

FOOD NOT WASTE: A SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF ATHENS' FOOD GLEANING
NETWORK

by

MEGAN LOUISE FREEMAN

(Under the Direction of Nikolas C. Heynen)

ABSTRACT

Hunger and food insecurity persist in the United States despite charitable efforts to place food that is unnecessarily wasted in the hands of those in need. Food Not Bombs is a collective that attempts to address inequality through the non-violent direct action of recovering wasted food and openly providing that food as a right to all people. In the spring of 2008, I began recovering food for the Athens' Food Not Bombs in order to analyze the differences and effectiveness of the collective in addressing issues of inequality. This was done through a spatial analysis of the collective's food gleaning network to find the impediments Food Not Bombs faces in that network and how the collective works to surpass those obstacles. Anarchist critique helps to analyze impediments of the food gleaning network while the concepts of prefigurative direct action and performativity show how Food Not Bombs can address these impediments.

INDEX WORDS: Food Not Bombs, anarchism, participatory action research, right to food, performativity, resignification, emergency food criticism, geographical information systems

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family. Life's performance would be meaningless without their input and I would be insane without their stability. Their unquestioning acceptance of my radical desires allows me to push beyond the limits that I thought were possible. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 History and Summary of the Research Problem

Although people living in the United States are paying more for their food than ever before, they are at the same time throwing away more food than they ever have. It is estimated that U.S. citizens waste over 40% of their own consumable food supply every year (Hall *et al* 2009). This 40% is made up of nearly 97 billion pounds of food that is thrown away by consumers, retailers, and restaurants. One study has revealed that food waste is equal to about \$100 billion each year (Gay 2005). After a brief glance over these U.S. statistics, one might envision a society containing so much wealth that it would contain no people in need and certainly no use for the thrown away “scraps” of someone’s meal.

This perception of the United States as the land of plenty for all people is commonly believed by many, but it is not a view that millions of hungry citizens share. According to a study by the Food Research and Action Center (2009), 49.1 million people in the U.S. were considered to be in a state of food insecurity in 2008, which has been a consistently growing number since data was first collected in 2000. This high and ever-growing number of food insecure people shows that numerous government and private organizations aimed at fighting hunger in the U.S., such as food banks and soup kitchens, continue to serve as short-range fixes to a long term problem (Poppendieck 1997, Riches 2002). Though food banks, pantries, and soup kitchens are being stretched thin in order serve their growing clientele, their failure to end poverty through the elimination of hunger in the U.S. will become more and more apparent as the U.S. unemployment rate increases, as it has over the past decade from 4.0% in January of 2000 to 9.7% in January of 2010 (US DOL 2010).

One particular place that is highly affected by these statistics is Athens, Georgia. A typical University of Georgia-led tour of Athens would only include tree lined streets and beautiful mansions across the center of the town, but a more extensive viewing would shed light on a darker, less often looked at side of town that most transient citizens would not notice. Actually, many of the over 34,000 students enrolled at the university that pass through Athens on a yearly basis never know that Athens-Clarke County (ACC) is one of the poorest counties in the nation. According to Partner's for a Prosperous Athens, the county has the 5th highest poverty rate in the U.S. at 39.3% (Partners for a Prosperous Athens [PPA] 2006). This poverty is invisible to some because it lies beneath the promoted shiny-happy layer of the University of Georgia, which has fostered one of the few liberal pockets in the South with one of the most famous music scenes in the country. Students flock to the town in Beamers and SUVs big enough to be buses and live in gated apartment complexes. Many of these temporary Athenians seem to barely notice anything placed beyond the university and the nightlife in near proximity.

This college town is also special because Athens is also a place where people who are not students move to in order to make music and other various forms of art. These artists know that they can live for relatively cheap, create their art, and still have access to the major city of Atlanta. The eccentric southern attitude coupled with art and creative freedom comes cheap for the new inhabitants, but long term residents in poverty do not find Athens cheap at all. With an unemployment rate actually lower than the Georgia and U.S. unemployment rates (PPA 2006) coupled with a much higher poverty rate, Athenians show that they are working hard for the money without the financial benefits associated with employment. Athens is not entirely dichotomized into students/artists and poor long-term residents, but these categorizations are common when searching to simplify the socio-economic spatial conflicts of this college town.

1.2 Background to the Research Problem

Food Not Bombs (FNB) is an autonomously organized set of anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist collectives working to change such binaries of the have and the have-nots through food activism. FNB is a global phenomenon with chapters around the world, including one in Athens. As wholly described by Howard Zinn in the foreword to the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* (2000, ix), “The message of Food Not Bombs is simple and powerful: no one should be without food in a world so richly provided with land, sun, and human ingenuity. No consideration of money, no demand for profit, should stand in the way of any hungry or malnourished child or any adult in need.” This description of the philosophy of FNB umbrellas the myriad of actions taken by FNB participants to show that food “although shared free of charge, is not a gift but a means of asserting and fulfilling a right” (Heynen 2010, 3). The general goal of the collective is to show that people are not hungry because of some perceived shortage of food, but because of the structural problems resulting from capitalist and governmental food distribution policies that only provide basic rights like food to those privileged enough to be able to afford them. The unnecessary structural violence of inflicted hunger and inequality on the poor is revealed when FNB activists glean, or recover food that would otherwise be wasted, and serve it to anyone who is hungry in a public space. The goal of FNB activists combines the very material feeding of hungry people with raising political awareness through open sharing of food and ideas.

The Athens chapter of FNB that I will be focusing on for the rest of this work aspires to the goals of the loose overarching collective while forming its actions through the spatial and social influences of the town. It is important that each FNB chapter creates their own identity with different ways in which they address problems in their own locations. In Athens, FNB activists did just that when they moved their cooking operation in to the space of Common

Ground. From 2006 to 2009, Common Ground provided a place for any progressive group to engage in political organization and discussion in a house that was centrally located only a block from downtown. It served as an important meeting space for several groups such as Free IT Athens, Bike Athens, PLACE (Promoting Local Agriculture and Cultural Experience), and, of course, FNB. Common Ground allowed its kitchen to be used by FNB activists two to three times each week for no costs. This use was extremely advantageous because it allowed the group to perform their activism in a space that reflected their own politics. Another specific advantage that this Athens group has taken advantage of is the use of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. This usage of the food bank is quite unique to Athens.

This local differentiation seems minute, but it has significant gravity on the political relevance of FNB actions. Typical FNB activists try to glean food from places where the food would otherwise be wasted. These places include local food co-ops that are willing to give away the produce that they are going to throw away or even supermarket dumpsters that contain unmarketable yet still healthy food. This food is occasionally found in abundance, so much so that the handbook actually suggests finding other food pantries and soup kitchens to donate to. This handbook, though, serves only as a general guideline for how a FNB group might be started and makes a point that “Every individual and group chooses its own values and politics” (Butler and McHenry 2000, 73). The autonomous nature of the collective allows each group to address the socio-spatial concerns that arise in different places with appropriately specific local answers. The specific ways in which the Athens’ FNB group resolves these concerns provides important motivation to create small-scale local spatial analysis of the Athens food gleaning network. The Athens FNB group has chosen to take advantage of the very large food bank in town that allows the group to glean donated food. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia has its produce donated

to it from corporations such as Kroger and Wal-Mart (Food Bank of Northeast Georgia [FBNG], 2009). Using this food is an unusual food recovery method for a FNB group because it challenges the politics of the group as it participates openly in the reproduction of capitalist society.

Receiving food from the food bank challenges the notion that FNB is gleaning in productive political ways. FNB achieved its ability to use the food bank only after it became an affiliate of Common Ground and took advantage of the progressive center's 501(c)(3) status. This status, while helpful, is problematic as well because this government granted status is given to charitable tax-exempt non-profit organizations that are *not* politicized. As critiqued later in this study, food banks are spaces in which charity happens, but structural political change is not openly promoted. The Athens FNB group usage of the 501(c)(3) status to get food from a place that is also apolitical tests the groups' ability to create political awareness. The contradiction of a radical group using apolitical tactics to promote their message needs to be addressed. This is the background through which my project was formed because FNB of Athens needed a new food gleaning network to produce political awareness. This project serves to find what the difficulties are when trying to build a network and what the Athens FNB group does to fight these problems.

1.3 Research Questions and Paper Organization

In order to engage with the issues of food recovery that the group faces on a regular and consistent basis, I wanted to explicitly address two questions pertaining to this network. First, *what are the impediments for building a food gleaning network in Athens, Georgia?* This question allows the investigation of social as well as spatial barriers that are confronted when

trying to build a reusable and reliable network for recovering food. The second question is, *how does the collective Food Not Bombs work to restructure the space of Athens to create a landscape that promotes the idea that food is a right and not a privilege?* Since all of my fieldwork was done as a participant with the Athens' FNB collective, the best solutions to these questions can be used in the future by Athens' FNB activists. This critique of the routine actions of the Athens FNB group will only serve to produce more knowledge of how a better food gleaning network might be achieved through changing those routines. As Patel (2007, 17) helps to explain, "Of course, no group is without contradiction. There is no pure ideology made flesh, no holier-than-thou land in which resistance perfect and untrammelled. We all make our politics with the tools we have at hand, in the places we find them." This project is an examination of those tools.

Chapter Two of this thesis will offer the theoretical framework through which I will later analyze my empirical findings. This framework begins with criticism of the emergency food system. Emergency food supplies the most significant impediment to building a food gleaning network in Athens because it perpetuates the capitalist narrative that the gap between the market and people in need can be fixed with a band-aid and not a structural change. An anarchist history and critique of capitalist development will further provide insight into impediments that are found when trying to promote the radical idea of the right to food through the building of a food gleaning network. Anarchism also offers ways in which FNB might restructure landscapes through food gleaning networks that provide more and better access to food through the use of direct action. I introduce notions of performativity here because it provides a mechanism through which direct action gains new meanings through subversive performativity and resignification. The third chapter will focus on the methods that I used to complete this project,

including participatory action research (PAR) and geographical information systems (GIS). I chose a multi-method approach so that the knowledge created in each method could be used to triangulate the other. PAR provided a way to find research goals that would benefit me as a researcher and the activists and future gleaners of FNB. I used GIS to help contextualize my experience over a larger spatial context and also provide ways in which I could analyze the possibilities of a less unevenly developed space and its potential for gleaning. Chapter Four initially puts forth the narrative analysis of my actions in the food gleaning network for FNB organized by spatial location. This is the story of how the food gleaning network evolved and devolved over the time in which I participated with FNB as a food gleaner. The second section of chapter four filters my experiential knowledge through the theoretical framework in chapter two and uncovers the meaning of the network interactions. The last chapter provides a conclusion and potential future research possibilities.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the theoretical framework through which I will later analyze my data. The first subsection introduces an overview of the critique of using emergency food systems as a way to fight hunger. This critique reveals the formation of the research problem of building a food gleaning network in a society in which people in need are directed towards places that provide emergency food, like the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. The food bank as a significant impediment to building a food gleaning network in Athens, GA is revealed through emergency food criticism. The next subsection introduces anarchist thought within a historical context and review of what anarchism means today. The radical social critique provided by anarchism reveals impediments that are faced when building food gleaning networks through the illumination of unequal capitalist processes that produce haves and have-nots. This section also illustrates ways in which the Athens' FNB group can restructure the landscape to better serve the population of Athens by changing how people acquire their food outside of the market through the use of direct action and prefigurative politics. These anarchist actions are further examined through the concept of performativity, which makes up the last subsection of this chapter. The concept of performativity provides the vehicle through which FNB activists can work with and through network impediments and still retain a sense of agency through the resignification of the world that they act in. This theoretical framework will be later used in chapter four to analyze the empirical findings of my research.

The current popular and growing field of the geography of food is where this project stems from. Criticisms of the impacts of the global food system on people in different spaces¹

¹ There is an extremely large literature dedicated to the geography of food, such as works by Atkins and Bowler (2001), Fold and Pritchard (2005), Witherick (2010), Pillsbury (1998), and Mansvelt (2005).

inspired this work analyzing how people can address the global food system in a local space. Although the concept for the project was inspired by the significant geography of food literature, it also works to move to edge of that literature to focus more closely on the literature of how people can survive in and work to change current food systems through concepts provided in modern anarchist and gender studies. The concepts of prefigurative direct action and subversive performativity produce actions in which the food system can be critiqued through local action to affect structural change at the global level.

2.2 Emergency Food Criticism: Handing Out Band-aids Instead of Fighting for Change

*Don't look now, someone's done your starvin';
Don't look now, someone's done your prayin' too.*

*Who will make the shoes for your feet?
Who will make the clothes that you wear?
Who'll take the promise that you don't have to keep?
Don't look now, it ain't you or me.*

-Creedence Clearwater Revival (John Fogerty, 1969)

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is an organization that works with various non-profit agencies to distribute food that would otherwise be wasted. Charitable organizations, such as large supermarkets like Kroger and Wal-Mart, donate wasted food to the food bank as tax-deductable donations (FBNG, 2009). According to the food bank's website, it served 42,500 people and received and distributed over 4 million pounds of food last year. The service that food banks provide is an immediate good for people in need as they have "clearly filled significant gaps in the array of assistance available to people in need, and have bought a measure of kindness and flexibility to the whole national project of helping poor people" (Poppendieck 1998, 309). While this service of helping those in need is always driven by good intentions, the reality of the growing use of food banks is problematic for the very people that they serve. A

critique of food banks and emergency food in general will help to elucidate the reasons for analyzing the actions of a FNB chapter in Athens, GA.

A food bank can be defined as, “a centralized warehouse or clearinghouse registered as a non-profit organization for the purpose of collecting, storing and distributing surplus food (donated/shared), free of charge, to frontline agencies which provide supplementary food and meals to the hungry” (Riches 1986, 16). Food banks across the U.S. are forms of emergency food that are supposed to help out those in need in times of crisis. Poppendieck (1998) questions the purpose of emergency food charities and the growing dependency of the U.S. on them in *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*. The ethnographic field research in this work reveals that the motivation behind most emergency food charity volunteers lies with those volunteers’ need for an activity that creates an intuitive feeling of doing good without having to face the troubling notions for the need for actual structural change: “That is, emergency food activities provide a visceral felling of doing good and being good, a means to comply with the dictates of one’s conscious or the obligation of one’s religion, with a minimum of inconvenience”(p. 47). The overarching ideology of FNB works to eradicate this act of doing charity for the sake of charity without addressing the underlying cause of why inequality exists. The various chapters work to affect change by sharing literature on ideas about the structural cause of inequality and hunger and in this way the food is distributed along with why food recovery for the hungry is necessary in the first place. In doing this, FNB activists work towards a structural change to eliminate the cause of inequality instead of putting a bandage on the chronic wound of capitalism-produced economic disparity.

The volunteer’s lack of realization of the causes of inequality is not the fault of the volunteer, but a symptom of emergency food in the U.S. in general. If the right to food is

accepted as the responsibility of the state, then the question of the necessitation for emergency food programs as a mediation between the wasteful failure produced by the capitalist market and those in need cannot be properly answered by a state completely intertwined with a capitalist market. While the growing dependency on emergency food programs, including the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia, reveals increased food poverty and inequality in the U.S., the dependency also shows food banks to be “an inadequate response to the complex issue of social exclusion and the state’s failure to “respect, protect, and fulfill” the right to food” (Riches 2002, 650)². Emergency food is a problem that builds upon itself because it excuses the state from the basic responsibility of ensuring even the lowest quality of life for all of its citizens: “Indeed governments will frequently refer welfare claimants to charitable food banks, clearly indicating that international commitments to the human right to food are only worth the paper that they are written on” (Riches 1999, 207). Therefore, states promoting food banks and other emergency food sources, like the U.S., eloquently avoid addressing the need for the decommodification of food. The decommodification of any basic human right is necessary in order for people to care for themselves independent of market participation (Riches 1999). A circular narrative of the U.S. economy emerges from the unyielding commodification of rights by forcing people into a routine of working to eat and eating to get through work. This cycle becomes flawed when unemployment rates increase as poverty rates increase, as it does in Athens. It is at this moment that, instead of the sequence being checked and fixed by the state, emergency food sources provide a flesh colored band-aid to cover up the defect.

² Riches reference to “respect, protect, and fulfill” is drawn from the United Nation’s Food and Agricultural Organization’s study entitled *The right to adequate food in emergencies*. This document makes the claim that the right to food is a fundamental human right and sets guidelines for states on how to preserve this right. The full PDF document can be retrieved at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4430e/y4430e00.htm#Contents>

In this way the flawed narrative of state supported capitalism that produces hunger through inequality is propelled by emergency food and the idea that hunger can be cured through food charity. Food banks and other sources of emergency food promote the notion by providing access to wasted food, hunger can be alleviated. Emergency focuses on food waste and hunger without addressing root causes of hunger. The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia exemplifies this focus on their website when they make no mention of structural causes for hunger or goals of the food bank beyond providing food (FBNG, 2009). With the notion that through the eradication of hunger, social inequality is alleviated, food banks miss the chance for change: “By defining the problem as “hunger,” the emergency food system is helping to direct our attention away from the more fundamental problem of poverty, and the even more basic problem of inequality” (Poppendieck 1998, 305). *The Food Not Bombs Handbook* says that FNB avoids producing the singular outcome of emergency food when they share food by placing importance on “greater political awareness *and* direct action” (Butler and McHenry 2000, 7). By sharing awareness of all types of inequality and injustices through their own actions and by joining forces with other progressive groups, FNB steers clear of criticisms of emergency food.

