Cultivating Food Sovereign Campuses
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Abstract

This chapter proposes a framework and pathway for developing food sovereign campuses. Building on previous research about sustainable campus food projects, community-campus engagement, transformative approaches to university food services, campus food system alternatives and food regime frameworks, it summarizes a case study of the campus-community food groups at Concordia University. This chapter draws from a critical-participatory-action research project performed between 2014 and 2018 called the Concordia Campus-Community Food System Research Project. We gathered information about the campus-community food system by interviewing fifty-nine food activists from Concordia and searched the university archives for relevant artifacts and articles. We also built an online archive and created multimedia products for the site; we uploaded the video interview segments and designed maps of the campus-community food system. Additionally, we organized a public consultation with all the campus-community food groups to get feedback about our findings and discuss how to build a food sovereign campus. This chapter proposes a framework that distinguishes key differences between corporate, weak sustainability, and food sovereignty approaches to post-secondary foodservices. Our findings suggest that a food sovereign campus is transformative, controlled by an array of campus-community partners, not run by large multinational foodservice corporations, and provides value to the campus and surrounding communities instead of externalizing social and environmental costs. While there are some issues with using food sovereignty to refer to campuses, we hope to inspire researchers and food activists to continue to develop the framework proposed in this chapter.

Introduction

The time is ripe for post-secondary institutions to move away from corporate foodservices and cultivate food sovereign campuses. Through collaborative efforts with faculty, students, and neighbouring communities, university and college food systems can play a pivotal role in developing more ecologically sustainable, equitable, and just campus and community foodscapes. This is important because the global food system is not socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable. Rather than implementing foodservice models that address global food crises, most Canadian post-secondary institutions hire large multinational corporations that exacerbate these issues[1]. Despite efforts to promote campus sustainability, post-secondary administrators are not meeting high-order, in-depth sustainability benchmarks (Bieler and McKenzie, 2017). Additionally, Canadian students are becoming increasingly food insecure (Meal Exchange, 2021). Food sovereignty frameworks can help meet these conditions and address the root causes of food insecurity.

While the concept of food sovereignty is broadly recognized as a framework for transforming local food systems, its specific application to post-secondary campuses remains underdeveloped. This chapter describes a case study of the campus-community food groups at Concordia University (Concordia) to explore the question: how can post-secondary institutions create conditions for campus and community food sovereignty?

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[1] Aramark, Chartwells-Compass, and Sodexo form an oligopoly within the landscape of higher education dining, together accounting for just over 60% of the food service contracts (Chevrier, 2022; Velasco 2018).

Why Establish Food Sovereign Campuses?

We must transform our food system. Industrial agricultural practices are pushing the planet beyond ecological limits[2]. As climate-related disasters intensify, the risk of hunger increases, and food supply chains further destabilize (Naheed, 2023). The global food system, rooted in a history of exploitation, perpetuates social injustice. Historical instances, including colonial-era slavery and Indigenous land dispossession, have evolved into contemporary problems such as migrant labour abuse and persistent violations of Indigenous food and water sovereignty (Ayres, 2020; Holt-Giménez, 2017). These social injustices are paradoxically justified in the name of increasing global food security, a notion put into question by the glaring contradiction of abundant global food supply coexisting with widespread hunger (Holt-Giménez E. , Shattuck, Altieri, Herren, & Gliessman, 2012). Moreover, the economic foundation of the food system is fraught with inconsistencies, discrimination, and avarice, with farmers sinking into debt to stay competitive, enabling a system that sets food prices below the cost of reproducing farm labourers (Holt-Giménez, 2017). Simultaneously, wages lag behind food price inflation, benefiting grocery store owners accruing record profits amid substantial price increases (Purdye, 2023).

Fortunately, post-secondary institutions are fertile grounds for developing transformative campus-community food systems. They bring together students, professors, researchers, resources, funding, space, and other assets, making them optimal places to experiment with food practices (Barlett, 2011). They facilitate experiential learning and participatory action research, which is essential for refining food practices on campus and in the community (Andree et al., 2016). Researchers can mobilize diverse resources to enhance the social economy of neighbouring communities (Fontan, 2013). Most importantly, Pothukuchi & Molnar (2015) and Pothukuchi (2012) argue that universities have a responsibility to foster democratic and social justice, particularly in supporting inner-city food projects. With substantial purchasing power, universities can strengthen community food systems by becoming anchors for local farmers, especially struggling medium-scale farmers (Friedmann, 2007; Bennell, 2008; Hrdicka, Tomalty, and Bornstein, 2011; Stahlbrand 2017).

While universities and colleges have the ability and (arguably) a civic duty to enhance campus-community food systems, their current practices often contribute to global food crises. Canadian higher education institutions commonly hire large multinational corporations, mainly Aramark, Chartwells-Compass, and Sodexo[3] (referred to as "the big three"), to provide foodservices on campus. The big three attempt to gain exclusivity contracts with university administrators, who make meal plans mandatory for students in residence[4]. Collectively, they create a captive

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[2] Especially ecological limits related to deforestation, biodiversity loss, freshwater use, greenhouse gas emissions, and the overproduction of phosphorus and nitrogen (Richardson K et al. 2023), Westhoek, Ingram, Van Berkum, Özay, & Maarten, 2016).

[3] Aramark, Chartwells-Compass, and Sodexo form an oligopoly within the landscape of higher education dining, together accounting for just over 60% of the food service contracts (Chevrier, 2022).

[4] According to Chevrier (2022), fifty-one Canadian universities offered meal plans for students in residence. Of these fifty-one universities, forty-six universities (90.2%) required at least some of their students in residence to purchase a meal plan.

consumer market[5] and monopoly over campus food distribution, allowing universities to generate revenue through a profit-loss model[6] tied to the foodservice corporation's profitability.

Critics have raised substantial concerns about Aramark, Chartwells-Compass, and Sodexo. The big three maximize profits by externalizing environmental and social costs, exploiting labour, and purchasing inexpensive food with significant environmental footprints (Martin and Andree, 2012; Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz, 2019). They have a documented history of employment discrimination, false claims, wage issues, labour relations problems, employment screening concerns, privacy breaches, and workplace health and safety abuses[7].

