality, and importance of food reside within the ongoing sharing of information key to a mutual aid economy that cannot be found on supermarket shelves.

The time it takes to become a dumpster diver is related to understandings of personal investment, political understanding, background, and political education. All the divers I spoke with were cognizant and thoughtful about being a part of a broader political community that saw

78. In an October 13, 2012 New York Times article, Bittman suggested that food labels should be changed to include rankings of nutrition, foodness, and welfare. Foodness is "A measure of how close a product is to being real, unadulterated food. (You might think of it as 'naturalness.')." The idea of foodness is frequently brought up in food activist circles as a way of talking about the changes in industrial food and packaged foods to increasingly feature artificial additives that would not have been considered edible until relatively recently.

79. These concerns are rooted as well in the history of the subculture that contemporary dumpster divers inherited. As Clark (2000) noted, the dumpster divers or member of 'X' group viewed packaged foods as rotten.

food differently than mainstream culture. The radical action of dumpster diving remains about more than saving money or adventure, and the role of FNB bringing these divers together foregrounded broader understandings of challenges within the food system. For Benjamin, the politics of FNB related to a longer personal history of thinking about the politics of consumerism, food, and equality:

Well I think that we live in a highly commodified society and people take for granted the things that they can get all the time. One of [those things] is food. I think that it's our responsibility to make sure that we know where our food comes from and that we have a relationship with our food in terms of who brings it to us and how we disseminate it amongst everyone. I was raised ... with food on my plate...I never experienced poverty personally but ... I always felt that when I would walk down the street and see people living on the streets that it was wrong and that because they have a different history why is it that they can't eat or have a warm bed at night ... And the more I thought about it the more I realized that I was a Marxist in some sense but before I ever knew who Marx was. I think it's an inherent thing among kids ... the community that exists among younger individuals is very communal and very communistic in a lot of ways. I think that resources are lost among people [who] live in a society where as long as you have this piece of paper that has some sort of value number on it you can get whatever you want. Nobody has to work for anything anymore ... And what I really mean by that is that you can go out and buy anything that you need rather than build it yourself and build a true appreciation for it. So what I saw [in] Food Not Bombs was taking this commodity and turning it back into a resource that equally belongs to everyone.

Mutual aid as an inherent understanding of the social world filters throughout Benjamin's comment. Rather than seeing suffering as something inherent, he sees his childhood responses as speaking to a natural understanding of the importance of communality and support. Benjamin traces his political history and draws strong connections between an inherent understanding of social justice to the way he lives his politics as an adult.⁸⁰ He also puts a division between himself and capitalist society through his engagement with FNB. In this organizing he is able to help build an alternative to the exchange of money for food.

80. He is also interestingly naturalizing Marxism and communism in a way that is troubling. He roots his radical beliefs in an inherent understanding he had as a child, but this project does not presume that this younger identity was any less structured or influenced by dominant ideology than his adult self.

Producing anti-consumer subjects provide opportunities and limitations in responding to regulatory structures that define our food and waste systems. Instead of rooting ourselves in bureaucratic structures, dumpster divers are seeking new ways of being in the world and producing selves that are capable of working against these regulatory structures to shift the frame within which they live.

Dual Power

The significance of mutual aid leads to Lenin's (1917) concept of dual power and also supports the work of FNB volunteers. To recall, dual power looks to build alternative institutions that will grow to shift subsistence into autonomous, non-hierarchical organizations (Holloway, 2002). Building in the shell of the old moves anarchist theorists and activists away from spectacular revolutions or small-scale movements to an evolution into new social, political, and economic organization. For Adam, dual power is central to how he organizes his action to support his politics:

I think Food Not Bombs and Really Really Free Markets and things like that are important because they create alternative structures ... in addition to the critiques of existing organizational structures and patterns ... unfortunately the success of neoliberalism ... has ... convinced people that there [isn't another option].

Drawing on dual power, FNB decommodifies (Heynen, 2006) and re-inscribes a mutual aid community into shared resources. This experience is also one that is shared by many non-divers who take the time to learn about the politics of dumpster diving as a way of combatting food/waste. Adam's debate with himself is how significant dual power actually is. Rather than seeing the potential for FNB and other mutual aid projects as guaranteed, he remains skeptical that the coercion of neo-liberalism and subsequently consumer culture is too strong. This debate recalls the approach of the Situationists who, along with the Frankfurt School, held little faith

that the 'masses' would be able to break out of dominant culture. However, Adam's continued work with FNB and other dual power organizing belies his skepticism. The potential for change overrides skepticism and for many FNB organizers being a part of a group of likeminded people who want to live differently is a good start. Carlsson (2008) sees these kinds of actions as a part of a new class expression that has workers finding meaning in the projects they take on outside of the paid wage day. Instead of finding the protection of class through organized labour, many people are coming together on their unpaid time to develop unique, collaborative, and progressive social projects.

While being concerned about food/waste and understanding why divers would act as they do, another step is necessary to bridge this concern with subsuming social training that dumpsters are dirty and dangerous. The reasons for constructing alternative means of distributing food become clear in moments where the failures of the current system are displayed. For some this happens in the moment when it becomes undeniable that the statistics of food/waste numbers frequently quoted are, in fact, material in the dumpsters behind our grocery stores. Challenging these structures is a part of the work of FNB volunteers and is a central component of the shared aspects of their anti-consumer politics.

In facing the reality of food/waste, often the sense of waste is changed and the horror at wasted food overcomes the horror at dumpstering. Daniel described one such example of this process when he spoke of being in a grocery store with his mother who, while familiar with his dumpstering practices, remained skeptical that the extent of food/waste her son spoke of really existed. As with many parent's responses referred to by those I spoke with, she supported his idealism, but remained concerned with its outlet. While walking through a bakery section, Daniel pointed out a stack of bread that was destined for the dumpster and told his mother about this

inevitability. Still skeptical, she approached the bakery worker to ask directly. Daniel explains what happened next:

...so she followed this woman into the back and demanded she explain what she was doing with these baked goods and this woman, who barely spoke English, was telling her to go away as she was trying to throw them into the compactor and my Mom was just appalled. My Mom came out of the back and said Daniel go around and see if we can get them out of the compactor and it was that instant where it was ... it's a natural thing if you are confronted with someone who is destroying perfectly good food, if you're a sensible person you're going to want to stop that...

The use of naturalizing terminology is again apparent in the context of non-normative behaviour. While Daniel points to a specific and often shared horror at food/waste, this horror is also structured by specific cultural, legal, and social frameworks discussed earlier. Considering such historic predecessors as scavengers from war times and during famines leaves little space for a moral stance that accepts the throwing away of good food. Yet, a foundational premise to my study is that we have a capitalist system that not only ensures this discard, but also depends upon it. In this case, the reality of food/waste was revealed and was a moment of profound change for Daniel's mother and her disbelief that good food was thrown away was confronted and confounded. In this case, the exchange details a moment of realization, and the distaste for the dumpster was superseded by the even more disturbing act of throwing away quality food. For Daniel this moment was also when his mother saw through the artifice of food commodity and regulatory systems that serve very few and obscure the reality of food cycles to those not directly involved in food production, distribution, and sales. It was common for divers to discuss their actions as a reasonable response to the amount of food/waste found in dumpsters. In this case, being directly confronted with the inner workings of the current food system was necessary to begin considering the needs for an alternative system.

Sandra took another approach to dumpster diving and had begun curbing for goods when she was a teenager. She had many stories about the lengths to which she had gone in order to bring home curbing finds. Some of these examples included calling friends or family to help rescue a great piece of furniture that she didn't want to lose. Her experiences were such that despite having only recently begun diving for food with Food Not Bombs, she had a long history with the process of recovering other people's discards.

I love when you see a box of free stuff on the side of the [road]. I've always been into that ... looking to see what's in there and what you can use and stuff but I haven't done, I never did food until Food Not Bombs.

It is clear from all of these narratives that FNB involvement had a great deal to do with entering into dumpsters for food for the first time. Many FNBers will also dive for consumer goods and part of the economy that is being built is one not only rooted in an explicit gift economy, but also an underground economy that delivers needed or desired goods outside of money exchange (Ferrell, 2006). Realizing the intention of the gift economy does not necessarily equate with recovery and for some the underground economy apolitically offers subsistence. The significance of the first dive and the broader political implications also varied and there was a distinction between how interviewees connected their action to broader political significance.

While everyone interviewed was invested in the broader political action of Food Not Bombs, not every member speaks about the action in the same way. Where Benjamin, Daniel, and Adam, particularly, spoke at great length connecting the politics of FNB with larger political concerns around resource management, inequality, and global distribution, this was not everyone's framing. In some ways, this could be connected to educational background with these interviewees having studied in political studies or global studies departments that would have

paired well with their developing politics.⁸¹ For Sandra and Erin, the significance of direct action was highlighted and seemed to be of more interest, in general, to the female-identified people I spoke with. This diversity points not only to the complexity of FNBers, but also the variety of reasons people have for political dumpster diving. It is not solely an expression of a unified political stance, but is also rooted in direct action activism, pleasure, questioning the timing of food/waste, mobility, and free-ness.

Free-ness

The focus of the chapter this far has been detailing the use of mutual aid and dual power approaches by FNB dumpster divers to create a shared anti-consumer identity. This shared identity follows the complicated intersections that Clark (2004) laid out when focusing on the way a large group of young people were aligned in a post-punk, anticapitalist, antiglobalization set of politics. However, and it is true with Toronto's FNB volunteers, these shared perceptions do not result in a shared, labeled identity. Instead, FNBers discussed their politics as mobile and part of an ongoing learning process. While Clark (2000) labeled his participants as part of subculture X, FNBers can be understood as connected towards the purpose of free-ness. This free-ness does not only refer to the lack of monetary exchange used for food, but a liberty from capitalist time, wage labour, and consumer culture.

81. The length at which interviewees had thought about these topics would also be related to how often I had spoken with them during FNB events, servings, and meetings about the trajectory of my research. In line with anarchist methodologies, I was open about my research and happy to speak about my preliminary research and findings during my fieldwork process. Thus, these discussions and the introduction of a research-driven consideration of the politics of FNB likely prepared interviewees for certain lines of questioning. However this is not to take away from the knowledge and experiences of interviewees who came to FNB from such a variety of backgrounds that while some may not have connected their politics to broader Marxist, anarchist, or communist political theory, they could connect it to other aspects of their political relationship to food, consumption, and lived experiences of anti-consumerism.

Time

As was discussed in Chapter 1 and further in Chapter 3, circumvention from the dumpster and its trajectory to the landfill is central to the meaning of food/waste. Further, the materiality of food as an organic substance ensures that the category is temporary and will not hold if the item spends too long in the dumpster and allows spoiling time to catch up. Food/waste is liminal and cannot last forever and it is in the brief time between discard and spoiling or pickup that dumpster diving action critiques wasted food through differential consumption. As an extension, the diver who consumes food/waste is consuming a variable system of symbolic meaning. It is only in the moments of the full circulation of food to waste that food/waste exists.

Harvey (1990) explores how space and time have been disconnected in Western thought with its need to separate categories. He notes that "Symbolic orderings of space and time provide a framework for experience through which we learn who or what we are in society" (214). In the dumpster, the meaning of food/waste is repeatedly inscribed, but so to is the meaning of the dumpster diving subject who lives at the liminal edge of the space-time of the dumpster to rework not only food/waste, but also themselves. The space-time of the dumpster presumes a timing that does not actually exist. Similar to the process by which value is removed when entering into the dumpster, a certain presumption of the timing of edibility is transposed on food/waste. This presumption of inedibility is not loyal to one space. Rather, food becomes inedible across all the spaces it traverses through biological processes of rotting or, in other cases, is a result not of time, but rather other forces of contagion (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Turmo, 2007). Contagion, infestation, and outbreaks occur in all stages of food production and distribution. The association of the inedible with the dumpster is a simplified understanding of how food shifts back and forth between sites of inedibility and edibility (MacClancy, *et al.*,

2007). For the dumpster diver, food/waste time is complex and shifting as she works against natural and eventual decomposition while simultaneously seeking to extend the edibility of food/waste long enough to ingest.

Beyond an understanding of the time-space of the dumpster, time is further significant to the dumpster diver. As a commodity in and of itself, one's personal time is up for sale, being preserved, being de-alienated through the labour the diver is able to redirect towards gathering sustenance. Instead of selling one's labour for cash and then exchanging cash for food, the diver gathers the remains of commodity movements. Time is central to the shift in relationship between dumpster divers and the consumer culture of food. Rather than relating to capital as consumer subjects then, this gathering forms the contours of the anti-consumer subject discussed above.

The time taken to be an anti-consumer relates directly to the privilege of access to both ability and space allowing for the circulation of food/waste into food. To enter a dumpster is to forgo convenience. While Pietrzyk (2010) argues that time is a key missing component in radical activist work, one where critiques against capital are confounded by a lack of memory and history, the experience of time is significant amongst dumpster diving activists. The challenge to labour time through the use of Carlsson's (2008) alternative means of subsistence requires a set of additional resources that are not always available. As Daniel points out:

Even when I was dumpster diving all my food it would be difficult [to find the ingredients for a balanced meal]... [for example] the six-month period where everything I ate was from the dumpster it only worked because I had an entire freezer to myself. So I would get stuff and immediately cut it up and freeze it so if I found just tomatoes [at a later dive] I could still make a meal because I had all this other stuff in the freezer whereas now [when he doesn't have the time to be such a devoted diver] I need to be able to find everything I need

for a meal or else I don't have a meal. And that's kind of a problem in itself and its ... that combined with the time [that makes it too challenging to continue diving for all his food].⁸²

Time pairs with space and specific material realities that require time, storage, and culinary knowledge to address the convenience limitations that result from a dumpstered diet. A whole host of additional privileged access is required in order for the diver to exist. Removing oneself from the exchange economy of commodified food does not dismiss the necessity of having a home to return to, access to running water, electricity, or food storage and cooking appliances. The domestic production of ingredients into a meal draws on a set of technologies that allow for a meal to be produced (Lévi-Strauss, 1983).

