

Discourses and Practices of Campus Food Sustainability at Concordia
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Nil Alt Kecik

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By: Nil Alt Kecik

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Signed by the final examining committee:

Dr. Pascale Biron Chair

Dr. Anna-Liisa Aunio Examiner

Dr. Alan Nash Examiner

Dr. Norma Rantisi Supervisor

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dean of Faculty

Date _____

ABSTRACT

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Nil Alt Kecik

Most North American universities employ transnational food service corporations to cater to predominantly residence populations. Known as the Big Three within the industrial food system, these corporations— Chartwells, Sodexo and Aramark—are the largest global food retailers. After Chartwell’s 13-year contract term at Concordia University ended, the university administration granted an exclusivity contract to Aramark in 2015. The university’s choice of food service provider, and its food procurement practices are in tension with Concordia’s discursive commitment to a ‘sustainable’ campus food system. Building on the epistemological tension between profit and sustainability, this study reviews the global commodity chain (GCC) framework, and its relevance for studying food system transformation through institutional consumption. The need to conceptualize GCCs as interlinked and complex flows of not only materials, but also of power, knowledge and discourse is the central theme. Grounded in this theme, the study looks at how the transition into food sustainability is governed and operationalized at Concordia. It is concluded that building direct producer-consumer relationships is more complicated than reflected with a linear supply chain imagery. At Concordia, subscription to this imagery muddles accountability and curtails the possibilities for alternatives.

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Introduction

At most North American universities, foodservice providers are primarily employed to cater to residence populations. Since the late 1970s, the operation of food services at most universities and public institutions have increasingly come under the control of three multinational food service corporations: Chartwells, Sodexo and Aramark, also referred to as the “Big Three” (Bennell, 2008).

Concordia University’s current food service provider is Aramark, entitled to food provision at the university’s two residence cafeterias, as well as seven food retail spaces on both downtown Sir George Williams (SGW) Campus and Loyola Campus. Aramark won the bid for food service provision after the University’s contract with food service provider Chartwells, a member of Compass Group Canada, expired in May, 2015. The transition from Chartwells to Aramark marked a significant time period for those who have been actively seeking ways to create alternative food procurement policies and practices on campus.

In the context of North American universities and colleges, ‘Requests for Proposals’ (RFPs) can be defined as the job offers universities announce in order to determine the best candidate among interested companies to provide a variety of professional, consultant services. More specifically, Concordia University defines the 2015 RFP for campus food service provision as “a solicitation made by a company for potential food service providers to submit business proposals to win a contract to provide a service” (“FAQ: Concordia’s food service contract and RFP Process”, 2015). Citing the RFP as an example on multiple occasions, Concordia University underscores its keenness towards a transparent process, an open competition and the participatory nature of the decision-making process (“FAQ: Concordia’s food service contract and RFP Process”, 2015; SFS coordinator, personal communication, October 22, 2016; Peden,

2015). Further, the university presents the undergraduate and graduate student, faculty and staff involvement in the Food Advisory Working Group (FAWG) as proof of the transparent and collaborative nature of the work leading up to the decision as to what the RFP criteria should be. Owing to collaborative activities such as “sharing research on food-related issues, including nutrition and sustainable practices” the university describes not only the drafting of the RFP, but also the food service contract as a product of this community-informed, collaborative process (“University Communications Services”, 2014).

According to the ‘Request for Proposal toolkit’ prepared by the Sierra Youth Coalition and Meal Exchange, an RFP is considered as

a major opportunity for changing the food your campus is purchasing, because RFPs are the clearest time when the university community can dictate to food service companies what is expected from them, and what type of food they need to be serving on your campus. They’re an opportunity to make sustainability and local purchasing an actual contractual requirement for your campuses food service providers. (“Campus Food Systems Project”, 2011-2014)

Indeed, the RFP holds the potential for the making of a ‘student-consumer’ who can have a say in procurement choices, but in practice, its realization necessitates that such ‘community members’ are empowered with the appropriate means to participate as actors who assume a responsibility for the university’s sustainability choices.

Following the RFP process, Concordia University announced that “the university chose Aramark because of its strong commitment to community and dedication to social and corporate responsibility” (DuBreuil, 2015). One of the ‘Big Three’, Aramark, is an American multinational corporation based in Philadelphia. The corporation operates in the agribusiness industry in 22 countries on four continents. It provides food, cleaning, uniform and facility management services in health care and education institutions, prisons, public safety agencies and parks, as well as sports venues, oil rigs and mines. Its revenues are \$18 billion, while its Canadian

subsidiary, Aramark Canada Ltd., one of the Canadian top 500 companies, has a revenue of \$994 million ('Aramark Company Profile', 2015).

Despite the university's presentation of the FAWG's work as a "partnership with the campus community", campus-based fee levy groups¹ such as the Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) and Sustainable Concordia do not celebrate Aramark's "corporate and capitalist structure" as the main food service provider on campus (Sustainable Concordia, 2016). Concordia University's choice to continue with a familiar food service model, although based on superficial alterations which I will discuss later, appears in tension with its discursive commitment to a local/sustainable, healthy and ethical campus food system. Associated with participation, equity and social justice as well as inclusion of marginalized voices and the ecosystems, sustainability calls for radical intervention in modern social and economic analysis. Spaces to perform and promote sustainability in universities are shrinking under corporatization. As Maxey (2009) argues, "there is an epistemological tension" between neoliberalism's privileging of the market and sustainability's insight that the economy is but a subset of (and tool to be used by) society and that, in turn, society is but a subset of the environment (p. 441). Whereas corporations' main drive is to maximize their (and sometimes their shareholders') profit, sustainability is a tool to enhance all life. Yet, the relationship between sustainability and the corporate structures prevailing in large institutions, such as universities, is not a simple, binary one. It is rather contested and evolving at an increasingly fast pace.

¹ A **student fee levy** is defined as a per credit, per semester or annual fee, collected by the University on behalf of a student organization, as defined by and in accordance with the *Policy on Student Associations and Groups* ("Student Accounts Fee Levy Operating Procedures", Last Updated – April 2017).

Therefore, this study aims to present an analysis of Concordia University's recent sustainable food system practices and discourses. To do so, it first examines the present structure of corporate influence through the framework of the global commodity chains. Then, it looks at the evolving and contested nature of these practices and discourses as an extension of a political- and cultural-economic project, and as a form of neoliberal governmentality². More specifically, by drawing on interviews, participant observation and discourse analysis, this study illuminates how the university's present procurement strategy compares with that of its stated goals of food sustainability, by taking a closer look at how the main food service provider obtains and sells 'sustainable' food and enrolls the student-consumer as a key agent responsible for upholding food sustainability.

In Chapter 1, I will provide an overview of the literature that will inform the analysis of my case study. I will review the global commodity chain approach and its relevance for studying food system transformation through institutional consumption practices. In doing so, I will explicate the challenges associated with the narrowness of focusing on either geographies of production or consumption as a political economy paradigm. Then, I will focus on the need to conceptualize global commodity chains as interlinked and complex flows of not only materials, but also of power, knowledge and discourse. In Chapter 2, I will discuss my methodological approach and how this shaped the perspective from which I gathered and analyzed my data. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the broader environment-economy tension inherent to sustainability and how it underpins the concept of food sustainability at large and in particular at Concordia.

² The term neoliberal governmentality is discussed in the literature review, but can be understood briefly a political economic project and a form of biopolitics (technologies and techniques which govern social and biological processes in human life) that is referred to as neoliberal governmentality (Dean, 1999 and Brown, 1999). Neoliberalism governmentality is neither merely a set of economic policies nor is focused primarily on economy, but a diffuse regime of social, political-economic and psychological power that entails the extension of market values to all spheres of life including the human body (Brown, 2005, pp. 37-39).

Further I will look at how food sustainability is linked to transforming food systems in institutional settings such as universities, and how the transition into sustainability is governed. In doing so, I will emphasize the centrality of the public consultation discourse in institutional governance. In Chapter 4, I will briefly present my case study while asking whether or how the university's discursive commitment to food sustainability has been maintained. To set the stage for such discussion, I will lay out how food consumption is posed as a reaction to industrialized, globalized and corporatized agriculture and what role 'local food' occupies in food sustainability initiatives. In the context of Concordia University, I will discuss Aramark Concordia's sustainability commitments and food procurement challenges while also presenting alternative conceptualizations of a sustainable food system. Chapter 5 will present my concluding remarks.

1. CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

1.1. The relevance of commodity chain analysis for analyzing agribusiness

Economists Davis and Goldberg (1957) defined the term 'agri-business' as "the sum total of all operations involved in the manufacture and distribution of farm supplies; production operations on the farm; storage; processing and distribution of farm commodities and items made from them" (p.3). Particular focus set on the increasingly systemic nature of the food production, allows for a detailed examination of the farming activities that are integrated into large-scale institutional frameworks. These activities can be summed under production, and marketing of technological inputs and of processed food products, led by highly-concentrated and complex forms of corporate ownership and management (Gregory et al., 2009, p.16).

Used as a shorthand for the industrialization process of the agrifood system, the term agri-business generally signifies one of two opposing ideological conceptions. The first conception holds a critical view of the food industry as being dominated by capitalist,

multinational corporations as a result of rapid globalization. The second conception sees agri-business as an improvement, and celebrates the role it has played in the modernization of food production capacities and practices. For the purposes of my proposed study and the discussion that follows, I will draw on the first conception. More specifically, I will explore various definitions and roles of global commodity chain concept as a framework for understanding the capitalist relations that define contemporary agri-business.

The field of agrifood studies has brought together geographers and sociologists working in critical political economy in Europe, North America and elsewhere (Bonanno et al., 1994; Goodman & Watts, 1997). Agrifood scholars have come to employ the commodity chain concept widely to follow commodities through their cycles of production, exchange, and use. Hartwick (2000) argues that through the use of the concept, geographers are not only gaining a better understanding of commodity-formation and circulation processes, but also are opening up spaces for the emergence of a new kind of radical politics that can challenge inequalities within these processes (pp. 1183–84).

1.2. Commodity chain analysis

Fine and Leopold (1993, p.599) were the first to develop the concept of systems of provision within the framework of “chains of connection”, described by Leslie and Reimer (1999) as “perhaps the most comprehensive elaboration of production-consumption relations” (p.405). Fine and Leopold’s (1993) particular interest lays in uniting the separate analyses of production and consumption. To that end, they reject the commonplace horizontal approach to consumption, where the alleged common features of consumption are applied across economy or society as a whole. Before Fine and Leopold’s work (1993), the literature overemphasized the cultural mechanisms of buying, rather than the social production of consumption, precluding

especially the workers who produce, distribute, advertise and retail commodities. Fine and Leopold (1993), for example, criticize Glennie and Thrift (1992) for overemphasizing horizontal factors such as commodification and aestheticization, while neglecting the vertical dimension which is the system of provision (pp. 599-601). The vertical approach sees different commodities as “distinctly structured by the chain or system of provision that unites a particular pattern of production with a particular pattern of consumption” (1993, p.4). Nevertheless, different systems of provision can be identified for different types of food commodities (chickens and eggs, for example). However, their systems of provision framework was criticized from within agrifood studies, largely due to its over-simplified separation of the biological from the social (Murdoch, 1994).