While political awareness is the intention of all FNB activists, the use of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia contradicts that objective. The food bank allows Athens’ FNB to take the food that has been donated to them from various corporate sponsors, such as Kroger. When FNB uses these donations as their primary food source they take part in the violent cyclical nature of emergency food, which keeps the state’s hands clean of its own citizens’ suffering. This criticism was the main incentive for choosing the research questions on impediments to building a food gleaning network in Athens and how FNB faces those challenges. Ideally all FNB chapters would act in ways that reflect a society in which extreme inequality is not perpetuated.

The use of the food bank can be seen as the most significant impediment to building a food gleaning network in Athens because the existence of the food bank itself promotes a society in which structural change is put off in favor of an immediate, short-term fix. This fix provides a necessary good for people in need that count on the food bank for daily sustenance, but the long-term effect of counting on emergency food is the continuation of inequality and hunger. In order to further investigate the impediments that capitalist organized space presents when trying to build a network, an overview of anarchist thought is helpful. Further anti-capitalist critique also offers a better understanding of why the reproduction of capitalist processes through emergency food systems, like the food bank, presents a problem for FNB gleaners.

2.3 Anarchism: Using Radical Anti-Capitalist Politics to Define Impediments and Discover Possibilities to Restructure the Landscape

Anarchism: A Controversial History

Anarchism is a philosophy that covers an extremely wide range of political goals that fall under one encompassing ideological umbrella of anti-statism. Though societal organization without the use of the state has a history that reaches as far back as when humans first began to organize themselves, anarchism as a philosophy of anti-statist possibility only came into light in the mid-nineteenth century. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was the first to coin the ideology as ‘anarchy’ after the term was used in reference after the French Revolution to revolutionaries who were not satisfied with the overthrow of Louis XVI without more significant structural change (Kropotkin 1910). Through the works of various principal thinkers, anarchist thought was interpreted in wildly different ways and produced many different actions. Soon anarchism in all its variations took hold as a significant form of social critique. According to historian Paul

Avrich (1991), the classical phase of the anarchist movement began in 1871 and ended in the 1930s. During this time, anarchism dramatically changed the history of the United States, though perhaps not to the benefit of the anarchist movement.

One anarchist philosopher that is important when thinking about radical history in the U.S. is the Russian anarchist prince and geographer Peter Kropotkin. This leading thinker had an invested interest in the U.S. anarchist movement and in turn generated much influence over U.S. radicals. Kropotkin's authority on the philosophy even granted him the opportunity to create the Encyclopedia Britannica entry for anarchism. He defined it in 1910 as such:

ANARCHISM (from the Gr. and , contrary to authority), the name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government – harmony in such a society being obtained, not by submission to law, or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded by various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption, as also for the satisfaction of the infinite variety of needs and aspirations of a civilized being.

Kropotkin promoted a specific form of anarchism, labeled anarchist communism, which profoundly impacted the ways that people in the U.S. critiqued society and tried to produce new patterns of self organization. This form of anarchism is most helpful when studying the ideologies behind FNB. Anarchist communism was based on the idea that the means of production, consumption, and any form of private ownership should be given over to common ownership. Avrich (1991, 4) attributes this to Kropotkin's "benign optimism," because he believed that, "once political oppression and economic exploitation had been eliminated, all, or nearly all, would work on their own free will, without any compulsion whatever, and take no more than they needed for a comfortable existence." His optimism stemmed from certain core values he placed on human rights and possibilities for society. His power to imagine a society in

which people worked and consumed at free will, unregulated by market or government, grew because he believed that only in times of scarcity did people create conflict.

Kropotkin expands on these ideas in *Mutual Aid* (1899). In this work he develops through his travels to Siberia the idea that mutual aid and cooperation are *as*, if not more, beneficial to any species as the Darwinist notions of competition. Therefore, the false idea of scarcity is used to produce competition where it should not be in a society filled with abundance. Anarchist thought defies this false notion because “we know that contrary to the theory enunciated by Malthus--that Oracle of middle-class Economics --the productive powers of the human race increase at a much more rapid ratio than its powers of reproduction” (Kropotkin 1995, 15). *Mutual Aid* is useful when thinking about the politics of FNB as they work “against the perspective of scarcity which causes many people to fear cooperation among groups. They believe that they must keep apart to preserve their resources, so we try to encourage the feelings of abundance and the recognition that if we cooperate together, all become stronger” (Butler and McHenry 2000, 4). The act of gleaning food is an important way to expose this contradiction of scarcity amid abundance, but reinforces the need for an examination of the gleaning methods taken up by the Athens FNB group.

Kropotkin’s work is also useful when analyzing the action of FNB because of his insistence on the right to food being the catalyst for radical change. In *Conquest of bread*, Kropotkin devotes an entire chapter to food and its place within the revolution. FNB seems to have gleaned their ideas for action directly from the sentiments raised in this chapter. “To attain a new end, new means are required,” (1995, 50) is how Kropotkin introduces his emphasis on the need for food as a basic human right. Turner (1998, 37) further explains that “violent means could not be employed to achieve a non-violent end.” Kropotkin and FNB activists see that new

means must be tied into food rights. This question of food is placed at the center of the possibility for change:

All the same, we maintain our contention: bread must be found for the people of the revolution, and the question of bread must take precedence of all other questions. If it is settled in the interests of the people, the revolution will be on the right road; for in solving the question of bread we must accept the principle of equality, which will force itself upon us to the exclusion of every other solution (Kropotkin 1995, 55).

FNB methods of fighting the state and all forms of authority center on food because food for all must mean equality for all. Through direct action the Athens' FNB openly address the ways in which food distribution is conducted as a privilege and not a right. The FNB methods of free food and political awareness are the new means through which a new end can be formed. The impediments of building the food gleaning network are dealt with through these politically motivated actions.

Through the concepts of abundance, mutual aid and basic human rights, Kropotkin formed a kind of anarchist philosophy that was very attractive to U.S. radicals. Emma Goldman (1931, 509) remarks on his importance to the movement when she explains: "He was a prominent figure in the realm of learning, recognized as such by the foremost men in the world. But to us he meant much more than that. We saw him as the father of modern anarchism, its revolutionary spokesman and brilliant exponent of its relation to science, philosophy, and progressive thought." One of the elements that attracted some U.S. anarchists to his notions was his acceptance of the use of violence. He was publicly sympathetic to the U.S. anarchists of the famous Haymarket Affair in 1886 during which a protestor rallying in support of striking workers threw a bomb at police (Avrich 1991). This event, which ended with five anarchists standing trial and then being put to death for the murder of police officers, still stands as a significant moment of social injustice. Kropotkin's support both influenced and reflected the

sentiments of many anarchists in the U.S. at that time. By not denouncing the use of violence as a method of political change, Kropotkin and his followers created a perspective of anarchism that still haunts its vocal activists and causes such negative connotations that many anti-authoritarian radicals still refuse to identify as anarchists.

The view of anarchists outside of the ideology grew to one of vicious recreants as the philosophy continued to be tied to violence with events such as the assassination of President William McKinley by anarchist sympathizer Leon Czolgosz. This perception of anarchists is helpful in denouncing the philosophy. Evidence of this is found in journal articles that decry anarchism as terrorism and as having almost, if not completely, died out (Novak 1954).

Evidence of this opinion can be shown as early as 1936 when articles like *Philosophical anarchism: Its rise, decline, and eclipse* (Yarros 1936) were published in academic journals.

This opinion that anarchism is violent and archaic is held, most likely, by the majority of people in the U.S. and hinders groups who identify with anarchist ideals and possibilities but do not identify as anarchists, such as FNB. The “New Anarchists,” as David Graeber (2002) refers to them, have evolved a new form of anarchism that recreates the ideals of the classical period of anarchism while still carrying some specific principles with them. Although they have progressed, the overall U.S. perception of anarchists has not changed.

Who Are the “New Anarchists”?

A review of the classical period is helpful for analyzing the backbone of radical groups like Food Not Bombs, but a review of a more recent anarchist history sheds light on current anarchist possibilities of new social organization and ways to address social problems. Since the end of the classical period in the 1930s, anarchism has remained a strong but somewhat unheard

form of political philosophy. Graeber (2002) claims that the disappearance of highly organized and vocal anarchists from mainstream politics is the result of new anarchist ideologies.

Anarchists today take “anarchist principles of anti-sectarianism and open-endedness so seriously that they refuse to refer to themselves as ‘anarchists’” (ibid.). They do not want to be called anarchists because of the factional, violent, and occasionally elitist habits of past anarchists. These new anarchists may not be self-proclaimed, but they do organize society in a way that “would seriously challenge the existence of reigning institutions like capital or state” (ibid), which separates them from other liberal, socialist, or left leaning groups of people. Though the anarchist movement since the 1930s has not been an overtly publicized one, the sentiments of anti-authoritarian, anti-violence, and anti-capitalism, which are today’s cornerstones of anarchist thought, have a strong history in U.S. counterculture.

According to Henri Lefebvre (1991, 134), “The Word has never saved the world and it never will,” but in order to organize, action must first be vocalized. The strong anti-authoritarian opinions of the 1960s counterculture uprising reflected anarchist thought and kept the ideas of possibilities of the world without authority and the state alive. From Malvina Reynolds (1967) singing “I’ll stay down here with the raggedy crew/ ‘cause getting up there means stepping on you, so/ I don’t mind failing in this world,” to Abbie Hoffman (2005) starting the anti-capitalist Yippie movement to induce a free society where everything is free and there is no authority, anarchist sentiments have been lingering among the thoughts of people in the U.S. since the 1930s. The most vocal anarchist tendencies are seen in punk music and culture starting in the 1960s and consistently remaining a powerful force. U.S. punk bands like MDC and Dead Kennedys were extremely influential in radicalizing otherwise apolitical rock ‘n’ rollers. Punk rock versions of anarchism are occasionally linked to the advocacy of violence as political

statement, but much of this violence is directed towards private property and purposely not bodily harm (O'Hara 1999).

These artists' anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist inclinations have kept anarchism alive within the realm of popular culture. Though some refuse to call themselves anarchists, these people are part of the ideological movement that sees authority as violence. This movement is not active within the academy today and possibly that is the reason "We are talking less about a body of theory, then, than about an attitude, or perhaps one might even say a faith: the rejection of certain types of social relations, the confidence that certain others would be much better ones on which to build a livable society, the belief that such a society could actually exist" (Graeber 2004a, 4). Through the movement in popular culture, anarchism is seen as a movement on the ground, not being proclaimed by 'armchair theorists', as Graeber explains, "younger activists are much more informed, among other elements, by indigenous, feminist, ecological and cultural-critical ideas" (2004b). Perhaps this lack of an overarching theoretical stance of anarchism for radicals keeps activists from self-identifying as anarchists. FNB does not claim anarchism in their handbook, but their strong anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist assertions and their dedication to revealing the equality of all people directly reflect anarchist sentiments. Not through vocalization, but through action, FNB shows itself to be acting through a lens of anarchist history. As the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* (2000, 71) says, "Authority and power are derived from the threat and use of violence... Such constant exposure to violence, including the threat thereof, leads many people to hopelessness and low self-esteem." When thinking about how the state "overcomes the violence of the 'state of nature' by imposing a greater, absolute violence of its own," (Turner 1998, 37) FNB can be seen as fighting the state as the greatest source of authority.

The new anarchists are activists who act out their politics in everyday tasks even if they do not feel comfortable as identifying themselves as anarchists. By acting through direct action in the everyday, this modern form of anarchism as a political philosophy places more emphasis on the spaces in which people act than do other types of social critique. The lack of academic involvement and the focus on a ground-up approach to anarchist direct action make every decision in anarchist organization extremely significant. As Goyens (2009, 442) explains:

I argue that anarchist meeting places therefore assume, for anarchists, a much more important role in the running and conception of the movement simply on account of their rejectionist (but not wholly negative) philosophy. In other words, anarchists may very well experience their political identity in more spatial ways than socialists because the latter live and experience their ideology also on a temporal plane with the preparation and anticipation of elections accompanied by deadlines, expectations for the future, and office term limits. This is not to say that urban anarchists were wholly isolated from the outside world by their own volition. Anarchists need their places to be more wholesome and sustainable for they are the new society in miniature.

Anarchists can openly reproduce the society that they wish to see by enacting that society through direct action that prefigures a different future. Graeber (2004a, 84) describes these kinds of actions as a form of prefigurative politics.

When protesters in Seattle chanted "this is what democracy looks like," they meant to be taken literally. In the best tradition of direct action, they not only confronted a certain form of power, exposing its mechanisms and attempting literally to stop it in its tracks: they did it in a way which demonstrated why the kind of social relations on which it is based were unnecessary. This is why all the condescending remarks about the movement being dominated by a bunch of dumb kids with no coherent ideology completely missed the mark. The diversity was a function of the decentralized form of organization, and this organization was the movement's ideology.

Choices from how and where to eat to where to get clothing and how one wears clothing all have the possibility of being political messages because they reproduce social meaning through daily action. As defined by Franks (2003, 18), direct action must be "prefigurative, the means have to be in accordance with the ends." The FNB movement is a direct action movement because by

collecting food that would otherwise be wasted and sharing it with anyone in a public space, activists enact a world that does not waste food and breaks down hierarchies of who gets to eat healthily. The means of the collective are not merely symbolic because they are not simply justified by a future end, but are recreating the present as the future.

FNB gives away food that is not market valued in public spaces to raise the political awareness that “Well-being for all is not a dream. It is possible, realizable, owing to all that our ancestors have done to increase our powers of production. We know, indeed, that the producers, although they constitute hardly one-third of the inhabitants of civilized countries, even now produce such quantities of goods that a certain degree of comfort could be brought to every hearth” (Kropotkin 1995,15). This idea, that how to perform in your daily life, down to the minutest of tasks, is what makes your character and in fact is embodied as physical action, is one that has been studied and clarified as the concept of performativity. Anarchists perform subversive acts of defiance against authority and capitalism through direct action. These actions are revolutionary not only because of the radical politics and criticisms that propel them, but also because of how subversive performativity that prefigures anarchists’ goals can reassign the meaning of the world around us to create large-scale change. The resignification of food waste to healthy meal reveals that through breaking cycles of normative performativity, FNB activists can create different realities for themselves through direct action. The next section will seek to place more significance on the possible actions of FNB and the places at which the collective chooses to take those actions.

2.4 Performativity: Enacting Possible Futures with Subversive Politics

“You can have your truth, but you’ve got to choose it.”

-Bob Dylan (1976)

Judith Butler’s philosophical works on rethinking gender have undeniably affected the way in which identity is thought about within the academy and is helpful when thinking about identity within activism. Throughout her work, Butler examines the reproduction of gender identities that uphold forms of oppression related to gender. This examination is done through the concepts of performativity and resignification. For Butler, gender cannot be “found in the feminist account of differently socialized and encultured bodies, or in the psychoanalytic dispositions formed in the familial Oedipal drama, but is the result of an illusion sustained by the incessant replication of norms that materialize that which they govern” (Hey 2006, 440). Gender is not natural, nor is it tied to cultural norms, but is the result of normative and repeated actions of embodiment. Oppressive power is gained through the persistent and consistent reiteration of subjects acting in similar ways that reproduce gender norms. While this project does not focus on gender differences, it does focus on how certain identities are acted out over space and are perceived either more or less radical than other identities. Performativity and resignification can be used in describing how competition is essentialized by people living in a capitalist society just as gender becomes essentialized and embodied. Through repetitive action, the naturalization of capitalism and the capitalistic normative othering of radicals who seek structural change are seen. Daily normative performances of consumerism and commodification reproduce cultural concepts of scarcity and competition in the U.S., but the repetitive acts of FNB work to change the norm through everyday non-normative action and obvious performances of what freedom looks like. Performativity and resignification are introduced in order to give additional meaning

to the ways in which FNB works to add new meaning to the spaces of food acquisition in a capitalist landscape. These concepts also place agency in the hands of the subjects, or in this case, the activists by stating that social reproduction occurs only as much as the individual enacts it. An overview of performativity and resignification and how they can interact with anti-capitalist critique help to further explore these possibilities.

Performativity is useful for social critique because it helps examine mass perceptions of identities, such as gender or as U.S. citizen, and break them down into a series of repetitive actions. The need for repetition is “a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (Butler 1993, 2). Like arguments for gender, arguments for capitalism have nearly always included naturalistic explanation. A well known example is the use of Social Darwinism and Malthusian catastrophe to show that as population outgrows production, people naturally compete for goods and the strongest survive (Peet 1985). Yet, as seen in the earlier anarchist overview, scarcity is commonly a socially constructed notion to induce people into competing for goods that are so abundant they are being thrown away. Like an Ouroboros, the classical figure of the snake eating its own tail to symbolize the cyclical nature of life, capitalism is reproduced again and again through the daily actions of ignorant consumerism. Only here the snake becomes sick as it consumes its own body and excrement because the reproduction of capitalism sickens the society that it inhabits by creating gross inequalities of abundance and need. This cycle is continued through normative performativity because the people who maintain these cycles of inequality do so only through repetitive actions that have been reproduced so often that they are embodied completely. Consumption enabled only through competition is essentialized through actions of market struggle and the commodification of food. FNB activists and other radicals seeking

structural change take themselves from this cycle when they enact subversive performativity through direct action that does not fall into the normative rotation of buy and selling food.