In contrast to the way consumer subjects are encouraged to understand themselves as able to meet their needs at any time through their purchasing choices (Zukin, 2004), the diver defines themselves instead through time. The time reserved by not selling labour for cash is then spent on much more complicated relationships with sustenance and consumption. The time of labour is shifted to one that is not alienated through the process of selling to an employer, but this time is not necessarily autonomous. The convenience of shopping is removed and the dumpster diver is faced with the dilemma of how to best feed themselves with finite resources of time. For Daniel, the continued need to also make money requires a balancing act of how much of his time he has available for food gathering and production. Daniel is in some ways able to escape the disciplining of his time by connecting his labour to food outside of a capital relationship, but finds himself disciplined in a new way (Foucault, 1995). Sharma (2011) argues that

... the time of life is biopolitical, differentially managed, regulated, and experienced ... biopolitics [is] not only ... temporally constituted but [is] also ... a differential relation of power – the biopolitical economy of time (441).

82. A further challenge to the dumpster diver is the nutritional requirements of a vegetarian or vegan diet. While one can certainly subsist on dumpstered food, a nutritionist would not necessarily recommend it as offering the variety and balance necessary to feed one's body.

This biopolitical economy of time is both potential and challenge when considering the time of food/waste and the dumpster diver. The trajectories of the two are interconnected, but dependent upon complex intersections of influence that confound a straightforward critique.

This raises the challenge faced by many dumpster divers who seek to relate to their food production in a way that idealistically looks back to an (problematic) authentic traditional life where whole food, self-production, and personal autonomy have been imagined. The utopian vision of the gift economy must exist within a set of circumstances that exist far beyond food choices and a true gift economy would require interventions in all aspects of social life. While these ideas are most certainly imagined images of the past, not unlike the utopianism of back to the land and homesteading movements, their imagining is also out of step with contemporary city spaces (Katz, 2006; Boal, *et al.*, 2012). Within these spaces, divers are seeking to reimagine traditional relationships to food and nutrition through the existing market of exchange.

Abigail also experiences dumpstered time as a way for her to access a quality of food that she is unable to afford. Similar to many divers discussed in this dissertation, food choices for health and equity are politically motivated. While she works at a job that allows her to pay her rent, it does not pay well enough for her to afford the organic foods she prefers.

...a big reason why I dumpster dive [is] because I can't afford to purchase organic food all the time. I am very lucky ... that my mom is more than willing to pay for my organic food but I'm at a stage right now where I wish to do this on my own. I don't really want any help from my parents so I dumpster dive a lot ... it's tight sometimes ... I'm really good with budgeting, I don't really spend any money anywhere else. I try to get as many things for free as possible whether it's salvaging or trading or borrowing but when it comes to food that seems to be the only thing that I really spend my money on. I'm lucky I guess cause I just funnel it all to food and not really to anything much else.

Abigail is aware of the privilege she has with having a family willing to help her, but looks for ways to live without this support. She is able to access her choices, however, by looking to

broader methods of living on a small wage and using diving for food and goods as a way to bridge the gap. As with Daniel's need to depend upon dumpster diving to feed himself during an extended period of unemployment, Abigail compensates for low wages with dumpster diving. It also speaks to the significance of food choices to her that the importance of organic food supplants that of the seeming dirtiness of the dumpster. Instead, in line with Clark's (2000) findings, the declining quality of industrial food is more significant than a dumpster source.

At these moments, the people who dive draw on their own ability to balance the liminality of subjectivity with the content of the dumpster. To be a political dumpster diver is to draw on knowledge and personal subjectivity that reframes 'you are what you eat' to 'you are also *where* you eat.' Divers free themselves from dependence upon wage labour where possible as well as refusing to accept commodified food structures and marketing for their nutritional needs.

The ethics of dumpster diving came up again and again as a response to, on the one hand, deeply held anti-capitalist beliefs and, on the other hand, pressing financial needs that changed how individuals understood their relationship to the dumpster. Dumpster diving requires a breadth of knowledge about food disposal that is often transmitted informally through self-published documents or social networks that share information on food safety and availability in dumpsters. It also involves a step away from standard categories of the edible and inedible, an experience that ranges from profoundly radical to a part of a longer experiential process (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; MacClancy, *et al.*, 2007).

Balancing time of activism is also significant for FNB activists not only in how they gather their food, but also how they balance this gathering with the other commitments they have in their life. FNB activism often requires a commitment beyond meetings to the time devoted to dumpster diving, food cleaning, travel, and servings. The space of Toronto must be traversed, but

this places pressure on the schedules of FNBERs who live much of their lives far away from the dumpsters, kitchen, and park that feature in FNB Toronto's work. As Adam noted:

...[His activist commitment] has started picking up and we've had more meetings and that kind of stuff so that's taking up a bit more of my time. Actually that's one of the reasons that I really wanted to move downtown. I used to live [in North Toronto] and the commute to Food Not Bombs ... was both costly and time-consuming ... I wanted to move downtown so that I could balance my schoolwork and activism ...

Here, Adam is clear on his commitment to his activist work but aware that it has shifted the way in which he defines his personal life. He chose to move so that he could be more deeply involved and use less of his time traveling from home to FNB work.

The final aspect of time that came up amongst FNB interviews was the nature of personal change over time. The impact of FNB involvement and working within dumpster diving to combat consumption was reflected in how individuals changed over time from their almost universal consumer roots into a new identity as anti-consumer. As Sandra noted of consumerism:

And you start thinking about it ... do I really need that and how did it get here ... and I think with time it becomes easier ... you start bringing up those questions and ... it becomes easier and ... once you start giving up stuff and you go through your life without new clothes and new technology and you detach yourself ... you don't rely on them as much and [realize] they're not a necessity...

In this sense, time is about a journey between different ways of being. The practice and learning of anti-consumer behaviour allows Sandra to move into a new relationship with consumption that is no longer dependent on a consumer identity. Instead she is able to trace how her relationship to consumer goods, and as an extension her relationship to food, has shifted.

Quality

The free-ness from consumer culture and liberty from wage labour extends to an anxiety around the quality of free food available. Adam was clear on the significance of free-ness when

trying to explain the choices he makes in the dumpster on what to take or not. While he only dives for vegetables or packaged goods, other free goods cause a dilemma for him:

Last time I went I saw a whole bunch of dairy products and it was a cold night so I figured if they threw it out then it would have not spoiled but I still wasn't sure so I just left it. It's hard to gauge ... I didn't want to start opening yogurt and smelling it...it's easy to get the fruits and vegetables but then it's also frustrating because when you see the dairy products ... you're like ... ahhh milk is so expensive ... I want free milk. But you don't know if it's good or not.

Here, the politics of veganism in his diving expressed earlier are less about an ethical choice and instead the result of protecting himself from the possibility of contagion. His experience of anti-consumerism is to desire access to goods he cannot afford, but to also understand that the regulations around dairy products may in fact render dairy products, in this case milk, as dangerous to consume. It is also significant that he does not consider looking at the producer defined best by or due by dates to offer guidance on edibility. Instead, he has structured his response to food exclusively on his own senses where he needs to smell the yoghurt to confirm if it is still edible. However, the anxiety and instability between the consumer and anti-consumer identities are again clear. Dumpster divers remain embroiled within larger structures of regulation and food knowledge that influence the meaning they can make within their own (radical) actions. While the ideal is to attain a coherent identity separate from consumer culture, the limitations placed on a small group working directly on one specific aspect of capitalism (purchasing) does not allow for the full production of a dual power structure.

In the case of Adam's interaction with regulation however, he has not internalized the standards printed on the container, but rather the fear of contagion that the standards inspire. He trusts his own senses, but the inconvenience of using them in the dumpster makes the dairy unrecoverable. Despite the desire for free products, the significance remains that highlights a

determination of quality and edibility that is defined not by lack of price, but a complex intermingling of decisions made by dumpster divers as they go about gathering goods.

For Erin and Sandra, concerns around food safety and their personal approach to its regulation came out when they discussed items they wouldn't take out of a dumpster:

Sandra: I'd say I would probably just stick to produce or staples like flour and rice and stuff like that. Other than that I would probably avoid any kind of dairy ...

Erin: ... or anything that's packaged like tortilla wraps [Sandra: oh yeah] that we found last week ... [Sandra: Which is good, yeah] and bread I would take, but basically dairy. I don't think I would ever take dairy out of the dumpster because I would be really skeptical about ...

Sandra: ... it just spoils so easily ...

Erin: ... and meat of course. Last week when we found meat in with the produce it ... [I] was kind of iffy about taking the produce because of the cross-contamination but I find that every time we do dive I always make sure I go home and I wash everything right away and I always cut off bad pieces so it doesn't spoil more...

This section reveals the ongoing impact of the pure food movement laid out in Chapter 2 where the danger of food has been culturally absorbed and anxiety around food quality continued. The process of determining quality of food expresses the interchanges between regulatory structures, individual senses, and ethical choices around what is chosen. For both women, and for other dumpster divers, concerns around food safety are primary and the desire is to confront the failures of the food system, but to not unduly put themselves at risk. It also links directly to the politics of meat eating where contamination is directly linked to meat mixing with produce.

In this sense, the fear of contagion is not completely subverted in the act of dumpster diving. Divers are deeply concerned with food safety and quality, but use more nuanced and individual sense-based means of determining quality. Of interest in the above concerns around meat and dairy is that none of these divers mention looking at best-by dates as a way of signaling

quality.⁸³ Here the connections between regulation and the different sense of time that dumpster diving forces intersect and the actions of the divers are directly aimed at extending the time of food/waste as long as possible. It is clear that all three divers distrust government regulations, both by their action and their statements, but it is also evident that selection and decisions made after the encounter with the dumpster continue to shift the relationship between the diver and their food.

The work of dumpster divers and their political cousins in anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian movements seek to create ways to exist outside of a consumer subject position, one where they are no longer the object of production expectations and can make decisions that move beyond these expectations to either express a semblance of free choice or redefine how their choices are constrained. These choices also confront top-down governance and reflect a deep suspicion, or in some cases complete disregard, of these regulatory structures.⁸⁴ Divers work creatively within the structures in place to create a new understanding of the decommodified food item (Heynen, 2006). Through its decommodification it is opened up to a bricolage of meaning where the way in which food should and could be put together is also questioned. Instead of accepting regulatory structures of food safety, edibility, and quality, the diver responds by working within the cracks in this system to engage with their food consumption differently. Power over consumption is negotiated through action and creativity in a way that refuses to

83. Store due dates do come up in certain circumstances, for example *Dive!* highlights the amount of meat that is still cold and not yet expired when demonstrating levels of edible food waste. This was not noted in any of the interviews I conducted and may signal a difference between Canadian and American food/waste practices. The levels of food/waste that *Dive!* demonstrates were never seen in a Toronto context and the kinds of food available to divers seem to differ between the two countries. The recovery of meat in the *Dive!* context also as highlights the vegetarian/vegan politics of FNB where we would never bring home dumpstered meat.

84. Clark (2004) understood a similar suspicion in his participants to be rooted in a differential understanding of Lévi-Strauss' cooked-raw-rotten triad. In the case of divers, corporate food was rotten and could only be cleansed through the translation of the dumpster.

behave as prescribed by regulatory structures and presumptions (Gramsci, 1971). Where Hebdige's (2002) punks used bricolage techniques in their fashion to express their political positions and subject identities to the world, their political children and grandchildren use dumpster diving to respond against a food system that leaves limited space for equal access to sustenance. Power is refuted by looking towards alternatives to food consumerism that highlight both the failures of consumerism and redefine the dumpster divers' relationship to food.

The notion of free-ness also touches off interesting interactions with people who visit servings or who hear about the activities of political dumpster divers. Integral to our cultural sense of quality is the price that one pays through an understanding of exchange as setting quality (Marx, 1976). In pricing is perceived quality, a quality that has little to do with edibility and much more to do with the use of cash. This perception is one that is both frustrating and confusing for FNB activists, such as Sandra notes when she questions:

...it's interesting people just aren't used to getting things for free so ... when you do stuff like Food Not Bombs you confront that [idea] ... why can't you eat food that's free and why is our culture so weird about getting things for free ... people were [at a small serving] just like really, this stuff is free? Why? What do I have to do? Is there a donation? And [we respond] no, it's just free, it's sharing ... people think it's the weirdest thing...

A general understanding from those who dumpster dive rather than purchase food is that free is better than not free, but this is most certainly a concept that does not necessarily translate outside of dumpster diving communities.

This questioning of free-ness is also of concern with the way Food Not Bombs organizing is viewed from the outside.⁸⁵ Adam commented:

85. Free-ness also creates another dilemma, one Adam notes when he says "I still struggle with it [his old consumer habits]... when I dumpster sometimes there's so much stuff and I just want to take it all ... [I] see a chair in the dumpster and [think] I want that, and then [I think] I'm just being a stupid consumer ... taking something cause it's free and cause I want more stuff that I don't need." The complications of an anti-capitalist life and a history of previously being much more of a consumer came up in almost every interview. Becoming a dumpster diver was an evolution and involved

You encounter a broad range of reactions ... there are a lot of people who are really hesitant to accept something for free, they think there's something wrong with it or there's the idea that we're a charity so.... it's odd that someone should want to share something just for the sake of sharing something with other people without some sort of economic relationship underpinning it [with] exchange or profit-seeking ...

Here, Adam is displaying the confrontation of capitalist and gift economies where there is an understanding from recipients that requires some sort of exchange, but reciprocity has been washed out of our cultural understandings. Instead, there is a sense that nothing is truly free in a capitalist market and the circulation of the gift is unrecognizable. He goes on to discuss other responses where gifting evokes deeply emotional responses:

Then there's also the reactions of people who are just floored by it [the actions of FNB] ... think this is the greatest thing ever ... you can see that they're really touched by it. [FNB demonstrates that] there are people who want to do things for the sake of helping out other people and building relationships and caring about their neighbours...

These responses recognize the significance of mutual aid and reflect a desire by many to work outside of the capitalist system and build relationships of caring and support.

Finally, the charity structure that FNB works outside of becomes the only recognized model by which some can understand the actions. Specifically:

...and then there's the people in between that struggle with trying to understand that people would do this and revert to ... hegemonic sort of ideas about helping people [and ask] why don't you become a registered charity? And why don't you do fundraising? And all these sorts of things that try and you know pigeon hole Food Not Bombs into the box of a charitable organization ... how a benevolent action might be directed in mainstream ways of organizing ... rather than autonomously and independently...