From Reformist Approaches to Transformative Approaches

While some Canadian universities have taken steps to become more sustainable, none have yet met in-depth, transformative, holistic sustainability criteria[8] (Bieler and McKenzie, 2017). Therefore, regarding post-secondary foodservices, we are intentionally shifting the focus from merely "*advancing sustainability in campus food services"* to "*cultivating food sovereign campuses and communities."* The term sustainability is often misused, concealing harmful business practices, leading to greenwashing (Grober, 2010). Food sovereignty is part of a transformative food movement rooted in ecological, economic and social justice. As La Via Campesina stated, "Food sovereignty is a precondition for food security" (Via Campesina 1996 cited in Patel, 2009). We maintain that establishing a food sovereign campus is essential for developing strong[9], transformative, sustainable campus food systems.

Despite significant efforts from post-secondary administrators and researchers, reforming multinational foodservice corporations has been difficult and slow, resulting in minimal sustainability impacts (Barlett, 2011; Bohunicky, Desmarais and Entz, 2019; Stahlbrand, 2017; Hrdicka, Tomalty, and Bornstein, 2011). Scholars emphasize that achieving social and environmental sustainability is more attainable through independent, self-operating dining services (Barlett, 2011; Stahlbrand, 2017; Bohunicky, Desmarais and Entz, 2019; Bennell, 2008). Large transnational foodservice corporations impede substantial food system reforms

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[5] These three foodservice corporations also dominate other captive markets in public sectors such as the military, hospitals, elderly care centers, and prisons (Martin and Andree, 2012).

[6] Post-secondary institutions typically employ one of three foodservice operating models: profit-loss (third-party operators manage foodservices for a profit and share a percentage with the institution), management fee (foodserices are outsourced to third-party operators to benefit from their expertise, but management is largely controlled by the institution), self-operated model (foodservices are run and staffed by the institution) (Mohawk Sustainability Office, 2017).

[7] From the year 2000 to the writing of this chapter, Compass Group incurred fines exceeding $34 million with 77 violations, Aramark accrued nearly $20 million in fines with 138 violations, and Sodexo accumulated over $100 million in fines with 62 violations (Violation Tracker). Sodexo, which also operates six private prisons globally, faced accusations of malpractice, leading to instances of contract terminations (Government of Western Australia, 2021).

[8] Bieler and McKenzie (2017) conclude by suggesting that for universities to be genuinely transformational, they need to meet, "…higher-order organizational learning about sustainability…[by] questioning worldviews in relation to sustainability, reorienting educational purposes and paradigms in alignment with sustainability values, and practicing sustainable forms of community engagement. (p. 17) [italics added]"

[9] Weak sustainability is 'econocentric'; the universal discourse reflects market economies (Gowdy & O'Hara, 1997). Strong sustainability is 'anthropocentric'; it recognizes that sustainability has hierarchies, where the biosphere is the primary, most important system (Gowdy & O'Hara, 1997).

(Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz, 2019) because minimizing negative externalities adversely affects profitability. This is an undesirable outcome for both the foodservice corporations and administrators who adhere to a profit-loss model. Transformative approaches to university food services show greater promise than reformist methods, as the latter fail to address the root causes of current food crises, namely the corporate food regime (Holt- Giménez, 2017).

Research on transformative approaches to university foodservices and campus food systems is emerging but remains in its early stages as scholars have only recently begun exploring these strategies. In one study, Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz (2019) compared self-operated (Diversity Foodservices[10] at the University of Winnipeg) and corporate contracts (Aramark at the University of Manitoba) to identify factors influencing food system transformation in university food procurement. They found that Diversity Foodservices became an exemplar of sustainable university foodservices, winning over a dozen awards since its inception (Diversity Foodservices Awards, n.d.). In contrast, the University of Manitoba had difficulties transitioning to local food procurement because Aramark didn't want to take on extra costs, they didn't have access to local sustainable supply chains, and they used a corporate structure for food procurement (Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz, 2019). Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz (2019) advise that universities follow the lead of the University of Winnipeg (as well as the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia) in implementing more radical changes to foodservices. Specifically, they recommend opting out of transnational corporate contracts and transitioning to a foodservice model better poised to contribute to building alternative food systems. To inform their analysis, Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz (2019) refer to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) *food regimes*[11] framework that contrasts neoliberal (food enterprise), reformist (food security), progressive (food justice), and radical (food sovereignty) approaches to food crises but didn't attempt to apply the model to university foodservices. This chapter advances Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz's (2019) work on transformative food systems by creating a food sovereignty framework for post-secondary institutions.

Campus-Community Food Systems as Agents of Transformation

Researchers are also becoming more interested in *campus food system alternatives* (CFSAs)–on-campus initiatives that are primarily governed by students and are motivated to produce structural, practice, and/or policy change through the campus foodscape (Classens, Adam, & Srebot, 2023). CFSAs offer important pedagogical spaces where counter-narratives and education for food systems transformation can emerge simultaneously by involving students in their local food system (Classens, Adam, & Srebot, 2023; Classens, Adam, Crouthers, Sheward, & Lee, 2021; Deskin & Harvey, 2023). Research on CFSAs is also only at the beginning stages and provides partial insights into the dynamic initiatives of students, staff, and faculty actively devising or envisioning solutions for food systems challenges within and beyond their campuses (Classens, Adam, &Srebot, 2023). While CFSAs may not inherently embody transformative characteristics, they present an intriguing opportunity for further exploration (Classens, Adam, &Srebot, 2023; Deskin & Harvey, 2023).

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[10] Diversity Foodservices is a work integration social enterprise (WISE) owned by two parent organizations, the University of Winnipeg Community Renewal Corporation (UWCRC) (with 52% of the shares) and Supporting Employment & Economic Development (SEED) (with 48% of the shares) (Donkervoort & Godbout, 2023).

[11] The term "food regime" refers to the political economy and ecology of food during capitalist crises and historical geopolitical conditions. It complements analyses like commodity chain studies, dependency analyses, and fair trade studies (McMichael, 2009). Holt-Giménez and Shattuck's (2011) framework developed from previous work on food regimes.

To advance the research on CFSAs and *campus sustainable food projects* (Barlett, 2011), this chapter focuses on an ongoing critical-participatory-action research project of the Concordia Food Coalition[12] called the Concordia Campus-Community Food Groups Research Project (CCFGRP). Readers, please note that although we use the terms campus-community to refer to the food organizations and food systems at Concordia, the terms campus-community food groups, CFSAs, and campus sustainable food projects can be used interchangeably[13]. At Concordia, students and faculty used to call these organizations "student-run food groups." We eventually began referring to them as campus-community food organizations to more accurately describe their existence, i.e., they reside on campus and are run mainly by students but also involve faculty, alumni and the community at large. Through a food sovereignty approach, we evaluated the potential for campus-community food systems to transform campus and community foodscapes.