One of the more obvious ways in which FNB activists reveal their penchant for activism through performance is through street theatre. The serving of the food in a public space is in itself a performance to make inequality more visible. Yet, some FNB groups take it further and act out on the streets, as did the San Francisco group in 1995 at the Hall of Justice steps.

According to performance reviewer Joel Schechter (1995), the San Francisco Mime Troupe performed with FNB as they were serving. The troupe acted out the numerous arrests of FNB founder Keith McHenry on the steps of the courthouse. Actors were dressed as FNB activists and police men and acted out the arrests in order to reveal the preposterous nature of someone being arrested for sharing food. After the official act of the mime troupe concluded, the performance continued as a real FNB server opened a vat of soup and was immediately arrested by nearby police. This instance of apparent performance mimicking normative performativity made me aware that performativity would be useful in analyzing how the actions of the Athens' FNB group affects their overarching message. Direct action in essence must be prefigurative and the work of the FNB collective enacts the ends that they wish to achieve. Their performances are subversive because they act in opposition to the normal and socially accepted forms of food distribution. Notions of competition and consumption are challenged by providing food as a right and not a privilege. Subversive performativity through direct action is not simply symbolic, but enacts the desired goal and creates practical political change in the present. As Kropotkin (1995, 50) called for new means to achieve new ends, through prefigurative direct action, the subversive performance of FNB activists challenges the status quo by enacting the possible future.

The spaces over which these acts are performed become very important when looking at capitalist contradiction. FNB chooses to serve in public places that bring attention in the streets to people living on the streets and to “bring people with different backgrounds directly into contact with each other” (Butler and McHenry 2000, 11). The collective continuously tries to expose the harms of capitalism and the failure of the state to right those problems through their public performances of giving unmarketable food away for free. The performance of direct action “highlights and attempts to overcome hierarchical practices, rendering them visible so that other groupings can contest power relations” (Franks 2003, 30). This visibility is extremely important because capitalism creates spaces which fall out of the general public eye. By changing how a landscape is organized to benefit those in need, FNB groups commonly drastically affect their environments to enhance the visibility of capitalist spatial contradictions. The invisible space between production, consumption, and their effects are what keeps consumers inculcated in the cycle that produces inequalities. Scarry (1985, 170) explores this space:

The proximity of work to pain is here specifically attributed to the massive hunger, sores, disease, airlessness, and exhaustion suffered by the industrial population, but all these conditions are in turn attributed to the more fundamental shattering of the essential integrity of act-and-object in the human psyche; for the body at work was separated from the objects of its work; the men, women, and children bringing forth out of their labor a multitude of objects (coal, lace, bricks, shirts, watches, pins, paper, plaited straw), themselves inhabited a space wholly outside the realm on which those objects conferred their benefit, a realm that belonged to a set of people who had not themselves directly participated in the making of the objects.

This realm of privilege must be broken open so that the effects of reproduction that are not seen by people in power, such as homelessness, poverty, and hunger, can be made visible. This distance provides spaces in which people can repeatedly act in ways that do not reflect violence of participating in an uneven capitalist society. The embodiment of this performativity presents

a world that contains no pain for the people that only participate in the consumption of objects. The performativity of capitalism across the affluent spaces of Athens illustrates a simulacrum of a non-violent world without consequences of blind consumption. The subversive actions of FNB of taking food waste from spaces of careless consumption and redistributing, and therefore resignifying, that food as a right exposes the performance of competition for the benefit of some and the ruin of others. The use of the landscape is altered from waste sites to food distribution sites to reflect that conceptual change.

Viewing anarchist anti-capitalist critique through the lens of performativity shows that competition for food is only held up and perpetuated through a series of acts, not the nature or essence of human beings to compete. Direct action and prefigurative politics could resignify social organization from one of competition to one of mutual aid, which brings back the hope of the anarchist Kropotkin, that people would work on their own free will without taking more than needed for comfort (Avrich 1991, 4). In this way the concept of performativity provides a useful vehicle for a deeper investigation of how impediments form for radicals trying to build food gleaning networks (performance of social expectations) and how radicals can overcome those obstacles (resignification) to reorganize their local space in a way that benefits the people as a whole. While getting food, activists reproduce ideas about what food is acceptable and good to eat. Food becomes unmarketable when it becomes blemished and is unlikely to be sold, not when it becomes inedible. The recovery of this food reveals the possibility that when food is thought of as a right and not a privilege, hunger will cease to exist.

This idea that the uneven effects of capitalism are produced by repetitive actions is exciting because it places agency in the hands of activists fighting for change. If “Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed”

(Butler 1988, 527), then by changing the ways in which people act on a daily basis at a local scale through prefigurative direct action as subversive performativity, groups like Athens' FNB can resignify the world around them as a space for autonomous anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist living. Anarchism can be realized through the reproduction of everyday lives surviving without the state, authority, or capitalism. The violence created by the cycle of the 'free market' is not avoided at a global scale, but can be addressed locally with political awareness and direct action.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, three subsections provided ways which to analyze the empirical data that I will provide in chapter four. Emergency food criticism was summarized in order to better understand the food bank as a sight which serves as an impediment for building a food gleaning network in Athens. Anarchism provided further critique defining the impediments of food gleaning in a capitalist landscape and ways in which modern radicals are addressing obstacles emerging in that landscape. Direct action and prefigurative politics reveal possibilities for change at the local level through subversive action that goes against the status quo. These mediums, as seen through the concept of performativity, provide the power of activist to resignify the world around them. This resignification reproduces new patterns of social organization that do not privilege those economically successful. This possibility of landscape change can be seen later in maps in Chapter Four. FNB collectives show the capabilities of subversive performativity to break cycles of normative action when they resignify the world that they live in through direct action. These concepts will be useful in chapter four when analyzing what impediments arose when building the food gleaning network in Athens and how FNB addressed those obstacles. The next chapter will discuss the data collection and methodology with which I completed this project.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Study Area

This project took place over several specific locations in Athens, GA. The town was chosen partly because Athens had already been my home for four years before this project commenced. The town had become my home and using it as a study area allowed for deeper, more knowledgeable data collection. Athens proved itself to be a good study area because it provided an extremely small scale spatial contradiction of an exaggerated poverty rate juxtaposed with a wealthy student population. The border between these two social worlds is constantly blurred, especially when activism stretches to bring light on those in need in the form of food charity. FNB works to diminish the hierarchy along the border by sharing food in a public and visible space to *anyone* who is hungry, including the rich and the poor. The places from which the food for FNB is gleaned can have as much of a significant meaning for the political message of the collective as the food sharing process. The places that are chosen for food recovery of FNB groups typically reflect the politics of the overarching FNB collective; they show that hunger exists where abundance is wasted. They also show possibilities of how the landscape can be altered and resignified to better distribute food across a larger area. The food gleaning network of the Athens FNB activists comprises several different locations that changed over the course of my project (see Figure 1).

Athens, Georgia Food Gleaning Network Sites

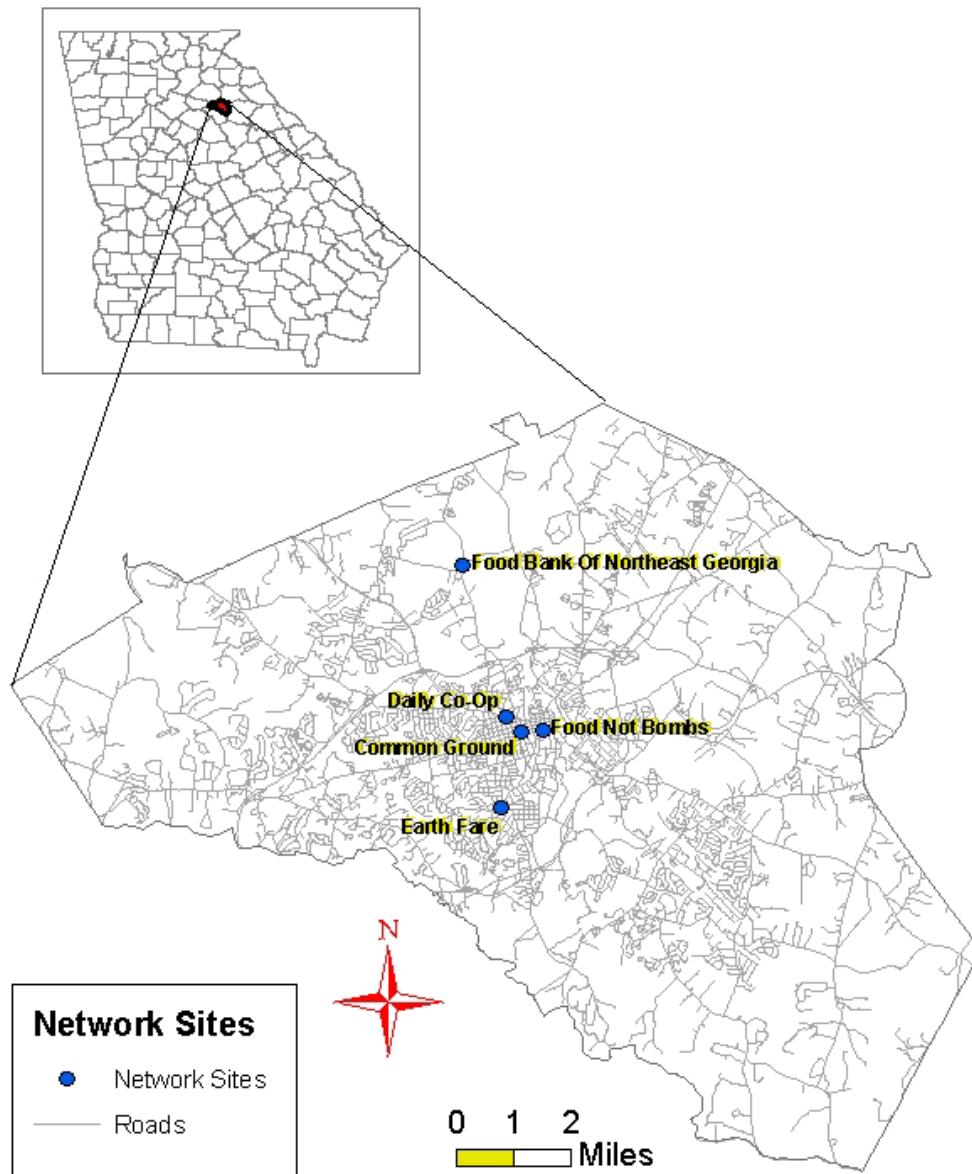


Figure 1: The frequently visited food gleaning network sites are highlighted here in blue. The inset serves to place Athens-Clarke County within the larger context of Georgia.

One essential location of the food gleaning network was Common Ground Athens. This was the progressive resource center in which Food Not Bombs prepared the meals that were eventually shared, though the physical space has closed since the conclusion of my research in fall 2009 when the center went ‘space-less’. The center was located two blocks away from downtown, which made the transportation of food from Common Ground to the sharing space of FNB in downtown manageable for even those without means of transportation. Common Ground served as a central node of the food gleaning network and also an essential meeting point for discussions involving the changes to, or stagnation of, the network. FNB was one of twenty-eight affiliate groups that met in Common Ground.

The Food Bank of Northeast Georgia is another place that I focused on as a very important node within the food network. The food bank serves fourteen counties in northeast section of Georgia, meaning its limited resources are stretched over a very large area. The large area covered by the food bank allowed it to serve 6.7 million pounds of food to people in need in those 14 counties during the 2008–09 fiscal year. Its resources are donated from several supermarkets around Athens, namely Kroger and Wal-Mart as listed on their site (FBNG, 2009). This amalgamation of food in one spot made the food bank a desirable spot for food gleaning activists on the go who did not have time for extensive gleaning from widespread locations, though its politics influenced the creation of this project of finding new food network sites. The food bank is located on the outskirts of Athens-Clarke County, 3.5 miles from Common Ground.

Other major nodes of the food gleaning network were engaged during the latter part of my research. Two significant locations will be included in this spatial analysis: Earth Fare, located at 1689 South Lumpkin Street, and the Daily Co-op, located at 523 Prince Avenue. These sites were the most obvious options for building a food gleaning network that followed the

politics of FNB more closely because of their advertised left leaning politics. Some supermarkets were visited briefly, such as the Kroger located at 191 Alps Road, to dumpster lock checks and conversations with produce stockers, but these locations were never fully included in the food gleaning network because of their exclusionary capitalistic practices. The large supermarkets were, however, included in some GIS spatial analyses as possible population service of those locations openly gave away produce that was being wasted.

3.2 Data Collection

For the question of finding the impediments of building a food network in Athens, GA, a multi-method approach that combines both ethnographic and Geographical Information System (GIS) driven methods fits the research goals. The use of more than one method to analyze a problem became attractive in this project because of the interesting ways in which the social network of FNB and the places which provide food for the collective play against the seemingly concrete spatial makeup of Athens, GA. Combining ethnographic fieldwork through the use of participatory action research (PAR) and spatial analysis through GIS creates a more complex lens with which to view the multifaceted interactions of Athenians within the food network.

Qualitative Data Collection: Finding the Food Gleaning Network Problem

PAR is a critical ethnographic method through which a researcher and research subjects conduct research and create knowledge together to find not only what is, but what can be (Thomas 1993, 4). This method is separate from most traditional forms of research because its goal is to place the subjects' production of knowledge within the research on the same plane as the 'expert' researcher. As Thomas (1993, 26) explains:

In most conventional inquiry, researchers serve as experts in the design, implementation, and policy suggestions for research projects. PAR advocates, by contrast, proceed from the premise that ‘science is not achieved by distancing oneself from the world’ and that when possible, researchers should defer to the input of the subjects in the belief that, ‘it is possible to pursue both the truth and solutions to concrete problems simultaneously’ (Whyte, Greenwood, and Lazes 1991, 21).

By enacting the same daily activities of other activists and creating knowledge together, the hierarchical nature of the researcher – subject relationship is democratized. In this way, both parties will be able to learn from one another and affect change in each other (Hoggart *et al* 2002, 275). This mutual learning process was one that was extremely important to me and a main reason why I chose PAR. Because of my own ignorance of the food gleaning network and processes involved in getting food for free, I needed the information that was freely given to me by FNB activists and other actors within the network. This project provides insight into the spatial processes of Athens because it is the result of many voices joining to help one. PAR is also useful to answer my research questions because it allows for better insight into Athens’ processes because it is a research method that takes place inside and outside of the classroom. When knowledge is gleaned through the shared actions of mutual activism in the community, learning becomes more purposeful, “But without external engagement, any education that happens in a classroom is ultimately of use only in the classroom” (Latif and Jeppeson 2007, 297).

Throughout the formation of this project, my own positionality as a researcher has consistently been a major factor of the outcome of the study. The use of participant observation through PAR creates a blurred line between insider and outsider and means that my voice within the project was a constant upfront contributor. As a white middle class woman with access to my own car for the delivery of food when gleaning, my ability to create a food network in Athens stems from a position of privilege. This privilege awarded me mobility and an amount of

scholarly leisure from which to assess the food gleaning network. Though my privilege awarded me a lens through which to analyze FNB actions, it did not prevent me from allowing my own personal life from influencing the data collection and analysis. During my two years of field work, I moved four times in Athens. These occasional violent uprootings of my perceptions of the socio-spatial make-up of Athens had irrevocable effects on the ways in which I interacted with actors within the food gleaning network and dealt with the challenges of recovering food on a weekly basis. These dramatic personal changes caused me to continuously question and reevaluate assumptions that I was building while researching. My position of outside researcher was initially broken down through my participation in PAR and this insider/outsider line was only further blurred by my growing friendships with actors in the food gleaning network and their shared advice for both the network and my personal dealings. Hopefully the use of this blurred line between insider and outsider (Herod 1999, Mullings 1999, Katz, C. 1994) allowed me to be a better actor within the food gleaning network because of my accessibility to the privilege of the academy and the community of the activist simultaneously.

PAR was particularly useful for forming research questions that would be pertinent to the community in question. By participating with FNB in several different aspects, from gleaning to cooking, serving, and cleaning, I chose my research questions through reflection on several moments that led me to believe that the collective most needed a better gleaning network. I hoped during my research formulation that by using these moments of reflection I could use my position as someone with time and purpose to analyze a socio-spatial phenomenon to better shed light on those less fortunate (Whyte 1989, 374; Thomas 1993, 26). This experiential guidance led me for the rest of my field work to be constantly evaluating myself and my actions and for

use value within the FNB community. I hope that this project can serve as an example of the issues that arise with participatory action and food gleaning in general.

Even though acting with FNB over two years led to a consistent routine, each day of research brought with it its own unique problems. The interactions that I had with different network actors constituted the majority of my data collection over the research period. I did not take field notes while in the field, so many of the conversations and happenings on my network experiences were jotted down first on paper with major points to be considered (Crang 1997; Cook 1997). These notes would typically be revisited later in the day by typing out full field notes with reflections on the day. In some ways this form of data collection leads to spotty details and some inability to record direct quotes from conversations, but it did allow me to act in different settings without positioning myself apart as researcher by taking notes while events unfolded. At times note taking in the field can serve to alienate the researcher from the research subjects. My intent for recording notes away from the field was not to hide my purpose as a researcher, but to “mitigate the intrusive influence of the researcher on ‘normal’ social activities” (Hoggart *et al* 2002, 257). I hoped through the collection of field notes I would be able to understand better the underlying motives behind the social forces that bonded the food gleaning network together. I expected to find failings in the network that would lead to insights on how to build a better network more suited to that of FNB activists’ needs.