Both empirical and theoretical knowledge acquired through the commodity chain analysis in the agrifood literature, is mainly based on studies of the US model of agribusiness. This type of analysis pays particular attention to the vertical integration of various segments (or ‘nodes’) of the food supply chain, including production, processing, marketing and distribution. Scholars, who take the commodity chain as their unit of analysis (Friedland et al., 1981; Friedland, 1984; Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1994, pp.17-21; Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994, pp.1-14) examine the nodes within the chain, and the nature of relations that constitute the individual nodes as well as those among nodes. Commodity chain analysis is intended to reveal the spatiality of these nodes, prominently investigating how the nodal links may be extended across a regional and/or the global economy (Friedland, 1984; Sayer & Walker, 1992). Thus, following the vertical integration model and tracing a commodity from production to consumption, the analysis aims to disentangle complex production chain relations as well as expose the social and spatial division of labour along the chain (Gereffi & Korzeniewicz, 1994, pp.9-11). Here, the use of commodity

chains appears as descriptive tool, a lens through which to examine industrial organization and/or economic geography (Gregory et al., 2009, p.101).

1.2.1. From chains to circuits

The concern for combining the analysis of different sites, including production, distribution, retailing, design, advertising, marketing and final consumption, has enabled scholars to develop more nuanced analyses (Leslie & Reimer, 1999, p.402). One such example is the concept of commodity circuits, which was developed starting from early 2000's. This concept was borne out of a concern, particularly amongst human geographers, that the concept of a chain is too linear, e.g. proceeding from production to retail or consumption, but not vice-versa, thus inherently excluding more complex or dialectical relations in which the commodity is situated. Also, instead of focusing exclusively on *material* flows, the commodity circuits concept has been used to examine the ways that geographical *knowledges* of commodity systems are continually shaped and reshaped, such as the role of consumer perceptions in influencing how a product is received (see Cook & Crang, 1996). [emphasis mine]. Leslie and Reimer, in their conceptions of the commodity circuit, conclude that the systems of provision can be seen as "circulations: interconnected flows not only of materials, but also of knowledges and discourses" (p.416).

Arce and Marsden (1993) join others in critiquing the systems approach, i.e. the chain concept, for laying too heavy an emphasis on structural factors while erasing the significance of human agency, thus offering an insufficient account of processes including food production and consumption. Instead of applying global commodity chain analysis to food, Arce and Marsden bring forward the concept of food networks (p.296).

The commodity circuit literature has now moved beyond the simplistic linear framework and has deviated into various streams emphasizing product characteristics, public regulation, and

looser global production networks composed of multiplicity of agents including, for example, corporate officials, unions or consumer advocacy groups. Beginning with the early 2000s, Crewe (2001) observes a “shift in focus towards consumption as a site of political action through explorations into the connections between commodity culture, self-identity, citizenship and political participation” (p.632). As these new considerations, including “individual identity, the power of agency and the potential formation of a collective politics of consumption” enter the global commodity chain analysis literature, the scholarly demand for a shift in focus from chains to networks or circuits emerges (Crewe, 2001, p.632). Yet, even in the face of this ontological challenge, the concept of commodity chains has continued to be commonly used as a methodological framework alongside equally popular concepts such as networks or circuits. Also it is important to note that conceptualizing food systems as networks or circuits has connections to broader trends in contemporary social science research (see Castells, 1996 and Urry, 2000). Scholars who follow these broader trends have called for a shift from understanding society and spaces as sets of fixed institutions and places towards the study of mobility and interrelationality. Networks, flows and spatiality are seen more capable of capturing relationality and mobility when following commodities. This theoretical trend contributed to entirely new modes of analysis by way of focusing on the linkages and (and often multiple and complex) spatial arrangements (Jackson et al., 2006).

1.2.2. On the need to connect the production and consumption in the study of food

To date, analytical concern in studies of agrifood has focused overwhelmingly on the production phase of commodity provision. Despite numerous food scares³, organic and anti–

³ The response to a food incident (real or perceived) that causes a sudden disruption to the food supply chain and to food consumption patterns (http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/statistics/crism/workshops/foodsecurity/speakerabstracts/angela_druckman_warwick_for_distribution.pdf).

GMO movements and various pandemic animal diseases, production has continued to predominate over consumption in agrifood studies, even though in other fields, as Jackson (1999) notes, consumption had been “duly acknowledged” (p. 95). In order to address this asymmetry, some scholars call into question the contemporary formulation of the ‘agrarian question’⁴. Goodman and DuPuis (2002), for example, suggest a new form of food politics that enables (formal) alliances between producers and consumers. They argue that such reformulation can open possibilities towards framing food as a site of struggle rather than a “conceptually-polarized fetish” (2002, pp. 5 -17).

Interest in consumption has brought together political economists, political scientists and sociologists to study the politics, sociology and spatiality of food consumption (Fine & Leopold, 1993; Marsden et al., 2000) as well as demarcating a new cultural geography of food (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Valentine, 1999; Freidberg, 2003). In recent years, rural sociology has grappled with readdressing and integrating food production and consumption questions (Goodman, 2002; Goodman & DuPuis, 2002; Lockie, 2002). There has been increasing interest in alternative food movements both in Europe (Renting et al., 2003) and North America (Allen et al., 2003), and in localizing food systems or shortening food supply circuits (Winter, 2003a, 2003b; Hinrichs, 2003). Bringing forth the intricate interconnections, which typically remained behind-the-scenes due to the complexity and multiplicity of systems of food production and consumption, has gained notable traction in the literature.

Agricultural geography and more specifically, the implications of globalization on the agriculture and food industry are now widely explored through the use of commodity-circuit/chain analysis. In order to capture distinct moments of the agri-industrial circuits,

⁴ This refers to the forms in which capitalist relations transform the agrarian sector, and the political alliances, struggles and compromises that emerge around different trajectories of agrarian change. (Gregory et al., 2011)

geographers employ commodity circuit/chain analysis across a wide range of work from surveys of farm-based activities to the diverse sites and activities of food production and consumption (Goodman & Watts, 1997; Guthman, 2004b). Further, geographers have broadened their understanding of food by paying due tribute to the relational aspects of the ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies for studying food (Goodman, 2016, p.258).

From an epistemological view, for instance, placing stronger emphasis on production at the expense of consumption along the commodity circuit/chain is criticized for imposing a deterministic view of food. This approach critiques the unilateral translation of food as socio-material value from field to plate where the meaning attributed to food extends only as far as the harvest (Whatmore, 2002, p.6).

The tension between the production-oriented and the consumption-oriented approaches, coupled with Goodman's (2016) call for scholarly work that sees food as "more-than-food", provide a parallel for the debate on whether the geographies of food should be studied through an analytical framework of chains or of circuits and networks. Parallels to the chain approach can be drawn on the basis of a linear conception of "production and consumption as purified categories of social life, sites only skeletally connected through the act of purchase" (Goodman, 2002, p.272). The analytical challenge, then, is how to overcome the theoretical imbalance between production and consumption in order to break through the confines of linear conceptualizations in commodity provision. Moreover, there is the challenge of attributing agency to consumers to render the concept of food circuits a mutually-constituted and relational set of interactions, while not being carried away with the belief that consumer demand for more transparency will suffice to ensure a socially and ecologically sustainable food system.

Tracing the genealogy of this hypothetical distinction between production and consumption, Tovey (1997) draws on the marginalization of food in discussions of agriculture and rural development. Studies of agriculture in Western Europe and North America have been conceptualized as separate from studies of food. Rural and agricultural studies have typically been associated with the economic, social political and environmental production of food, whereas studies of food were confined to the academic sphere of culture. Regarded as an outcome of the firm disciplinary boundaries between economy and culture, agriculture and food fell under different ontological domains, resulting in a distinction in the analysis of the consumption and production of food.

Since early 1990's, scholars have produced work where both food producers and food consumers were situated within the modern food system (Goodman & Redclift, 1991; Tovey, 1997; Whatmore, 2002). Yet, as food has become more industrialized, more chemists and genetic engineers have become involved in food production (Goodman et al., 1987). Consequently, more intermediaries were incorporated into the circuits between farmers and consumers in the food industry and its commodity chain became lengthier and more globalized (Tovey, 1997, p.23). Today connections between the grower and the consumer are increasingly hard to make.

In addition to highlighting the institutionalized structural dualism in food and agriculture, Tovey (1997) brings to our attention another shortcoming of the follow-the-commodity logic: food's conception as a generic 'commodity' in the context of the consumption-production dualism becomes both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in that it locates food at the heart of discussions on the contemporary processes of change and restructuring in the global

economy. It is a weakness because it does not recognize the distinct ways in which food embodies social meaning (p.22).

1.3. Food consumption and commodity fetishism

In shifting the focus from production to consumption-production links, the question of globalization arises: how can commodity circuit analysis enrich our understanding of the social and political implications of globalization on the agrifood industry? Some scholars, who elaborate on tracking commodity origins to shed light on the continuity between consumption and production, resort to Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. Guthman (2009) defines commodity fetishism as a necessary means to disguise the social relations that facilitate commodity production (p.192). According to her point of view, such disguise is essential to the retainment of capitalist commodity production as a legitimate act. Thus, in commodity circuit analysis, commodity fetishism constitutes the conceptual trigger, prompting an unveiling of how commodities are really produced. This is regarded as a first step towards transforming social relations, and in a way, linking food's economical meanings to its social meanings (Hartwick, 1998; Hudson & Hudson, 2003).

To elaborate, the Marxian concept of 'commodity fetish' refers to a material object that has the exchange value or the status of a commodity (Winge, 2008, pp.511-523). According to Marx's Theory of Value, however, the value of a commodity is threefold, in that, it involves production (and labour); physical (and material) form; and the relationships (or characteristics) that define the product (Allen & Kovach, 2000; Castree, 2001; Gregory et al., 2009; Guthman, 2002, 2004b, 2009; 2011; Winge, 2008; Agyeman & McEntee, 2014; Blay-Palmer, 2016). In other words, the term 'commodity fetishism' describes why and how commodities are ascribed a deceptive objectivity. The making of a commodity, presented as the first step of the threefold

Theory of Value, is a complex process, primarily underpinned by the surplus value-generating characteristics attributed to certain commodities. For example, in the domain of organic food growth, Allen and Kovach (2000) infers that “the focus on ecological issues and natural materials in organic agriculture obscures social relations involved” (p. 221). Drawing on Marx’s notion of commodity fetishism, they illustrate how obscuring is implicated in the social tensions between farm owners and workers. Put slightly different, commodity fetishism is a condition in which the social relationships that occur during commodity production are concealed from the consumer, and consequently, the invisibility of the social relations leads consumers to “see value as something that inheres in the material commodities themselves, rather than something that is created by particular social relations” and discursive strategies (Allen & Kovach, 2000, p.226). Disguising the social relations, in turn, leads to their social reproduction, perpetuating the obscured power asymmetries along the commodity circuit. The second stage of Marx’s Theory of Value, tackles the relationship between value creation and the physical (and material) form of commodities. Here, commodities appear as “an independent and uncontrolled reality” and thus (once again) separate from the people who produce them (Gregory et al., 2009, p.100).