This confusion is one of misunderstanding the significance of mutual aid at the heart of FNB work. Here, a disconnection from a sense of mutual aid that Kropotkin (1989) saw as a natural feature of the biological world is confounded by the individualism central to capitalist relationships. The confusion of the work FNB is doing came up frequently during servings.

learning, changing, and becoming aware of details about consumerism that hadn't been previously known.

Assumptions of who we were and our level of charity involvement were frequently misinterpreted and we often had visitors advise us on how we could better gain funding for our project. The confusion of what our purpose was created incredulity amongst FNBers, but does highlight the challenge to social structures of food and exchange at the centre of FNB work. There is limited socio-political space to consider autonomous movements as a part of creating solutions to a lack of social justice. Revealed is the dependence of charity work on institutions of fundraising and registering that the confusion displays the problem many people have thinking outside of these models of social support.

However, at the centre of Adam's description is the person who is moved and responds strongly and positively toward the work of FNB. This person shares the commonsensical understanding of the importance of not wasting food and to use food/waste to feed hungry people. This is the response we saw earlier by Daniel's mother who overcame her disbelief in the problem of food/waste to directly encourage her son to recover edible food from the grocer's dumpster. Despite the inherent importance of money exchange at the centre of consumer consumption, these responses reveal another social and cultural process that recognize alternative means of deriving value that is not only the purview of the political dumpster diver (Graeber, 2001).

Fundamentally, the ability to function, even partially, without money remains central to the critique of the consumer subject. The anti-consumer dumpster diver is making choices not only to change the way they exchange their cash for goods, but to dispense with the need for money as much as possible. In this dispensing of the need for money, Food Not Bombs divers come somewhat closer in their political intents and expressions.

Conclusion: Free-ness Revisited

The actions of FNB volunteers move beyond the framework of action that superficially draws them together, gathering leftover food to be served as vegan meals, without restriction, to local communities. This group is also bound by a desire to move beyond their roles as Bauman's (2004) flawed consumers and produce new ways of relating to each other, their communities, and to their own labour. The movement between consumer and anti-consumer follows multiple trajectories but the underlying goal is to express a liberty that has been inscribed into this new version of a gift economy.

Building in the shell of the old has proven to be possible, but does not entirely separate radical action from capitalist structure. As laid out in this chapter, anti-consumer dumpster divers are struggling to create a space and experience for themselves as much as possible outside of consumer culture. They do so by drawing on food/waste to reveal the failures of food distribution systems, redirect meals to hungry people, and experience free-ness. This free-ness is found in not exchanging money for food, and also breaking from past consumer selves. Breaking free then produces the dual power opportunity to build not only new ways of gathering food, but to use these models to communicate across geographic distance.

Thus far, this dissertation has looked to dumpster diving and FNB as a way of tracing food/waste through its history in the commons, its circulation in the city, and now its centrality to a shared drive towards free-ness by dumpster divers. In the next, and final, chapter I will turn to how dumpster divers spread out from their local actions to larger scale communicative moments. Once food/waste is re-inscribed with meaning, digital communication technology and self-publication bridges discrete geographic areas and brings together dumpster divers around the world.

Chapter 5: Reading Against Regulations and Creating Counterpublics

Over the past eight years, dumpster diving has percolated up into public consciousness, yet the attention from the mass media has remained consistent in the limited focus on the macro politics of the divers interviewed. While I have discussed in detail the work of Food Not Bombs volunteers in Toronto, the public face of dumpster diving is instead generally recognized by a broader public as freeganism. The popular attention to dumpster diving has, since 2004, influenced the development of freegan.info when that collective began direct outreach to mainstream communities to share their message of voluntary simplicity and the massive amount of food/waste they were reclaiming (Barnard, 2009, 15). The group's monthly trash tours in New York City and wider media based outreach have received much mainstream attention and, as a result, have raised the profile of dumpster diving on a global scale.⁸⁶ This mainstream attention is not limited to Freegan groups in New York City, but also looks to freegan activity around the world. Freegans have been interviewed as far across the globe as Edmonton (Faulder, 2012), the UK (Hibbert, 2011), Spain (Abdelfatah, 2012), and Australia (Martin, 2011). The geographic breadth of individual and small groups of freegans can lead to some scholars viewing freeganism as a coherent, global identity. For example, rather than starting at a local understanding as I have done, Edwards & Mercer's (2007) study of Australian freegans concludes that freeganism is a connected, global movement. This global connection is possible because of mainstream media attention that looks to the practice of dumpster diving and the claiming of the moniker freegan which has become readily available based on media coverage and websites such as freegan.info. However, despite the connections based on similar behaviour, it remains that the socio-legal

⁸⁶ See, for instance, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (2008); Palmer (2009); Halpern (2010); and MacIssac (2011).

histories of discrete freegan and dumpster diving communities require a focused critique of the regulatory structures that bring them into being.

My study of Toronto's FNB group has emphasized how diving is specifically local and defined by a socio-legal history that is not shared globally. As a mediated movement, however, freegan.info has raised the profile of a wide variety of activists and punks who have utilized political dumpster diving for decades. One of the means of organizing and communicating for diverse groups of political divers around the world was in the use of self-publishing and self-distribution of zines. Therefore, I turn in this final chapter to consider how the long history of dumpster diving and related food/waste activism laid out in this dissertation has been supported by self-publishing practices that build a counterpublic across large geographic divides (Warner, 1992). I began this dissertation with a consideration of food safety regulations in Ontario and Canada and have used that understanding to build a study of a local dumpster diving group that, while geographically specific, is linked to a global network of activists through FNB.

This global network in turn extends beyond FNB work to touch on a diverse variety of different but interconnected anarchist movements (Graeber, 2009). These movements are then able to utilize communication technologies to forward critiques of other social, environmental, and economic technologies. While ownership and goods become part of state apparatuses, "...basically, the *only* areas that are entirely off-limits to this sort of regulation backed by force are communicative ones: speech, discussion in meetings, exchanges on the Internet, etc." (Graeber, 284). This point is debatable, and has been numerous times.⁸⁷ However, an understanding of communication as currently, although perhaps temporarily and certainly not universally, a space of escape from state tyranny, fuels an ongoing construction of a

87. Ramnath (2005) recounts the significance in antiauthoritarian history of fighting not only for labour rights, but also free speech.

counterpublic that politically motivated dumpster divers continue to explore, expand, and debate within their ranks.

The work of political dumpster divers have moved beyond their small-scale, localized beginnings to be a part of a larger understanding of the intersections between individual action, waste crisis, and food politics. However, stories about these histories are not necessarily expressing a consistent political message. In contrast, mainstream media treatments invariably focus on limited, consumer identity driven messages, similar to other social justice actors, and see dumpster divers treated by "...the mainstream media [who] often systematically distort, negatively cast or ignore social movement viewpoints" (Stein, 2009, 750). The ability to negotiate with mainstream media attention and mainstream media representations remain an ongoing challenge for political dumpster divers.

Mainstream media representations of, for example, feminism has revealed similar challenges in how the feminist movement has been framed and discussed, such as Bradley's (2003) discussion of Betty Friedan's 'hostility'. The early framing of Friedan extended to feminists more generally as 'strident women' and characterized popular understandings of feminism and feminists. This early coverage is linked to ongoing stereotypes of feminists and the way the movement continues to be characterized. Bronstein (2005) discusses an ongoing challenge in mainstream media attention to third wave feminism. This coverage continues to demonize second-wave feminists, although it shifted away from this presentation of third-wave feminists. Instead, the philosophical connections between second and third wave feminisms are ignored and continued vilification of second-wave feminists is used to "[transform] the fiery ideological character of the second wave into a friendly and approachable, but less substantive, brand of feminism" (794). This mainstream treatment ignores postcolonial, anti-racist, and anti-

heteronormative work so central to the development of feminist theory and activism. The misrepresentation of radical thought by mainstream media is reflected across both dumpster diving and feminist communities where mainstream attention is often seen to dilute political work in the interest of allaying public fears.

As a researcher of dumpster diving, the interest of mainstream media in dumpster diving communities has spilled into my professional life and I have found myself with requests for interviews, some small speaking engagements, and more public attention than a PhD candidate generally receives. The experience of being interviewed as a researcher was one that foregrounded the limitations faced by journalists to discuss complex, multilayered, and, at times contradictory, political movements (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Hackett & Gruneau, 2000). I learned this lesson with my first, and at this point only, completed television interview. One day in July 2010, I woke up into a heat wave with the knowledge that a cameraperson and reporter would arrive on my doorstep in a few hours. I'd been fretting about their arrival for the previous week (well, if I'm honest, that week would be plural) and had prepared my strategy to stay on message, how to frame my research, and was prepared for a set of questions I suspected I would be asked. When they arrived, I had laid out, at their request, a selection of books and articles written on dumpster diving and was ready for the interview.

Over the next two and a half hours, I answered predicted and unpredicted questions at my home and then in a local alleyway with a row of restaurant green bins in the background. The questions turned to focus primarily on how much money could be saved through the act of dumpster diving. This was a question I dodged, time and again, with vague references to food being expensive, but always returning to point out that the purpose of my research – and the work of FNB – which was not to seek ways for people to cope with poverty, but to draw

attention to the intersections of inequality that exist within our food system. This message did not translate and when the show finally aired, my two and a half hours were edited down to 45 seconds. While I was treated fairly and was in no way misrepresented, the 15-minute segment was almost entirely about dumpster opulence and the ease with which divers could live richly without money (Saving Money Videos, 2013).

Revealed in this misrecognition is a disconnection between the politics of dumpster divers and the message often found in mainstream media. The discussions available in FNB groups or in the zines, documentaries, and websites this chapter will discuss differ from those of the mainstream journalist. For the journalist, the pressures and expectations are different than that of the academic or the activist. Even within different forms of journalism, the expectations and means of study vary as each medium brings with it specific and unique challenges, capacities, ownership, and audiences (Collins, 1989; McChesney, 1999). Sanders (2004) complicates this by considering the role of ethics within journalism and points to limitations within the news media field that impact ethical reporting. The journalist has the power to frame a story and frame the agenda of public thought, but does not have a responsibility to express the political desires of those who they report on or include stories from radical political communities (Tuchman, 1978). In the case of my interview, and my role as participant-observer, my ethical responsibility is to respect and understand the political stance of my participants, and to build within that understanding a larger analytic narrative.

The role of journalism, or that of a journalist, as a corrective within democratic culture has shifted as the business of news has become less about the challenging of power and more about its protection (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Gans, 2003). Within the context of increased neoliberalization of social life, activism and scholarship brought together under the New Social

Movements (NSM) banner have emerged into public consciousness: a literature that shares a central concern with "...identity, culture, and the role of the civic sphere..." (Pichardo, 1997, 425).

New social movement theories evolved in response to earlier interest in examining social and political organization in sociological inquiries. Early Chicago School sociology turned to not only urban spaces, but also to collective behaviour as a way of interrogating social interactions amongst different groups in the city (Park, 1967). The tendency in this early work to focus on deviance was questioned by Birmingham School subculture researchers beginning in the 1970s (Hall, *et al.*, 1990). However, it was also this early interest in collective behaviour that serves as background for the turn towards NSM discussions. Smelser (1962) turned to assessing collective behaviour and schematizing the way collective behaviours operated and impacted various types or lack of social or institutional change. With five categorizations of behaviour, Smelser was interested in systematizing how individuals form into collective action. As a way of understanding movements of democratization and consequences of social organizing, separating actions from consequences was a way of assessing the impact of social organizing (Tilly, 2004). Both Smelser and Tilly explored Resource Mobilization Theory, a way of understanding collective action common before the NSM focus was released.

Zald & McCarthy (1987) were the first to introduce the term Resource Mobilization to the study of social movement organizations, but the understanding of social movements through resource mobilization was common (Gamson, 1987). At the centre of resource mobilization is an understanding of collective groups as seeking resources in order to inspire action. The role of the social movement in a resource mobilization understanding is broken into purpose, goal, and

rational thinking. This moves past the early focus on deviance within the Chicago School sociology, but is also less concerned with communicative acts central to NSM.

Contemporary NSM theories extend from attention paid to public sphere and democracy to understand collective political action. Limitations evident in the early work of Habermas, *et al.* (1974) have been long documented and debated, but it is clear that without Habermas' early theorizing of democracy and democratic communication, NSM theories would not be possible (1989; 2001). One of the limitations of this work has been its focus on a shared public sphere and many of the responses in NSM theory have looked at how to understand shared political intentions or affiliations while balancing an understanding that individual actors do not have equitable access to the public sphere (Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 2000; Warner, 2002).

As Calhoun (1993) notes, New Social Movement theory presumes a new kind of organization in NSMs that is not necessarily supportable. Rather, the features of NSMs, such as reaching across diverse interests, the use of direct action, and affinity groups rather than party structures, are also the features of any emerging movement. However, and most significant for this discussion, is that NSM provides a bridge between macro and micro understandings of social experiences and political intentions with a focus on lifeworlds rather than systemic understandings (Cohen & Arato, 1992). However, the significance of institutionalized rights to this understanding is complicated in the case of anarchist activists. While they in some ways benefit from the civil rights and freedoms that are available to people in the western world, they remain suspicious and consistently aware of how these rights are differentially accessible to individuals based on their class, gender, race, and access to power structures.

Buechler (1995) notes, "...new social movements require us to rethink how all collective identities (including class identities) are not structurally guaranteed but socially constructed"

(456). Activists are not understood through the movement, but also serve to continually construct the meaning of their political actions individually and as a collective. In this context, the use of self-publication allows politically motivated dumpster divers to work collaboratively on building a shared set of meanings that are defined through debate and consideration, rather than a party platform. Each individual writer contributes to a larger set of understandings that collaboratively work to define political dumpster diving and the meaning of Food Not Bombs. However, as is more common with NSM groups, this work is not intended to erase difference and build towards a conclusive meaning, but rather, to express the diversity within the movement (Hardt & Negri, 2004).

As Tilly (1985) notes, previous theories of collective action had not balanced a consideration of the individual with the collective. I follow his insistence that collectives must be understood as collectives here. Rather than looking only to individual reasons, understanding behaviour *as* a collective is primary. In later work, Tilly (2004) developed his understanding of social movements as historically rooted and connected through time. This dissertation started out with provincial and national socio-legal history and turns now to another level of macro understanding. Looking to the communications of the collective connects FNB and politically motivated dumpster diving to a global interrogation. For dumpster divers, access to control over the global food system is not possible. However, changes can be made through information translated through digital communications technology. This is not to ignore the significance of specificity and locality, but rather to look for the connections with global communication strategies that these localized behaviours and tactics are rooted in and thus express (*ibid*, 729).