Quantitative Data Collection: Opening the Landscape for More Possibilities with the Food Gleaning Network

The other set of methods that were applied to the research problem was the use of GIS as a tool to analyze the spatial relationship between the need for food and where it is available for the people. I chose to use GIS because I wanted to use a unique methodological pairing of PAR

and GIS to see if I could create a more complete understanding of the space around me. More complex knowledge could be attained by the connection of two methods commonly seen at odds: “At the level of practice, an urgent need exists to go beyond the conventional understanding of GIS as a largely quantitative practice and to recognize the potential of such realization for disrupting the rigid distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods in geographic research” (Kwan 2002, 656). It is important in the previous quote to note that this connection takes place at the level of practice. For my research, the practice of PAR and GIS allowed me to see my actions in the field in two ways that influenced one another. Although PAR helped to reveal where the food gleaning network in Athens was manageable and possible through various direct personal interactions, GIS helped to triangulate and add perspective to the findings of the qualitative methods and find where there was more need for food. Lawson (1995, 452) helps explain the benefits of using quantitative and qualitative methods in conjunction: “All of our understandings are partial and situated, and the use of one method or another does not absolve us from this. Given this realization, we should take advantage of the ways in which quantitative techniques provide powerful opportunities to demonstrate the operation of processes of oppression and of difference.” The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is beneficial in various research projects (Rocheleau 1995; Kwan 2002; Lawson 1995; McKendrick 1999; Brewer 1989). This study is also such a project that can only benefit from the added spatial analysis provided by mapping events over space.

The use of GIS in map making for this project shows where the food gleaning network exists today and perhaps possibilities for where it could exist in the future. Maps reveal processes for any spatial area in a single moment, while PAR focuses on multiple moments on a micro-scale of places already included in the food network. This broader moment of data

representation is just that: a personal representation of what I perceived to be current and possible future nodes of the food network and what kind of population that those nodes could serve. Though some critics of GIS characterize it to be irrevocably positivist and masculinist, Kwan (2002, 648) sees these critiques to fall short of the possibilities of GIS in science.

To argue that all or any of these constitute the inherent or immutable nature of GIS is to ignore the specificity of this history – for very different kinds of GIS could have been developed under different sociopolitical interactions – and to foreclose the possibility for GIS methods to be reimagined as critical practices for feminist geographic research.

By viewing GIS as a useful tool for data visualization and not as a form of statistical truth making, I create a space in which the use of GIS is immediately beneficial to triangulate my qualitative research. While the view of GIS as a representational tool may be a simplification of the impacts of GIS on very real events, GIS does provide a much needed larger scale perspective not seen from the ground. I wanted my research to be grounded in the actions, thoughts, needs, and beliefs of the food gleaning network actors and GIS was very helpful in that I was enabled to collect data that allowed me to analyze my own actions with network actors and nodes from a new perspective. From a map of Athens, GA, all of the places that I was not able to interact with while acting within the food gleaning network are seen. GIS allowed me to input census block level poverty data that is not able to be seen from the window of a car and locations that were too widespread over Athens to experience in my daily research activities.

The spatial data for GIS analysis was collected in a couple of different ways. I recorded point data from my own travels within the food network in order to place the local knowledge on the maps from PAR. Other data, such as road files (TIGER files), census block group data, and demographic data was collected mainly from the US Census Bureau and the GA GIS Clearinghouse databases provided for free online. Though I used ArcGIS, expensive software

reserved mainly for professionals, I wanted to get my mapped data from free resources. This free info could be input into other free mapping software that can be found online³. While the data collected from these databases stayed the same throughout the entire project, the data I produced from the changing food network changed over time, which revealed the fluidity of the construction of space and thus the potential for change while looking at something as concrete as a map.

3.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis: Ways to Address Network Building Impediments

The use of PAR to collect data creates the opportunity for data analysis from the very beginning of one's project. Even at the time in my research when my research questions had not yet presented themselves, my experience had already begun to be analyzed and affect future actions. In an ethnographic action research project, Hoggart, *et al* (2002, 298) claim that "from the minute a researcher collects data, analysis seems to kick into gear, even if this is unintentional." This kind of informal analysis affected the turnout of my project and was not entirely realized until the beginning of formal analysis of the collected data.

For the formal analysis of my field notes, I first transcribed all of the data that had not already typed up into Microsoft Word documents in order to analyze them more clearly⁴. Some of these field notes that had not been already typed were written on loose scraps of paper and were at times difficult to place within the larger temporal organization of the other field notes without thinking about the spatial implications implied in those notes. This difficulty led me to organize my notes in terms of spatial locations as opposed to strict temporal time line. This

³ Some examples of free mapping software can be found at <http://www.mapcruzin.com/free-gis-software-tools.htm>

⁴ See Appendix C for an example of one day's field notes.

organization allowed for better analysis of the food gleaning network because I could more clearly see where different occurrences and reoccurrences happened and what they meant for the gleaning network as a whole. After restructuring this data set, I read through my field notes in order to pick out certain themes or concepts (Lichterman 2002, 130) that could be relevant for analysis. I performed a document search throughout all of my field notes for concepts, such as charity criticism, anarchism, and waste in order to analyze the ways in which these concepts surfaced and related to the space at which they occurred.

For this paper, I provide a narrative analysis from my field notes that presents the reader, as well as the researcher, an examination of my experience in the food network within the larger structures that influence socio-spatial occurrences in Athens. According to Dear (1988, 296), “Any narrative about landscape is necessarily an account of the reciprocal relationship between relatively long-term structural forces and the shorter-term routine practices of individual human agents.” This form of analysis also shows that the larger structure and belief systems of actors within the food gleaning network are not static or unchanging, but are revealed in the ways that people tell events as stories (Crang 1997). By producing a narrative of the events, I can place my own story of scientific research within the larger body of theory that is relevant to my research problem, mainly through anarchism and performativity. The use of narrative focuses on the story of my fieldwork, partly because I wanted to test Kropotkin’s claim (1995, 78) that, “The man who is full-fed does not understand this, but the people do understand, and have always understood it; and even the child of luxury, if he is thrown on the street and comes into contact with the masses, even he will learn to understand.” Narrative analysis can be useful in exposing the subjectivity of my findings by exposing the personal process of understanding how the impediments to the food gleaning network and how FNB works to address those obstacles.

Narrative is also a valuable form of analysis when seeking a deeper understanding of the concept of performativity because both narrative analysis and performativity focus on the power of personal subjectivity and action.

The goal that I wanted to realize through the use of narrative analysis was to be able to take the experience of the practical routine of acting in a food gleaning network and to examine the different problems that arise from food gleaning through the context of broader social theory. The narration process allowed me to organize and present my field notes in a way that exposes my own subjectivity within the research. I hope that this type of analysis reveals the personal stance from which the data was observed and collected: “While narrative does not yield absolute truth, it can transport narrators and audiences to more authentic feelings, beliefs, and actions and ultimately to a more authentic sense of life” (Ochs and Capps 1996, 23). Narrative clearly shows the narrator as controlling the events that occur and how they are told. This form of analysis also sheds light on “voice, authenticity, interpretive authority, and representation” (Chase 2005, 655). FNB direct action prefigures the future for those participants who perform their hopeful ends. These acts affect the actor because direct action “although carried out to primarily benefit the actor (in order to avoid paternalism), has a socialized concept of the self, and recognizes that identities alter through the practice of such methods, in the most simplistic form – from passive victim to active resistor” (Franks 2003, 26). The narration of my own story of the food gleaning network illuminates how my own personal experience affected the changing network.

This focus exposes the subjective position from which the food gleaning network was made and acted in because it “communicates the narrator’s point of view, including why the narrative is worth telling in the first place” (Chase 2005, 656). I also wanted this analysis to help me find where exactly my project may have failed in building the network that I had so hoped to

build at the beginning of my research process that would have resignified the landscape of Athens to one that promoted food as a right. This narrative reflects my actions as an individual FNB participant trying to affect change at a local level. I think that it did help to reveal reasons why the Athens chapter of FNB acts and reproduces social structures that are not exactly in line with typical FNB politics.

Quantitative Analysis: Spatial Situating Possibilities

The social processes that necessitate and facilitate the food network in Athens were further examined through GIS analysis. Several different methods were used to create spatial representations of poverty and food sources to triangulate the information gleaned from the qualitative data analysis, though only a couple were used in my final analysis of the network. The data collected on poverty in Athens and specific places where food is provided for those in need was analyzed through different tools in ArcGIS. First, I created several maps strictly for the visualization of where I was gleaning food on a weekly basis and over what kinds of spaces I was traveling. These were constructed as point data maps to show the points, or nodes, of the network, and as choropleth maps, which show poverty and population variation at a census block group level. I chose also to create a point data map for major supermarkets in Athens. I did this because I wanted to create a map that showed where dumpsters containing vast amounts of waste that could be recovered as food for those in need. These mapped places, especially when compared to the maps of the existing food gleaning network, show the extreme contradiction of waste and abundance in Athens.

A network analysis map in ArcGIS can show how much of an area is serviced by certain facilities. For both point maps, the existing food gleaning network map and the supermarket

waste points that show a possible more just food gleaning network, I performed a network analysis to show what areas in Athens were serviced within three miles of each point location. I chose three miles because I assumed that three miles would be the most that someone would want to walk to get free food. This assumption was made after interacting with the food gleaning network and experiencing how much time was used to glean. According to Google Maps, walking three miles in Athens would take about one hour⁵. This means that someone gleaning from a site that was three miles away would spend at least two hours getting food. After trying to fit in the gleaning network into a busy schedule, I decided that no working individual, especially if that person had a family, would have the time to spend more than two hours gleaning food. Map intersect was then executed in order to create a better visualization of how many people in poverty were being served by the current food gleaning network and how many more people could be served if gleaning from supermarket waste was considered an acceptable form of food acquisition. Although GIS produces a perhaps overly simplified snapshot of a landscape, it does provide a helpful visual of landscape possibilities.

3.4 Why GIS?

The moment of realization that FNB actions in a food-gleaning network that does provide food for those in need, but simultaneously contradicts the ideological goals of the collective is when the first interest in GIS for my research came about. Through consistent interaction of participation action research with FNB and its gleaning network that was already set in place, I was having a difficult time seeing the effect that my research was having on the people outside of whom I interacted with on a daily basis. I found that GIS could provide this alternative viewpoint from which I could visualize the actions that I was taking in a single instant outside of

⁵ This information can be reconstructed at <http://maps.google.com>.

my field notes. Maps had the ability to synthesize multiple aspects of ideas found in my research into a single image. From this point of hope-- that maps could inform and produce knowledge that I was creating over the space that those maps would visualize-- was where I began experimentation with GIS.

The network analysis of the food charity sites that I was frequenting when collecting data through PAR methods shows that the area of Athens that I was covering was extremely limited and necessitated the use of a car. The network analysis of the supermarket locations, where food was being wasted on a large scale and could potentially be used to feed those in need, reveal the potential spatial implications of opening up the food-gleaning network to cover more area over the landscape of Athens than only places that are considered socially acceptable. The supermarket analysis shows that more people in need could gain access to free food due to the wider area serviced by those locations. These findings illuminate the extremely small space that I covered in my field notes with PAR and one of the possibilities that I have for expanding that research. In this way GIS was informed by my qualitative method, but has informed my future research and initiated a set of critiques for my past research as well. This helpful, albeit slightly painful, look at the limited area that I covered with my field work helps to situate the knowledge produced by that field work. GIS allowed me to see the relatively small impact of my research in even the tiny city of Athens. Katz (1992, 498) explains the importance of this situated knowledge: “Conscious awareness of the situatedness of our knowledge enables us not only to be accountable for the stories we tell, but to move strategically to the discursive, practical, and material borders between subject positions.” The visualizations produced by GIS analysis have served as very useful tools when striving for a balance between activist and researcher by revealing the spatial impact that I was having in Athens. Though GIS has been beneficial for my

own research, GIScience has been critiqued up until recently as being irreversibly incongruent with the social sciences.

Most criticism of GIS is based on the assumption that the science itself is inherently positivist, which would make any findings or knowledge produced from that science to claim an objective truth. Critical geographers, such as poststructuralists and feminists, find that truths are varied and socially constructed, so the thought of a map producing one objective truth through GIS analysis is unattractive because “one reason why GIS has achieved such astounding ‘success’ to date in decision-making support roles is that is based on only one seemingly noncontradictory perception of reality” (Harris *et al* 1995, 219). The positivistic nature is not the main problem for others, as what GIS has been used for is: “A substantive critique holds that GIS represents yet another instrument of capital control and government surveillance (Pickles 1995; Curry 1998; Aitkin, 2002)” (Sieber 2006, 491). Although these critiques still hold some weight among social scientists and critical geographers, many are finding that GIS has the potential to facilitate research while still staying true to their non-positivist epistemologies.

This growth of GIS beyond positivism is seen in the literature surrounding critical cartography and critical GIS. Academics are beginning to open up to the power of maps for the people (Crampton and Krygier 2006). GIS is now being looked at as an emancipatory tool for communities, “Researchers engaged in community-based actions research (whether feminist, environmental, or social) may find it useful, even more action-oriented, to adapt their strategies to take advantage of the visualization, analytical, and representation approaches offered by the machine (in this case, the GIS)” (Bell and Reed 2004, 64). Scientists, such as Pavlovskaya (2006), also see the benefits of using quantitative spatial analyses with tools like GIS in conjunction with qualitative research.

Mei-Po Kwan is a geographer who finds that using GIS concurrently with qualitative methods can produce better knowledge and a more just world. Yet, Kwan is a bit different from many other geographers using GIS to triangulate knowledge because of her background. As a professor at Ohio State University, Kwan has an extensive background in GIS technique. Although she is considered a GIScientist, Kwan is becoming more and more known as a feminist scholar from the work that she does with mixed methods. This is a unique vision because she is not looking to simply add to qualitative research methods, but wants to help GIS evolve into a critical quantitative method.

Kwan addresses feminist criticism in order to elevate her goals to use GIS as an emancipatory science. The objectifying aspect of GIS cannot be seen as an intrinsic characteristic because “If the vision enabled by GIS is incorrigibly disembodied and masculinist, the use of GIS methods will only serve to perpetuate the objectifying gaze of the masculinist master subject” (2002, 649). The issue of embodiment rises again later in her work: “Despite the fact that a large number of bodies are affected by the application of GT (geospatial technologies) ... bodies are often treated merely as things, as dots on maps, or even as if they do not exist” (2007, 24). Through this criticism of GIS, Kwan reveals that one major way to create more just GIS visualizations is to address the issue of the body within those analyses. Without embodiment of the data collected and analyzed, even critical GIS may reproduce the power hierarchies that it strives to challenge. Mapping the spaces that Athens’ FNB activists do and do not act upon takes the concept of critical mapping to reveal a large scale picture of the places that are embodied in the work of the collective.

Through the visualization of the food gleaning network, GIS shows a snapshot of embodied performative acts created through building that network. The mapping of the network

over the space of Athens reveals where food is able to be gleaned in an average activist's daily routine and the number of people this gleaned can potentially benefit. The vision that I am trying to enable through the use of GIS for this project illuminates socio-spatial injustice at a local scale. I have created maps through ArcGIS with census provided statistical information, but have analyzed that data in conjunction with spatial data produced with PAR. My participation as an activist and FNB participant adds to a growing concern for the powerful nature of technology itself as, "Citizen participation that is neither direct nor vigorous must, after all, give us reason to worry that the legitimacy of technology's advance may fall ever more disturbingly into question as the prospects for crippling dissent rise in opposing proportions. Ultimately, participation is essential to technology's responsiveness to the interests and value commitments of citizens" (Tatum 2000, 9). Through the use of a mixed method approach to my research objectives in my thesis I have emerged with a more complicated knowledge of the spaces in which I participated.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

The Food Not Bombs (FNB) collective of Athens, GA provides an interesting lens through which to look at how radical politics are enacted at a local scale. The ill-fated contradiction of abundance and hunger in a capitalist society made up of haves and have-nots is often illuminated by the prefigurative and subversively performative kinds of activism that FNB performs. FNB exposes how economic injustice is not a naturalistic fact of human nature by acting out alternative, anarchic possibilities when dealing with the right to food. The group serves a wasted abundance to anyone who is hungry and shows how uncomplicated the direct action of feeding ourselves outside of market participation can be. This act is considered subversive because it destabilizes the notion that food must become a commodity for it to go from seed to stomach. Each FNB group performs these acts differently specific to their spatial peculiarities. The unique ways in which the Athens FNB group has answered local issues involved with the course of action from gleaning food to serving are what make this group an especially interesting subject for a geographical study. This is also an interesting project because of the ways in which Athens' FNB activists and other food gleaning network actors address the problems of food gleaning. Emergency food was engaged with in order to pull some empirical knowledge of the reasons why the food bank, a major gleaning source for Athens' FNB, provided a cause for tension and eventually came to symbolize an impediment to building a better food gleaning network. Throughout my research, I tried to keep the politics of the Athens FNB activists in mind in order to create a network that would suit their interests as well as my own. By resignifying wasted food as healthful food, I was able to participate in the daily resistance enacted by FNB.

I started participating with FNB in Athens in September of 2007. Those first interactions with the ever-changing faces of the collective and the people that we shared food with were initially difficult to process. I chose to participate mainly on Wednesdays to try to build a more solid personal network of people that I would see on a regular basis. Each Wednesday I would show up around 4:30 to help cook the food at Common Ground, help carry the food downtown to College Avenue to share, and then make it back to Common Ground to clean and usually make it home by 9:00. These long days exposed me to many of the problems that the group was facing daily.