What is Food Sovereignty? How Can it Apply to Post-Secondary Campuses?

Food sovereignty is a multidimensional concept (Edelman, Weis, Baviskar, Borras Jr, Holt-Giménez, Kandiyoti, and Wolford, 2014) that fundamentally refers to the right of people to control their own food systems (Edelman, 2014). The term "food sovereignty" gained prominence in 1996 at *The World Food Conference* in Rome, where La Via Campesina strategically introduced it to transcend simplistic discussions about food security (Patel, 2009). Their intent was to implement a social justice approach that included the right to food, agrarian reform, resource protection, trade reorganization, ending global hunger, social peace, and democratic control of the food system (Desmarais, 2017; Patel, 2009). In 2007, La Via Campesina established the *International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty*, organizing the *Forum for Food Sovereignty* in Selingue, Mali, resulting in the *Nyéléni Declaration on Food Sovereignty* (Patel, 2009). Since then, the term has been further debated, defined, and implemented–although it has yet to be applied to post-secondary food systems. As a starting point, we explored three important ways to understand food sovereignty: (1) it refers to establishing social justice outcomes, (2) it refers to radical approaches within 'food regimes' comparative frameworks, and (3) it is a process.

A central feature in defining food sovereignty includes guaranteeing rights, establishing conditions of social justice, and developing a set of ethical principles that guide food production and distribution, like those recognized in the Nyéléni Declaration. To apply food sovereignty approaches to post-secondary institutions, our research team analyzed the campus food movement looking for the establishment of ethical principles and/or other social justice outcomes. We mapped the campus-community food system to understand the scope of the student/faculty/community-led organizations and whether they had transformative missions, values and/or policies. Furthermore, in line with Levkoe, Hammelman, Reynolds, Brown, Chappell, Salvador, and Wheeler's (2020) framework for food sovereignty research praxis, we examined historical and structural forces and power dynamics of the campus food movement.

Food sovereignty is used in comparative analyses through food regimes discourse. Numerous scholars (Rosset, 2003; Wittman, 2011; Desmarais, 2017; and Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011) have utilized food sovereignty frameworks to assess prevailing political and economic structures in food systems. Commonly, these analyses juxtapose food sovereignty (radical regimes) against corporate (neoliberal regimes), reformist (food security) and progressive (food justice) on a variety of food issues[14].

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[12] https://www.concordiafoodcoalition.com

[13] We acknowledge that recent publications (i.e., Levkoe, Andree, Bhatt, Brynne, Davidson, Kneen, and Nelson, 2016) have focused on community-campus partnerships, especially those that put the community first. Unlike Levkoe et al (2016), we are using campus-community to refer to the organizations that operate mainly on campus and serve the university community primarily.

[14] In one example, Desmarais (2017) compares corporate-led, neoliberal models with food sovereignty models across eighteen categories: trade, production priorities, market access, subsidies, food, food production and provisioning, hunger, food security, access to land, seeds, rural credit/investment, corporate monopolies,

Drawing inspiration from food regimes scholars, we created a framework to compare *corporate*, *weak sustainability*, and *food sovereignty* approaches to campus food systems. We developed new food categories of issues that are important to campus food systems, including: who runs food services, approaches to sustainability, the goals of campus foodservices, the business model of food services, involvement of different constituencies and their roles in the campus food system, how campus food security is addressed, how food consultations take place, how employees are treated, how food is procured, and environmental sustainability.

Food sovereignty is an ongoing process, embodying a movement, a struggle, and a democratic practice that is continuously negotiated and dynamic. It involves reclaiming food from neoliberal modes of production, transformation, and distribution, as well as fostering cooperative food systems by the people, for the people (Anderson, 2018). A similar process can be achieved in post-secondary schools whereby the campus community comes together to discuss how to collectively create an inclusive, equitable, and just food system[15]. Our research team employed a process-based research approach, critical-participatory-action (Lawson, 2015; Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon, 2014), to facilitate and study the cooperative transformation of campus and community food systems.

Methods

This chapter outlines three phases (conducted between 2014 and 2018) of the ongoing CCFGRP. In the initial phase, we employed a three-step process to extensively research Concordia's campus-community and administration-run food services, examining their historical development from inception to our public discussion in March 2017. We began by conducting semi-structured video interviews with fifty-nine key figures in the food movement at Concordia, including founders of campus-community food groups, politically active students, administrators, professors, and other influential individuals. Additionally, we compiled relevant news articles and documents from student newspapers, the Concordia Archive Department and other external sources.

In the subsequent phase, we created multimedia to showcase our findings. We established the Concordia campus-community website (www.concordiafoodgroups.ca) to exhibit the interviews and historical artifacts. Furthermore, we developed visual representations of the campus-community food system, specifying the roles of each group in production, processing, distribution, waste management, and support/advocacy. These maps were built by incorporating established theories of food system cycles (Jacobi et al., 2019; Kuusaana and Eledi, 2014; Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, and Lambrick, 2009; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000) and integrating theories of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 2013), identifying market, non-market, and alternative market transactions.

For the third phase, we organized a public meeting, inviting campus-community food groups to discuss the findings, give feedback on the food system map, and explore strategies for building a food sovereign campus. The meeting was hosted via the *World Café Method* (Brown and Isaacs, 2005), where we created a hospitable environment, provided snacks and refreshments, presented our findings, explored relevant questions to create an action plan, encouraged everyone's contribution, connected diverse perspectives, listened together for patterns and insights and shared collective discoveries on our website.

Our team took a *critical-participatory-action research* approach by involving research participants as co-designers of the project, focusing on improving food systems on campus and in local communities, and advocating for a transformative approach to post-secondary food services. We also began the first two phases of what we hoped would amount to *action spirals*– a research approach influenced by Lewin

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overproduction, small/medium scale farmers, gender, urban consumers vs agricultural workers, research, and policy development.

[15] Like the process that went to create the Nyéléni Declaration.