Melucci (1985) responded to distinctions between European and American approaches to NSM in the 1970s in a way that refines these connections. Seeing a division between "...the

breakdown/solidarity or structure/motivation alternatives...” (*ibid*, 791) as limiting potential understandings of NSM, he argued that “analysis should concentrate on the systemic relationships rather than on the simple logic of actors...Movements are *action systems* operating in a *systemic field* of possibilities and limits” (*ibid*, 792, italics in original). Most significantly for my discussion, he moves on to consider that collective identities are not a beginning point in a movement, but rather an end result of collective action. Shared identities develop through the working together and building of meaning that is evident in the work dumpster divers do on the ground and the work they print.

More recent studies of NSM theories are bridging across disciplinary divisions and specific movements to advance theoretical understandings (Meyer, *et al.*, 2002). The struggle to define a broadly applicable theory of early NSM theorists has shifted as have the movements studied to look more to fluid affinity rather than unified theoretical understandings. Downing (2001) does so by refocusing studies of alternative public spheres through their communicative techniques and models:

For the mob approach, communication takes place by some barbaric chemistry; for the rational actor approach, by dint of demonstrations and other organized expressions of discontent; and for the NSM approach, by sustained mulling over questions of identity inside the movement itself. (26)

Instead of continuing this limitation, Downing focuses on the networks of radical media and an understanding of interconnectedness that draws audiences and producers together through shared political motivation and often direct working relationships.

The public sphere ceases to be simply an idealized agora and becomes something tangible between members of interlocking circles, whose mutual communication engages them at many levels, not just that of rational, ordered debate. (33)

Here, bridging approaches allows us to view direct action and communicative work as part of the same political project. To return to my experience and frustration with the translation of

my political work and the ultimate TV broadcast of my interview highlighted an ongoing concern on how to share information across different communication structures. Within the dumpster diving community I worked with, challenges around engaging with reasonably frequent requests for interviews involved ongoing discussions looking to determine an appropriate stance to ensure Toronto's FNB message was protected. A coherent media strategy was never determined, but ongoing concerns around misrepresentations of FNB politics were often discussed. Beyond these concerns, the focus by mainstream media on the potential for money saved in dumpster diving reflects the changes in environmental discourse Luke (1995) identified in the 1990s. The downloading of responsibility for environmental action from industry to individuals was revealed in a discourse that directly linked sustainable living with money saved. The ongoing impact of this downloading of responsibility also misdirected focus and ignored that "...the reckless consumer – along with ecological disaster – is a symptom, not a primary agent in the process" (159).

As the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis and prolonged recession continue to be felt, increasing austerity measures, drought conditions, and rising food prices are coinciding with a rise in public discourse around finding means of coping in extreme deprivation.⁸⁸ The individual responsibility that Harvey (2007) understands as central to neoliberal discourses are being felt as individuals who are hungry and must face food insecurity because of systemic inequalities are increasingly pushed into a newly rationalized turn to dumpster diving as a solution.⁸⁹

88. Many of the blogs and websites that deal with food waste are aimed at consumers and often include overt arguments for saving on groceries through reduction in food wasted in the home. A primary example is the UK's *Love food hate waste* (WRAP, n.d.) which has been adapted most recently to an Australian context.

89. This is most evident in the changes in Spanish policies to balance intense need (Daley, 2012) and radical response (Spooky, 2012) that are playing out as a result of extreme levels of unemployment and suffering.

The challenge for the political, and in my case academic, dumpster diver in this context is to balance raising awareness of the irresponsibility of so much food/waste with a refusal to endorse dumpster diving as a recommended response to poverty. However, attempting to discuss these complex interrelations of the failure of capitalism is hard to achieve in sound bites. Yes, absolutely, one can save money by dumpster diving, but to focus the message on this is to disregard the lived experience of 3.9 million food insecure people in Canada (Tarasuk, *et al.*, 2013). Perhaps, most importantly, to say that you can save money by dumpster diving places the responsibility for poverty on an individual's actions where they fail to be industrious, hard working, or virtuous enough (Bauman, 2004).

The need for mutual aid in these circumstances is clear and taken up in the direct action of FNbers. The challenges with communicating anarchist activism within mainstream media has inspired my personal decisions to pull back from being interviewed, but also inspired this chapter considering the way political dumpster divers, along with many social justice activists, are utilizing available communication technology to create their own discourses and support the activist organizing they are doing in their communities. The work in reclamation and public servings that brings bodies together in a face-to-face gift economy is shared across distance by the texts produced in support of the dumpster diving counterpublic.

This diverse nature also provides a challenge to research and collection as the informality of production and distribution means that no study can be exhaustive or all encompassing. As with so many DIY cultures, finding a large repository of food and dumpster diving related alternative publications is unlikely. However, a variety of repositories were contacted including the Toronto Zine Library, Microcosm Publishing, AK Press, and informal discussions with other interested people for recommendations or loans. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss

the role zines and websites play in the overall regulation and structuring of the dumpster diving practices I observed or experienced.

Counterpublics and Self-Regulation

These complications and the intersections of government and corporate food interests have radical eaters and divers looking to provide their own information on food quality and safety. The failure of the bureaucratic structures that appear in the food in the dumpster offers an opportunity for dumpster divers to intervene and begin to carve out a space for alternative ways of thinking about food safety and food regulation.⁹⁰ To this end, a variety of documents have been created and circulated globally that relate to learning how to dumpster dive, how to dive safely, legal implications of the action, reasons to reject industrial farming, and the intersections between government spending choices and hunger. For the political dumpster diver, these documents serve as not only discursive support for a counterpublic but also function as non-state regulations.

Asen & Brauwer (2001) note that one defining feature of counterpublics is a simultaneous inward and outward address where communicative acts are constructed against the state and also for the members of the counterpublic. The focus on the communicative acts central to the counterpublic also draws a study of dumpster divers further from subculture theories. Where fashion, music choice, and youth behaviour are seen to bound the subculture (Hebdige, 2002), for the counterpublic, communities are bound through explicit texts. More importantly, the texts of the counterpublic can circulate separate from human action in a way, for example, fashion cannot. Instead, the communal meaning is disconnected from the individual and can

90. It should be noted that the responses against failures in food safety and regulation are not limited to the publications I am focusing on. In fact, there is a diverse and often popular press that questions the food system and its regulations (Bittman, 2009; Pollan, 2008).

circulate more broadly without being dependent upon individual interactions. The access and circulation of these texts sets dumpster divers apart from lurkers or tourists to the action. It is (relatively) easy to pick through the trash, but it is a far different experience when one is drawing upon a unique language of dumpster diving accessible and knowable through texts circulated within closed circles. While anyone may pick up a zine at a fair and peruse it, the meaning and community imbedded within it are a language that is learned by participating, against consumerism, in diving culture. The focus on written texts also highlights the significance of class interrogation that is so important to political dumpster divers. Their counterpublic communicative acts are based on being outside the norm and in fact working against mainstream, state supported communication.

In contrast, the communicative acts of the public are directly related to the bourgeois state. Their work also argues against the segmentation of interest common to bureaucratic structures that have departments for discrete aspects of food safety, food regulation, and waste management. Alternative documentation looks to connect across these discrete departments and understand, holistically, the way in which the regulation of one impacts the results of others. The texts of the counterpublic function in a way that is separate from the work of mainstream journalists or traditional methods of the public (Doxtader, 2000). For the anarchist, self-publication is a method of communicating not only topics of interest, but doing so in a new way.

Texts create bureaucracy, regulation, and publics as the organization of individuals through texts are mobile and replicable in a way that addresses not only face-to-face communities, but also strangers (Smith, 1990; Warner, 2002). This is significant when developing an understanding of the texts that circulate through not only dumpster diving

communities, but also the roots of radical and anarchist leaning politics.⁹¹ As Ferguson (2010) notes:

The anarchists [of the early 1900s] certainly understood themselves as largely excluded from hegemonic public spaces, and they developed vigorous discursive arenas to create their own counterpublic spheres. Additionally, they allow us to see the intensely embodied material context within which anarchist ideas emerged and through which they were put into circulation. Both our understandings of anarchism and of counterpublics benefit from their encounter. (3)

Her study of the counterpublic brought together by famed anarchists Goldman & Berkman recounts that anarchists have a long history of producing texts for circulation, a practice that continues on in anarchist communities to this day and is reflected in academic research about these communities (Jeppesen, 2012; Gordon, 2009; Duncombe, 1997). For the dumpster diving community, the production of texts is a way of not only spreading information, but also to setting a set of rules for food/waste reclamation and treatment of food rights that work directly against state regulations. This can also be seen reflected in many of the self-published examples of treatments of dumpster diving written by political divers. The ongoing popularity and existence of anarchist bookfairs, infoshops, and distros across North America speaks to the continued usefulness and success of this method of organizing and sharing alternative information (Jeppesen, 2012; Atton, 1999).

Ferguson (2010, 15) notes that government officials frequently interfered with the generation of the anarchist counterpublic by confiscating printed material, delaying mailing times, and arresting text producers. These methods are still in use today and the common police practice of using texts as reason for arrest, evidence at trial or the seizing and destruction of

91. Looking back to the history laid out in Chapter One, the self-published pamphlets that organized early Digger activism were able to circulate their ideas, but also served as an historical record for later generations.

literature so it can't be shared remains common (Potter, 2011). Censorship of dissent has long featured in American regulations and politics where, despite Constitutional protection, other legal structures are put in place to disrupt the freedom of speech of activists (Paxton, 2008).

Changes in technology likewise have impacted the regulatory structures of both form and content of communication (Cranor & Wildman, 2003). The centrality of journalism to the public sphere and the use of self-published texts to bind a counterpublic reveal the challenge made to the state where, through the writing of difference, the power of the state is brought into question. The legal attention paid to the documents of radical movements makes the importance of these documents clear. Legal attention to these texts bridges censorship from regulatory to constitutive, where the outcome of legal restrictions on activist communications extend, increasing the possibility of self-censorship (Davenport, *et al.*, 2005). Here, the chill factor replaces a structure of pre-production censorship that is not available because self-publication exists outside of a specific state regulatory structure. The power of words and documents for both the counterpublics they create and the dominant cultures that try to control them are clear.

The challenges to anarchist self-publishing is also noted in Atton's (1995) study of Spunk Press where false links made between anarchism and terrorism contributed to negative reporting of the alternative publishing house. Specifically:

By noting that Spunk Press was run by anarchists, *Computing* and *The Sunday Times* imply that the information collected there is partial, therefore dangerous. This is a problem that many alternative writers and publishers continue to experience. When they find themselves unable to have their ideas published in the mainstream they become publishers themselves, only to find that their titles are excluded from bookshops and libraries because they are perceived to be biased. That they are not produced by mainstream publishers or available through the mainstream distributors is enough for many to refuse to stock them. (NP)

He is also concerned that the dismissal of, and crackdowns on, freedom of information are increasingly at the expense of self-publishers in the interest of commerce. Specifically concerned

with internet communications, this form of anarchist publishing moves beyond hand-to-hand distribution and allows for dissemination across great distances, but also opens up this distribution to unintended audiences. In this way, the ability to disseminate is increased, but so too is the accessibility of state power and regulation to control alternative dissemination. A dual challenge then extends when considering outreach opportunities. The ability to reach unintended audiences offers the potential to share information that is not available through mainstream channels, but it also opens this information and, more importantly, radical writers to increased surveillance.

The variety of approaches and critiques available to dumpster divers and aligned political movements is the centrality of a sense of anarchist work and political approach. However, these approaches are not uniform and instead reflect Gautney's (2009) understanding that:

...anarchism itself generally eschews the very idea of formulating (for them, imposing) a general, all-encompassing theory to explain social phenomena, especially revolution and social change. Anarchism is perhaps better understood by its methods and principles rather than through a single, unified theory or political strategy. (NP)

These methods include actively producing new social forms and forms of production where consensus, equality, and anti-oppression are enacted through the production process (Graeber, 2009). Anarchist self-publishing can be included under the umbrella term of alternative media, but distinguishes itself through a purposeful political production structure. As Jeppesen (2012) notes:

Media activists ask: How can we challenge mainstream media to get our voices out and gain power? In contrast, anarchists ask: How can we tell stories of our communities in directly democratic, mutually respectful, collectively accountable, caring, and compassionate ways that will continue to create the social transformation toward which we are working in our activism? How can media be created and shared in ways that prefigure a non-hierarchical society? (265)

This ability to produce, distribute, and consume anarchist texts is explicated in the distinction between biopower and biopolitics laid out by Hardt and Negri (2009). If biopower is indeed power over life, biopolitics are the "power of life to resist and determine an alternative production of subjectivity" (57). The negotiated power central to Foucault's (1980) work leaves open opportunities for individuals to speak back to power structures and create alternative ways of being in the world. The acts of freedom of biopolitics (Hardt & Negri, 2009, 59) are not only found in the action of dumpster diving itself, but reproduced and circulated through the more permanent record of a non-hierarchical counter bureaucracy. This counter bureaucracy exists in the production of documents, arguments, and evidence that is approved by the specific counterpublic in question. Peer review exists outside of state regulation and, instead, those arguments that are accepted through continued circulation reflect the expertise that political dumpster divers and their allies quietly determine through ongoing support (or the removal of such). In the context of dumpster diving, the challenge to regulatory systems that is made by the action is supported by texts that discuss it. In this sense, the action is made concrete and transportable by writing it down or filming it and passing it on. However, the display of dumpster diving is also a way of bridging other political differences where the anarchism is subsumed into a broader anti-food/waste discourse that does not depend on claiming anarchist beliefs, but rather produces anarchist ways of being in the world.