This experience and the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) allowed me to approach research questions for my project that would be useful for the collective. I would not have noticed the need for a better food gleaning network to suit the groups' needs and ideals had I not first interacted with them extensively. Through conversations about what FNB stands for and how difficult the food was to get on certain days, I eventually came to see that an evaluation of the Food Not Bombs' food gleaning network, how the network affected the ability to raise political awareness, and the difficulties of building a network that better suited the collective's needs was a desirable research project. This narrative reflects the impediments that I found over the capitalist landscape of Athens and helps to address the ways in which FNB works to resignify the landscape to reflect food as a right to raise political awareness and provide food for those in need. Four locations are focused on throughout this narrative analysis because they served as the most important places in which food was gleaned. GIS was later used to analyze the possibilities of gleaning food that I did not enact in the network. The maps created reveal possibilities for the resignification of space in Athens.

4.1 The Food Not Waste Narrative

The Theatre is the Life of You.

-Minutemen (1984)

Common Ground

My participation with FNB started at the Common Ground resource center in September of 2007. This space served as the most important node in the food gleaning network because it was the place where the food was dropped off and prepared for sharing. Common Ground was the only place in the network that remained constant and permanent. Of course, in the fall of 2007 I did not know that “network node” would be how I would come to view this place. I knew that I wanted to study FNB, but was not sure what aspect of the group that I would eventually focus on for this project. The attraction of studying the Athens’ FNB collective was because of its truly unique nature when approaching food charity. The FNB activists that I interacted with and read about did not want to simply alleviate inequalities that people face due to economic injustice, they wanted to break open the idea that we live underneath a system that is neither for the people nor by the people. This group sees the possibility for large-scale radical change beginning at a local level and reveals those possibilities through daily direct action.

Having lived in Athens for four years before the beginning of this project, I knew what it was like to share food with FNB downtown on College Ave. This public sharing space was always on my route through downtown to and from campus and I would occasionally stop to share a meal with the FNB group. These moments were always nice for a free meal and conversation, but I never really knew what kind of political message the group was trying to promote. The Athens’ FNB rarely brings literature with them when they share meals, so finding

out the political nature of the group takes a little prying and lots of curiosity. This unknowingness drove me to want to know more about why these white people in punk t-shirts were handing out free food downtown. With my introduction to graduate school came my introduction to more direct participation with FNB.

In September of 2007, I ventured to Common Ground for the first time to look behind the curtains of the FNB act. I was fortunate enough that my advisor, Nik Heynen, was already active within the group and gave me an “in” and an introduction to the people who regularly participated with the group. Although FNB is a collective that is open to *anyone* who wants to participate, I found in my participation at Common Ground that some participants are more welcome than others. This became apparent when students in sororities would show up to complete their charity requirements and would be allowed to participate, but would not be included in conversation and would later bear the brunt of many jokes. These times I became acutely aware of how lucky I was to have an automatic connection to the activists through my advisor. Through this “in” I was not perceived as an average undergraduate girl with flimsy ideas about charity; I was a graduate student with valid criticisms about overarching structures of capitalism and the state.

This constant performance of me as graduate student with big ideas became embodied in my daily actions in life as well as with FNB, though it constantly came into question with different people that I acted with and changed the nature in which I interacted with this important food gleaning network node. This became a place at which my dedication to FNB was occasionally overshadowed by my outward appearance of average, white, middle-class female. These events were rare but heavily affected my sense of belonging to a group that challenged belonging to a system. One instance of these feelings came up when another female activist who

had actually helped start the Athens FNB and was an extremely important participant that kept the group alive, eventually apologized to me for being rude to me for months because I did not look like I was serious about activism. Occasionally my clothing would also be called into question, as it was towards the conclusion of my research in 2009 as I ventured into Common Ground to drop off food. A male in his mid-twenties was standing in the front room next to the kitchen donning dread locks and tattered jeans. He smiled at me first and then looked quizzically disgusted as he asked me if my glasses were Gucci “or something?” I answered that they were actually Chanel and immediately felt the guilt and shame of having these overly expensive glasses prominently placed before my eyes while working to address sources of inequality (personal communication, February 10, 2009).

These interactions, though quite uncomfortable for me, continually challenged me to think about importance of performance in this kind of activism. My sense of belonging led me to prefer different places for gleaning and focus on my position as researcher and outsider in an insider world. Every time I was called out as different, I realized that the sense of performance and togetherness in subversive acts can be just as important as they are in normative acts. The politics of a grassroots organization like FNB are revealed through even the minutest of actions to be important. In order to affect large-scale change the FNB activists realize that the personal is political. The everyday choices that you make reproduce the world that you want to live in and each action matters. These thoughts were revelations for me as I acted with and for the group over the two years that I participated with FNB. Subversive acts of recovering goods that would be wasted and breaking the faulty cycle of wasteful consumerism became daily routine and revealed better ways to survive in the current uneven economic system. Small acts of defiance against the reproduction of economic injustice include not wearing mass produced

clothes and having a diet that does not contain foods obtained from socially and environmentally unjust production. These small acts must be programmed into one's everyday life in order to be included in the performativity that reproduces new social possibilities.

The concept that change can be initiated through small local actions directed my attention to concentrating on the very small actions of FNB. My realizations at Common Ground led me to think about what the Athens' FNB was doing at a very small scale, what might be interesting for a long term study, and what they most needed help with from a scholar activist. I began to overhear conversations that took place between the FNB regulars, including two key figures that I'll name here as JON and SALLY⁶ that focused on problems they were having gleaning. The most pressing issue was that JON was gleaning the food by himself on his bicycle. Not only was he biking alone 3.5 miles down a busy road to get this food from the food bank, but he was taking his young baby with him (see Figure 2). This was potentially very dangerous and worried everyone who was involved with FNB. SALLY could not glean because she worked through the hours that the food bank was open and therefore would not be able to provide the food by the time it was needed. Then we discussed the problem of food being gleaned from the food bank. In the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* (2000), Butler and McHenry state that food recovery is a good first step to starting a FNB and that the first food recovered can be donated to food pantries and shelters (p. 10). The handbook does not mention the taking of food from state or private funded food pantries and shelters because one of the goals of FNB is to reveal that there is much more abundance than is being promoted by the state and the capitalist economic system in place.

⁶ I changed the names of the people that I interacted with in the food gleaning network in order to protect their anonymity.

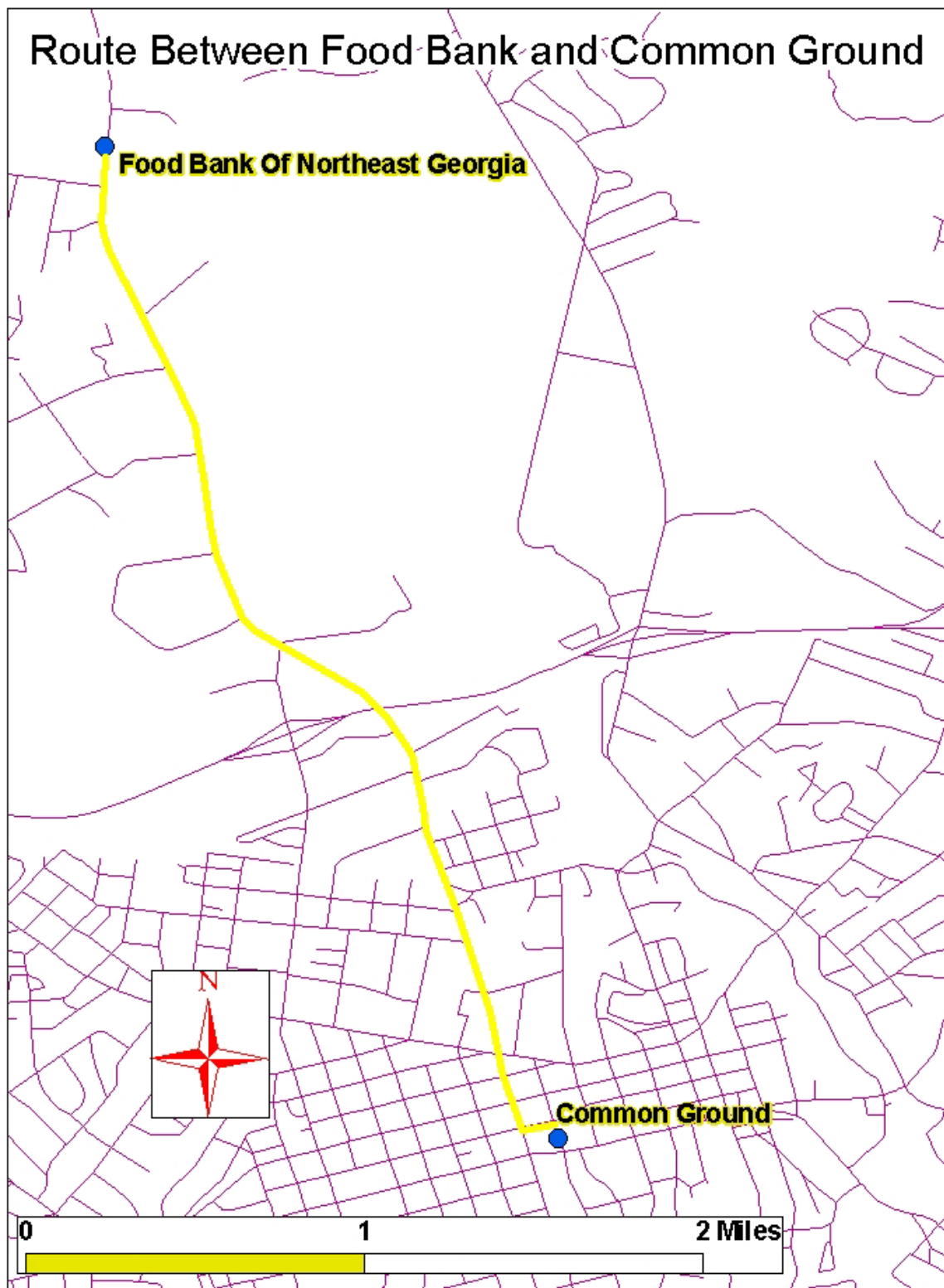


Figure 2: Route from Food Bank of Northeast Georgia to Common Ground. Highlighted route is approximately 3.5 miles.

The food bank serves as a band-aid for the capitalist system and therefore is part of that system. JON and SALLY were aware of the ideological contradictions involved when using the food bank, but felt that the ease with which food was gleaned from the food bank was valuable enough to outweigh the problems (JON and SALLY, personal conversation, February 2008). Their continual support of using the food bank in spite of their knowledgeable criticisms of the emergency food system revealed that these Athens' FNB activists were less interested in the political awareness produce through alternative food gleaning methods than they were about getting food to hungry people.

This is the moment that propelled me into the food gleaning network of the Athens' FNB. JON's dedication to the group to bike with his baby to the food bank just to ensure that the performance of FNB could continue inspired me to take over his gleaning work. He gleaned and participated mainly on Mondays because he usually worked on Mondays, the other day when people in Athens typically enacted FNB politics. In order to start gleaning at the food bank I needed to use my association with my advisor once again as he was already helping with the food recovery at the food bank. Each place I traveled to from this point on was with the cognizance that I would have to return to Common Ground in order to drop off the food that I had recovered and that if I did build regular and permanent relations with network nodes, then these gleaners who followed me would have to get to and from these places as well. The current activists' trust and reliance on the food bank provided incentive to keep the food bank as a permanent site on the food gleaning network.

Food Bank of Northeast Georgia

The Athens' FNB became a partner agency of the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia when it achieved 501(c) (3) status by being an affiliate of Common Ground. The 501(c) (3) status gave FNB this ability because it identifies the group as a charitable tax exempt organization that is not supposed to engage in strong political activities. This problematic partnership between the government laws followed by the food bank and the strongly political collective of FNB was moderated by Common Ground's less political, but still progressive political organization. I knew about this discrepancy before ever entering the food bank after my conversations with JON and SALLY. But, JON and SALLY's feelings about this being the best possible food gleaning site for FNB because of its ease were convincing enough to place my trust in the food bank as a consistent food recovery site.

To allow even greater ease with my introduction into the food gleaning network, Nik, my advisor, allowed me to go to the food bank with him several times before I was able to go through orientation at the food bank to become an official "shopper" for FNB. These first few visits were telling of how the rest of my interactions with the food bank would continue to go. In order to get to the food bank in between classes and meetings, we rushed occasionally and at all times we used a car. Although JON managed to navigate this direct food gleaning network on a bicycle, fighting typical busy Wednesday schedules necessitated the use of a car. The fact that Nik and I both had cars made this work much easier. Nik introduced me to CLAIRE, the head of checkout at the food bank and the primary person that I would end up interacting with on a day to day basis. This introduction is another way in which my position as outsider researcher participating in activism was beneficial to me. Through Nik, I was introduced to people at

Common Ground and at the food bank as someone who was trustworthy and who would continue to participate with them.

In March of 2008, I went to orientation to become an official shopper for FNB so that I could start getting food from the food bank by myself. The orientation provided an interesting look into who typically uses the food bank services. I was a couple of minutes late to the orientation that was held in a room that was located just above the food bank's storage warehouse. Even though I was somewhat late, the group of people that would be orientated with me had not yet made their way into the room. The age discrepancy between me and the rest of group was very noticeable as I was the only person present below the age of around 50. The age provided an immediate differentiation between me and 'them' and this divide only grew wider as we started to introduce ourselves as we headed upstairs to the orientation conference room. It turned out that I was the only person in the entire group of nine people that was not affiliated with a religious organization. Besides FNB, there were three church food pantries being represented in the room. All of these food pantries were located at least 15 miles away and were preparing to start taking massive amounts of food from the food bank with trucks at varying time periods.

Our orientation leader focused primarily on the church groups because I had already told her that I was already familiar with how to obtain the food that I needed from the food bank. For much the hour and a half that we spent in the orientation room, our leader discussed and answered questions about how groups can order large amounts of food and when those groups could pick up the food at proper times. She also went over rules about how occasionally the food pantries might be inspected by food bank employees to make sure that they were serving the proper population and that they had properly working refrigeration and spacious enough

storage spaces. The steps that these people had to take in order to provide free food for their communities were not simple or cheap. The bureaucracy of the food bank had to be meticulously extended into the food pantries to ensure a just system of food distribution. Throughout the orientation the leader consistently reminded the church groups that they would be monitored in order to be trusted. This nature of distrust did not bother the people being questioned as they consistently answered with affirmative statements like “oh, of course” that validated the cycle of distrust.

These interactions, which I was allowed to sit silently and witness as if I was not even in the room, brought to mind the common suspicion that people have against people who use emergency food resources. Throughout the orientation I questioned why these rules were repeated over and over again as if these church food pantries would bother to hire a truck to pick up an entire ton of Chex Mix and Frosted Flakes every other week just to throw it away. I supposed that I was not being grilled because the amount of food that I would be taking was so minimal or because FNB was already an established affiliate with the food bank. The food bank’s distrust arises from the potential of this food to be put back into the market and resold. Their website openly points to the market potential for food bank food in their membership criteria:

Must not sell, transfer, barter or offer for sale the items supplied by the food bank in exchange for money, property or services, or otherwise allow the items to re-enter commercial channels.⁷

The apprehension that the food bank displays of giving away vast amounts of food is because it is well known that the food is still useful and good. When looked at from the FNB perspective that everyone has the right to food regardless of economic standing, these precautions of making sure that the food that did not get sold at the grocery stores never gets sold anywhere become

⁷ Retrieved from <http://www.foodbanknega.org/partners.php> on June 20, 2009.

needless. The church-going pantry workers and the orientation leader were looking at this not as a political action, but as a necessary action to pick up the pieces that fall through the giant crack between the market and people in need.

The orientation was an important glimpse into why the food bank was not the right place for FNB to be recovering food. Although all people who participate at the food bank do so under the drive to end hunger, the politics of FNB do not fit wholly with those of the food bank. The people who attended orientation that day had perhaps the opposite political agenda of radical politics as I noted in my field notes that most of the bumper stickers in the parking lot that day read something like “My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys” with pictures of Presidents Bush and Reagan on them. The political pieces did not discount the anti-hunger activism that these people were doing for their communities, but it did bring up further questioning of whether or not two opposing political agendas could be met through performing the same actions. If major change happens at the most minutest of actions as well as large-scale action, then if FNB activists and right wing supporters are recovering their food from the same organization what change are we moving towards?

Events that occurred on the multitude of Wednesdays that I recovered food from the food bank drove me further to looking for different sources of food recovery. One recurring issue that sticks out as significant was the competition for produce that FNB was having with another soup kitchen in Athens. This competition was already in full swing as I started my time at the food bank as Our Daily Bread, a very popular Methodist soup kitchen close to downtown Athens, was recovering produce at the food bank. Since the items that FNB receives from the food bank are produce and bread, the Our Daily Bread volunteers would often try to beat FNB activists to the produce when it arrived. On July 23, 2008, I found myself standing next to the freezer with three

elderly women waiting for the produce truck. There was not much conversation between us as they were noticeably agitated that I was there so early. They eventually gave into my persistent and somewhat embarrassing reaches for conversation and said that we could split the produce evenly when it arrived. If the message of FNB was that food was in abundance and did not need to be competed for in a world market, then why was I hovering stubbornly next to a freezer trying to hold my ground against these women? Also, if this space was where all food donations were supposed to be sent, and with 11 major supermarkets located in Athens, why were FNB and Our Daily Bread fighting over a couple of boxes of produce? Where was all of the other produce that was not sold in the supermarkets going?