(1947). An action spiral consists of four research stages, where the researchers (and participants with participatory-action research):

1. Begin with a broad idea or objective and conduct preliminary research.
2. Formulate a collective action plan based on the findings of the preliminary research.
3. Implement the action plan.
4. Evaluate the action plan.

Upon completing one action spiral, researchers can initiate a new cycle by re-planning, re-implementing, and re-evaluating the intervention.

The first two phases of the CCFGRP were part of the idea generation and preliminary research stage, and the third phase was part of the action planning stage of an action research spiral. In the first phase, we gathered information to understand the campus-community food system. In the second phase, we created visual multimedia of our results. In the third phase, we got feedback from the campus-community food groups, collectively interpreted the results, and discussed an action plan[16].

Results and Discussion

This section provides a concise descriptive and historical analysis of the Concordia campus-community food system from 2014-2018, examining factors that facilitated and hindered the development of the food system. Additionally, it introduces a framework and strategy for developing food-sovereign campuses. This is only a brief overview of our comprehensive findings. For an in-depth analysis, please refer to *Building Food Sovereign Campuses: A Case Study of the Campus-Community Food Groups at Concordia University* (Chevrier, 2022).

Concordia Campus-Community Food System

Concordia students, faculty, and the wider community have established an extensive and dynamic network of campus-community food organizations that are engaged in food production, processing, distribution, and waste management. There were about twelve campus-community food groups and various sub-projects/groups. These organizations were not all easy to differentiate because some were independent organizations, some were semi-autonomous projects of a parent organization, some were groups of people who hosted conferences, and some merged with other groups or separated from their origins (please see Figure 1).
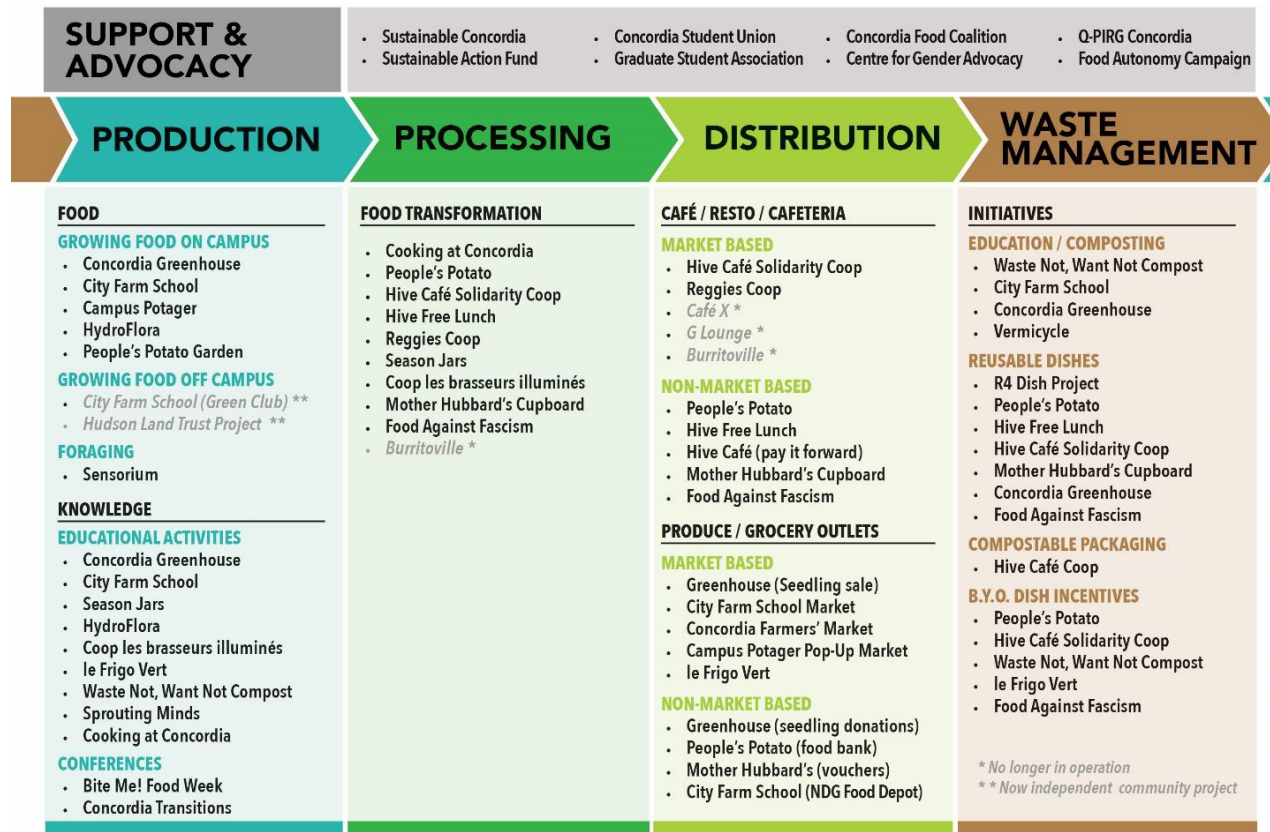
The dedication and ingenuity of Concordia students led to the successful creation of the campus-community food system. Students pushed for food system transformation by becoming *builders*, *warriors*, and *weavers*. Stevenson, Ruhf, Lezberg, and Clancy (2007) stress the importance of these three roles when trying to transform food systems. Warriors actively resist corporate food systems through political action; builders reconstruct and/or create alternative food organizations and economic models; weavers work to connect warriors' and builders' work. Students also participated in many forms of food activism, including *development* (community economic development) and *social action* (grassroots organizing, coalition building and advocacy) from *integrative* (bringing people into social movements) and *oppositional* (challenging power relations, building alternative systems) political approaches (Shragge, 2013). Students also participated in *radical activism* (focusing on capitalism as the main cause of social problems) and *oppositional development*, "building alternatives that create democratic or non-

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[16] These phases overlapped temporally. We uploaded the video interviews as we produced them; also, once we got feedback from the campus-community food groups about the food system map, we revised the map and re-uploaded a new version.

market economics," and *oppositional social action* "social movement organizing and critical consciousness, challenging the legitimacy of power relations" (Shragge, 2013, p. 22). All of these approaches and roles were important for developing and maintaining the campus-community food system.