Following Marx’s Theory of Value, the third step maintains that commodities are a result of complex social, economic, environmental relations among multiple players, human and non-human. These relations, nonetheless, play out over time and space, both of which are excluded from the context through commodity fetishization. Labour-related and ecological processes that “transform biological material from one state to another (...) almost universally extract labour value from some people and redistribute it to others” (Guthman, 2002, p.306). The materiality of these processes serve to attach particular meaning to food according to the way it has been produced. Labelling food as ‘ethical’ or ‘organically grown’, and most recently ‘local’ is

underpinned by a supposed political meaning that relies on “the visibility of this materiality” (Cook & Crang, 1996; Bell and Valentine, 1997; Guthman, 2002).

There is also a geographic dimension to this semiotic process. As a result of globalization, the question of traceability gains traction (Harvey, 1990; Hartwick, 1998; Hudson & Hudson, 2003). This geographical dimension focuses on distance as a measure of how globalized the food system has become. Local food movements or movements built around shortening the supply circuit, are mostly based on this geographical dimension⁵. The most widely-acknowledged formulation on the topic comes from David Harvey. He summarizes the foundational understanding of commodity circuit analysis in his following quote:

Tracing back all the items used in the production of that meal reveals a relation of dependence upon a whole world of social labour conducted in many different places under very different social relations and conditions of production. That dependency expands even further when we consider the materials and goods used in the production of the goods we directly consume. Yet we can in practice consume our meal without the slightest knowledge of the intricate geography of production and the myriad social relationships embedded in the system that puts it upon our table. (Harvey, 1990, p.422)

In response to Harvey’s advocacy for the deployment of the Marxian concept of commodity fetishism, Castree (2001) lays out some concerns in regards with the concept’s applicability in commodity analysis today (p.1519). What becomes unveiled by the act of defetishization and how this act becomes critical are the two central question for Castree (2001, p.1519). In an attempt to address these questions, he identifies five points of limitation. First, the metaphor of unveiling devalorizes the positive aspects of consumption, and ends up obscuring

⁵Guthman (2009) contends that this dimension of food labelling (hence commodity fetishizing) is linked (although somewhat indirectly) to the world-systems approach that produced early work in commodity circuits analysis (p. 193). In conceptualizing the set of linked activities as ‘commodity circuits’, the world-systems theorists’ initial goal was to shift the methodological unit of analysis in international political economy away from the nation-state. The reason for this shift was the concerns with the transparency of commodity movements, i.e. “‘unequal exchange’ which also raised the question as to where value is added, appropriated, and distributed” (p. 193). The further ramifications of this shift were twofold: First, they demonstrate that these linked activities rely heavily on an international division of labor. Second, they show that workers, too, are rendered commodities as part of this division of labor.

the processes of consumption and the links between commodity's use-value and exchange-value. Similarly, Baudrillard (1981), who theorizes the relationship between the social subject and the object, sees fetish as the site of convergence for the subject and the object. Therefore, the object of consumption does not exist in a vacuum to cater to pure, natural, human needs, but it is produced as a sign within a system of relations of difference with other objects. Baudrillard understands the process of consumption "not as the realization of objective needs or of economic exchange but as the social exchange of signs and values" (as cited in Castree, 2001, p.1520).

Second, Castree (2001) argues that when the 'unveiling' is regarded as intrinsic to defetishization, it becomes a deeper reality which only the analyst can access and disclose (Castree, 2001, p.1520). The third limitation posed by the concept of commodity fetishism is the urge to link commodities to a specific site, and to a population of spatially dispersed labour. This reduces the complexities prevalent in various processes the commodity undergoes to mere distances. Castree (2001) refers to the work of Spivak (1988), Derrida (1994), and Keenan (1993) to submit the fourth limitation he identifies: the difficulty in tracing socio-spatial origins without essentializing places, cultures, and localities (p. 1520). Lastly, Taussig's (2010) work on commodity fetishism constitutes Castree's fifth point on limitations to the motif of commodity circuit. Taussig reminds us that once the unveiling is complete, we recognize that the social relations that supposedly come out in the open are themselves signs and social constructs (as cited in Castree 2001, p.1520). By virtue of these five major limitations, Castree (2001) concludes that most contemporary social, cultural, and economic geographers have begun using other metaphors in conducting commodity analysis (p.1520). What these geographers⁶ have done

⁶ Among these geographers are Phil Crang (1996) who looks at commodity displacement, Peter Jackson (1999, 104) who examines social-geography of things, Debby Leslie and Suzanne Reimer (1999) who use the 'commodity-circuits' method without basing it on Marxian notion of commodity fetishism, and Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne (1998), who, in their analysis of Cafe Direct, resort to 'actor-networks'.

differently is re-framing commodities as complex, ever-changing, and mobile sites of social relations, cultural identity, and economic power. In other words, they take Harvey's geographical imagination to the next level, where this imagination comes to be "a pluralized, multi-perspectival, reflexive geographical imagination attuned to the relational dynamics whereby multiple cultures, places, and ecologies" shape and are shaped by one another (Castree, 2001, p.1520).

Finally, Cook and Crang (1996) contextualize the notion of commodity fetishism in extensive networks of food and people and call it 'double fetish'. Double fetish holds a twofold meaning: on one hand it is the demand for scrutiny of "the spatially distanced systems of provision through which food commodities come to us", and this can be dubbed 'defetishizing' (Crang, 1996, p.131). On the other hand, there is increased emphasis placed on geographical knowledges about the meanings of places and spaces associated with food commodities. It is these knowledges that facilitate the re-coding (or double-fetishizing) of food commodities through differentiating them from the homogeneity of the globalized foods. Therefore, when labelled as 'organic', 'sustainable', 'local' or 'ethical', these foods are distinguished from conventionally produced foods. This re-coding (differentiation) become a crucial means of adding value to those food commodities, hence mainstreaming them back into the market with new surplus value (Crang, 1996, pp. 131-4).

1.3.1. Consumer agency in transforming commodity chains and the *Theory of Value*

Although there is an abundance of theoretical interpretations on the subject, scholars share a general interest in what we might call commodity studies. Guthman (2004b) construes this interest in studying commodities as "the politics of re-localization" (p. 233). Since obscure

and complex commodity circuits both permit and veil “systems of inequality upon which circuits depend”, part of the solution is seen as re-localizing these circuits (p. 233). One of the ways in which relocalization is materialized is making multiple commodity circuits identifiable, linked and transparent, which, in effect, translates to a search for origins. Accordingly, ‘eating local’ and/or ‘knowing where your food comes from’ emerges as the dominant discourse of alternative food provision. In short, eating green (e.g. organic), eating ethically (e.g. Fair Trade) and eating locally (e.g. food miles) appear as distinct practices, yet they are analytically similar responses to the increasing awareness of the ecological and social repercussions of globalized regimes of industrialized agrifood production. They are deemed distinct based on the claim that they “thicken” connections between producers and consumers (Crang, 1996). Since, historically, the criticism originates from consumer-led campaigns and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), literature on geographies of consumption draws to the centre the significance of consumer demand for greater transparency and accountability, hence tasking consumer agency with the remaking of a more ethical commodity circuit (Sack, 1992; Hartwick, 1998; Hughes, 2004).

Both the ecological (by way of omitting social-nature relationship) and ethical (by way of omitting farm workers altogether) aspects of concealment along the commodity circuits are linked to the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism. In other words, for capitalist commodity production to retain its legitimacy, the social and ecological relations under which commodities are produced need to be veiled so that the consumer continues to consume. Therefore, localizing (or thickening) becomes the means of challenging the social and ecological relations under which agricultural use-values are created. And within this localizing, food labelling becomes the means to access this hidden information about the materials and/or processes that agricultural producers apply and/or avoid (Guthman, 2004b, 234; see also Hartwick, 2000).

Yet, there are also scholars (Arce & Marsden, 1994; Guthman, 2003, 2004b; Ilbery & Maye, 2005) who question the ability of food labelling to demystify commodity circuits through defetishization. Indeed, the question of whether labelling food serves to fetishize or defetishize stands out as the fundamental tension in the politics of consumption (Guthman, 2002). Guthman (2004b) describes the contradiction present in the recent politics of consumption as “demand(ing) agricultural products that do not involve ... processes that historically have made agriculture profitable” (p. 235). Furthermore, drawing attention to the centrality of consumption within politics of consumption, she cites Bocoock’s argument that consumption does not equate to the mere physical consumption of the end-product, but rather is tantamount to “consuming ideas, images and symbolic meanings” (as cited in Guthman, 2004b, p.236). Framing consumption as a complex set of ideas, images and symbolic meaning, helps to reframe the commodity in terms of a new set of meanings for the value with which the commodity is associated (see Baudrillard’s sign value, 1981; Fine & Leopold, 1994; Purcell et al., 2016). Following from this, the possibility of refetishization through labelling turns on the meanings of commodities that labelling conveys and the values it ascribes.

Fine and Leopold (1994) identifies two ways of framing value pertaining to commodities. They name the first way the “use value approach” (p.7). This approach is principally concerned with how the use values of commodities are subject to ideological distortion through advertising (p. 13). This method also allows for creating multiple meanings for the same commodity, depending on the role assigned to its consumption. The use value approach tends to neglect the economic content of the commodity and emphasize its constructed desirability (Fine & Leopold, 1994, pp. 213-247). The second approach revolves around “exchange value” and seeks to locate advertising as included in the circulation of capital (p.13). In this way, advertising is situated

alongside production and distribution as an equally effective – and interconnected - node within the circuit. Although scholarly work has attempted to reconcile and synthesize these two approaches, the ultimate purpose of capital production and its impact on how commodities are developed and advertised, makes this synthesis difficult. Fine and Leopold (1994) were the first scholars to propose the application of a *vertical* perspective within commodity circuit analysis to address the gap, where a vertical perspective takes each commodity as a separate set composed of production, distribution, retailing *and* “cultural determinants” (pp.13-14) [emphasis mine].

As Fine and Leopold (1993) argue, there is “a complex and shifting relationship between the two aspects of the use value of a commodity - its physical content and its interpretation” (p. 26). The gap between a commodity's (physical) use value and its ascribed use value (image) is what Fine (2002) dubs the “aesthetic illusion”. The use of this terminology is not to say that meanings are necessarily pointless or just tools for ‘tricking’ the consumer into consumption. They perform a function of distinguishing the “metabolic use value” of food from its cultural content to highlight that the emphasis on the cultural content can be amplified by adding symbolic value (Guthman, 2004a, p.516). Typically added by discursive means, the symbolic value might manifest in form of “attempts to instill trust in the food supply, when assurance becomes the symbolic value consumers most desire” (Guthman, 2004a, p.516).