Eventually the volunteers from Our Daily Bread stopped visiting the food bank. CLAIRE, the head of check out, told me that she was not sure why they stopped coming but she thought that they got most of their food from Sam's Club anyways and probably just did not need to drive all the way out to the food bank (CLAIRE, personal conversation, April 1, 2009). The fact that these volunteers had worked so hard for the relatively small amounts of produce that the food bank regularly provided was interesting considering that they could have just bought it at the store. The disappearance of the Our Daily Bread volunteers made it much easier for me to get food from the food bank on Wednesdays because I could make it there after class without having to rush too much to compete for food. Their disappearance also brought up the need for a better food gleaning network that would not be so time consuming to cover spatially. Those volunteers did not want to drive out to the food bank and it was getting to be a difficult journey for me as well. When looking at Figure 3 (shown below), the service area of the food bank can be seen along with where population is most concentrated in Athens. The three mile service area outline shows that while the food bank may be serving people who have the money

and ability to travel to it, many people in need without transportation are not being served by this organization. The food bank's limited service area shows that people in need for food are simply being represented by privileged people with transportation means and the temporal privilege to make it to the food bank.

Food Bank of Northeast Georgia
Three Mile Service Area
Athens, Georgia

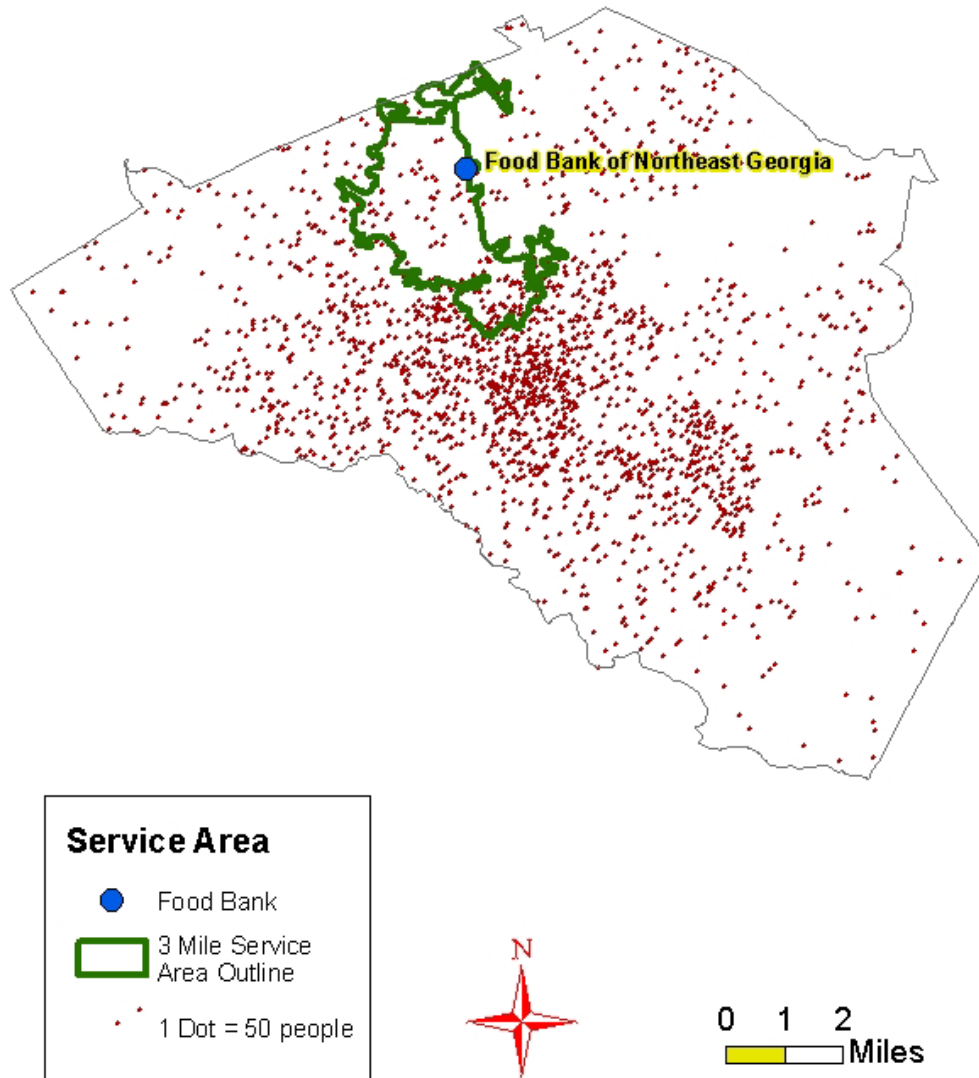


Figure 3: This map displays the three mile service area capability of the food bank. The dot density representation helps with population visualization. The unfortunate position of the food bank can be seen in relation to the population of Athens.

Figure 3 shows a map of Athens' need for extended emergency food groups and volunteers due to where the food bank is located. The food bank service area is laid over a dot density population map so that the food bank's incongruence with the population of Athens can be visualized. Even the town in which the food bank is located does not have adequate spatial access to the organization, and other groups must travel to get free food and take it to the people. Traveling to a location away from higher centers of poverty to get free food that was most likely donated from major supermarkets closer to those poverty stricken areas gives one time to process the illogical nature of the entire situation. Because the food was being taken from more accessible space only to be thrown into a bureaucratic filtering station that chooses who can and cannot take the food, the food retained its status as commodity and not a basic right. The scarcity and competition for produce at the food bank ended when the Our Daily Bread volunteers stopped showing up and by the end of my field work, CLAIRE was begging me to take more produce than FNB and the refrigerator at Common Ground could ever handle. The competition and continuation of the commodification of food are what drove me to start recovering food from other sources and the eventual abundance is what brought me back to this space. Although the politics of the food bank as an organization that does not seek to provide food as a right to all people cannot be properly aligned with FNB political beliefs, it does provide a source of free food for people in need that can be distributed in a positive way through the activists of FNB. In order to help right the ill-fitting nature of the food bank and FNB, a further spatial analysis into food gleaning network possibilities was necessary.

The Other Nodes: The Daily Co-op and Earth Fare

The Daily Grocery Co-op is a non-profit cooperative in Athens that seeks to provide its members and the general public with healthy environmentally and socially conscious food. The progressive environment of the co-op is evident in the local foods that they sell and the volunteer help that helps to run the store. FNB was already gleaned from this place before I started recovering food on Wednesdays and therefore it was very easy to continue this relationship. Many of the FNB activists were also members and volunteers for the co-op so they knew the importance of saving food that was not marketable to clients. This stop fit perfectly into the FNB model of food recovery because much of the food sold there is grown locally and organically. The location of the co-op is also perfect as it rests just a couple of blocks from downtown and Common Ground and was on the way to the food bank. This made it easy to stop here first en route to the food bank to make sure that I needed to drive to the food bank in the first place.

Most times I ventured to Daily I did need to make another stop at the food bank. The small nature of the co-op and the more minimal amount of goods that they sell was reflected by the small amounts of food that could be recovered from there. The people that run the co-op are also very conscious of the use-value of their produce and seem to make a point to only order as much food as they can sell. The remains were usually a small box of a few apples, onions, and the occasional rare vegetable or fruit that was not sold. For a full meal to be cooked for FNB, a healthy amount more produce was needed. This business modeled the ideals of many FNB politics and therefore did not produce very much waste to glean from, though it was always the most pleasant to visit. As a local community meeting point, often going into the co-op meant at least one friendly conversation and occasional personal shopping. Soon after I started visiting

the co-op for the purpose of gleaning for FNB, the workers would simply nod as I walked to the back of the store, opened the fridge, and took what was marked “Food Not Bombs”. This extremely positive weekly experience led me to choose another network node that might serve a similar clientele and would be amicable to FNB gleaning from them.

This desire led me to Earth Fare (see Figure 3), a health food store about a mile and half from Common Ground. The journey to Earth Fare can be easily made as it is across downtown from campus. The university busses provide easy and free transportation to and from the neighborhood that Earth Fare is located. This ability to glean food and then transport it freely was an important factor in choosing Earth Fare as a location that would benefit the food gleaning network. Another factor was the grocery company’s commitment to only selling healthy food. While the store does not place the same emphasis on the social and environmental justice of their products as the Daily Co-op does, I assumed that this would be a business that would not mind allowing FNB to take the food that they would not be selling. JON, the long time FNB participant, had also told me that FNB used to glean food from Earth Fare, but had stopped due to a turn-over in Earth Fare’s employment (JON, personal communication, April 30, 2008). This is a moment at which I clearly assigned my own personal views of health food being equated with social awareness because I thought that building a relationship between FNB and Earth Fare would be welcomed. Over the next several months I would be proven wrong.

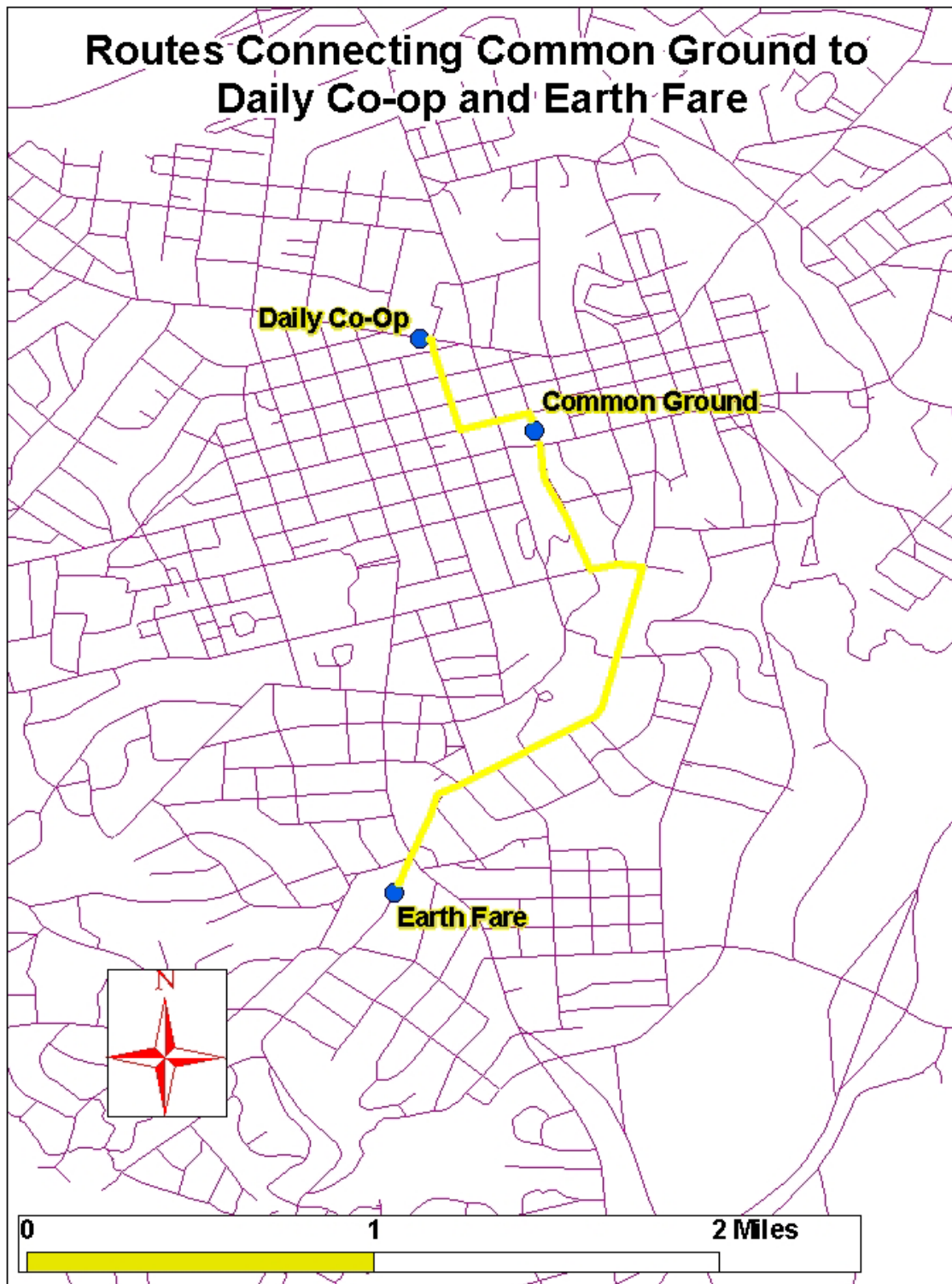


Figure 4: Routes connecting Common Ground to the Daily Co-op and to Earth Fare. These routes were traversed in an effort to expand the food gleaning Network in Athens, GA.

JON told me that the person to talk to when attempting to build a gleaning relationship was the Earth Fare produce manager named GLEN. He suggested that I called before I went to meet GLEN so that I would be sure to go to Earth Fare when he was working. I called Earth Fare on May 1, 2008 and asked to speak to GLEN, the produce manager. GLEN was open to the idea of restarting the FNB – Earth Fare relationship and wanted to set up a time that I should come by to get the food. The conversation took an interesting turn when GLEN suggested I come to pick up the food early in the morning on the next Wednesday because his boss would not be there. He also asked that when I did come to get the food to walk directly to the back to the meat counter and ask for him by his first name. This way the only people involved in this food hand-off would be me, GLEN, and his friend the meat-guy. As I hung up the phone I realized that this conversation had made me a bit nervous. It did not seem that I was building an open relationship with Earth Fare, the seemingly progressive health food store, but that I was building a one-on-one food gleaning relationship with the produce manager.

The following Wednesday I woke up early and made it to Earth Fare by 9:00 am. The store had just opened, but there was already a good amount of business. Trying not to look suspicious, I walked authoritatively towards the back and asked for GLEN. GLEN came from the back and introduced himself. He was in his mid to late twenties and had the definite Athens-townie look down (sixties boots, tight fitting jeans, and band t-shirt). He told me that he was excited that someone was finally coming by to pick up the food because so much of it was being wasted. He told me that the store threw away copious amounts of produce every week and that Wednesday mornings was the perfect time for me to come and pick it up. I wanted to know more about why Earth Fare did not want their waste to be gleaned or why they would not have it donated to the food bank. GLEN did not seem to know, but he did know that he would most

likely get into trouble if he got caught giving the old produce away. He then went back to the back and came out with an entire grocery cart full of beautiful produce and juices. I had never gleaned juice before and GLEN said that this was locally produced juice, called Righteous Juice, that Earth Fare was throwing away by the gallon a couple of days before it even expired. This was the first day participating in the gleaning network during which I did not have to drive out to the food bank. I walked past the cashiers and out the front doors of the store with an entire cart of food without any stopping me. Although this evoked the juvenile thrills of shoplifting candy, the reality of having to sneak food from the store broke down my hopes for building an open relationship that could be carried on by future FNB gleaners.

The relationship between FNB and Earth Fare continued on unstable ground. The secretive nature of gleaning required the gleaning relationship to be a close personal one. When other FNB gleaners acted, they chose to get food from the food bank instead of trying out Earth Fare. I showed up at Common Ground on June 11, 2008 to drop off the food and help cook. JON came to cook as usual and we chatted about the healthy organic food from Earth Fare, the amazing amount of juices that were being gleaned, and who would glean if I left for some of the summer. I was unable to find employment for the summer and knew that at some points I would be traveling to work with my father's company in Savannah, which was four hours away. JON said he would take up some of the slack as would other people who had started to show up to participate on Wednesdays. Earth Fare was now a viable option for gleaning and JON biked down there several times over the summer. As the summer passed, I spent less and less time in Athens and this absence severely disrupted the relationships that I had built in FNB and with Earth Fare.

Fall semester commenced and my schedule was busier than it had been in the previous year. I tried gleaning on Tuesday afternoons in order to better fit my schedule, but occasionally could not fit it in at all. Earth Fare became a luxury that I tried to travel to when I had the time, but eventually gave up the hope of gleaning until the end of the semester. Spring of 2009 provided much more time to reconnect the food gleaning network. Getting back into the gleaning process was more difficult than it was at the beginning of the project. JON, my main and most important contact at FNB and Common Ground, had stopped participating on Wednesdays in order to work and take care of his baby. I could not get a hold of him on his cell phone, so I tried contacting actors in the food gleaning network to see if anyone was gleaning from them. In early February, I ran into GLEN as he was working at a restaurant downtown. He told me that he was not working at Earth Fare anymore and did not have anything nice to say about the experience. Apparently the new produce manager was not friendly to the FNB cause, but that I could go in and try to talk him into giving me food and if that didn't work then to try a friend of his named JIM (GLEN, personal communication, February 8, 2009). On February 18, 2009, I made my way to the food bank to see if CLAIRE knew who was picking up food. The only information she could remember about the person gleaning was that he was white, male, brunette, and medium height. She also told me that if I wanted to pick up food, I needed a new food bank shopper card, but let me take a box of produce on my way out. I decided that getting this card would be the first step to the food recovery process and emailed SALLY to see if she had one for me. There was no reply for a couple of weeks, so I made my way down to where FNB serves on College Square and, to my surprise, ran into both SALLY and JON.

SALLY explained that she did not think that anyone was gleaning food on Wednesdays and that most of the time they just seemed to be using leftovers from the Monday happenings.