Dumpster diving material moves through informal connections that have the ability to exist, to a certain extent, independently of mainstream circulation. They also draw on a key feature of civil society that Graeber (2009) points to regarding the way regulation is meted out by the state where the only remnants of freedom exist in speech, discussion, and circulation of

information on the internet. To connect to the last chapter, in producing communications, freeness is experienced, defended, and shared. Further, as Gordon (2009) notes:

The Internet is also attractive to anarchists because its architecture enables a communistic informational economy. The collaborative production of free software or of Wikipedia is for the most part not even a form of exchange. Rather, information is effectively held in a common pool. (NP)

The intersection of self-publishing and digital technologies have created new opportunities for dumpster divers to move their activist work out of the dumpster to a broader readership. Gordon (2008) lays out the complicated intersections between the relationship between anarchists and technology that is useful when considering the self-regulation of food through self-publication. Many of the common technological concerns for anarchists involve technological interventions in the food system that aim to increase yields, but have detrimental long term outcomes that lead to increased famine levels and unsustainable production approaches (Patel, 2007; Shiva, 1992).

As was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, anarchists engage with communication technologies to extend their critiques of other social, environmental, and economic technologies. Despite ownership of mainstream media or the technologies that anarchists use to express their ideas, the ideas themselves remain relatively free. Despite attempts to foreclose on freedom of speech, their eradication has yet to be completed. As noted earlier, Graber (2009) argues that communication remains off limits to regulation and it is through these acts that anarchists continue to engage in political organization. However, while Graeber certainly has an idealized reading of the freedom of speech available to activists, he does point to the way democratic societies and related capitalist relations have yet to foreclose on communicative rights in the way ownership of goods is regulated. Thus, where biopolitics and

communicative rights meet is the space within which self-publishing can become a form of self, or counter, regulation. The rules of the market are no longer impermeable but have fissures within which changes in behaviour can be acted out (Callon, 1998).

In the case of FNB and radical dumpster divers, the documents that provide the textual framework also work in more complicated ways. They are not only informational or instructional as they appear in form, but also provide the framework for the counterpublic and a set of regulatory structures that exist outside of state regulations. For the dumpster diver, these documents provide information on why moving away from industrial and corporate farming is important, but also provide guidelines for how to go about doing this. The DIY history of contemporary divers is clear in the ongoing use of zines and pamphlets for these purposes and to further use the genre to encounter oneself and to look for a kind of self-critique allowed for within confessional histories of radical politics and action (Ferrell, 2006).

These two aspects – action and dissemination – are necessary for developing community robustness, public awareness, and shifting the action of a few radicals closer to a social movement whose actions become an option for a wider variety of actors (Pickard, 2006).⁹² As Jeppesson (2012) notes, the act and distribution of zine making is integral to an anarchist ethos. Embodying horizontal organizing and anti-capitalist politics, zine culture is a textual embodiment and circulation of the broader anti-authoritarian politics of its producers. This understanding can also be extended to other forms of self-publication, albeit under different political economic circumstances, that seeks to create a space within the current governmental framework. Thus, when the zine ethos is taken up by the dumpster diver, it is a moment of

92. This is, of course, not to say that all one needs to do is write a zine, start a website or blog, or make a documentary to change the world – rather, the availability of these texts become options for more people who might not otherwise have access to the critiques they document.

documenting the direct action of diving and redistributing food as well as creating a counter bureaucracy against flawed governmental food regulations (Hochman, 2011). The critique is not only in content, but also in form as individuals and communities use communication technology and grassroots networks to disseminate ideas and information that government food regulators are unlikely to provide.

The use of alternative, radical, and self-published texts to circulate new social forms opens up textual space for debate. One of these debates falls around lifestyle anarchism (Bookchin, 1995), a derisive label frequently launched at freegan practices in general and dumpster diving in particular (Edwards & Mercer, 2007; W., 2006).⁹³ This understanding of certain anarchist practices as parasitical rather than productive is shared with many mainstream misunderstandings of anarchist political action. Within anarchist communities, particularly within the FNB community I worked with, addressing social problems through mutual aid models is key. It is not inherently accepted that the radical action of dumpster diving, or producing texts about it, will contribute to new social forms and organizations. Rather, self-publishing also creates a space for debate that extends to many aspects of dumpster diving and radical food activism (as well as other actions that would fall under an anarchist umbrella). As a mutable set of regulations, they can be reconsidered, debated, shifted, and refuted as various members of the loosely formed activist networks contribute to and read these documents.

However, it is not only the role of anarchist direct action on impacting consumer subjects that is important. These actions are reinforced and inscribed by further actions of documentation that take the material experience of dumpster diving and the material reasons that make dumpster diving possible and move into a realm of critique beyond that of lifestyle anarchism. Instead,

93. Lifestyle anarchism is open to debate and has been a feature of contemporary debates around anarchism and featured frequently in the now defunct magazine *Practical Anarchy*.

connection across geographical boundaries and a consideration beyond the act of dumpster diving produces the possibility of a counterpublic not only based on shared meals, as seen in the FNB model of food redistribution, but also through the development of a community linked through texts. The dumpster diver doesn't only dive and make that food into a meal. Sometimes she also writes out her ideas, politics, and experiences so she can share them and further contribute towards the building of new social forms.

It is not enough to enter the dumpster and translate food/waste into a meal, it is also necessary to begin thinking about the regulatory frame that defines food as waste and in so many ways impacts potential responses. A discursive world is constructed that both makes it possible to conceive of throwing away food, but also as a way of thinking through how these messages and meanings can be made differently. Utilizing accessible technologies offers the activist an opportunity to use various media with radically different content. Instead of depending upon a regulatory system proven flawed, a system of messages, debates, discourses, and meanings is created by dumpster divers to help redefine their relationship to not only their meals, but also to other eaters in the world.

As a response to policy and regulation, many of the pamphlets and zines I came across during my research provided not only the content of the counterpublic, but also a set of overarching guidelines. In response to regulations and policies around food waste, much of the textual information is a set of regulations for the radical dumpster diver. The messages found in these sources lack the consistency of governmental regulations which strengthens their adaptability and further develops a discussion rather than simply enforcing modes of behaviours. Most simply, various zines point to three major themes of rules and guidelines for dumpster diving: 1. Leave the dumpster cleaner than you found it; 2. Share what you find with those who

need it; 3. Be safe, both legally and hygienically. The nature of anarchist organizing, however, avoids the use of rules, but rather offer recommendations, discussion, and guidance. This is reflected in the way Food Not Bombs volunteers offer suggestions to new divers. Underlying these recommendations are a concern for individual safety and respect for shopkeepers and other divers. Instead of the biopower of governmental and corporate regulations, these discussions in content and in form work against imposed regulation and governance. Recalling Jeppesson's (2012) thoughts:

...a zine may be legitimated in anarchist communities because it enacts and engages a series of anti-authoritarian principles, in both the activism described and the processes of production and distribution of the zine. (267)

The intersection of the kinds of texts that circulate around food/waste and reclamation, those that are top down and bottom up, reveal the way that both kinds of regulations can be understood, interpreted, and refuted. Bottom up and self-published documents come in all manner of form, have varied levels of distribution and archiving, and by the very nature of their independence are not searchable in the same way governmental regulations are. Self-regulation is also an attempt to move out of the challenge noted by Bauman (2008) that:

As already noted by Pierre Bourdieu, culture lives by seduction, not normative regulations; PR, not policing; creating new needs/desires/wants, not coercion. This society of ours is a society of consumers, and just as the rest of the world as-seen-and-lived by consumers, culture turns into a warehouse of meant-for-consumption products – each vying for the shifting/drifted attention of prospective consumers in the hope to attract it and hold for a bit longer than a fleeting moment. (24 – 25)

By producing responses to these meant-for-consumption media products, the space is made for having a discussion of how to work outside of the consumer culture of food.

Within the broader context of anarchist and activist media, dumpster diving is a topic of a number of different genres and media types. In this case, while Atton (2002) is concerned with

both production form and content when considering alternative media, my project seeks to step past production form to consider the form of media and the content of alternative projects detailing dumpster diving. The production form frees writers and divers from being constrained in telling stories about dumpster diving and engaging in a diverse set of explorations, discoveries, and presentations to think through the politics of food waste and dumpster diving.

Sharing the world of alternative and radical literatures, the production forms laid out above allow for investigations and explorations that subvert the general narratives of dumpster diving found in mainstream media. Instead of focusing on the role dumpster diving plays in a capitalist consumer identity, these alternative publications draw on the history of anarchist self-publishing and counterpublic creation to provide textual support for diving behaviours. Self-publication opens up the politics and experiences of dumpster divers to much broader audiences and can potentially bridge diving communities across geographic separation. The various media also offer different ways of sharing the stories and politics of dumpster divers. These sources, in form and content, create various meanings for creators and readers, but together they build an understanding of dumpster diving that is rich, complex, and, often, differential.

Internal Debates: Self-reflexivity, Lifestyle Anarchism, and Complex Politics

The sharing of one's own stories as a way of exploring dumpster diving makes the discursive space constructed both broadly educational and specifically individual. By drawing on their own narrative material, diver-producers maintain control over how their message is constructed. Meaning is constructed from experience and individual voices claim their expertise through experience and non-institutionalized learning. When considering the self-publishing of dumpster divers, a strong theme of personal stories and self-reflexive dilemmas are evident. Susie Cagle's two volumes of *Nine Gallons: True Stories* document, in part, her foray into a San

Francisco Food Not Bombs chapter. Her (true) stories are those of the complications around being involved with Food Not Bombs, engaging in the kind of political action she is embarking on, and also the internal fissures that can occur with FNB.⁹⁴ Of interest is not only the challenges that can come up when looking at the kind of organizing FNB engages with, but considerations around the complex nature of privilege that can be traced through anarchist groups and individuals utilizing dumpster diving for their own food.

One section in Volume 2 has the main character talking to an older, male activist about privilege in dumpster diving communities. It is a common critique of anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups that they are inherently white, middle-class, and privileged, regardless of whether this is actually true.⁹⁵ Cagle responds through a personal story that she is able to share because of the zine publishing structure. Cagle's depiction of herself delves more deeply into the complications of privilege when it comes to affording food. When the person she speaks with critiques dumpster diving when one has a job, she responds that she was recently laid off. Pointing to the nuanced and thoughtful way within which dumpster divers often take on their own privilege within their direct action (or, in some cases, coping) becomes a part of the zine culture.

For Suzie, her race does not allow her to escape her class and she is seen negotiating her poverty with the presumed privilege of whiteness. Cagle's questioning is a way for her to share her struggle and journey, but also becomes part of a larger discourse of how to think about the politics behind dumpster diving and working with FNB. It is not only about the action, but also

94. The subtitle of *Nine Gallons* references true stories. Understanding that there are problems claiming truth in any textual representation, they do represent the author's portrayal of her experiences.

95. Graeber (2009) disputes this presumption and finds instead that anarchist activists come from a wide variety of class backgrounds. However, he and Thompson (2011) both note the predominant whiteness of anarchist groups. These findings are supported by my research experience.

clearly becomes a part of a larger discourse that features debate, self-reflection, and ongoing refinement of politics and actions.⁹⁶

This zine also makes reference to a larger debate and tension within anarchist communities that was discussed in an "Open Letter to Food Not Bombs" (Kill Whitey, 2009). Cagle responds to the critiques of this letter which focuses on the charity model that is seen to be a part of white history that disavows the differences in privilege between differently racialized people. She achieves this critique through a discussion between Susie and Adrian taking place via internet chat. Susie expresses frustration that the letter ignores the good work of Food Not Bombs and fails to offer possible solutions to the problems it raises. Adrian focuses on the importance of recognizing critiques that FNB forecloses the ability of communities of colour to organize for themselves. The end of this discussion comes when the two are unable to bridge the differences between their understandings and reactions to the open letter. Left speechless in front of their respective computer screens, difference is left hanging in silence. The lack of a resolution points to ongoing debates amongst anarchist organizers about the role FNB can play in organizing for food security for all and also reflects complexity within the anarchist counterpublic. While Heynen (2010) has distinguished between FNB and white charity models that the open letter critiques, the distinction between Susie and Adrian's responses to this letter signal the fractures that exist within the diversity of radical communities.

Reviewing zines about dumpster diving also reveals themes and debates that reflect fissures and discussions within dumpster diving cultures. In *Rolling Dumpster* (Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, 2009), a zine that contains an extended comic that questions the role of

96. The significance of debate and discussion within anti-authoritarian organizing features heavily in discussions of anarchist politics. The time devoted to meetings and the length with which they take is an ongoing challenge to members of the movement (Gordon, 2008; Graeber, 2009).

dumpster diving, food redistribution, and freeganism as a part of a larger challenge to globalization and capitalism. In this comic, an anthropomorphized dumpster, Skip, is in discussion with divers and, through the course of discovering discarded radical literatures, finds herself radicalized and realizing:

I could be doing so much more! I've been deluding myself, so focused was I on bagel redistribution that I've been avoiding the confrontation that's necessary to challenge the State and Capitalism. (NP)

In discussion with the diver who had been visiting her, Skip argues for more aggressive protesting and destructive activities. At one point, the diver offers the explanation that s/he does not have the money to cover possible legal fees and Skip responds: "That's such crap! Maybe you've got the privilege to not fight, but some of us have our backs up against the wall 24/7. Er...no pun intended." The diver refuses this and compares Skip to the anarchists trying to convince everyone to go to the G20 protests in Pittsburg, which takes Skip on her journey to this form of direct action. This trajectory is one that many young FNBers find themselves on – the one that has the organizing of food redistribution as a way of accessing more intensely radical organizing involvements.⁹⁷ While anarchist scholars haven't spent much time detailing this trajectory, it is evident in the underlying involvement of dumpster divers and FNB organizers behind the scenes at protests, letter writing campaigns, infoshops, and other kinds of organizing (Edmonston, 2001; Gordon, 2008; Graeber, 2009; Gautney, 2010; Heynen, 2010).

Yet, Skip's isn't only a narrative about escalation, it is also a narrative of conflict in political beliefs and a moment when the political intentions of individual activists is placed in tension and the desire to change the world is imagined in very different ways. For the diver, the presentation in the comic is one of reluctance to take the step this zine, through Skip, is arguing

97. FNB activists often refer to FNB work as a gateway to other anarchist activism.

for. For the diver in *Rolling Dumpster*, political development is signaled by her changing T-Shirt label, which begins as Vegan and in a later frame is crossed out and replaced by Freegan written below. As she clearly shifts throughout the narrative, her development is one that cannot compare to the one imagined for Skip who moves from beginning frames arguing for bagel redistribution to a final frame of direct confrontation with riot police. For Skip, the ongoing and increasingly intense involvement in protesting is valorized and rewarded through engagement with a likeminded, in this case anthropomorphized dumpster, community.