The purpose of the aesthetic illusion, in part, is to widen the gap between obtainable prices and actual costs of production (including a ‘normal’ rate of profit). This is how rent is generated. When price competition intensifies, the rents decrease. Further, rent generation faces particular challenges when food is pitched due to its healthy, ethical and/or sustainable production and procurement characteristics. Such challenges are typically obscured via discursive intervention.

Among these challenges, this study will explore (as discussed further below) how the paradox of making profits can fall in line with sustainability and ethical considerations in the pursuit of ‘sustainable’ food procurement. In addition, this study centers its focus on the gap between food’s physical content and its interpretations, while seeking to explore the making of the aesthetic illusion and how a commodity circuit analysis can (or cannot) uncover this illusion.

Agro-food researchers have written much on “the commodified cures designed to resolve” transparency and traceability issues along global commodity circuits (Guthman, 2015, p.2532). Yet, there is still a need for theorization of the overlap between the social/discursive life of food and the political economy of food production. Without such understanding, food system transformation attempts are unlikely to affect the politics of production in intended ways. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how the meanings that underpin the politics of consumption transform into and circulate as surplus value and rent, and, in turn, how surplus value and rent value are co-constructive in making meanings for a politics of consumption (Guthman, 2002, p.295).

1.3.2. How the paradox of making profits while ensuring sustainability is resolved: ‘Certification Regimes’

The paradox in question is obscured, in part, when food providers assume a discursive responsibility for environmentally and ethically sustainable procurement while conflating responsibility with consumer participation/choice and sustainability activism with profit-making. Circumventing a much needed discussion of what environmentally and socially just food systems would look like, the legitimizing discourse of community engagement in opting for private, large-scale food provision attempts to obliterate the fact that this business model inherently has to prioritize monetary profitability over sustainability.

Discursive commitment to transforming the conventional food industry into a healthy, sustainable and ethical food system, for example, is a form of signification that comes into play quite frequently in the context of institutional food procurement. As explained earlier, purchasing food in which ecological, social, and/or place-based values are embedded through certification is presented as a path for responsible institutional procurement. The use of food labelling, as a (normalized) signifier of ecological, social, and/or place-based values, is a result of the major change in global environmental governance since the early 1990s. Peck and Tickell (2002) describe this phase of service governance as “roll-out neoliberalization”⁷, where non-state agencies become the major actors of ‘innovative’ regulatory regimes by the adoption of “market-like solutions to environmental problems” (Collard, Dempsey, & Rowe, 2015). As the state has increasingly become passive in its role as a regulator of transnational industries and trade, non-governmental organizations have sidestepped governments and begun dealing directly with corporations. The non-state system of regulation resulted in “private” governance bodies, allowing the emergence of certification regimes including food labelling (Cashore et al. 2004). As a result, a combination of state, private, non-governmental organizations, and multinational bodies govern these labels, which “attach economic values to ethical behaviors... and devolve regulatory responsibility to consumers” (Guthman, 2007, p.457).

The current discussion of making environmentally and ethically sustainable, regional food systems via the institutional purchasing power follows a particular type of governance model. In the case of North American universities, this governance model heavily relies on ‘self-responsibilization’ where controversial decision making is readily administered to the community level (Basu, 2007, p.113). How and why such self-responsibilization is reinforced

⁷ It is important to recognize the process-oriented character of neoliberalization, which Peck and Tickell (2002) rightly captured in using the “-ation,” rather than “-ism” suffix.

through a discourse of community consultation in Concordia's dominant food provision system, and how it aligns with the broader social-spatial structure of sustainable food procurement are key areas of inquiry for the proposed study. The recent sustainability turn public institution-private food provider partnerships are enmeshed in is heavily based in a discourse of responsible consumption and community participation alongside practices of supply chain modification and food certification.

2. CHAPTER 2: Methodology

This study explores the recent food system practices at Concordia University by examining the university's discursive commitment to transforming the campus food system into a sustainable, healthy and ethical one by way of procurement. To fulfil this commitment, the university contracted its food services to Aramark since the beginning of the academic year 2015-2016.

More specifically, my research objectives are to: (1) trace the university's recent food procurement practices as an extension of a political-cultural economic project; (2) shed light on the role of ideas and discourses in explaining institutional change marked by the beginning of Aramark's term as Concordia university's food service provider (3) examine how the discursive regimes of sustainability shape policy designs, decisions and measurement of outcomes; (4) link these processes to the broader debate on neoliberal economic rationality and sustainability; and (5) to contribute new empirical data to the already existing literature on sustainable food system transformation in universities.

My research questions are as follows:

- (1) How do Concordia University's food procurement policies relate to its discursive commitment to a local/sustainable, healthy and ethical campus food system?
- (2) What role do neoliberal rationalities as a mode of sustainability governance play in the making of the responsible consumer in the specific context of Concordia University?

2.1. Methodology

[When conducting research], the challenge is how to start from a place of entanglement or how to replace epistemologies that enact hierarchy and distance with those that assume interdependency and entanglement in asymmetrical conditions... [Meeting this challenge] means questioning the epistemological practices through which knowledge is produced and legitimated... Who counts as a legitimate producer of knowledge and why? How do we position ourselves in relation to the objects of research? ... What kind of world would we like to be involved in enacting? (Sundberg, 2015, p.120).

One of my objectives in undertaking this study was to learn what examining the material *and* discursive means through which Concordia University attempts to transition into sustainable food provision can reveal about power and knowledge-making dynamics on campus. Following Sundberg's (2015) quote above, critical analysis of a research question pays attention to issues of knowledge and power, especially how particular knowledges and understandings of the world are marginalized while others receive acknowledgement as universal truths. Correspondingly, Butler (2004) argues that one way of attaining hegemonic political understanding is through circumscribing the suitability of certain knowledge to enter and circulate in the public sphere. Although marginalized discourses tend not to inform policy considerations and institutional commitments, inclusion of the stories born out of alternative experiences may help include situated, embodied knowledges in the policy making process. Counter stories can complicate conceptions of what is possible in terms of building a more 'sustainable' food system by

challenging normalized and linear conceptions of the commodity chain and traceability within food commodity chains.

Research has demonstrated that the regulation of commodity chains has fallen increasingly into the hands of the private sector (e.g. Guthman, 2002; 2004a). It is this finding that underpins my objective to study the corporate sustainability discourse and practice and excavate it by taking seriously the work and opinions of non-dominant actors and their frameworks. In other words, as Sundberg (1990) points out in the opening quote, my aim was to explore questions of legitimacy of knowledge produced and disseminated through Concordia University's dominant institutional channels by investigating their relation to the material food procurement practices.

To this end, I employed three methodologies to construct my analysis: participant observation; in-depth, semi-structured interviews; and discourse analysis.

2.1.1. Participant observation

From August 2015-January 2016, I stayed at Concordia University's Grey Nuns Residence. Students are mandated to purchase the residence meal plan in order to secure a room at the residence as early as June 1st of the same year. The 8-month meal plan costs \$3,800 for an *all-you-care-to-eat* plan in either of the university's two cafeterias (SGW and Loyola Campus). Students are also required to pay \$190 in flex dollars to be used at seven food outlets on campus run by Aramark. As a first-year student who was entirely new to Montreal, I had to find a housing solution quickly. Under such circumstances, the residence, although it would clearly upset my budget, was my only option.

After having stayed at the Grey Nuns and eaten the cafeteria's food for a few weeks,

I could not make sense of the glaring contrast between the food that was served and what the university's website and the posters on the cafeteria walls said was being served. Moreover, the university's online discourse as well as Aramark Concordia's excessive postering was telling me that it was my 'responsibility' as a consumer to eat in a healthy and ethical way. I was confused.

In addition, there was no written contract signed between the food provider Aramark and the resident students, allowing corporate governance to be carried out in a legal vacuum. This resulted in my participation in multiple outreach events, organized predominantly by the Concordia Food Coalition (CFC). The first of these events was the CFC's annual Bite Me!. Bite Me! is a week of events and workshops introducing students to current food discussions, initiatives and resources on campus. During this week, I met the CFC coordinator and the university's then newly-hired Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) coordinator. These relationships led to my becoming a member of the CFC board. As well, I was able to attend the university-led consultation and advisory committees. I also had access to the online platforms these committees used which helped me receive notifications for the upcoming meetings.

For this study, I attended a total of 27 participatory campus events and community meetings related to varied aspects of campus food system transformation on Concordia's campus. These events and meetings included consultation meetings, workshops or tours organized by Residence Life staff at the Grey Nuns Residence, Environment, Health and Safety Concordia's Sustainability team, Concordia Food Coalition, Sustainability Action Fund, Sustainable Concordia, and Concordia University School of Community and Public Affairs. Additionally, I attended various off-campus events, including the National Student Food Summit at the University of Waterloo, Changing the Menu National School Food Conference and Food Secure Canada's 9th Assembly, Resetting the Table.

My participation involved a wide range of activities from discussions about potential objectives of a Food Hub (initiated by the SFS coordinator and later renamed as Sustainability Food Advisory Committee) and auditing a food community mapping session, to hearing monthly updates from the major actors within campus-based alternative food networks as well as the Aramark Sustainability Manager's presentations of the company's monthly food procurement developments.

From these gatherings, I identified a number of interviewees. There were particular advantages that came with using participant observation to recruit interviewees. I had a clear understanding of my informants' role in the Concordia food system context, hence I could guarantee that they were actually directly involved in food procurement. Finally, having immersed myself in the activities of the agrifood movement on campus, trust relations were formed in and through the campus food networks. Becoming a known, trusted participant in the food networks, through repeated interactions and engagement, made more in-depth knowledge and meaning accessible.

2.1.1. Interviews

Due to my previous involvement in the campus food networks at Concordia, I realized that semi-structured interviews with the actors whose work involve supply chain management was the best method to garner nuanced insight about the relationships being formed or altered along the supply chain. It was evident that I would not be able to find these in official documents. Further, the changes in food procurement practices Aramark made were too recent to be documented and published in any format. Therefore, it was established that the challenges and successes in 'sustainable' food procurement at Concordia would be better understood by talking to those who were playing out on the field.

In laying the foundation for my interviews, before getting specific about whom to interview or what to ask, I benefitted immensely from Erik Chevrier and Kim Gagnon's Concordia Student-Run Food Groups Research Project which has been underway since 2015. The project is comprised of an online archive of video interviews about the student run food groups at Concordia University. Although the project primarily aims to provide an institutional memory of the student-run food projects at Concordia, it inevitably expands so as to unveil key historical accounts and insights by those who were actively involved in consultation processes or alternative movements during the food contract periods. These accounts and insights shed light on the avenues the university repeatedly opted to take. They simultaneously reveal how the university along with the three major food providers it had contracted alliances with, have deserted some discursive and practical avenues over the last two decades. Having access to Chevrier and Gagnon's interview archive made it possible to contextualize this project historically and institutionally by listening to the stories of the very actors who performed the groundwork that lead to the recent food system developments on campus. Chevrier and Gagnon ("Research Methods", n.d.) describe the archive as "part of an ontological process" that aims to capture memories of the students who were or have been active in campus food movements. As "students are not static entities" on campus and eventually graduate and leave, the video interview archive acts as a connective tissue that accommodates the multiple spatial and temporal similarities and digressions concerning Concordia University's food system choices. As this study intends to capture the most recent stage in the university's discursive and practical commitments to campus food sustainability, it can be considered a continuation of the Chevrier and Gagnon's project.