She said there was already a new card for me posted on the Common Ground refrigerator and that I could pick it whenever. I started going back to the food bank on a regular basis by March 18th and was getting so much food that there was barely any room for it at Common Ground. Although I was getting so much food from the food bank that CLAIRE was begging me to take more and more and giving me guilt trips about only taking sixty pounds at a time (CLAIRE, personal communication, April 15, 2009), I decided to try getting food from Earth Fare one last time. GLEN had warned me about the militancy of the produce manager, but when I showed up on March 24th, I really wanted to approach this person and ask him if he would be interested in building a relationship for food gleaning. When I got there I saw a man unloading vegetables in the produce section and then immediately froze and decided not to talk to him. Perhaps it was GLEN's warning or the intimidating and hyper-authoritative way in which this man moved about, but I decided to head to the back as GLEN suggested and asked for his friend JIM, who was not there. I did not go back to Earth Fare again after this experience because of the amount of food that I was getting from the food bank was overwhelming. CLAIRE seemed aggravated when I did not come by and always had more. Spring progressed and I found that the Our Daily Bread volunteers had moved on and no one else seemed to be interested in the free produce.

My commitment to gleaning for FNB has lessened since the summer of 2009 when I decided to remove myself from the food gleaning network in order to gain more perspective on the research that I had completed. As I reflected on interactions with network actors and the difficulties different places presented when trying to build a better food gleaning network for FNB and possibly for all the people in Athens, the most significant spatial contradictions appeared where there was the most waste. A further investigation of food waste through the use of GIS helped to situate the obstacles that I faced within the network.

Supermarkets and Their Forbidden Fruits

Supermarkets provided possible food gleaning network sites that remained untapped throughout my research. Although these sites are most likely overrun with food that is wasted and never donated to anyone, the food that is thrown away at these stores is forbidden. Many major chain grocery stores, such as Wal-Mart, Kroger, and Publix, even go to the lengths of locking their dumpsters so that no one can dumpster dive for food and goods that are still usable. This protectionist attitude towards their waste is one of the reasons that I chose not to include these in the network. Many other FNB activists who glean have families and jobs that could potentially be affected by the consequences of illegal activities. I tried as much as possible to stay away from sources or gleaning that might have these impacts on future gleaners. This limited the amount of sites that could be used as network nodes, but the sites that I used more realistically represented risks that FNB activists would regularly take to get food.

One of the most enlightening conversations on food waste in major grocery store chains occurred on June 20, 2009. The stocker at the Kroger located at 191 Alps Rd. was restocking apples early in the morning. I had to reach around him to pick out the Gala apples that I wanted for lunch when he suggested that I go for other more delicious, cheaper apples. The man suggested that I try the apples so that I could make a more educated choice. He took a slightly bruised apple from each type and cut out a thin sliver for me to try. After we both had sampled each apple as much as we wanted, he dropped the remains at a box lying at his feet. I asked him if he did that often and he answered jokingly that he liked to sample all the food in the produce section. Then I asked him how much of those bruised apples would be wasted anyways and he answered that the store throws away a bunch of apples every few days. I'm not sure if he was exaggerating and have no way to fact check his story, but he did not mention that some of the

food was ever donated, even to the food bank, but emphasized that these apples would have ended up the dumpster anyways. The suggestion that this food was thrown away instead of donated was especially attention-grabbing because the food bank's website lists Kroger as a sponsor. Does this mean that Kroger supports the food bank with money, but not with produce? The ideas produced from this conversation with the stocker might not have been entirely factual due to the casual nature of the encounter, but the interaction did cause me to reflect on how little the food bank had to offer in terms of produce. Considering how casually the stocker was throwing away the produce and the fact that there are eleven supermarkets in Athens, including two Krogers, one would think that the food bank would be receiving more produce donations than one or two boxes a week. If this food was not being donated to the food bank, I assumed that it was going in the dumpster, like the stocker said. I immediately started thinking about the potential for food recovery if these supermarket sites would simply not lock their dumpsters, or just would place their produce and un-purchased goods behind their buildings in order to decrease stigma and the amount of effort it takes to get free food. These could be the first steps to resignifying these spaces as food distribution sites instead of food market sites. This possibility offered a new spatial perspective through which to view what a possible, more evenly developed space of food gleaning could look like. These maps provide a possibility for the resignification of the landscape of Athens, GA from one made up of spaces of competition to one made up of spaces that provide the right to food.

The spatial analyses of the area and potential population that supermarkets could cover as food gleaning network sites is useful to show future possibilities and more reasons to fight for these small, but meaningful changes. A network analysis through ArcGIS was implemented to examine what parts of the population could be served from different sites. The supermarkets

sites and the existing food gleaning network sites were both run through this analysis to be able to study what kinds of spatial relationships these places were having with their surroundings. The network analysis was run to see what parts of Athens were covered by these sites in one, two, and three mile service areas. These areas were chosen because of the assumption that three miles would be the most that someone would want to walk, if they did not have the resources to afford other transportation, to get free food. I then approximated the population that the sites could serve according to the network analysis. I found that of all the eleven supermarket sites included in the analysis because of their potential for large amounts of food waste, the largest population that they could serve at a three mile service area would be approximately 75,688. This is nearly 75 percent of the entire Athens population of 101,489 people. In comparison, the network that I acted in could serve up to approximately 48,019, or almost half of the Athens population. Although the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia provides service to 14 counties, if it was to be reached by Athens citizens, only 5,419 would reach it by foot according to the three mile service area run through the network analysis. Figures 5,6, and 7 show three different network analyses of the food bank alone, the food gleaning network that I participated in, and the potential of supermarkets to provide food to people in need in Athens.

These maps reveal the many possibilities and utopian hopes of promoting the right to food as a step towards ending unjust inequality. The spatial ramifications of opening up the food network for the people of Athens, GA can be seen here. A much larger population in need could be served if the food gleaning network was opened to the supermarket sites. But, the maps presented here show possibilities, not realities of the current daily spatial acts that occur in Athens, GA. The most acceptable place to glean food is the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. GIS spatial analysis reveals that the food bank is not set up to serve the people of Athens. Most

likely due to rent prices and space availability, the food bank is placed on the outskirts of the town. Supermarkets are more important to a capitalist landscape because they provide a large flow of capital and goods. They can afford the high prices of owning or renting large parcels of land close to the people that they want to provide service. The food bank's network analysis map shows that though addressing hunger may be important to many people in Athens, this sentiment is not represented over the landscape. Supermarkets claim that their wasted food goes to the food bank in order to assuage the public interest, but as the produce stocker at Kroger explained to me, un-purchased food goes in the *dumpster*.

Possible Future Food Gleaning Network
Three Mile Service Area of
Supermarkets in Athens, Georgia

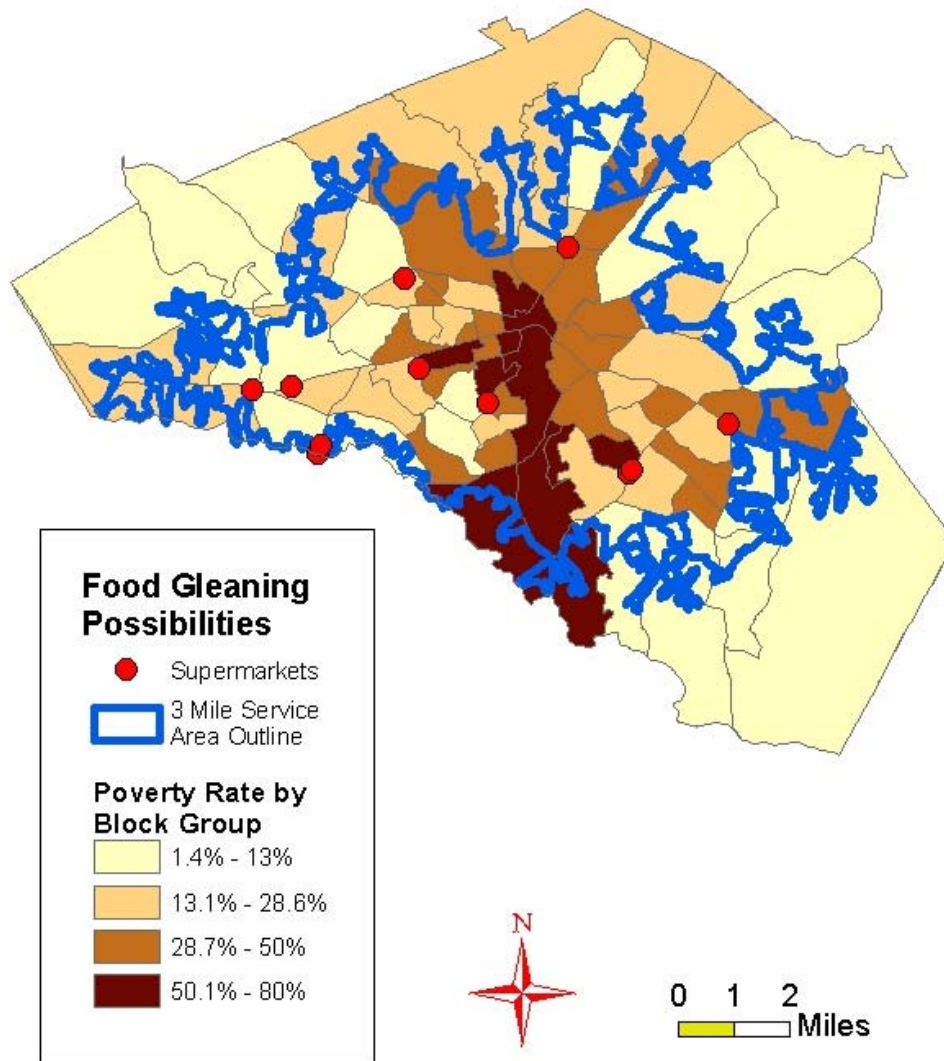


Figure 5: Three mile service area of supermarket reveals the possibilities of food distribution for people in need in Athens.

Food Gleaning Network Sites
Three Mile Service Area of Sites
Visited in Athens, Georgia

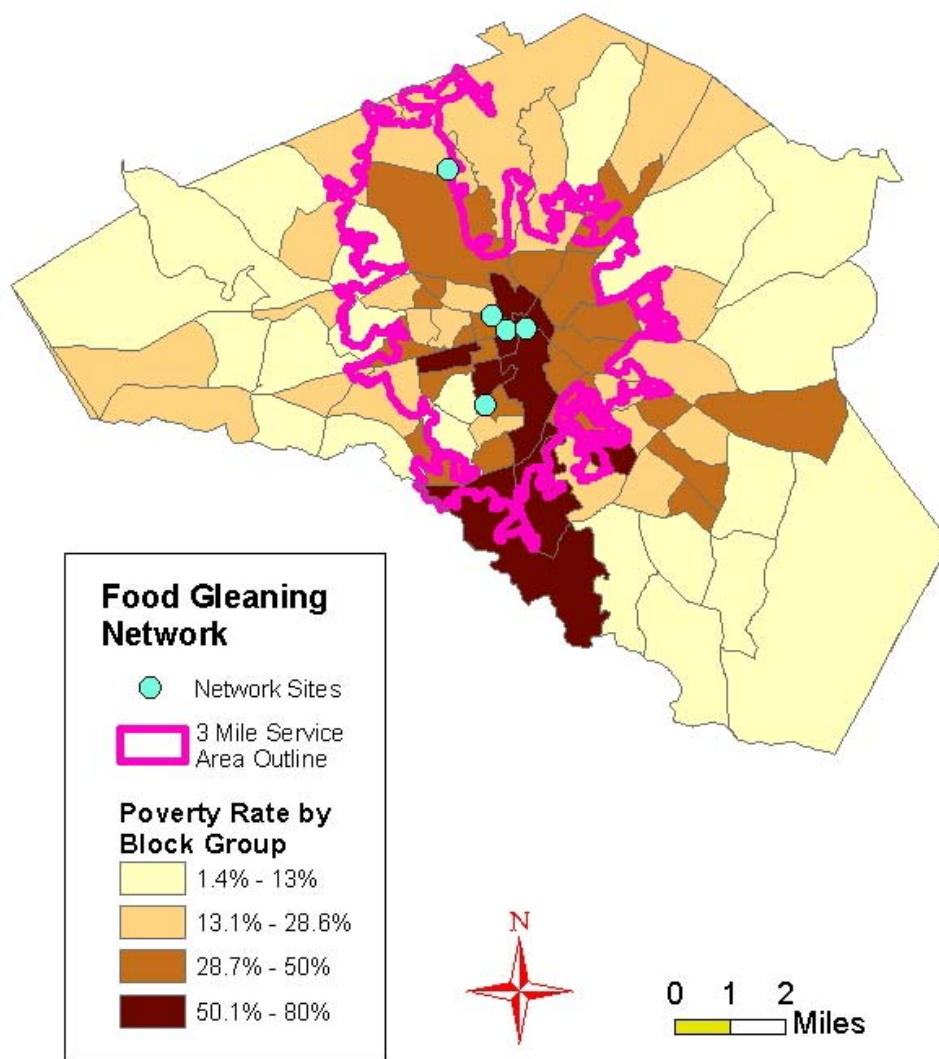


Figure 6: This map shows the area covered by the food gleaning network that was set up over the duration of this project.

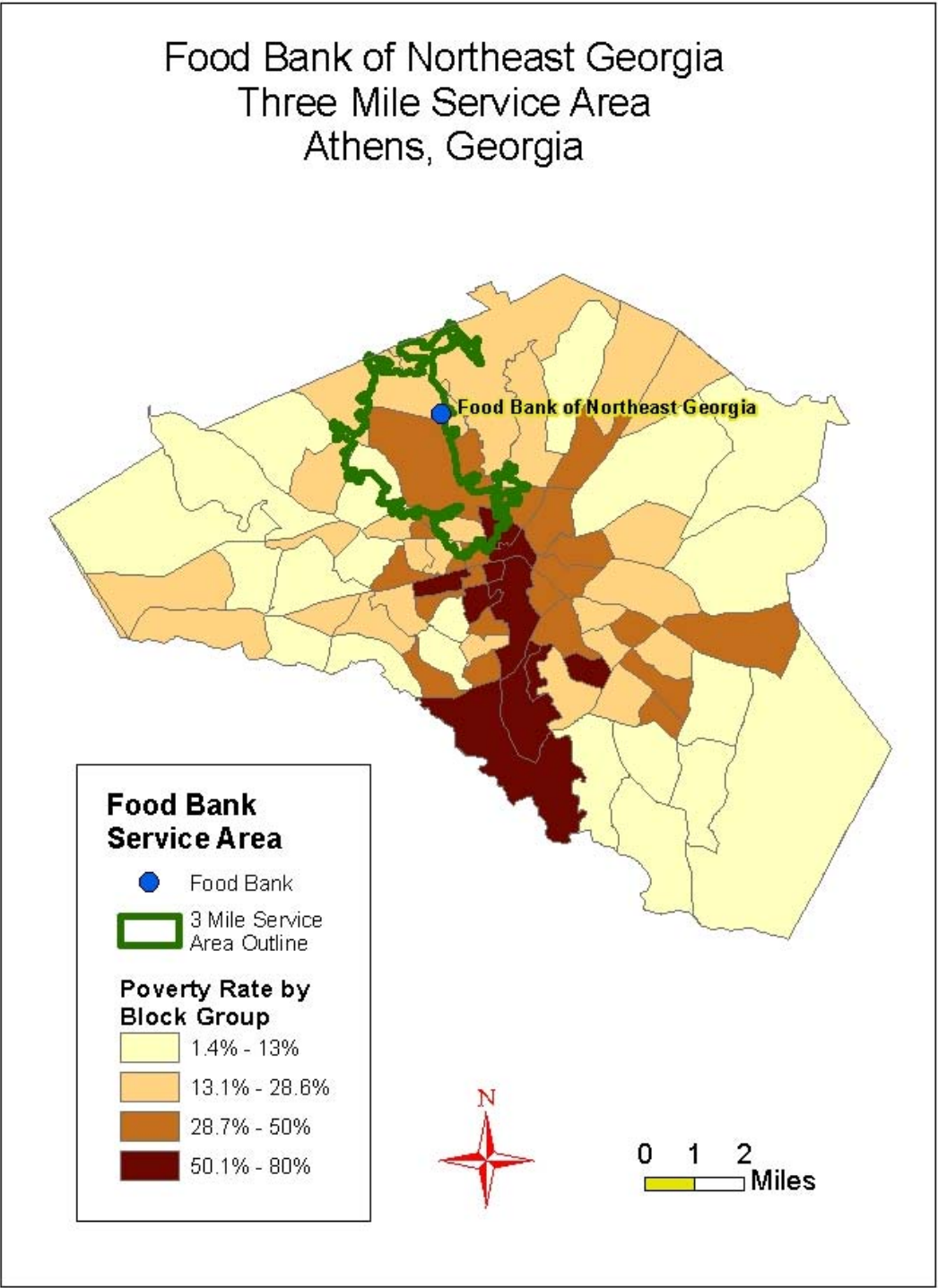


Figure 7: This map shows the limited area covered by the food bank. When compared to the supermarket service area, this map shows that the need for spatial reorganization in food distribution.