Figure 1

A Snapshot of the Campus-Community Food Groups at Concordia as of November 2018

SUPPORT & ADVOCACY			
• Sustainable Concordia • Sustainable Action Fund	• Concordia Student Union • Graduate Student Association	• Concordia Food Coalition • Centre for Gender Advocacy	• Q-PIRG Concordia • Food Autonomy Campaign

PRODUCTION	PROCESSING	DISTRIBUTION	WASTE MANAGEMENT
FOOD	**FOOD TRANSFORMATION**	**CAFÉ / RESTO / CAFETERIA**	**INITIATIVES**
GROWING FOOD ON CAMPUS • Concordia Greenhouse • City Farm School • Campus Potager • HydroFlora • People's Potato Garden	• Cooking at Concordia • People's Potato • Hive Café Solidarity Coop • Hive Free Lunch • Reggies Coop • Season Jars • Coop les brasseurs illuminés • Mother Hubbard's Cupboard • Food Against Fascism • *Burritoville* *	**MARKET BASED** • Hive Café Solidarity Coop • Reggies Coop • *Café X* * • *G Lounge* * • *Burritoville* *	**EDUCATION / COMPOSTING** • Waste Not, Want Not Compost • City Farm School • Concordia Greenhouse • Vermicycle
GROWING FOOD OFF CAMPUS • *City Farm School (Green Club)* ** • *Hudson Land Trust Project* **		**NON-MARKET BASED** • People's Potato • Hive Free Lunch • Hive Café (pay it forward) • Mother Hubbard's Cupboard • Food Against Fascism	**REUSABLE DISHES** • R4 Dish Project • People's Potato • Hive Free Lunch • Hive Café Solidarity Coop • Mother Hubbard's Cupboard • Concordia Greenhouse • Food Against Fascism
FORAGING • Sensorium		**PRODUCE / GROCERY OUTLETS**	**COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING** • Hive Café Coop
KNOWLEDGE		**MARKET BASED** • Greenhouse (Seedling sale) • City Farm School Market • Concordia Farmers' Market • Campus Potager Pop-Up Market • le Frigo Vert	**B.Y.O. DISH INCENTIVES** • People's Potato • Hive Café Solidarity Coop • Waste Not, Want Not Compost • le Frigo Vert • Food Against Fascism
EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES • Concordia Greenhouse • City Farm School • Season Jars • HydroFlora • Coop les brasseurs illuminés • le Frigo Vert • Waste Not, Want Not Compost • Sprouting Minds • Cooking at Concordia		**NON-MARKET BASED** • Greenhouse (seedling donations) • People's Potato (food bank) • Mother Hubbard's (vouchers) • City Farm School (NDG Food Depot)	** No longer in operation* ** * Now independent community project*
CONFERENCES • Bite Me! Food Week • Concordia Transitions			

This graphic was designed by Kim Gagnon (2018)

Food was a central part of campus social justice movements for various reasons. First, students mobilized against corporate foodservice providers and set up student-governed, cooperative foodservices in parallel. Secondly, food justice was important for many student activists who advocated and worked toward transforming food systems. Third, activists were hungry, and these organizations brought food to strikes, squats, and protests. Finally, the food organizations became a central hub for organizing, recruiting, mobilizing, and educating people about social justice causes.

Some Concordia faculty members also helped co-create the campus-community food system by assigning community-service learning (CSL), community-campus engagement (CCE) and action research as course projects. Initiatives, such as the Hive, the Burritoville Cooperative, and the Concordia Farmers' Market, emerged from classroom efforts. Many scholars have recognized the importance of community-based research to improve campus and community foodscapes (Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz's 2019; Levkoe, Andree, Bhatt, Brynne, Davidson, Keen, and Nelson; 2016; Andree et al., 2016) and CFSAs as places for alternative pedagogy (Deskin & Harvey, 2023; Classens, Adam, Crouthers, Sheward, & Lee,

2021). Importantly, using alternative learning paradigms is a key criterion for universities to achieve holistic, in-depth sustainability (Bieler and McKenzie, 2017).

Two additional critical factors played a crucial role in both establishing and sustaining the campus-community food system. Students benefited from a well-supported fee levy system, entailing fees per credit for services provided by campus-community organizations, including daily access to food. They also established a robust support system that included coalitions, advocacy groups, campaigns, student unions and funding pools.

Despite establishing a vast and robust network of campus-community food organizations, various factors hindered the development and viability of the campus-community food system at Concordia. These impediments included:

1. Some students challenged fee levies and implemented easier opt-out procedures.
2. Processing limitations–there was not enough kitchen space for every group.
3. Gap between production and processing–students were not usually around in the summer when food grows best in Quebec.
4. Students were part of a transient population that typically studied for 3-5 years; then they graduated and moved on. This was difficult for the stability of some organizations and knowledge transmission between cohorts.
5. Some students were highly motivated but lacked expertise–they were learning by doing.
6. Some projects and/or groups relied heavily on volunteers–this was not always viable.
7. Concordia did not have a food studies, culinary or agriculture program–missed opportunities.
8. There were many administrative barriers[17].
9. Large food service corporations had exclusive control over the two main cafeterias (meal plans) and grab-and-go outlets (flex dollars).
10. Some campus-community organizations were not viable and closed operations.

Developing a Food Sovereign Campus at Concordia

Establishing Rights, Ethical Principles, Progressive Policies and Transformative Practices

The motivations for transforming the Concordia food system and the values upheld by most campus-community food organizations closely align with those articulated by food sovereignty researchers and practitioners. Some organizations, including the Concordia Food Coalition, intentionally employed the term food sovereignty to characterize the process through which students assert control over campus food systems, particularly in liberating residents from mandatory meal plans. Other groups described their practices, values and/or focus as food justice, anti-oppression, anti-capitalism, anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, anti-homo/transphobic, food security, equitable food system, BIPOC food sovereignty, labour/farmer

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[17] Administrative barriers included, difficulties working with administrators, lack of space for alternative food operations, discrepancies between the values of the institution and campus-community organizations, and challenges in getting administrators to prioritize alternative, transformative food organizations.

rights, and inclusivity, among others. These practices, values and/or focuses align with progressive and food sovereignty-based approaches within the context of food regimes frameworks (Rosset, 2003; Wittman, 2011; Desmarais, 2017; and Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011). Predominantly, the Concordia campus-community food groups had transformative objectives, although there were some exceptions A few groups/projects had reformist and/or corporate orientations, e.g., they were not political, not social justice-oriented, were for-profit organizations, carried unethical products and/or signed exclusivity contracts with large multinational corporations.