In addition to the Chevrier and Gagnon video interviews, I held in-person interviews with 16 informants who have taken active roles in the food systems transformation movements at Concordia University. Semi-structured interviews described as “a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions in the general form of an interview guide, but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (Bryman & Teevan, 2005, p.386) provided me with the necessary time to solicit informant opinions in regards to the main themes I had planned to examine. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour. The interview questions were grouped into themes around institutional procurement practices, challenges faced in decision-making processes and student-consumer engagement in these processes. The interview guide was not followed word for word, but used as a guide such that throughout the course of the conversation, responses to all of the questions were acquired.

I prepared an interview guide (a list of questions based on the key themes from the literature) for each interview session. The semi-structured individual interviews were intended to obtain an in-depth understanding of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process and the subsequent food service contract signed with the multinational food service corporation Aramark. As the contract differed from the previous ones with a keen emphasis on sustainable procurement strategies, interviews also involved specific questions on the most up-to-date procurement practices, challenges and successes concerning these practices. In addition, discussions brought up questions addressing the flexibility aspect of purchasing arrangements, how procurement decisions were made and how food sustainability was defined in relation to procurement. I continued to adapt the interview guide as I began to identify emergent themes from the initial set of interviews I had conducted. I held individual interviews with student informants for confidentiality reasons and to simplify scheduling, but I was open to interviewing them in groups

if they wished. However, no such wish was expressed. Professional informants affiliated with the university and the food service provider, however, did express an interest in holding a group interview. Therefore, one of my interviews was a group interview conducted with 3 individuals including the SFS coordinator affiliated with Concordia's Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), the director of Hospitality Concordia, and Aramark Concordia's Health, Well-Being and Sustainability (HWS) manager.

2.1.3. Discourse analysis

My interest in Concordia University's food procurement policies and how they relate to its discursive commitment to food sustainability originated from an embodied awareness of the power that accompanied these discourses as they circulated in and out of multiple campus spaces. The Grey Nuns resident cafeteria where I ate three meals a day for a duration of four months provided me with countless emotional and intellectual stimulants to develop this awareness. As I was simultaneously learning about the ways in which ideologies of neoliberal governance are articulated and normalized, my curiosity simultaneously began revolving around Aramark Concordia's food sustainability commitments, and later more specifically around the discourses and practices of food procurement. The global commodity chain framework helped me see how practices of consumption/food procurement can be "written into discourse" with their keen focus on tracing the origins of foods or tracking ethics across the production and consumption circuits (Pratt, 199, p.225).

I listened to those undertaking the task of procurement within Concordia University's dominant food system and compared my findings to the narratives that circulate within the university's online and offline domains. In order to develop a holistic understanding of the campus food systems at Concordia, I also interacted with the alternative food movement actors

on campus and tried to comprehend the ways in which they differ from the dominant campus food system in discourse and practice.

Taking its roots from cultural theory, and particularly taken up by Michel Foucault, discourse analysis serves to identify the various strands that comprise naturalized narratives before they set off to achieve effects of power. Pratt (1999) reminds that despite cultural theory's "emphasis on the everyday and the local", at its core, discourses are abstract expressions of subjectivity and social and economic life (p.216). Following from this, this study chose to extend out from an analysis of everyday local power relations rather than scrutinize the concept of scale (i.e. the 'local') at the core of Concordia's food sustainability discourse. Further, as Spivak advocates, engaging with material interests, and how they are signified in the discursive realm can facilitate the exposure of structures that obscure capitalist relations. To that end, discourse analysis serves to detect patterns in the power-induced discourse, and tracing the origins of these patterns shed light on "how subjects come to understand themselves and their capabilities and how material inequalities are produced through everyday situated practices" (cited in Pratt, 1999, p.216).

2.1.4. Limitations

2.1.4.1. Student representation

I initially planned to conduct a survey with Grey Nuns resident students to include resident student feedback on cafeteria food, but my suggestion was declined by Concordia University's Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) on the basis that they had already begun implementing various feedback mechanisms, such as monthly meetings at the residence, garnering feedback from residence assistance, a Your Voice Counts webpage and We Care Wednesdays (a reminder every Wednesday about the available feedback mechanisms). Given the

restraints on timely access to this information and the limited scope of a master's thesis, I decided not to go into an in-depth analysis of this dimension. Therefore, the broader implications of student representation on campus food system transformation are not discussed. Nonetheless, a lack of student representation in campus-based food movements and food system decisions has come up during the interviews and numerous events I attended. Therefore, I restricted my analysis on student representation to the discussion in my conclusion, based on the data I retrieved during my interviews.

2.1.4.2. Ethics approval process

This study received ethics approval from the College of Ethics Reviewers (CER) affiliated with Concordia University. My e-mail correspondence with the research ethics unit informed me that due to university staff involvement in my study, I was required to collect approval letters from their respective work units. Permitting these individuals' participation in my study, the letters were to be approved by an authorized representative, i.e. manager or director of the work unit. One of my major recruitment hubs for key student-informants was the campus-based Hive Cafe Solidarity Cooperative. Yet, getting an approval letter was not a straightforward task, as this organization does not have a fast-paced, hierarchical organizational structure.

Therefore, due to the significant difference in governance structures, i.e. corporate versus cooperative, and the amount of capital and labour resources at their disposal, it took much longer for the Hive Cafe Board of Directors to provide me the approval letter than it took EHS or Aramark. This gave me a longer time to follow up questions with the EHS and Aramark informants. Coupled with their promptness in responding to my questions, I spent more

‘interview time’ with Concordia and Aramark informants than with my (mostly) student informants.

3. CHAPTER 3: Contextualizing Concordia’s sustainability agenda

‘Sustainability’ has been a central concept in Concordia University’s structures of governance as well as in its operations and public relations, with a particular focus on food sustainability. This chapter seeks to provide some context for the emergence of a food sustainability agenda at Concordia. To help set the scene for the Concordia case, the chapter begins with a more general discussion of the concept of sustainability. It considers how it has been defined historically, including some tensions associated with the multiplicity of meanings attached to it, as well as recent efforts to assess it. This discussion provides a backdrop for better understanding of Concordia’s own sustainability policy – both its evolution and some of the tensions it embodies - as well as the two sets of ‘sustainable’ food systems that exist on campus.

From activism to academia, popular culture to industry, the term sustainability is simply everywhere. In the face of economic and environmental crisis, and unprecedented rates of urbanization, the term has become ubiquitous in policy circles and across countless social domains. On one hand, the popularity of the term sustainability can be interpreted as revealing the widely-shared desire for a more environmentally just and sustainable future. On the other hand, this popularity results in competing and often contradictory meanings and applications of the term that pose challenges for sustainability scholarship, organizing, and practice.

During the interviews I conducted with the student food groups, one concern that came up multiple times was to do with the definition of ‘sustainability’, and how it took shape in relation to the campus food system. When asked my informants to define sustainability, most of them defined it in reference to the ‘three pillars of sustainability’ model. As one of my

informants clearly laid out, these pillars described sustainability in terms of (i) economics (ii) environmental practices and (iii) human and animal welfare (the Hive Café former kitchen coordinator, personal interview, March 13, 2017).

The three-pillar model for sustainability (and its corollary sustainable development)⁸ dates back to *The World Conservation Strategy* put together by the UNEP in 1980. This strategy served to identify the need for long-term thinking and set the intention to meld the environmental objectives with the developmental ones (World Conservation Strategy, IUCN, UNEP & WWF, 1980).

Nevertheless, the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) had not yet conceptualized sustainability in the way we understand the term today. This was because the term was developed specifically to address the issues of conservation at that time. One important formulation of sustainable development that came out of the WCS emphasized the idea that it was not only the affluent, developed countries who were capable of degrading the environment. Poverty coupled with population growth, was also designated as a potential cause of environmental degradation which in turn would hinder development and lead to the perpetuation of poverty.

The correlation between environmental degradation and poverty marked a break with mainstream environmentalist discourse that had formerly positioned economic growth as incompatible with environmental quality. In 1987, *The World Commission on Environment and Development* chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland expanded the scope of sustainable development while ensuring popular use at the global scale: “Sustainable development becomes a goal not just for developing nations but for industrial ones as well” (WCED 1987, p.4).

⁸ Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Report, WCED, 1987, p.43).

Today's popular understanding of the term sustainability and its interchangeable use with 'sustainable development' can be traced back to the *International Conference on Environment and Economics* held at OECD headquarters in London in 1984. Later on, in 1987, discussions on how to formulate sustainability gained popular momentum with the publication of *Our Common Future*, the United Nations World Commission's report on Environment and Development, often referred to as the *Brundtland Report* (Kates et al., 2015, p.9). Among the conclusions of the conference, it was stated that environment and the economy, if properly managed, are "mutually reinforcing; and are supportive of and supported by technological innovation" (International Conference on Environment and Economics [ICEE], 1984). In identifying the emerging trends, the report tackled the concept of 'renewed economic growth' and presented a discussion on its strong ties to technical developments. It was also identified that this new understanding of economic growth might cause "new and complex pollution problems" (SDAC, n.d.). In unpacking the term 'renewed economic growth', I aim to highlight the economy-environment tension in the following section. I will also explain how this tension is governed in relation to sustainability via sustainability assessments.

3.1. Which should be privileged: Economy or environment? Weak or strong sustainability?

The 1984 conference highlighted a new take on the economy and the environment relationship. In the report published after the conference, the long-time conviction that regulations set for environmental protection had a negative bearing on economic growth was deemed outdated for the first time (Bermejo, 2014, p.35). Therefore, in the renewed conception of economic growth, continued environmental improvement and sustained economic development were considered "essential, compatible and interrelated policy objectives for OECD Member countries" (ICEE, 1984, conclusion no.7). Also, further attention was drawn to the

scarcity of environmental resources which are essential for economic and social development. Predicting the adverse consequences of inept environmental policies, the conference concluded that there was an urgent need for improved management of environmental resources. Three actions were identified at both domestic and international scales: (i) integration of environment and economic policies, (ii) implementation of “anticipate and prevent” strategies and (iii) making more cost-effective and efficient environmental policies (ICEE, 1984, conclusions no. 9-11).