Also at play is reference to debates around black bloc strategies that percolate through anarchist activist culture. In particular, debates around black bloc property destruction are more detailed in Gordon (2008) and Thompson (2011). Yet, unlike *Nine Gallons*, the concerns of Skip in regards to engaging in overtly illegal protesting activities are quickly dismissed. In response to reading radical literature and questioning her actions, Skip concludes that the focus of activism should be on broader anti-Statist work and the work of food redistribution is comparatively inconsequential.

This debate is one that was reflected in Toronto FNB meetings where some members were interested in escalating organizing into different directions that were not rooted in food redistribution. While changes to the FNB model did not happen during my time, the tension between redistributing food and tackling broader systemic problems has not been resolved. When Skip joins the dumpster spokescouncil, they discuss whether the humans will "throw down" and one dumpster dismissively refers to the human protesters as "a bunch of liberals". The use of black bloc tactics, which these dumpsters are used to argue for, are neither uniform nor uncontroversial in the anarchist community. Central to the movement that political dumpster divers are a part of is a re-imagining of democratic decision making – direct democracy – that

requires discussion, debate, and ultimately consensus to determine the way forward (Graber, 2002; 2009). Graeber identifies the distinction in the political responses thus:

Much of the hesitation, I suspect, lies in the reluctance of those who have long fancied themselves radicals of some sort to come to terms with the fact that they are really liberals: interested in expanding individual freedoms and pursuing social justice, but not in ways that would seriously challenge the existence of reigning institutions like capital or state. (61)

This, however, is not necessarily a fair critique and may rather reflect a difference in understandings of direct action where some, in this case Skip, feel that direct action necessitates disruption, and often physical destruction, of existing institutions. The question of what happens to the food and the hungry that were so integral to Skip's early activism is lost within different concerns and political intensions.

The use of personal narratives in activist trajectories offers a further benefit in that it becomes a part of the self-reflection central to many of the activists I came into contact with. The use of personal stories and the further use of self-reflection through these stories becomes a way of contributing to a larger political dialogue and also continuing personal work necessary for anti-oppressive organizing. This is not to say that this is always true. Sometimes self-publication is self-indulgent and not all will be examples of personal stories that can be learned from or are necessarily self-reflexive. Instead, the features of conjecture, debate, and difference displayed through these scenes demonstrate the trajectory of the counterpublic anarchist activists are producing.

Unfortunately, radical communities in general, and anarchist communities in particular, are subject to external critiques of hypocrisy that are unfair in their expectations of perfection. The contradictions of consumer culture are absorbed within consumer behaviour, but anarchist activists do not have access to the status and meaning making central to a purchased identity

(Douglas & Isherwood, 1996). This is another role of the self-published story – by creating one's own narratives and considerations of the complications of radical politics, a safer space to work through contradictions and limitations is created. In addition, these narratives create a diverse set of options for how to be an activist, how to experience dumpster diving, and how one might consider alternative ways of being in the world (Hochman, 2011). Finally, these debates can also directly consider a broader understanding of developing new social roles and relations: difference, debate, and conjecture. As Laclau & Mouffe (2001) argue, central to radical democracy is a celebration and embracing of these features. Through this celebration of difference, they argue a strengthening of socialism will occur (Smith, 2003).

In the zine, difference is highlighted in a way consensus-driven FNB work is not. However, the free-ness that was so central to the FNB volunteers discussed in the last chapter is expressed in the debates and difference that zines and their distribution can contribute to. Central to the work on the ground and on the page is a desire to theorize for oneself against the dominant messages that circulate around food and waste (Nunes, 2006). Further, debates around various approaches to anarchism, most specifically concerns with lifestyle anarchism, are raised in these forums (Bookchin, 2005).

This concern with lifestyle anarchism is often directed at CrimethInc's body of anonymously and cooperatively published works. CrimethInc define themselves as "...a decentralized anarchist collective composed of many cells which act independently in pursuit of a freer and more joyous world" (CrimethInc Ex-Worker's Collective, n.d., n.p.). However, many who identify as anarchists do not accept the texts they produce without critique. One such example is CrimethInc's *Evasion* (Anon., 2003), which serves as a geography of dumpsters as the anonymous narrator dives his way across America. His approach is one of disruption and opting

out of mainstream society. Rather than seeking to build new social forms that address larger social inequalities, the narrator focuses on his own experiences and freedoms to argue for dumpster diving, squatting, theft, and train hopping as methods of avoiding engagement with mainstream, capitalist society. In this narrative, dumpster diving and squatting are the author's response to his parent's threat that if he didn't return to school, they wouldn't continue to support him. In this case, his solution is the unexpected decision to live off the waste of others and subsequently off the grid. Anonymous sets himself up against mainstream society and where some freegan and dumpster diving sites seek to bridge difference, *Evasion* is not interested in bridging any divides.

Anonymous, going by the name Mack Evasion, responded to critiques of lifestyleism:

All the noise about *Evasion* can be quieted by understanding what *Evasion* is: A personal narrative. So it's not a revolutionary program. There is no proselytizing in the pages of *Evasion*. It's a personal account of my life as a (voluntarily) unemployed 20-something vegan straight edge kid. It is, essentially, the story of one person who developed a critique of this culture, a responsive course of action, and went for it. Understanding this, if *Evasion* has any significance beyond literature, it's this: something to offer direction (one direction, of many) to a person who wishes to work less and live more. (Evasion, 2006)

Mack is clear about the individuality of the narrative and sees it not as a problem, but rather as a component of a set of tools for engaging with the world differently. In this way, the individualism can also be seen as part of a developing and diverse counterpublic that has space for difference and discussion. No individual text takes up the role of definitive and instead strength lies in difference.⁹⁸ *Evasion's* predilection is for antagonizing mainstream society and utilizing waste not to build new social forms, but rather to travel America without financial

98. Many anarchists would not agree with this understanding. As is laid out in the introduction to freeganism, there are deep divides amongst anarchist communities and both Food Not Bombs and CrimethInc have come under attack for being oppressive organizations.

support. Here Mack is able to live a life free of consumer culture by engaging with free-ness not only in refusing to pay, but also refusing to be bound by social rules. Mack's defense of this as an individual story, a narrative that may inspire, creates an interesting moment in the counterpublic. The action of dumpster diving within *Evasion* is an individual, singular experience, for Cagle an attempt to contribute to a social justice movement she believes in, and for *Rolling Dumpster* a stepping stone to anti-globalization black bloc protesting. At the centre of all of these narratives is a relationship directly with the dumpster, a relationship that has the potential to lead in all of these (and more) directions.

After six years of silence, Mack Evasion clarified the significance of the individuality of his work on *Evasion* and his other contemporary writing:

I wrote *Evasion* for who I was when I was 17 years old. I wanted to write something I'd wished I'd had when I graduated high school. I knew I wanted to circumvent college and circumvent having to get a job, and just go straight for maximum optimal experiences all the time. I wanted to extend my youth indefinitely ... I wanted a zine that was all-action, no filler, and absolutely unapologetically criminal and militant. I wanted a zine that said, I'm not going to ever work again and I don't care what you think about it, and I'm going to do whatever it takes to make it happen. (Pukeskywalker, 2011)

He goes on in this interview to discuss how his life has changed and the reasons he decided to distance himself through his identity as Mack Evasion. Thus, across the various ways of thinking through the individual experience of dumpster diving, it is possible to uncover a variety of desires, concerns, and needs that dumpster divers reveal in print. These are also changeable across time with ideas and selves developing with experience. Rather than seeking a uniform political stance, these examples reveal the complex political reasons at the centre of the shared action of dumpster diving. Self-publishing and anarchist networks provide a space for debates around lifestyle anarchism, various forms of activism and privilege internationally. In the same

way that anarchist cultures refute top-down organizing, self-publishing acts in such a way that difference and debate are protected.

While the use of self-publication has resulted in a robust bibliography of documents for the dumpster diver to draw from, it should be clear that there is not an internal consistency amongst these documents. Instead, the use of self-publication is not only about outreach and education, but also a way of responding to other writers and thinkers to refine or, rather, attempt to define a broader, shared political intention. This attempt remains and strong divisions exist amongst radical writers who look to create the best model for large-scale change possible. It is in this sense of macro level change that many of the critiques of dumpster diving and FNB activism come from. These critiques, like the models of waste reclamation they are concerned with, are not consistent and instead speak to an ongoing debate and attempt to think through what it means to struggle against capitalism, seek autonomy from state power, and combat inequalities of access to the resources necessary for human life.

Online Communities: Looking to New York and Long Island

Despite the differences between the various zines discussed in the previous section, there is a shared desire amongst political dumpster divers to build communities rooted in social justice. In some cases, self-publication is used to share success stories of activist communities as seen in two examples of online communities formed in New York State. First is [freegan.info](#), the popular, well-known central repository for the freegan community in New York City. Second is the online resources of Long Island Food Not Bombs, which is a blog, resource site, list of events, and online zine built by the active LIFNB.⁹⁹

99. These sites are few amongst many and other online resources exist that connect dumpster diving users. Dumpster Divers Paradise and MeetUp are examples of online resources designed to bring divers together and through the internet connect like minded individuals in real life.

These online communities reflect what Pickard (2006) notes are the interconnections between the text offered online as rooted in a set of activist relations and organizing in face-to-face contact. Internet communities as laid out here do not exist only on the screen or in digital form, but are also connected to organizing on the ground. Rather than delving into the debates over the public sphere (Fraser, 2000) or the internet's potential for fulfilling this role, radical texts are understood in this discussion as interrelated and drawing upon groups that exist outside of the text (Downing, 2001). They offer the potential to reach a much vaster audience than the distribution networks of the zine market, but cannot be understood as simplistically recreating shared understandings of social justice.¹⁰⁰

Freegan.info is the most extensive website available documenting the politics of freegan living, of which dumpster diving is a key action, and arguably the reason for the attention of mainstream media outlets to political dumpster diving (Barnard, 2009). Their approach is to include detailed documents ranging from instructions on diving, information on safety, and extensive considerations of the politics of freeganism. Their instructions work in conjunction with their in person communities where new divers and journalists are invited to join on trash tours and communal meals to learn how to dumpster dive and meet others involved in the action. Here, training is not limited to text on a page, but is also reinforced by the outreach offered through the trash tours and online and offline community connections that can be accessed through the website. It becomes clear that the text itself is not enough and can also serve as a way to move beyond information on the technical details of diving towards personal experience

100. Milioni (2009) talks about the IMC taking up a public sphere perspective, however these zines fall along a spectrum of affinity to alternative media. They are, in form, alternative media (Jeppessen, 2012) but are not necessarily situating themselves as citizen journalists. They are rarely able to match the reach and production cost of right wing counter-publics that Downey & Fenton (2003) discuss.

and a connection made to the larger politics of food/waste that exist before its appearance in the dumpster.

In this sense, the training manual is not only about the technical information of how to reclaim waste food, but is also guidance to contribute to the anti-consumer identity discussed in the last chapter. To engage with the dumpster is to behave in very specific ways, for very specific purposes as a means of thinking through new roles in the world. However, these guidelines move the anti-consumer subject out of individual experience and into relation with other divers, other consumers, retail outlets, employees, and so on that come into contact with the food before, during, and after its time in the dumpster. The manners of the diver are codified in these few, but significant, rules that have been developed to protect the larger group from having their access to dumpsters foreclosed, a desire to bridge dumpstering actions with mutual aid communities and a shorthand for newcomers who may not have a knowledge of how to be a responsible dumpsterer. However, these three rules, while the most common, are not enough to provide the knowledge necessary to safely dive for food. Instead, they serve as a codification of behaviour around the dumpster, but have little to say about the practicality of food safety and regulations. These issues are dealt with differently dependent on the intent of the publication and the form it takes. Discussing food safety from the edges of socially acceptable behaviour is challenging and, when it is discussed, a variety of means to determination are presented.¹⁰¹

Long Island Food Not Bombs (LIFNB) is as diverse on the internet as they report of their community work. Rather than limiting themselves to one aspect of Food Not Bombs, they have taken the mandate of mutual aid and extended it to provide a wide range of community supports

101. *Dive!* (2010) draws heavily on internal best before dates, particularly when looking to the reclamation of discarded meat. Cagle doesn't discuss it in detail. Freegan.info used to have a page written by a medical doctor writing about food safety, but was been taken down sometime after 2011.

at weekly gatherings. They have expanded redistribution of food to redistribution of other necessities (clothing, information, community), as well as linking with local organizations that plant gardens and donate harvests to be redistributed (Issler, 2012). Their work and organizing has been important not only through supporting their community on a regular basis, but also in the aid they are able to provide for disaster relief. In Fall 2012, LIFNB began sending out calls for support through their listserv as they provided food and goods redistribution for those impacted by Hurricane Sandy.¹⁰² Similar to the work FNB groups did in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina detailed by the South End Press Collective (2007), LIFNB use the support they have practiced and refined to directly impact a broader community in greater need as a result of local disaster. This ability is facilitated by internet technologies – being able to communicate quickly and across distance – but the outcome and support that LIFNB demonstrates is most certainly rooted in a strong and dependable in person community (Downey & Fenton, 2003).

Both of these online communities allow the complexity necessary to understand the significance of dumpster diving, food waste, and redistribution that circulates at the centre of political dumpster diving politics. However, despite calling these sites online communities, they are, in actual fact, digital repositories of face-to-face communities. The resources and information are a result of hard organizing work and they are able to utilize digital technology to share this information. The result is an accessible repository of information that is not bound by geography or limited to small-scale distribution networks. Instead, use of the internet brings with it the potential to open up debates around dumpster diving to a much broader audience. The on

102. I am not aware of any organizing work that Freegan.info has done during this time. This is not to say that they haven't been organizing, but rather that they have not made a broader call for help on their website.

the ground outreach has already been done, communities have already been created, and these sites are an end result rather than a means to an end. Together, all of this information speaks to the various ways that dumpster diving and food/waste is discussed and circulated. It also lays out a map of understanding how dumpster diving as an act is linked to broader movements and questions. The layered, intersectional, and interconnected understandings of community activism exist as a way to question broader systemic inequalities that are not limited to food and waste, but rather point to these as connected to other levels of inequality.