4.2 Finding Meaning in Action and the Food Not Bombs' Food Gleaning Network

The experiences that I encountered as I acted within the food gleaning network were often difficult to process in meaningful ways during my fieldwork. Since the conclusion of my research, I have had time to reflect on the entirety of the happenings and what significance each moment had for me and possibly what significance these actions might have for the other actors in the network. The project goal was to find the impediments to building a food gleaning network in Athens, GA and how a group like FNB could address those obstacles to build a healthy working network that changed the landscape in such a way that encouraged feelings of the abundance of resources. The actions taken to reach this objective were plentiful in the material results of hundreds of pounds of food gleaned, but the more theoretical meanings need to be teased out through the philosophy previously discussed in Chapter Two. Emergency food criticism, anarchist thought, and performativity theory help to situate the actions taken by all of the actors within the food gleaning network within the spatial context of Athens, GA.

My project developed primarily to address political and spatial issues FNB was having because of its association with the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. FNB activists were aware that the use of the food bank was incongruent with many FNB ideals, but still provided the easiest and most sure way to acquire food for preparation. Although I eventually returned to gleaning at the food bank, I did find the food bank's practices contrasted FNB politics because the prefigurative nature of direct action of the Athens' FNB collective is contested at the food bank. The members had to achieve 501(c) (3) status in order to "shop" from the food bank. This stripped the collective from its autonomy. In the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* (2000), the collectives that the founders hoped to inspire were autonomous in essence and that is what makes them malleable enough to survive. Getting food from the food bank follows normative

performativity practices because it accepts the view that food banks can serve the entire population in need and make up for any inequality created through the capitalist market.

At orientation for food bank registration, I represented the only non-religious group. Poppendieck's emergency food criticism states that emergency food activism is not done to address the large structural issue of inequality, but to create a visceral feeling of doing good (Poppendieck 1998). The church affiliated groups were there to do what they thought was right and most likely created a food distribution site that was a positive force in their community, but they did not create *change* that could eventually end the need for emergency food altogether. Though the autonomy and the nature of the direct action of the Athens' FNB group is challenged through the use of the food bank, the FNB handbook promotes the idea of inclusion: "We try to value individuals for the contributions they offer, without any expectation that they be completely divorced from the status quo"(Butler and McHenry 2000, 75). Anyone who participates with FNB is valued, but are all actions made by those people in the name of FNB valuable for the collective? The use of the food bank groups the collective with more normative charitable actions that do not seek structural change. This grouping is regulated under the government's grant of 501(c) (3) status, which gives the power to recover food to those who represent the poor. If the subversive performance of direct action needs to be prefigurative, the use of the food bank is incongruent with the goals of the collective as government mediation is not end goal. Food is a right for all people and must be provided in a way that does not privilege some over others, as the government status and food bank's distance from the people encourage.

The food bank continued to be a site at which a band-aid was placed on a wound that does not heal without visibility. The website claims that the food bank is fighting hunger, but can hunger be fought by simply feeding people and not addressing the root cause of that hunger?

According to the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* (2000), political awareness must be created in order to affect real change for marginalized people. Emergency food is based on the belief of the idea that all people should have the right to food, but that right must be approved through a vast bureaucratic maze that only the most mobile of the poor can pass through. A car was critical when getting to the food bank between work and school obligations. This spatial impediment of distance from the people of Athens creates a necessity for an intermediary between food bank and people. The right to food is believed, but only half-way realized while perpetuating the cycle of thought that this right must only be fought for in times of emergency. The food bank's fight against hunger is one that is only symbolic, for the actions involved with emergency food systems do not prefigure the ends.

According to anarchist thought, the right to food is a basic human right that must be achieved to create a just world. Though many of the actors in the food gleaning network did not openly identify as anarchists, anti-authority and anti-capitalist ideas were consistently addressed in conversation with different actors. JON, SALLY, and GLEN expressed individually that food is abundant, it should not be wasted, and that hunger in Athens was the result of corporate and government error. JON and SALLY especially revealed their beliefs that in order to achieve more political awareness, a more representative food gleaning network had to be established. Common Ground, the Daily Co-op, and Earth Fare all represented spaces for me that in some ways encompassed anarchist ideals simply because of their enthusiasm for the network. Although a corporation like Earth Fare did not support an open FNB food gleaning relationship, workers within that corporation openly risked their jobs in order to facilitate the actions of FNB. These actions could be representative of many people in Athens who work for large wasteful companies.

Supermarkets are dedicated to economic survival in the capitalist system because they are symptoms and propellers of that system. Supermarket waste and the resulting need for emergency food reveal major impediments to building a food network in Athens. The food bank is the place that was pointed to as the most socially acceptable source of food recovery, but the food available there was occasionally fought over. It was even more notable that later FNB was the only group that seemed to be gleaning the produce at all because that food must have not been accessible to people who could have used it. GIS analysis revealed the contradictory nature of these places. Maps helped to visualize where places were spatially incongruent with the landscape that they inhabited. The food bank is shown to not fit on the landscape where it might be most needed. Supermarkets, actual sites of mass food waste, are mapped to expose how many people these sites could serve if the right to food was a reality.

FNB works to restructure their landscape into a space that better serves the people by looking through an anarchist lens to enact subversive performances in order to embody those anarchistic, anti-authoritarian politics. Anti-capitalist critique of food distribution drives FNB activists to try to recover food in ways that produce feelings of abundance and mutual aid. The collective sees hunger as a symptom of a larger unbalanced system, but is not the main problem of that system as the food bank sees hunger. FNB sees that by revealing a symptom of the failure of capitalistic and hegemonic systems, they shed light on the larger structure that produces inequality of all kinds. Subversive performativity through direct action provides the mechanism through which FNB can enact its politics in important and meaningful ways. From the small, seemingly miniscule and often unnoticed choices that are carried out on a daily basis, a significant difference can be made from within the flawed structure by choosing to act in non-normative ways. This is the point at which agency is provided to create political awareness for

FNB activists because their actions can resignify food “waste” as edible food and also the competition for food as the right to food. Even though Athens’ FNB does not regularly hand out literature when they share food, they reveal to the public through subversive performative politics that prefigure the world that they hope to see in the future. They promote peace with the peaceful actions of taking food that is wasted by the market and turns that waste into healthy, non-violent food for those in need.

Although this food is obtained mainly from the food bank in Athens, I found that this action does not totally negate the efforts of the group, though it does not help to prefigure their end goals. The FNB activists earnestly take into account the flaws of the food bank as a food gleaning node, but need this source of food recovery because it is consistent and safe. Many of the activists have families and jobs that could be adversely affected if the activists got into legal trouble. This risk motivates the Athens’ FNB to act in certain ways that do not perfectly align with the *Food Not Bombs Handbook* suggestions. The unique ways in which the Athens group addresses their spatial impediments of gleaning food are specific to the town and work to keep the group serving on a regular basis. The survival of the group in Athens has become more important than promoting specific political goals through action that could be potentially harmful to those acting. Just the suggestion of a different way of distributing food for the hungry is subversive in itself because even the smallest acts become important in a world of repetitive normalizing actions that disappear under the veil of naturalized being and embodiment. The presence of FNB in Athens raises awareness of waste and hunger. Perhaps in this space, the goals that the collective prefigures are simply focused on the awareness of these spatial and economic contradictions, as Heynen (2010, 11) points out: “The politics of visibility for FNB is

not only the politics of making poverty visible in the hope of altering the geography of survival and the biopolitics of neo-liberalism, but also the politics of making *resistance* visible.”

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The goal of studying the food gleaning network of the FNB group of Athens, GA was to find and evaluate the obstacles that occur when building and acting within that network. By looking through the lens of emergency food criticism, anarchism, and performativity, the large and small scale impediments can be defined and addressed with positive local action.

Throughout this project four major network nodes were repeatedly visited in hopes of analyzing their fit into the network and why or why not they fit in with the politics and realities of the Athens' FNB group. Poppendieck (1997; 1998) and Riches (1986; 1999) provide the emergency food criticism that started the expansion of the food gleaning network from the Food Bank of Northeast Georgia. An analysis of how anarchism has addressed criticisms, like those of emergency food, presented not only constructive ways in which to further break down the complicated barriers for food distribution set up by capitalist spatial formation, but also sheds light on how enacting politics at the personal and local level can make a difference on a large scale through prefigurative politics (Graeber 2004a). These prefigurative politics of direct action show that FNB activists in Athens are enacting the world that they hope to see in the future. Performativity, as proposed by Butler (1988; 1990), is a useful tool to look at the ways in which the anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist politics of FNB can be reproduced through their subversive actions. As prefigurative direct action enacts the future as the present, subversive performativity resignifies the present as the future. This concept provides agency in that change can be enacted through dissident acts that go against the norm of the U.S. food cycle of production and distribution. By resignifying the world around them, FNB activists illuminate another world of food distribution possibilities of non-violence.

Using both anarchism and performativity to address impediments to food gleaning, such as emergency food promotion by local and state governments, provides a way to view the meaning behind each action of the FNB group. Their politics may not be obviously promoted by their members, but their subversive actions promote a meaningful change in society. The problematic use of the food bank was addressed in this paper, but was not thrown out as a gleaning resource because of the ease and safety it provided to future activists as a gleaning resource. This ongoing food bank-FNB relationship was found as I acted with FNB and realized what they needed from a researcher. While the rest of the network that was built over the time period from spring of 2008 to summer of 2009 is not fully active any longer, the analyses provided by the efforts to expand the network are useful ones for myself and for others interested in build food gleaning networks.

I found that the food bank's relationship to FNB was as problematic as the food bank's relationship to the rest of the town. The large stores that claim that they donate all of their unused produce to the food bank still seem to be throwing massive amounts of edible produce away. The simple presence of the food bank provides an out for those stores in order to avoid facing the idea that unnecessary food waste goes against human well being because they can point to the food bank and say that hunger is being taken care of. These major supermarket stores were avoided through my participatory action research because they did not fit with the goals of building a network that could be safely and easily accessed by future gleaners. They were, however, analyzed from a distance by GIS techniques. The multi-method approach provided the means by which I could act in a network that was realistic to the Athens FNB group while exploring other gleaning possibilities through mapping. The food bank ignited the catalyst for changing the network and through the analysis of PAR and GIS, the food bank also provided

a space to view major impediments to food gleaning in Athens and the spatial contradictions created by capitalist practices. The now large scale repeated action of the cycle of emergency food trying to make up for market food waste is revealed through the subversive resignification of the daily acts of FNB activists. The politics and actions of FNB determined the locations at which I was willing to glean from, but maps provided a snapshot of possibility in the leveling of unevenly developed landscapes.

The network that I built does not exist today because of the removal of Common Ground from the physical landscape of Athens, GA since the completion of my research. The food is no longer delivered to that important meeting place for various types of progressives, but is taken to another space with different meanings and spatial impacts on the FNB food gleaning network. The gleaning relationships that existed between FNB and the food bank and Daily Co-op still exist, but their spatial relationships have changed in ways that may or may not change the ways in which this research can be interpreted for the activists' use. I turn back now and evaluate my work and the work of other network actors like CLAIRE and GLEN to see whether or not our actions moved beyond the "visceral feeling of doing good" (Poppendieck 1998) to support deeper structural change. By resignifying the things that create violent effects, such as resignifying food waste that results in hunger to edible food that promotes good health, regardless of the source of that waste, FNB activists significantly disrupt the narrative that places people at the bottom of Athens' economic hierarchy. In some ways I only served as a temporal connection for the group for the time period that I acted as primary Wednesday gleaner, but by taking the interactions that I had while gleaning and assigning them meaning through analysis, we see the importance of the FNB story in Athens, even with a somewhat flawed gleaning network. The malleable and temporary nature of network seems to be something expected in

many networks built as collectives to enact prefigurative direct action is seen in Franks' (2003, 33) article: "Groups come together on mutually desired projects, allowing those concerned to explore it in their own way, the relationships being as permanent or as temporary as the mutual interests and desires that maintain it." The group disrupts the thoughtless reproduction of inequality while providing food for those in need because of that inequality.

Yet, the question remains that although ways that the Athens' FNB could restructure the Athens landscape to resignify space as in accordance with the promotion of food as a right and not a privilege have been brought to light through prefigurative direct action and subversive performativity, does this group follow through with these tools to affect the landscape?

Interactions with the Athens' FNB activists revealed that this collective places more importance on feeding people in need than it does the political awareness aspect of FNB. The acquisition and use of the 501(c)(3) status negates the autonomous nature of the group and shows their actions not to be prefigurative of a future that they wish to enact in the present. The use of the food bank as a significant food recovery source keeps the collective from resignifying spaces across the landscape as places that resignify waste as food, the future as the present, the global as the local, and the privilege of food as a right. This failure is one that moves the actions of Athens' FNB from the revolutionary ideal thought up by the founders into criticisms commonly associated with the emergency food system. In order to encourage structural change, the Athens' FNB may have to work beyond the feelings of consistent and safe food recovery into more risky gleaning actions if they wish to truly affect their space in a significant way. Without challenging the current food gleaning network, activists may only be de-politicizing themselves.

The experiential knowledge produced by this work leads to possibilities for future research projects. Recent changes in where FNB cooks its food could produce a different

outcome in spatial analysis of the food gleaning network, especially through GIS analysis. The fluid, ever-changing, and purposefully non-bureaucratic nature of the collective FNB makes it a group that can be studied over and over again with constantly changing actors and results.

Another interesting avenue for future research would be the continued analysis of how the theories of anarchism and performativity can interact to provide helpful answers through action to societal problems produced by living in a capitalist society. Research could also continue to include multi-method approaches to solving these problems to further investigate the possibilities of how quantitative mapping techniques can triangulate qualitative findings.

While this project's purpose was to answer two research questions on the impediments of building a food gleaning network in Athens, GA and how FNB was changing the landscape of Athens to address those impediments, the outcome has brought as many questions as it has answers. The answers that are teased out through the works of Poppendieck, Riches, Kropotkin, Graeber, and Butler could be re-evaluated through the work of other geographers such as Donna Haraway. I see her work on situated knowledge as an important way in which the importance of mapping can be integrated into qualitative methods and provide possibilities to further construct our own ethnographies as non-innocent (Katz 1992, 498). These maps could reveal our own positioning if the power was given to the people in user-generated maps. Future research could include the use of survey maps to see where people in need glean sources of free or easily available food for themselves. This kind of mapping could reveal large amounts of information unavailable to a researcher acting in the food gleaning network as a researcher.

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APPENDIX A: Informational Verbal Consent Form

Informational Letter

Date:

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Geography at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “Food Not Waste: A Spatial Analysis of Athens’ Food Gleaning Network.” This project is conducted under the direction of Dr. Nik Heynen. He can be contacted at (706) 542-1954 or through email at nheyne@uga.edu. This project will focus on analyzing different food-gleaning locations to see if they properly serve the population of Athens. This study requires participants to be 18 years of age or older. If you participate in this study, you will be observed for the duration of our interaction. Your participation will be recorded in a notebook by me over a one week period of time from April 28, 2010 to May 4, 2010 and then analyzed at a later date. Study participants may benefit from the analysis of the current food-gleaning network if the analysis provides insights into ways in which the network could be improved. The future network will hopefully be better able to serve the public. The benefits of this project to humankind in general include the advancement of understanding of whether or not current food-gleaning networks work for people in need. This kind of knowledge is valuable to improve society as a whole and create better assistance for those in need. As a resident of Athens, GA and a university student, it is important to contribute to this field of knowledge from which people are affected and act in everyday.

Your participation will involve acting as you normally would in the food gleaning network and should only take about two hours. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All of your individually identifiable information will be kept completely confidential throughout the study. Identifiers will be removed when written field notes are transcribed onto the computer into digital format to be analyzed. Written field notes will be shredded and thrown away after transcription. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only. Your identity will not be associated with your responses in any published format.

The findings from this project may provide information on how citizens can acquire food more easily when they are in need of food assistance. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me Megan Louise Freeman at (912) 604-2348 or send an e-mail to meg1985@uga.edu. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

By giving verbal consent, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Megan Louise Freeman

APPENDIX B: Observation Protocol

Sample Observation Protocol:

How are the participants traveling to and from the network sites?

What kinds of transportation difficulties might one have if they were to try to access these sites without the use of a car?

What socio-economic backgrounds to these participants seem to make up?

Are they acting as if the food gleaning work is difficult?

How much food is being recovered?

What kinds of food are being recovered?

Where does the food come from?

Where does the food end up?

Where are the participants going after they leave the network sites?

How long are the participants willing to spend in the food gleaning network?

What kinds of food are most available for gleaning?

What kinds of people are organizing within the food network and who benefits from the sites being used?

What age are the participants (average)?

Are the participants affiliated with the network through some other organization? (such as a church)

APPENDIX C: One Day's Fields Notes Sample

4/1/09

I went to the food bank today. There was a ton of food there again, so I finally remembered to ask CLAIRE who else was gleaning produce from the food bank. She looked at me and thought for a minute, then said that she didn't think anyone else was gleaning the produce. She said I was the only one lately and that was gleaning. She doesn't know what happened to Our Daily Bread or even if they were still gleaning there at all. She said that she had not seen them in a while and did not remember when they had stopped coming, but that they probably did not want to drive all the way out there if they got most of their food from Sam's Club, which was on the other side of town. She said that was why I had to take all of the produce because no one else was coming to get it. I got another 60 lbs, but couldn't manage any more in the Corolla with Abe, my dog, in there and all of my stuff. I felt bad that the produce left there would probably rot. If the food bank was closer to the people, I think that this would be different. Maybe more people would come for the perishable items instead of only church groups coming for large orders of old pop-tarts. Why are they so far out that you can almost only get to it by car? They are only serving the interests of those who are fortunate enough to drive there. They are only serving people who represent people in need. And this representation must be valorized by the government through things like 501(c)(3) status.