The fight for campus food justice at Concordia began in the early 1990s when students formed the Eat Your Peel Collective, later renamed Le Frigo Vert (Frigo). Initially focused on establishing ethical food distribution, Frigo evolved over time into an anti-capitalist, anticolonial community support space and socially/environmentally responsible grocery store. The People's Potato (the Potato) was established five years later, as a "free" vegan soup kitchen, i.e., students are not charged on a per-transaction basis; instead, they contribute to an annual fee levy of approximately $10 per student. The Potato quickly became a central hub for activism. It served as a pivotal space for organizing strikes, demonstrations, and various political activities, while also fostering vibrant discussions on a wide range of political issues. In doing so, it provided a crucial platform for activists to share information, coordinate interventions and form a community. Like Frigo, the People's Potato focused on social justice, anti-capitalist alternatives, and creating an accessible anti-oppressive space.

Around 2012-2013, students and faculty established the Concordia Food Coalition to create a viable alternative to Chartwells (the incumbent campus food provider) while concurrently fostering the development of an alternative, democratic food system. This coincided with heightened student mobilization and involvement in campus politics catalyzed by the *Maple Springs*, a widespread social movement encompassing hundreds of thousands of students across Quebec. In the wake of the Maple Springs, students at Concordia University developed a strong commitment to reforming the campus-community food system. At that time, food activists began adopting the term food sovereignty to describe the campus food movement. Between 2014 and 2018, various transformative groups and initiatives emerged, dedicated to enhancing the campus foodscape. Some notable examples include the Hive, which provided a free lunch program at the Loyola campus, implemented socially/environmentally responsible procurement policies, had a democratic structure and only provided compostable/reusable dishes. Furthermore, the campus bar, Reggie's Solidarity Cooperative, worked with the Center for Gender Advocacy to develop "safer space policies", to combat harassment and discrimination.

Before developing a comprehensive framework for understanding how to build a food sovereign campus, it is important to recognize that despite over two decades of efforts to replace corporate foodservice providers at Concordia, students and faculty have encountered enduring challenges impeding success. These challenges corroborate the findings of Bohunicky, Desmarais, and Entz (2019), underscoring the pivotal role of "political will of the administration, student activism, and support from non-university sectors" (p. 44) in facilitating the shift of universities away from corporate foodservice contracts. Factors related to the Concordia administration included risk aversion, skepticism about campus-community food organizations handling larger operations, a corporate vision of foodservices, prioritization of waste management over transformative sustainability, and the complexity of the request for proposal process. Student-related factors included anti-activism sentiments, conflicts among activists, high student turnover, and limited

experience with foodservice operations. Faculty had more opportunities and were less implicated, while large foodservice corporations posed challenges for smaller, local social enterprises to compete.

Food Sovereignty as a Comparative Framework

Learning from the case study of the campus-community food system, the history of the food movement at Concordia, the public discussion about building a food sovereign campus at Concordia and previous literature on food sovereignty and sustainable food systems, we developed a framework (please see Table 1) for comparing the key differences between corporate, weak sustainability and food sovereignty approaches to campus foodservices. The purpose of this framework is to provide a starting point for a larger conversation about how to build food sovereign campuses.

In the corporate approach, administrators outsource food services to profit-driven, external corporations. These corporations monopolize campus foodservices and force student residents onto mandatory meal plans. To maximize profit, these corporations externalize social and environmental costs, compromising campus sustainability efforts. Students, faculty, and workers are not part of the governance of the operation but are potential clients or not important. The weak sustainability approach involves administrators hiring external corporations or running self-operated services[18] to mainly provide food to students in residence. While the approach emphasizes triple-bottom-line sustainability, which may include reasonable wages and waste reduction initiatives, it fails to address transformative sustainability because environmental costs are still externalized, and workers are still not paid their true value. Furthermore, workers are not stakeholders or part of any decision-making body; they are merely labourers who receive wages for their work. Students and faculty are also not stakeholders but customers and sometimes consultants. Finally, food insecurity is reduced through food relief programs like food baskets and/or soup kitchens, but there is no real attempt to reconnect people to the means of reproducing themselves or their communities or addressing the root causes of hunger.

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[18] We included self-operated food services in the weak sustainability approach because Bohunicky, Desmarais and Entz (2019) suggest that food service transformation occurs when moving away from corporate contracts, although self-operated university food services are not always transformative in and of themselves.

Table 1

Key Differences Between Corporate, Weak Sustainability and Food Sovereignty Approaches to Post-Secondary Foodservices (Chevrier, 2022)

Campus Food Issues

	Corporate Approach	**Weak Sustainability Approach**	**Food Sovereignty Approach**
Who runs food services	External Corporation.	External Corporation or self-operated (administration run).	Campus-community stakeholders – partnerships with faculty, students, administrators, staff, and the community at large.
Approach to sustainability	None.	Soft sustainability or triple bottom line approach.	A transformative approach to sustainability that includes social justice, decolonization, and anti-racism.
The goal of campus food services	Profit from a captive market of resident students.	Provide food to a captive market of resident students.	Improve the foodscape on campus and in the surrounding communities.
The business model of food services	For-profit.	For-profit or non-profit.	Social enterprise or social innovation approach.
Involvement of faculty	Faculty are potential customers.	Faculty are potential customers and consultants.	Faculty are stakeholders and co-create the food system through research and community-service learning projects.
Involvement of students	Students are the main customers.	Students are consulted about their food preferences.	Students are co-creators of the campus food system.
Involvement of community at large	The community at large are potential customers or not important.	The community at large are not the main focus of food services.	Beneficiaries of and partners with a campus food system that creates community value.
Consultations about campus food services	Part of a marketing strategy to increase profit.	Consultations about food preferences, led by the administration.	Led by a federation, coalition and/or network of campus-community organizations.
How to address food insecurity on campus	None - Student residents are the primary customer and must purchase a meal plan as a condition living in residence.	Food banks and emergency food relief for hungry students.	A holistic approach of connecting people to food production, processing and distribution on campus and in the community at large.
How food service employees are treated	Driving down the cost of labour is key to maximizing profits.	Labourers treated with respect and are paid fair wages – but are excluded from decision making and not paid their true value.	Labourers are involved in decision making, are not exploited via wages, and given proper benefits to lead a fulfilling life.
Food procurement	Bulk purchasing from large distributers to drive down the cost of produce.	Purchasing food from local farmers at the lowest price possible.	Purchasing food, at a fair price, from a network of local farmers that hire workers for fair wages and/or where possible, grow food on and around campus through farmers coops of faculty, students and the community at large.
Environmental Stewardship	Externalize environmental costs to maximize profits.	Reduce waste and procure food locally when possible.	Holistic approach that reconnects people to the biosphere through food practices, regenerative agriculture and decolonization. Animals, nature and people form a relationship of reciprocity and interdependence and not exploitation.