In these instances it becomes clear the importance for dumpster divers to not only direct their work towards each other, but also the significance of outreach that is so central to the work of Food Not Bomb's Keith McHenry (2002; 2012). When setting up stops on his speaking tour, he requests a table be set up the afternoon of his talk. The permanence of print is necessary for his outreach and becomes a way of continuing his activist work beyond the talks he offers. This focus on tabling allows him to share documentation, have discussions, and extend his talks to direct connections with others who may or may not be familiar with FNB work. He also includes chapters in both of his books describing the importance of tabling at events and providing information for people to follow up with after they meet FNB at servings. The nature of tabling has changed with the advent of online community opportunities and McHenry's history of activism has been impacted by the rise of digital communications and changes in communication technology.

The shift in digital communication is evident when comparing www.foodnotbombs.net to the use of Facebook in the organizing of Toronto's FNB group. McHenry is responsible for the website that serves as an umbrella location and not only a personal contact, but also one to the Taos, New Mexico FNB group he now collaborates with. The long history of McHenry using

technology is evident through this website and through a discussion I had with him when he visited Toronto on his speaking tour. The website makes direct reference to this:

This website has been made very low tech so that people in areas with bad telephone connections and people who must pay by the minute will be able to get to each page quickly. (McHenry, n.d.)

Here, disparate access to technology is directly referenced and a long history with inclusion is revealed in the technological decision made with the website. When we spoke about technology, McHenry was also able to recount a long history with FNB where limited global communication technology meant that for years FNB groups were cropping up in different North American cities, but rarely knew of each other. The propensity of anarchist activists to travel presumably brought stories of the FNB model to different cities and it was only with the media attention paid to the San Francisco chapter that the network of activism began to be revealed. The rise of the internet and now social networking has made it possible to access information about dumpster diving and FNB easily and quickly for those with access to a computer and internet connection.

The use of the online resources by freegan.info and LIFNB reflect the importance of outreach that McHenry has been arguing for during his activist career. The terms have certainly changed and the ability to self-publish, and more importantly to connect across distance has only improved with the increase of digital communications technologies. In this case, the community exists on two levels. As a reasonably accessible communication technology, diverse audience members who may have varying levels of expertise and experience in dumpster diving activism can find information and guidelines (Downey & Fenton, 2003). However, without audience research, this is speculation and for this project the nature of the messages and the rise in attention to dumpster diving by mainstream sources signal that these sites are not only being

visited by divers but are also the subject of wider interest. Perhaps more important than who may be reading, the accessibility of these resources, as well as the zines discussed above, offer models for the new social forms that political dumpster divers are enacting and continue to produce in their everyday lives.

Zines in Toronto

As discussed in the last chapter, the translation of ideas available through zine publication was central to Daniel's foray into work with Food Not Bombs. His story, amongst the other activists I spoke with, was unique in detailing zine culture, including personal involvement with the local Toronto Zine Library. This library was set up by a collective and, opening in 2007, continues to occupy a room upstairs at Tranzac, just below Bloor on Brunswick. Through this process, readers are given access to ideas and work from a much more geographically diverse area than their local community (Ferris, 2001). Key to the use of zines in radical communities is the sense of DIY ethics that came up in many of the interviews I conducted and the action of FNB in general.

The significance of a DIY ethic is one that privileges anarchist mutual aid over dependence on capitalist structures and the state and a strong desire, rooted in political punk cultures, to provide for oneself and one's community (O'Hara, 1999). Daniel brings these connections together more directly when speaking about his history in punk politics and organizing:

I grew up in ... punk circles and I went to a lot of punk shows when I was younger. The thing is the school of [political, straight edge] punk that I identified with was never really present in Toronto so after years of trying to find it I ... decided to try to get it going and when I looked in other cities [through] the zines I read and the albums I listened to and

the books I read¹⁰³ ... political punk scenes in other cities ... all the kids would be a part of Food Not Bombs and ... Food Not Bombs always seemed like a really important part of it ... I got really embedded with groups like Food Not Bombs and at the time I didn't even buy into the radical side of the politics as much I just really wanted to see an active Food Not Bombs chapter exist here because it would make me feel better because ... there's this punk community and this is one pillar of that that I can be happy that it exists ... but the longer that I spent time with Food Not Bombs and with other people and groups and projects I... internalized a lot of the ideas and ... it eventually culminated in ... focusing on trying to make things that look like Food Not Bombs ... anarchist inspired DIY activism happen in Toronto ...

Daniel's involvement in various aspects of punk politics and DIY culture links to broader interests within political dumpster diving networks. Throughout our conversation, he spoke at length about the various projects he had been involved in and they ultimately linked back to the trajectory of this statement. His attempt to create a political punk culture in Toronto, while influenced by music, was much more about these various DIY projects that took Food Not Bombs as their emblem. The connection between zine culture, political punk, and Food Not Bombs came together in Daniel's story where he was able to trace the significance of those three aspects of his political beliefs and connected actions. He was also clear that for him DIY work was a way of building a community he was looking for but could only find in other cities through the zines he was reading and collecting.

The use of zines in Toronto's political dumpster diving community is a little more complex in that the idea of having a zine is broadly supported, but the work to produce one has yet to happen. Abigail mentioned interest in producing a zine that mapped out dumpsters in the Annex area to be shared with a broader audience. For her, the production of zines was linked

103. Political punk considers punk as more than a youth music and style scene (Bennett, 2001; Hebdige, 2002).

directly to the DIY ethic she saw at the centre of FNB work. Central to her understanding of zine production and FNB organizing was a creativity that was suppressed in her suburban upbringing:

...growing up in a suburban neighbourhood ... all we ate was meat and ... of course you go out and eat fast food a lot cause that's all you really creatively could do with the money that you had ...

Here she is more interested in detailing the history of her move to veganism, but the motivations for the two are shared and seem to be rooted in the desire for free-ness from the shackles she sees in her suburban upbringing. Zine culture and self-publication is a way of moving beyond a consumer culture that trains one to understand the world through purchasing power rather than that of creativity.

More recently, at an organizational meeting in January 2012, Toronto's Food Not Bombs Society of Letters was formed as an extension of the food redistribution work the group was already doing. At the time of writing, this project was still in development, but does have the potential to be an important part of radical organizing in Toronto. The use of texts to reach beyond local geography moves the idea of dumpster diving beyond the dumpster and binds political divers across time and space. It is interesting to note that while talk of zines and other ways of communicating FNB politics outside of servings abounds in Toronto's FNB group, it doesn't always result in a text. As Daniel noted, while FNB is a part of a vibrant political punk scene, so too is the production of zines. As a form of communication specific to political punk cultures and identities, self-publishing moves behind the work of divers as they organize against food/waste and hunger (Stockburger, 2011).

Reading and Writing a Counterpublic

These aspects of self-published or alternative accounts of varied dumpster diving communities have, together, created a counterpublic. This counterpublic is not only that of

dumpster divers, but also extends amorphously into raising concerns around environmental sustainability, food insecurity, and a flawed food system. The transportability of the chosen media and their interactions with digital technology unfixes the discussion of dumpster diving politics from their location and transmits small-scale actions to a geographically disconnected reader- and viewership. Taken together, the variety of thoughts and political beliefs create a nuance within the political reasoning behind dumpster diving that ensures a debate that would not, in fact could not, be encountered in mainstream or mass publications. Rather, the nature of self-publication does not require broad generalizations or connections with mainstream frameworks of understanding. Instead, the reasons and political intentions are freed from framed limitations and instead can exist within a new kind of discursive world where they can be considered according to shared understandings of their expected audience and varied responses according to individual reader/viewer. Individual authors can debate, discuss, and present their relationship to dumpster diving and food waste in ways that make sense to them and their local communities.

As Milioni (2009) notes, it is not only the creation of new spaces, but their transformative nature that signifies the counterpublic. Drawing on Warner, she argues:

Counterpublics are differentiated neither primarily by their composition (e.g. subordinate social groups), nor by their capacity to produce counter-discourses ... nor by their potential to succeed in exerting actual influence on the political system. Their distinctive character, and their crucial role, is in their transformative, instead of merely replicative ... orientation, which is a modification of existing norms and patterns, and the actualization and, potentially, radicalization of the normative content of the critical public sphere. (Milioni, 2009, 411)

The ability to draw people together and to create new ways of being and thinking in the world is key to the work of the diver-producer. Creating websites, zines, and books offers an opportunity to rethink the way the public sphere functions as a place for consumer behaviour. Instead of

consumer behaviour, these diver-producers are developing nuanced displays and discussions of the nature of food/waste and the way that food/waste systems can be interrogated, rerouted, and transformed into a new way of feeding people. From the radical violence of *Rolling Dumpster* to the online outreach of freegan.info and LIFNB, the ideas now in circulation are signaling a new direction for grassroots activism and food advocacy. While mainstream publicity for dumpster diving and food/waste has grown, so too has the alternative media that seeks to take back control of the messages they circulate. As a topic for alternative media, dumpster diving has proven to be of interest to producers and consumers and their shared work is integral to allowing a discourse about dumpster diving to grow.

Across all of these ways of creating a new way of thinking about food and dumpster diving, these texts also open up a discursive space that is not always open to individuals in face-to-face interactions. *Nine Gallons* expresses the importance of self-analysis and deeply reflective practices as Cagle details the complications of the FNB model of consensus decision-making, waste food reclamation, and anti-oppression. Many of her stories detail conversations with other volunteers, friends, or visitors to the park. Unlike McHenry or Long Island Food Not Bombs, Cagle expresses an uncertainty with the politics and practices of Food Not Bombs. The concern around what it means to serve food/waste to people is displayed when a man, upon finding out that the free food he was offered had been reclaimed from the trash spits it out and storms away in anger. Cagle's character is then left in silence without a response. This silence is emblematic of the challenge of FNB activism and moving into different discursive fields where the meaning of food/waste is no longer shared.

Instead of the presumption shared by many divers that reclaimed food is just as good, if not better, than purchased (Clark, 2004), the deep divisions between divers and non-divers are seen

as Suzie, left standing speechless and alone, is unable to bridge that discursive divide. Her experiences, as represented in her zine, reveal the various ways individuals engage with food servings and reclamation. For some divers and for some circumstances a lack of documented, shared regulations leave them unable to have this kind of conversation. However, the zine itself becomes a part of that conversation – where Cagle displays the division between herself and others in a way that continues the conversation by putting it down on paper and distributing it. Her blog, *This is What Concerns Me* details in its title her desire to share those concerns and start a longer conversation than that available over a meal.

Thus, the act of self-regulation happens not only through practice, but also through the production of more mobile conversations and considerations that can continue beyond the dumpster, the park, or the serving. The questions of what to do with the power differential evident in servings are partially addressed by ongoing documentation. Complicated debates are distilled through a variety of sources and the complexity of reconsidering mainstream culture is made available through the voices of the many, rather than the few. Dumpster divers move food out of waste circulation to make it mean something new and support this by recirculating ideas out of geographic fixity of local groups and out of the fixed time of servings to be living, adapting discourses of an anarchist counterpublic. The various acts of self-regulation do not only occur in face-to-face conversations or directly during a dumpster dive, they are also backed up by a separate set of documents that rely on self-publishing and self-distribution to work against the governmental and corporate regulations that dictate food safety. Seen in zines, websites, documentaries, Youtube videos, and so on, there is a wealth of information that is designed to aid divers in expressing themselves and sharing their stories.

It is in the moment of these texts, or rather the many moments of these texts, that new ways of thinking about food/waste are made transportable and translatable across different social worlds. The lived experience of dumpster diving is taken on the road and can circulate beyond that of the food commodity or the diver's body through the city. The text is not bound in time and space in the same way the action of the diver is. While the diver moves through the city, she cannot circulate as fast and as wide as a zine may. The counterpublic is changeable and refuses to be pinned to a specific meaning or geography. It is instead circulating and changing as food/waste does, responding and interacting to local geographies while still remaining linked to a growing global understanding of the significance of food/waste activism. This becomes clearer when we look at the impact digital technologies have had on the activism and the spreading of that activism for dumpster divers.

Conclusion

The process of self-regulation requires a set of regulations that are accessible and shared by members of the group across geographical difference to create a counterpublic that exists beyond traditional forms of power (Warner, 2002; Ferguson, 2010). Warner is clear that counterpublics are made up not only with those who have direct face-to-face communication, but also strangers who may never have met. The circulation of the above communications are a form of counter-regulation that produce not only a way of being in the world, but also a guide for how to go about safely dumpstering food. While individual zines, websites, and films may have differently nuanced politics, they are connected by a base set of guidelines that travel by word of mouth and circulate through these alternative media systems. Zines about dumpster diving display themes in anarchist politics laid out by Gordon (2008). Thus, it is not only the form, but also the content of the anarchist counterpublic (Jeppessen, 2012; Ferguson, 2010).

For the diver, the regulations they take part in enacting do not have the force of law behind them, but are instead a community identity of which they become a part. Through their circulation and consumption, these narratives define the community of dumpster divers as diverse, challenging, and thoughtful about their role in relation to food/waste and the reasons for hunger and inequality. These documents also serve as an introduction to the new diver who may be unsure how to go about safely diving and preparing food, or may be unaware of rates of wasted food. Thus, the DIY ethic comes through when considering how self-produced and self-distributed documents and skill sharing serve as a counter-normative effect to ensure that the dominant message of food safety regulation is not the only one circulating.

Circulation is limited, as is clear from anyone familiar with small-scale self-publication. While there are a few examples of distros that have utilized internet technology, such as Microcosm and AK Press, distribution often takes place through a more unique series of interconnections. Infoshops, punk shows, individual travellers, and anarchist bookfairs are all opportunities to share information regarding not only dumpstering politics, but also a broad range of radical literatures increasingly not available as a result of the domination of book industries by large corporate chains. Appadurai's (1996) infoscape has been foreclosed and corporate ownership defines how information travels around the globe. However, as is clear by the activities of alternative media, this scape is not the only flow of information. Instead, dumpstering politics may sometimes flow through global scapes, but more often they are travelling the globe but not through the circuits of capital (Harvey, 1978). Moving through digital means, or more importantly being passed hand to hand, these ideas filter through and are taken up and transported by the multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004).