In his analysis of the Brundtland Report, where the three pillars of sustainability scheme originates, Stern (1997) noted the report’s claims about how economic growth could be accelerated, and possibly change direction while meeting sustainability criteria (p.147). Yet, the report presented little or no evidence to back up this claim for ‘sustainable growth’. Judith Rees (1990) also argued that significant progress in natural resource management could not take place within the then existing institutional frameworks. Rees (1990) commented about the Brundtland Report with a critical tone: “It allows us to have our cake and eat it too” (Rees, 1990, p.435). Similarly, Michael Common (1995) described the report as a “brilliant political document” constructed to garner the maximum support for sustainable development. Stern (1997) concluded that *Our Common Future* was actually a “mass of contradictory statements and unfounded assertions” (p.147).

Although so far no consensus has been reached on the definition of sustainable development, all theories acknowledge that “future welfare or well-being is determined by what happens to wealth over time” (Atkinson et al., 2000, p.241). Albeit a common theme, welfare and/or well-being are far from having clear-cut definitions themselves. A review of the literature reveals two distinct camps with regards to the relation between welfare or well-being, and

sustainability: the ‘weak sustainability’ camp and the ‘strong sustainability’ camp. Such classification too is based on an economy-environment tension.

In weak sustainability, natural capital⁹ and manufactured capital are substitutable and produce the same kinds of well-being and/or welfare (Ekins et al., 2003; Neumayer, 2003; Neumayer, 2012). From an economic perspective, what differentiates weak sustainability from strong sustainability is the decision to afford special protection to natural capital, or allow substitution by other forms of capital, especially produced capital (Pelenc & Ballet, 2015). In weak sustainability practices, the costs of attainment are prioritized, and are generally derived as a result of a cost–benefit analysis. This approach which inescapably draws on trade-offs between the environment, and the socio-economic benefits, can be defined as more of an *economic* sustainability where resources allocation, practices of consumption, and the resulting financial value constitute the integral component of sustainability practices¹⁰ (Bell & Morse, 2008, p.13).

In contrast, strong sustainability does not prioritize the financial costs of attaining sustainability. Its focus is primarily on the environment. Therefore, it is also referred to as *ecological* sustainability. In this type of sustainability, the system quality¹¹, defined as the physical measures of population, soil erosion and biodiversity, is given priority (Bell & Morse, p.13-17). Summers and Smith (2014) form their definitions of weak and strong sustainability in

⁹ Natural Capital can be defined as the world’s stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things (World Forum on Natural Capital Edinburgh, 2015)

¹⁰ Ecological modernization is also another widely used term that is strongly associated with capitalism and weak sustainability, has had its fair share of criticism for being too optimistic about the technological and governance solutions to the economy–environment tension (Mol & Spaargaren, 2000). A generally accepted critique of ecological modernization is that it is “essentially a political strategy to try to accommodate the environmentalist critique of the 1970s on with the 1980s deregulatory neo-liberal climate” (Christoff, 1996; Dryzek, 2013). In other words, ecological modernization is still based in the capitalist logic but with a greener aspect—and as such it “avoids addressing basic contradictions endemic to capitalism” (Pepper, 1998, p.3).

¹¹ Initial accounts of system quality and sustainability focused on natural resources and environment, with emphasis on measurable, physical entities such as “the level of water and air pollution, soil erosion, soil acidity or alkalinity, crop yield, and biodiversity”; later on quality of human life was also included among the parameters of system quality (Bell & Morse, 2008, p.17).

relation to future generations, and their right to be able to supply their needs. According to Summers and Smith (2014), there are two different ways of fulfilling the moral obligation owed to future generations. One way of fulfilling this moral obligation would simply be equating the environment to the natural resources or natural capital that is available for wealth creation, and ensuring that future generations have the same ability to create wealth as we have (Summers & Smith, 2014, p.725). This approach aims to compensate future generations for any loss of environmental quality by availing ‘alternative’ sources of wealth creation, and it is referred to as “weak sustainability” because it treats natural resources as if their loss can be compensated with monetary means.

The second way to fulfil the moral obligation we owe future generations is to reject the conceptualization of the environment as a resource for mere economic potential. This approach advocates that the environment cannot be replaced by human-made wealth and that future generations should not inherit a degraded environment, no matter how many additional sources of wealth are made available to them (Summers & Smith, 2014, p.725).

So far, I discussed the underlying tension between economy and environment and showed how questions of giving priority to one or the other raises some fundamental questions about what sustainability can or cannot be.

3.2.1. Assessing sustainability

However difficult sustainability and sustainable development have proven to define, ‘sustainability assessments’ have emerged as a key instrument to evaluate how sustainable a given project or policy is. Such assessments are based on measurements that seek to establish the impact caused by the production and/or consumption of goods and services, and the efficiency of public and private sustainable governance objectives and methods (Sala et al., 2015, p.315).

Some of the parameters for assessment, formed with the popularization of the Brundtland Report (1987), were grounded in the (i) growing awareness of the limits to growth, and the necessity of considering the long-term impacts of resource management decisions, (ii) enhanced attention to intergenerational concerns and transnational impacts, (iii) realization that a strict reliance on the market and “business as usual” will produce results that are not satisfactory in attaining social and environmental sustainability (Dixon & Fallon, 1989; Du Pisani, 2006)¹²

While sustainability assessments are primarily intended to inform evidence-based policy and institutional sustainability commitments, the literature suggests that indicators can be quite fluid and relative (Saltelli et al., 2008, Hansen, 2009; Ciuffo, 2012). Further, policy tends to pay more attention to economic indicators (e.g. GDP) than environmental indicators, and environmental indicators are monitored with much less regularity than the economic indicators (Conrad & Cassar, 2014, p.4). Some scholars even argue that sustainability’s epistemic uncertainty does not stem from its underlying theoretical framework, but mainly from intrinsic challenges in measuring it (Sala et al., 2015; Brunoti et al., 2016).

To be sure, the three-pillars approach to sustainability has some important advantages for sustainability assessment application. They fit well with the established scope of assessment. Put slightly different, the usual division of social, economic and environmental within the three pillar approaches allows government bodies to delegate responsibilities to respective organizational sub-bodies in project assessments or strategic decisions (Gibson, 2006, p.263). From the training of experts in the sustainability assessment to the methods of information/data collection, most tangible sustainability criteria still originate from an evaluation of the conceptual social, economic and ecological categories. Yet, integrating the findings generated by such

¹² Some of key concepts linked to measurements include ‘wealth’, ‘utility’, etc. but specific measures such as GDP use quantitative/numerical criteria, which do not easily capture quality of life attributes.

sustainability evaluation continues to pose an ongoing challenge since, in reality, these dimensions are interlinked and interdependent. This essentially methodological flaw makes the three-pillars approach a weak conceptual framework both on the level of institutional sustainability assessment, and at a broader epistemological level (Gibson, 2006, pp.263-64).

To counter this weakness effectively, scholars propose adopting an integrative approach (Eggenberger & Partidario, 2000; Scrase & Sheate, 2002; Dovers, 2005; Gibson, 2006). The integration approach argues that sustainability assessment as an integrative process can facilitate better decision-making in terms of policy and practice. Gibson (2006) suggests that an integrative assessment can only be achieved when the project's long-term effects are considered while bridging the de facto sustainability parameters with the contextual factors, and engaging experts and citizens (p.277). The integrative re-framing holds potential for a holistic assessment process that factors in the traditionally underrated aspects of sustainability, including ecological systems and functions, socio-economic inequities, and the element of uncertainty (Gibson, 2006, pp. 277-278).

3.2. Sustainability at Concordia

As indicated in the prior section, sustainability assessment is primarily intended to inform better, evidence-based policy and institutional sustainability commitments. However, Kielbeck (2015) notes that international organizations and treaties came to promote sustainability in higher education in the recent years, making it an important selling point for institutional leaders (p.69). For example, the *International Implementation Scheme (IIS)* prepared by UNESCO's education sector in the scope of the United Nation's *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* ("IIS", 2005-2014) program suggests a number of points for successful integration of sustainability into education. One of those points focuses on "reorienting" existing education

programs towards sustainability” (Combes, 2005, p.29). The program tasks the university with “question[ing], rethink[ing], and revis[ing] education from pre-school through university” to incorporate an in-depth understanding of sustainability principles in the domains of environment, society, and economy (Combes, 2005, p.29). Further, this re-configuration calls for a more holistic and interdisciplinary outlook on sustainability within the society at large, it also requires individual nations to tailor their sustainability commitments in a locally relevant and culturally appropriate manner. Following this recommendation, Velazquez et al. (2005) outlines the sustainability strategies in higher education under four categories: education, research, outreach and partnership, and implementation of sustainable campus operations. More specifically, Barlett (2011) proposes four categories of sustainability commitments for higher education institutions which would help align “both intent and capacity” in a realistic manner: purchasing goals, academic programs, direct marketing and experiential learning (p.102).

Although this study focuses on the interventions in campus operations, and specifically on food purchasing goals aimed at attaining an environmentally and socially sustainable food system at Concordia University, it is important to recognize that Concordia also has sustainability commitments in its academic development plan. The creation of Loyola Sustainable Research Centre¹³ in late 2012, as well as hosting the United Nation’s global sustainability program Future Earth¹⁴ have definitely enhanced both Concordia’s image and ability in terms of generating innovative trans-disciplinary solutions for sustainability issues (Kielback, 2015, p.139).

¹³ “The Loyola Sustainability Research Centre (LSRC) integrates the scholarly study of science, policy, and values in the pursuit of environmental and community sustainability” (“Loyola Sustainability Research Centre” (LSRC), n.d.).

¹⁴ “Future Earth is a major international research platform providing the knowledge and support to accelerate transformations to a sustainable world” (“Strategic Research Agenda”, 2014, iii).

3.2.1. Making and implementing sustainability policy at Concordia

The university adopted a new sustainability policy in January 2017. The policy document defines sustainability at Concordia as “a mindset and a process that leads to reducing our ecological footprint and enhancing social well-being while maintaining economic viability both on and off campus” (“Sustainability Policy”, 2016, p.3). As such, the document presents several guiding principles on topics like environmental protection, responsible production and consumption, ethical financial management, and the protection of cultural heritage (“Sustainability Policy”, 2016).

The governance of the processes that is articulated in this policy document is well- aligned with Velazquez et al.’s (2005) analysis of the sustainability models in higher education. Three committees are set up: one of which is concerned with daily campus operations and environmental sustainability, another with campus engagement, and the last with making curriculum and research connections to sustainability. The three sub-committees include a mix of faculty, administration, and students from Sustainable Concordia (SC), the Graduate Student Association, the Concordia Student Union and the Sustainability Action Fund (“Sustainability Policy”, 2016, p.5).

According to *The Link* newspaper, the advisory committee, chaired by vice-president of Services Robert Coté, is the main decision-making body for sustainability projects at Concordia (Lafontaine, 2017). A majority of the committee members come from the university’s administration. The advisory committee puts the final seal of approval on proposals, presented to them with the involvement of three sub-committees. Additionally, in the article, SC coordinator Mark Underwood clarified that the university held the power to dissolve these committees at any time up until the day of approval. However, having recently received the Board of Governors’

official approval, the sustainability policy committees are here to stay (Lafontaine, 2017). Concordia heralds the sustainability policy as a “university-wide plan [that] builds on a long tradition of green campus practices” from its official web page (“Introducing Concordia’s new sustainability policy”, 2017). The online news article is hyperlinked to four related stories within *Concordia.ca*, top two of which are *Concordia’s new food service provider focuses on ethical dining* and *It’s official: Concordia is a Fair Trade Campus* (“Introducing Concordia’s new sustainability policy”, 2017), promoting the new sustainability commitments Aramark Concordia made.