The food sovereignty approach envisions a holistic, socially and environmentally responsible campus-community food system guided by diverse stakeholders. It recognizes the pivotal role of students in instigating collaborative processes for change. At the core of food sovereignty lies the empowerment of the people to control their food economy (Desmarais, 2017). Defining "the people" becomes intricate within the campus context, encompassing students, faculty, administrators, and community members. While administrators currently wield significant decision-making power, the question arises as to whether they genuinely represent "the people " within a food sovereignty approach. Students, especially those in residence, are the primary customers of campus foodservices. Faculty, despite being fewer in number, can contribute significantly to the food system through research and community service projects, playing a crucial role in achieving transformative sustainability (Bieler and McKenzie, 2017).

In the food sovereignty approach, campus food systems also benefit the external community, serving as an anchor for local farmers, mitigating food insecurity (through initiatives like the Potato and Hive Free Lunch), and advancing food justice. This approach embraces transformative sustainability by challenging educational paradigms, acknowledging the interdependence of the social, economic and environmental, and incorporating decolonial and anti-oppressive perspectives. It also respects the true value of labourers by allowing them to be part of the governance structure and compensates farmers with fair wages for their produce.

Uses, Benefits and Critique of the Food Sovereignty Framework

This framework serves as a tool for steering transformative campus-community food practices, offering guiding principles to aspire to and orienting the development of campus community food systems. Using a food sovereignty framework can help move past traditional sustainability indicators to incorporate social, economic and environmental justice, orientations often neglected with traditional sustainability indicators. Levkoe and Blay-Palmer (2018) suggest that using traditional sustainability metrics can be limiting because once a target is reached, there is little incentive to improve. They advocate for communities to prioritize seven pillars: prioritizing food for people, valuing food providers, harmonizing with nature, localizing food systems, fostering local control, promoting knowledge and skill development, and recognizing the sacredness of food (decolonizing food). By adopting food sovereignty frameworks, communities can actively pursue these objectives, monitor their advancement, and iteratively enhance community food systems over time. The food sovereignty approach proposed in Table 1 aligns with the seven pillars of food sovereignty. Post-secondary communities can utilize the framework as a guiding tool to shape the operations of their campus-community food systems. By aligning campus food systems objectives with the food sovereignty approach, post-secondary institutions can play a leading role in addressing food system crises.

There are many possible critiques of the food sovereignty framework. Informally, we received valuable feedback while giving presentations about the framework, some of which were incorporated into the revised version. Other areas require a more thorough exploration but are still worthwhile to mention in case other researchers/practitioners are willing to advance this framework. Further considerations for campus food issues include educational paradigms, research approaches, animal consumption, and cultural sustainability.

Another critique may arise from post-secondary administrators who question the feasibility of financial models that do not externalize costs to maximize profits. Often viewing food services solely as a business rather than a subsidized service or catalyst for social change, administrators tend to adopt weak sustainability approaches, if they prioritize sustainability measures at all. This perspective diverges from the approach we promote.

Some might highlight the farmer and peasant roots of the food sovereignty movement, suggesting that post-secondary communities may not fully grasp the challenges faced by these groups (Patel, 2009). Patel (2009) points out that food sovereignty cannot be brought about solely by peasants and farmers,

especially when they are a minority. Food sovereignty must also be recognized in urban settings by prioritizing fair wages, local sovereignty, environmental stewardship, and social justice (Patel, 2009). In using the term food sovereignty, we stand in solidarity with the peasants, farmers and Indigenous Peoples and hope to use the resources of the university to mobilize for food justice, food security, and transformative sustainability.

Reflecting on the concept of campus-community "sovereignty for whom?" presents a multifaceted challenge without clear-cut solutions. This topic has caused tensions among student activists, between student activists and the administration, and between student activists and other students. Students have many different aspirations and political ideas; some are convergent, and others cause conflict. Many tensions arise that can complicate any straightforward understanding of campus food sovereignty. For example, if a food sovereign campus is about moving away from multinational corporations and towards a community-based model, what happens if some students, "the people," want multinational corporations? In a survey of Concordia students and faculty, which chain restaurants they frequented most, the top three were Tim Hortons (54% of the 1,262 respondents), McDonalds (34%) and Starbucks (26%). The survey also demonstrated that the Concordia community preferred local independent locations (43%) over large chains (21%) (Waddington, Traini, & Dover, 2021). This brings up the question, can a food sovereign system have McDonalds and Tim Hortons if that's what (some) students want or does a food sovereign system completely reject working with multinational corporations?

The Process of Campus-Community Food Sovereignty

Cultivating campus-community food sovereignty is a multifaceted, dynamic, and ongoing process that has no specific road map. Each campus has unique needs and starting points. Here are some insights from what we learned with the CCFGRP.

First, critical-participatory-action research can be a powerful tool for cultivating campus-community food sovereignty. The CCFGRP allowed many generations of food activists to share stories, transmit knowledge, and impart experience. Establishing the multimedia archive was vital for preserving the institutional memory of these organizations. The videos recounting the histories of successive generations of food activists serve as a rich resource for current and future students, offering valuable perspectives on the struggles and accomplishments in food advocacy and community economic development. Participating in the CCFGRP prompted groups to engage in collective discourse about the campus-community food system, fostering enhanced collaboration on shared initiatives, hosting joint events, and nurturing a sense of communal belonging.

Second, critical-participatory-action research is a highly effective approach for obtaining genuine information about the campus-community food systems. By involving participants in the planning and feedback processes, we were able to develop maps that accurately reflected the campus-community food system. Moreover, by creating a video archive, the information utilized in this chapter is available for examination and critique by fellow scholars[19].