These examples offer an overview of the way self-regulation plays out in dumpster diving and Food Not Bombs communities. Central to the organizational principles of FNB is the autonomy of each individual chapter. The incredible organization of Long Island (who are able to host multiple servings a week, produce a regular newsletter, provide access to clothing, and so on) can be compared to the disorganization of San Francisco's recent chapter, as presented by Susie Cagle. On the ground, interactions with food/waste, food politics, and political dumpster diving are diverse and it is within the differences that a new way of thinking about food regulation becomes possible. It is clear from the amount of edible food/waste available that something has gone wrong with our food regulation system. Through the action of dumpster divers, new ways of understanding how to define edibility and also to connect edibility to other social relations (of communality, mutual aid, self-determination, and free-ness) produce the deepest challenge to flawed food regulations. Dumpster divers who take to producing discursive spaces outside of mainstream media or governmental/corporate regulation are working to define their own way of being in the world. The counterpublic they actively produce becomes available in a shifting, mutable way where difference is considered, respected, and debated on a terrain that is defined through those who choose to engage.

For FNB and dumpstering communities, the overlap with these circuits of information are obvious connections, but do not account for how ideas move outside of an open, but limited community. One of the obvious challenges in spreading information regarding any radical idea is the challenge of moving outside of an already sympathetic and involved community of people. The framing of mainstream media to focus on individualistic and narrow understandings of political dumpster diving as a means of saving money, a moral panic, or an oddity of human interest is responded to by the use of texts that self-regulate and self-promote the work of divers.

The mainstream media's limitations has resulted in independent and alternative medias that are displayed in the work of these zines and online communities (Gordon, 2008; Graeber, 2009; Thompson, 2011; Jeppesen, 2012). Instead of depending on the mainstream, divers are defining themselves not only through their action, but also the narratives they produce and distribute amongst themselves and to interested non-, or perhaps not quite yet, divers.

Epilogue

It was a warm day in mid-May and I was sitting in a church reminded of the way food safety was discussed at the opening of this dissertation: the dual challenge of Canadian food safety that utilizes regulations that ensure quality food is thrown away, based on date codes that do not reflect edibility, while not regulating contemporary agricultural techniques that have drastically increased food contagion and outbreaks. My new job was working with Toronto's food rescue charity, Second Harvest. Covering familiar ground to Food Not Bombs and dumpster divers, but through an institutionalized charitable framework, I was attending a joint-agency workshop on food safety and food handling for social service not-for-profit agencies. It was held in a church at Bathurst and College often used by non-profits and charities to host events, workshops, and meetings. Sitting in the nave, I looked towards the alter where, instead of a sermon, we were watching our facilitator and her slideshow about how to safely use close-to-code, donated, and rescued food. With light streaming through the stained glass window behind her, nostalgia overwhelmed me as I balanced thinking of the beginnings of this project and the significance of this workshop to the work of social service workers and volunteers around the city.

The purpose of the workshop was to learn about how one can use fresh food that was coming close to inedibility or goods that were close-to or past code safely and hygienically. Much of the discussion covered familiar topics (and similar recommendations) I had had over dumpsters, but this advice had the stamp of approval from local authorities – the facilitator also offered training with Toronto Public Health's Accredited Food Handler Certification Program (Toronto Health, 2013). In these cases, food never reached the dumpster and was instead circulated through formalized donation. Reaching out to charity workers dealing with food, we

were presented with an overview of not only how to recognize and rework surplus food (a more common industry term for what I have called food/waste), but to also communicate this information with clients who visited meal programs and food banks.

Particular discussions around best by, best before, and use by dates reportedly prove challenging in food bank sectors as workers need to explain to their clients that despite the apparent stamp of authority, best before and best used by dates are guidelines and do not always communicate inedibility or contamination. These challenges with food regulation are not unique to social services and their clients, in fact, this challenge was laid out in the introduction to this dissertation as shared by many consumers: dates that are used to internally manage the movement of stock are commonly misunderstood as defining edibility and safety.¹⁰⁴ Yet, this workshop and my work with Second Harvest both allow me to view food/waste through a very different lens and clarify the work I have done in the previous chapters.

This dissertation has looked at the experience of dumpster divers in Toronto as connected to a broader movement of food/waste activism around the world. Three research questions guided this project: (1) What are the circumstances that allow so much quality wasted food to be thrown away and then recovered? (2) How do dumpster divers remake the hybrid of food/waste to produce social meaning? and (3) How do individual dumpster divers utilize the category of waste to build individual and communal social relations outside global capitalism?

To answer the first question regarding the circumstances that lead to so much quality wasted food, I began with a discussion of food safety and food regulations as structuring factors ensuring that edible and quality food is frequently thrown away. This was then followed by a history of gleaning and enclosure acts that have left contemporary Canada with no legal

¹⁰⁴ Lieb (2013) received public attention when her report was released confirming that misunderstandings of date labeling of food is shared in a US context.

protections for gleaners and a disavowal of the social relation of mutual benefit that was central to gleaners and farmers. In response, dumpster divers work within urban spaces to question the commodification of food and the discounting of mutual aid and gift economies in capitalist food systems. This gift economy and the nostalgic view of an idealized past proves to be only a partial truth of the dumpster diving experience.

By drawing on gift economies (Mauss, 1990) and the liminality of food/waste (Douglas, 2002a), dumpster divers rework their social worlds. They move not only through the city, but also challenge their consumer identities through critical and self-reflective responses to both food and consumer culture. Toronto's Food Not Bombs is a part of a global network of activists who are working to create ways of relating to each other and their broader communities that do not support contemporary capitalism. Instead, the nostalgic past is revisited when food is foraged and shared without the restrictions of price and sociality of contemporary experiences of eating. This turn to a gift economy, and my discussion of the group experiences of Food Not Bomb members in chapters 3 and 4 address, the second and third research questions that have guided this project. Food/waste is taken up as a key component to enacting an anti-consumer identity that is rooted in the gathering and making of food without the use of money. Time and labour is devoted to remaking individual and communal meaning outside of the confines of capitalist structuring.

Much of the meaning produced by politically motivated dumpster divers draws on a nostalgic reproduction of the gift economy that is seen to allow a freedom from capitalist and corporate structures. This looking back is central to the work of political dumpster divers, but the use of digital media and dual power concepts also sees the dumpster diver looking forward. New social movements have moved away from single-issue focus on economic experiences and

instead bring in the subjective experiences of individuals and communities (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The multitude (Hardt & Negri, 2004) or the new labour relations (Carlsson, 2008) fueled by non-wage labour time are changing the way food/waste is conceived. Divers have known for decades the level of wastefulness of the contemporary food system. This knowledge is now moving beyond small, politically connected circles and is being recognized as a significant problem to be addressed by industry members, individuals, and governments.

These movements are increasingly able to organize and grow because of digital communications and the capacity for individuals to produce their own meaning not only on the food they cook and eat, but also the text and visual communications of self-produced zines and websites. Toronto's Food Not Bombs cannot exist without social media in the form of Facebook and it is clear from the experiences of divers that the history of self-produced texts filters through their understanding of their own diving experiences and their connections to broader global movements. Without falling into an understanding of the internet as the new commons, a utopian idea easily refuted (Fraser, 2000), digital technologies have changed the experience of anarchist activism (Gordon, 2008). While FNB is looking towards critiquing food/waste and hunger, they are also connecting these actions to critiques of global state and capitalist commodification of food, degradation of ecosystems, and ongoing war mongering (McHenry, 2012). This core value is rooted in the history of FNB and it is through a look to McHenry's history that the impact of digital technology is most evident. Connecting FNBs around the world, self-publication and online organizing bridges dumpster diving communities across discrete geographic locales and builds connections and recognition across time and space.

But, this dissertation is not only about the global movement of divers, nor merely about the experiences of Toronto's FNB group. It is, first and foremost, a concern about food/waste

and an attempt to understand why and how we live in a time when 40% of edible food is being thrown away (Value Chain Management, 2013). The study of Toronto's FNB group has illuminated the connection between the socio-legal structures that have historically conspired to construct a contemporary situation that sees increasing individual and public concern around food/waste. If dumpster divers were amongst the first activists to sense how extensive the problem of food/waste was, they are no longer alone in this concern.

This study has displayed and illustrated the significance of the dumpster divers' ability to change the meaning of food regulations and food/waste itself through their actions. As a contribution to cultural and urban studies, this project joins a growing concern within studies of city spaces to consider ecological concerns (Heynen, *et al.*, 2006). Bridging the eco-criticism of the middle section of this dissertation with my opening and closing chapters offers a unique, structural critique to the study of food/waste globally, and, specifically, in Canada. Without research detailing the specific relationship between Canadians and the food/waste that moves through our waste streams, solutions and correctives are not possible.

This study is, however, only a first step. My work with Second Harvest has given me access to an organization that has built a food surplus rescue infrastructure in Toronto over the last 28 years. Through its history, negotiations have been made directly with food industry partners in order to pick up donated food and redistribute it to a growing number of social service agencies in metropolitan Toronto. The work against the charity model seen in FNB has instead become central to Second Harvest's longevity and success. It is also a way of looking at food/waste that uncovers a series of interested industry members and a set of circulations that the dumpster diver does not come into contact with. With seven routes, running five days a week, and one truck on weekends, Second Harvest rescued and redelivered over 7 million pounds of

food in 2013. The extension of the food system here refuses the dumpster and instead moves food through an extended distribution system modeled on the logistics of fresh food delivery.

Any research study, particularly one that extends over a number of years, could be done differently. For myself, as a researcher, moving into this job has displayed directly how this project would have been different if its starting location had not been the dumpster, but a Second Harvest truck. Both spaces open up a consideration of city spaces and circulations, but these circulations run trajectories that do not overlap despite their shared object of focus – bringing food/waste and hungry people together. To compare the two models at this stage is impossible – no extensive study has been undertaken of Second Harvest – however, the distinctions between the two, at this juncture, lead to a more significant question. More research of food/waste in Canada is absolutely necessary if we take its reduction as a serious undertaking. Further, this research needs to consider the limitations of individual studies that can only look to so many stages of the food system before losing their analytical edge. A focus on a limited framing through a food system analysis also runs the risk of missing out on stages of the food system – such as the dumpster diver – that are not recognized as legitimate.

However, it is not only within the institutional structure of Second Harvest that I can look at food/waste through a new lens. Over the last couple years, growing attention is being paid to surplus food and methods with which wasted food numbers can be reduced. Studies by George Martin Centre (2010) and Value Chain Management (2012, 2013) have broadened into new annual roundtables towards reducing wasted food. Bringing together industry members, agriculture scholars, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, a forum will be held in Mississauga, Ontario in November 2013. At this point, more information and research is being conducted to produce Canadian specific numbers of wasted food and *Cut Waste, GROW*

PROFIT (2013) explicitly demonstrates to industry how profit increases when less food is thrown away. This move is heartening as the more attention directed towards wasted food numbers, and particularly by including many actors in the food system, increases the potential that food/waste can be reduced.

However, the work I continue to do around food/waste, so central to this dissertation retains, most importantly, the goal of political dumpster divers: not only to recover edible food, but also to maintain a focus on social justice. Combatting food/waste cannot thus be reduced to profit numbers or landfill space, but must be understood through a continued challenging and questioning of an unequal food system. Environmental impact and increased costs are important considerations, but despite their interest to food industry, should not be the most well known word around wasted food.

Instead, understanding the liminal and subsequent connection mapped out here in the concept of food/waste, we can again return to the communicative aspects of both food and waste. These connect people across all walks of life, and across broad geographic spaces. Hunger is the need behind the work of Second Harvest and similar food recovery charities around the world – City Harvest in New York; Forgotten Harvest in Detroit; OzHarvest in Sydney, Australia, to name a few – and this need is not abating. Despite increased attention and concern turned towards wasted food, social justice must continue to be a part of the conversation. It is not enough to ask why and how much food is wasted, but we must also continue to question why we, globally, have so much while so many people starve.

Appendix A: Interview Participant Summary

Interviewee Name	Demographic Summary	Approximate Age
Adam	Global political studies student, deeply involved in local anarchist organizing in addition to work with FNB.	Early 20s
Erin	Nutrition student and health store retail worker. Extensive traveler and experienced with FNB in other cities. Focused on food related activism.	Early 20s
Sandra	Childcare worker, focused on food related activism.	Early 20s
Abigail	Health food retail worker, animal rights activist, and interested in sustainable fashion design.	Early 20s
Daniel	Withdrew from political science program, founding member of Toronto's FNB and Toronto's zine library, as well as a local punk house. Employed in the kitchen of a local restaurant.	Early 20s
Benjamin	Political science and philosophy of science student, withdrew during the time of research. Continued on in central role with FNB.	Early 20s
Keith McHenry	Co-founder of FNB, activist, and public speaker.	Early 50s

Appendix B: Letter of Consent

Study Name: *This lifestyle can be recycled where facilities are available*

Researchers: *Michelle Coyne*
PhD Candidate, Joint Programme in Communication and Culture, York University and
Ryerson University
mcoyne@yorku.ca

Purpose of the Research: This study seeks to develop an understanding of the meaning of dumpster diving and the political choice to recover waste food. Academically, this study will interrogate

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: Your participation will include, according to your own interest and time, diving and conversation. I will, on occasion, digitally record our conversations, but at any time you can end our time together or refuse to be recorded.

Risks and Discomforts: Participation in this research will not include any additional risks or discomforts.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You: This study contributes to a growing field of literature questioning human relationships to waste. Further, by foregrounding food waste reclamation and practices of political activism related to this food waste, the project provides a forum to discuss these issues with a broader audience.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. If at any time, you no longer wish to take part, please let me know and be assured that this will in no way affect future interactions with the researcher or York University.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, you can request all previous data be destroyed and, when possible, the researcher will comply.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. During our discussions I will take handwritten notes and, with specific consent, digitally record our conversations. Both notes and any recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my personal office. I will be the only person with access to this data and I will continue to keep it in storage after the study is completed. When possible, any identifying factors will be removed from tapes and notes so that your confidentiality will continue to be protected.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact me or my Graduate Supervisor - Dr. Paul Moore either by telephone at 416-979-5000 ext 2604 or by e-mail (psmoore@ryerson.ca). You may also contact my Graduate Program, Communication and Culture at 3013 Tel Centre, York University or 416 736-5978. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca).

Legal Rights and Signatures:

I _____, consent to participate in *This lifestyle can be recycled where facilities are available* conducted by *Michelle Coyne*. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____
Participant

Date _____

Signature _____

Date _____

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