3.2.2. Certified sustainability at Concordia

Universities are considered to be uniquely equipped to spearhead significant social and economic change through sustainability innovations in their institutional practice (Sterling, 2013; Stephens et al., 2008). Sustainability assessment of institutional practices, including campus operations such as food procurement, are largely conducted based on certification regimes that focus on the supply chain’s production end.

The first sustainability assessment efforts at Concordia were made by the student body. According to Sustainable Concordia’s website, the organization was founded in 2002 with the efforts of two avid students, Geneva Guerin and Melissa Garcia Lamarca, who wanted to make sustainability a top priority at Concordia. As a result of their leadership and the contributions from key stakeholders from Concordia’s staff, faculty and administration, the Sustainable Concordia (SC) Project was launched as a working group under Québec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG) (“A brief history of Sustainable Concordia”, n.d.). According to Kielback’s

(2015) account, before becoming a student fee levy group, SC was sponsored by Concordia University's Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)¹⁵ (p. 125).

The primary goal of SC at the time was to develop a vision for campus sustainability through a collaborative process that involved diverse campus stakeholders. These stakeholders formed the project's Advisory Committee. With the help of faculty members of the Advisory Committee, SC managed to facilitate credited student research on the sustainability assessment trends of the day.

An art student designed the assessment document, and a communications student developed a website for SC to ensure the organization's survival beyond the completion of the sustainability assessment. The 2003 Concordia Campus Sustainability Assessment (CCSA) was published in early 2004. In the same year, a researcher from the Campus Sustainability Assessment Project¹⁶ conducted reviews for 1,400 assessments in North America, and ranked the CCSA at #2 for its comprehensive scope and multi-stakeholder engagement ("A Brief History of Sustainable Concordia", n.d.). The CCSA was institutionalized by the administration, and the job description of the Sustainability Coordinator¹⁷ was made to include management of the CCSA. Concordia University is registered under the university rating system "American Association of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking and Rating System"

¹⁵ At Concordia, the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) ensures "an environmentally responsible, safe and healthy work, research and study environment" ("Environmental Health and Safety", n.d.). The Office of EHS is responsible for delivering inspections and designing trainings which aim to develop and implement practical and sustainable processes to manage campus innovations.

¹⁶ In 2003, Lindsay Cole, a graduate student at Royal Roads University was working on campus sustainability assessment. Through the SC, Concordia became the pilot project for her thesis that employed a participatory action research approach. The objective was to design a framework for assessing sustainability on Canadian university campuses. The methodological framework Cole used in her study later became the Sierra Youth Coalition's Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF). As of Summer 2007, the CSAF has been used at over 25 campuses ("A Brief History of Sustainable Concordia", n.d.)

¹⁷ According to the 2015 CCSA's foreword by Pietro Gasparri, the director of Environmental Health & Safety department, "one of the first CCSA's accomplishments was the creation of two full-time, permanent positions (the Environmental Coordinator and the Sustainability Coordinator) within Environmental Health & Safety dedicated to the advancement of sustainability at Concordia" (2015, p.2).

(STARS). In North America, STARS promotes institutional change based upon how sustainable the education and research, planning, administration and outreach, and operations on campus are (“STARS Overview”, 2017). The publication of this rating acts to improve the reputation of a higher education institute and can affect how it ranks (STARS, 2012). The Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS®) also promotes change based on the institution’s self-reflection of “how sustainable its education and research, planning, administration and engagement, and operations are” (Kielback, 2015, p.62). In 2012, Concordia received a silver certification rating level with a score of 45%. According to Concordia’s campus sustainability assessment, among the five different STAR certification levels¹⁸, silver certification indicates that sustainability initiatives are already an important aspect at Concordia but also that further improvement is possible (Gasparrini, 2015).

In North American and Western European universities, it is common practice to require the contracted campus food provider’s (usually one of the Big Three) enrollment in sustainability certification programs. In Canada, STARS certification includes specific requirements addressing local and sustainable food procurement on campus. A minimum of 75% of the food purchases that the contracted food service company makes must be third-party verified to be considered “ecologically sound, fair and/or humane and/or local and community-based, and conventionally produced animal products must comprise less than 30 percent of the institutions total contracted food purchases” (“Stars -Concordia University Food and Beverage Purchasing”, 2016).

¹⁸ Platinum (85%+), Gold (65%+), Silver (45%+), Bronze (25%+) and Reporter (“Recognition and Scoring”, 2017)

3.2.3. Food sustainability at Concordia

One of the newly emerging forms of sustainability at Concordia is food sustainability. With the former food service provider Chartwells¹⁹ completing its contract term in 2015 after 13 years, the university community entered a period of rapid change with regards to its food system. Aramark, one of the three multinational food corporations that share almost all institutional food contracts in North America in healthcare and education sectors, ended up winning Concordia's food service contract bid in 2015. Aramark's term marks a heightened emphasis on food sustainability at Concordia, particularly manifested through the university's governance strategies, as well as its operations and public relations.

The changes at the administration level reflect a set of discourses (and to some extent practices) that, I suggest, are linked to a new ideological trend emerging where institutional food procurement and sustainability overlap. This new trend concerning campus food is reflected in the recent imperative to “shift institutional food purchasing from the ‘best value’ narrative defined by lowest cost” to sourcing local and sustainable food (Reynolds & Hunter, 2017). Moreover, to accommodate this shift, a number of North American universities have been creating in-house sustainable food system coordinator/manager positions. The Sustainable Food System (SFS) coordinator position at Concordia is an example of this trend²⁰. Barlett (2011) calls these positions that have been created in the last several years “forager positions” (p.107). Since

¹⁹ According to Compass Group Canada's website, the company is currently “Canada's leading foodservice and support services company, with \$1.8 billion in managed revenue in 2013 and over 26,000 associates across the country” (‘Compass Group Canada Profile’, 2014). The Big Three are awarded contracts globally in food and cleaning services in a variety of institutional settings including K-12 schools, campuses and hospital.

²⁰ University of British Columbia, McGill University and Concordia University in Canada currently have SFS coordinator positions.

the SFS coordinator focuses on finding ways to develop ties with the local/regional farms, their role is likened to a forager of local suppliers²¹.

Similarly, a number of food service providers (largely the ‘Big Three’) have created sustainability coordinator positions, signaling the effort required to fulfil their sustainable food commitments²². At Concordia University, the SFS Coordinator is mainly responsible for “identifying local food purchasing needs and opportunities, and developing constructive and collaborative relationships with contracted food service providers, local food suppliers and on-campus food initiatives” (“Sustainable Eating”, n.d.)

Although there are successful alternative food initiatives or promising food system projects that have emerged in some Canadian and U.S. universities, the majority of these universities continue to contract their food services out to one of the largest three multinational food service providers (Barlett, 2011, p.107). In doing so, they restrain the possibilities for campus food sustainability to an intrinsically profit-seeking, globally-operationalized agribusiness model. Food sustainability commitments made within the confines of such a model

²¹ Supplier is defined as a party that is the source for goods or services. A supplier provides the products, commodity or services to consumers, usually via distributors. The suppliers can be producers/growers, processors, packagers, wholesalers, dealers, and merchants who deal in particular products and merchandise. The difference between the distributor and the supplier is that the supplier is the provider of a product/service which can be traced back to the producer, whereas the distributor can be any organization that purchases products from a supplier, stores them, and then resells them to retailers. In the case of direct producer-consumer relationships concerning fresh produce purchases, the producers is the supplier, and there is not distributor involved (November 18, 2015, <https://theydiffer.com/difference-between-supplier-and-distributor/>).

²² Chartwells at the University of Waterloo and Trent University, Aramark at Concordia University and Dalhousie University are some examples. Also, since December 2015, Chartwells has a position called Manager of Campus Engagement and Sustainability who oversees the implementation of Chartwells Campus Projects across Canada. In addition, a non-profit organization called Meal Exchange, runs their Real Food Challenge program on 35 university campuses in Canada to address food sustainability issues within campuses. The program is based on The Real Food Calculator, basically a verification tool, administered by students in collaboration with foodservices and faculty to provide an independent audit of the ‘Real Food’ purchases on campus. Greenbelt Fund, Vancouver Foundation, Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, Vancity enviroFund and Eco Canada are the funding sources for the development of Real Food Challenge in Canada (Chartwells top management officer, personal communication, June 17, 2016; Dalhousie University Media Centre, 2015; “Real Food Challenge Canada”, n.d.)

invariably accentuate a shift in institutional procurement practices so as to create shorter commodity chains, hence local/regional food hubs and distributional networks. While signing partial or exclusive contracts with one of the Big Three agribusiness companies, i.e. Chartwells, Sodhexo and Aramark, is common practice among North American universities, each contract creates a unique campus food system because of the particular composition of spaces available for food production and retail.

In the following section I will lay out two different food systems that are currently operational at Concordia University: the food system run by Concordia food services and that of the student food groups. I will place a particular focus on the procurement practices underway among Concordia food services actors.

3.3. Mapping out food at Concordia

3.3.1. Concordia food services

According to the online document that the university published regarding the food service contract and the RFP in 2014, all of the spaces to be managed by Hospitality Concordia in collaboration with the food provider Aramark are grouped under the name *Concordia food services* (“FAQ: What services are referred to in the Concordia University Food Services RFP process?”, n.d.). These spaces consist of two residence cafeterias as well as the retail food service outlets on both the downtown campus of Sir George Williams (SGW) and the west-end campus of Loyola. One of the cafeterias is the Grey Nuns Dining Hall, located in the Grey Nuns Residence on the downtown SGW Campus. The retail food service outlets on the downtown

SGW Campus are the LB Café and the LB Bookstore Café, located in the Library Building, and the Café 4, located on the 4th floor of the Hall Building²³ (“Places to Eat”, n.d.) (see Figure 1).