Third, despite these advantages, we faced challenges. At the public discussion about creating a food sovereignty campus at Concordia, participants didn't come out with a list of demands, like the Nyéléni Declaration, or create an action plan. Rather than focusing on a specific strategy, the discussion centred on generating new food initiatives to address deficiencies in the existing food system, emphasizing the importance of establishing more connections, advocating for increased meeting frequency, and prioritizing the transition from corporate food services to local student-led initiatives. Unfortunately, the

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[19] The raw interviews are available here: www.concordiafoodgroups.ca and www.concordiafoodcoalition.com

absence of a detailed action plan precluded the completion of an action spiral. Additionally, once we started to build an action plan, COVID-19 put the CCFGRP on pause for nearly two years.

Moving forward, we developed an improved version of the CCFGRP methodology to map other campuses and communities. Through the Communal Lunch Project, we are creating resources for campuses across Canada to map their respective campuses, build campus food coalitions, and host food group assemblies. We updated the methodology to incorporate other forms of value production based on the theories of multi-capital abundance[20] and are testing it with George Brown College. We have already used the improved methodology to map a community food system in Lachine[21], close to Concordia's Loyola campus. We are also re-mapping the campus-community food organizations at Concordia to better understand the post-pandemic landscape. By nurturing ongoing engagement with food groups, we have preserved a less detailed representation of the current campus food system map (see Figure 2). In 2022, we also began hosting food group assemblies to facilitate action planning, encourage collaboration and discuss the campus-community food system.

Figure 2

Snapshot of the Campus-Community Food Groups at Concordia University as of November 2023
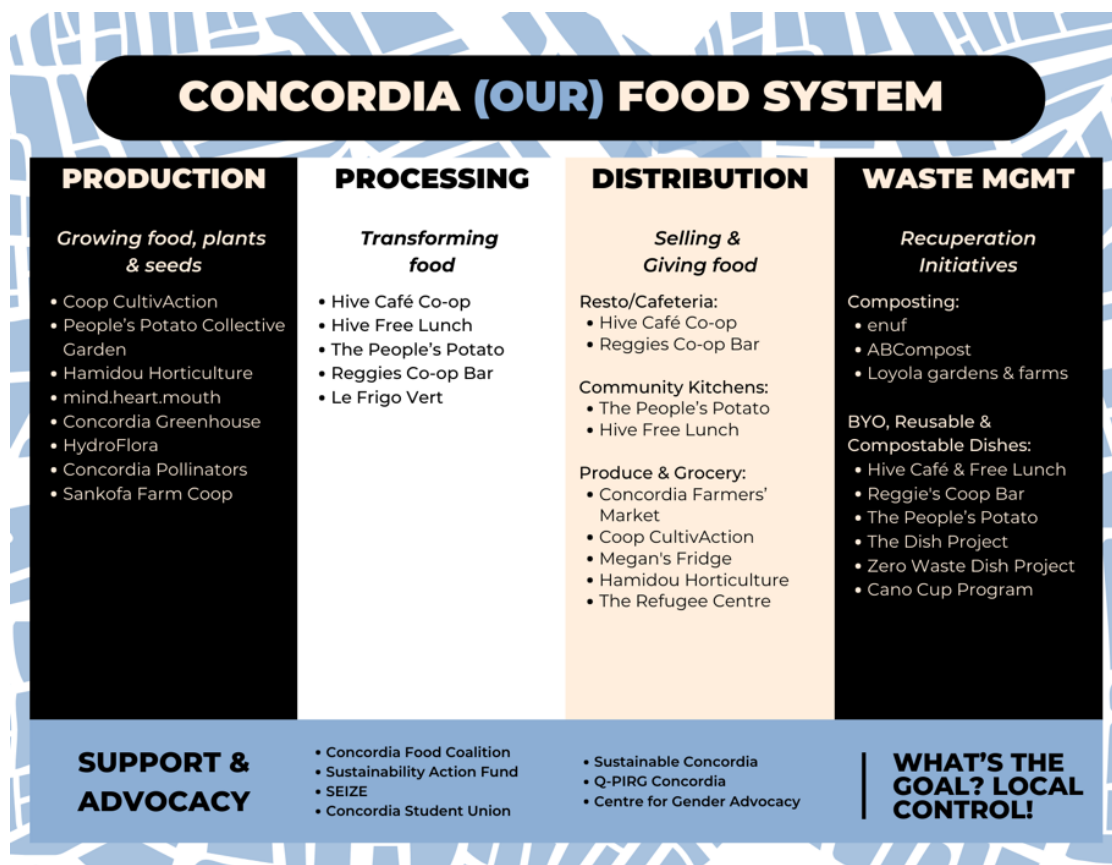
This graphic was designed by the Concordia Food Coalition (2023)

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[20] Roland and Landura (2015) discuss multi-capital abundance by identifying many forms of value production, including intellectual, spiritual, social, material, financial, living (or natural), cultural, and experiential (or human).

[21] https://communautealimentairelachine.ca

Conclusion

This chapter explored the potential for universities to become food sovereign through a case study of the Concordia campus-community food groups. First, we discovered that campus food sovereignty encompasses social justice outcomes, reflected in policies, organizational procedures, and bans on harmful practices. Second, achieving campus food sovereignty involves an ongoing process of negotiation with stakeholders who seek to transform the food system. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach but rather a collaborative effort to shape a food system that aligns with the needs of the campus and community. Third, food sovereignty is not a reformist movement; it is transformative, aiming to dismantle corporate control of campus food systems. Fourth, it involves collaborative governance by both the campus and broader communities, with the goal of creating positive value for all stakeholders. Fifth, it rejects the business models that impose mandatory meal plans on students in residence and/or monopolize foodservices through exclusivity contracts. Sixth, food sovereign campuses are made up of social enterprises encompassing diverse economic practices (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013). Seventh, food sovereignty represents a more radical departure from corporate and weak sustainability approaches, as outlined in this chapter. Finally, while the concept of food sovereignty may be complex, it offers a transformative alternative to conventional sustainability approaches, aligning with holistic and in-depth sustainability goals (Bieler and McKenzie, 2017).

Post-secondary institutions have considerable potential and (arguably) a civic duty to solve current food crises or, at a minimum, not contribute to these crises. Post-secondary institutions can nurture secure, equitable, and just campus and community foodscapes by working with researchers, educators, students, and the public. To achieve this objective, it is imperative to transcend corporate and weak sustainability and cultivate food sovereign campuses.

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