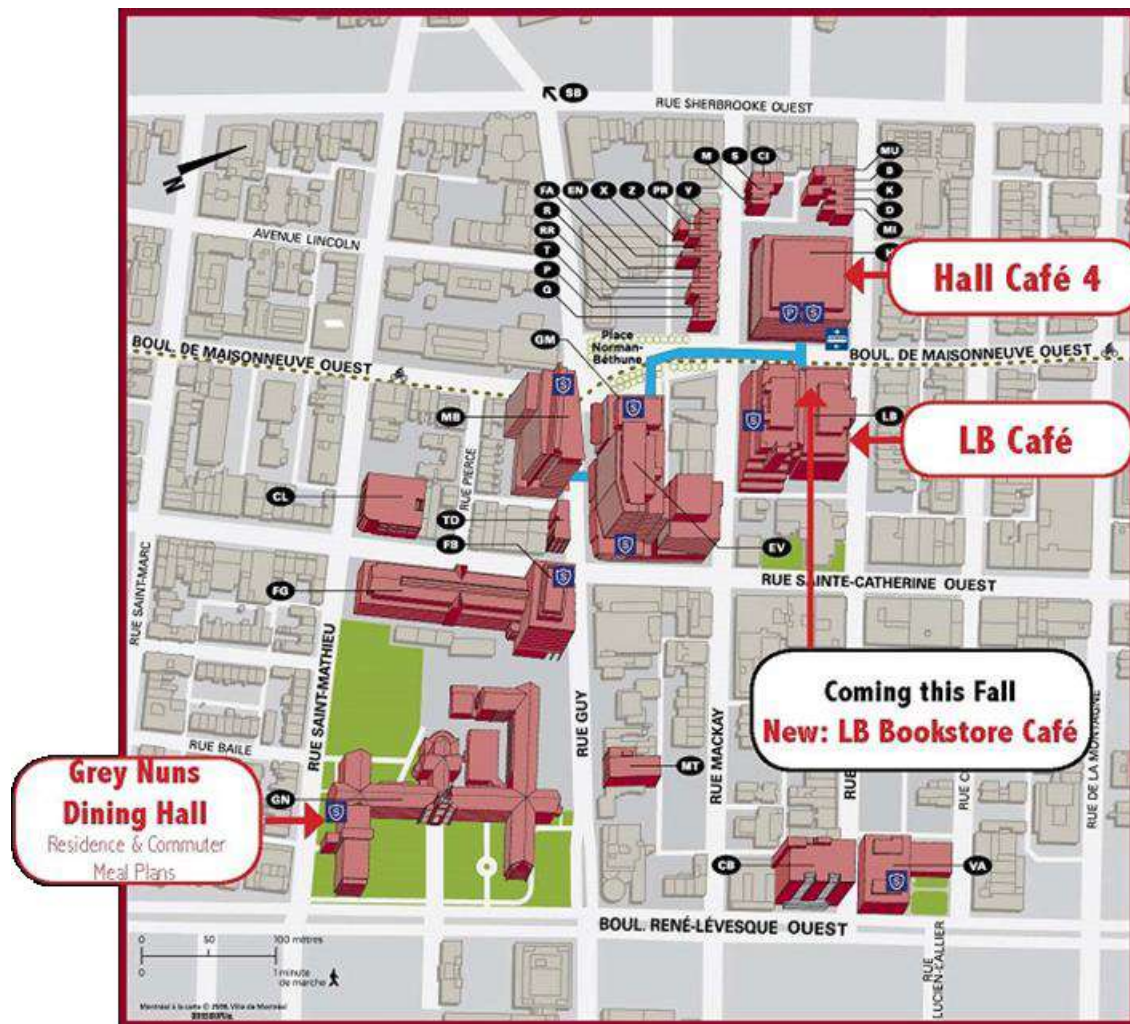


Figure 1. The retail food service outlets spaces currently managed by Hospitality Concordia, in collaboration with the food provider, Aramark on Sir George Williams Campus. From “Places to Eat” on Concordia University Food Services Webpage, 2015. https://www.concordia.ca/campus-life/food-services/places-to-eat.html?cq_ck=1438721868697#loyola-map

The second cafeteria, located on the Loyola Campus, is named The Buzz Dining Hall. The retail food service outlets on Loyola Campus are the AD Café, located in the Administration Building, the SP Café in the Richard J. Renaud Science Complex, the CJ Café in the

²³ Since the visual was published in 2015, the LB Book Store Café is shown as ‘new’. Aramark’s franchise Starbucks opened its doors on February 29, 2016 at this location (SFS coordinator, personal communication, July 5, 2017).

Communication Studies and Journalism Building, and the Rez Café in the Hingston Hall B
("Places to Eat", n.d.). (see Figure 2)

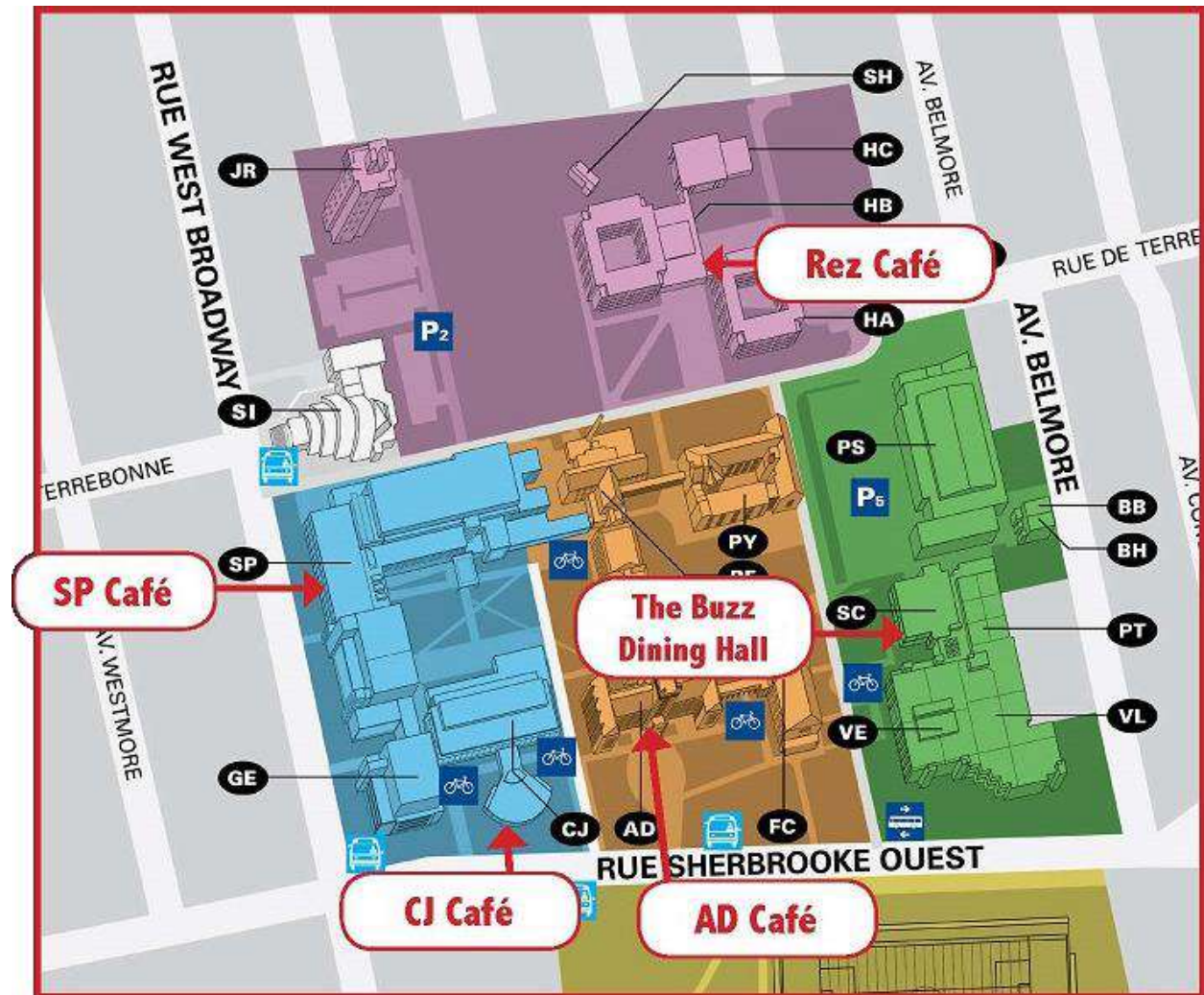


Figure 2. The retail food service outlets spaces currently managed by Hospitality Concordia, in collaboration with the food provider, Aramark on Loyola Campus. From "Places to Eat" on Concordia University Food Services Webpage, 2015. https://www.concordia.ca/campus-life/food-services/places-to-eat.html?q_ck=1438721868697#loyola-map

The food service contract signed between Concordia University and Aramark manages the provision of (i) the daily meals for students living in residence (as part of their daily Meal Plan program) (ii) the meals, snacks and beverages served at the retail outlets, and snack machines, and (iii) catering services that provide food and beverages for events held on campus.

Residence meal plan

The residence meal plan is the major source of revenue for Aramark Concordia. A total of 910 students live in both residences at Concordia, 600 staying at the Grey Nuns Residence, and 310 at Loyola Jesuit Residence. The Grey Nuns dining hall is estimated to get 600 “swipes”²⁴ per day, and the Buzz dining hall on Loyola campus gets approximately 100 “swipes” per day (Aramark Concordia management, personal communication, May 12, 2017). The meal plan provides for all-you-can eat at both of the main residence dining cafeterias on the Sir George Williams and Loyola Campuses for a duration of 8 months (two school terms). There are three main meals served throughout the day at both cafeterias²⁵.

The most recent cost of the mandatory meal plan is \$4,100²⁶. Students are also required to pay an additional \$210 for the *dining dollars plan*, which allows them to use their student ID to purchase food and beverages at the Aramark-run retail locations (see below). Students (predominantly international) who choose to live on campus are mandated to purchase the residence meal plan to be able to secure a room at the residence.

Retail locations

Sir George Williams Campus (Downtown)

Among the downtown SGW Campus food retail offerings is the Café 4 in the Hall Building with its new brand name The Green Beet. The Green Beet serves food that is made and packaged at Grey Nuns cafeteria’s kitchen. The LB (Library Building) Café hosts a Tim Hortons,

²⁴ The students come in and swipe their ID cards every time they come to the cafeteria to eat, whether it be for a full meal or just a coffee or a snack.

²⁵ The meals are served according to the following schedule: Breakfast from 7:00 am to 10:30 am, lunch from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm and dinner from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm on the week days, and brunch from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm and dinner from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm on the weekends (Grey Nuns Dining Hall, <https://www.concordia.ca/campus-life/food-services/places-to-eat/grey-nuns-dining-hall.html>)

²⁶ When I was a resident-student in the 2015-16 academic year, the meal plan costed \$3,800, and the dining dollars students were obligated to purchase costed \$190.

a Freshii and a Bento Nouveau kiosk. There is also a shared food court included. These three food outlets are run by Aramark as franchises, each of which is mandated to keep to the style, products and the supply chain practices of the parent companies Tim Hortons, Bento Sushi and Freshii, respectively. Similarly, LB Bookstore Café (beside the Bookstore entrance at the Library Building) features a full Starbucks run by Aramark as a franchise, therefore the products served at this Starbucks location follow the supply chain practices of Starbucks.

Table 1. Sir George Williams Campus (Downtown) Food Retail Locations contracted to Aramark			
NAME	OPERATED BY	ROLE	PROCUREMENT PRACTICES
*Grey Nuns Residence Cafeteria	Aramark	Serves Mandatory Meal Plan	Follows Aramark’s Food Service Contract
*Café 4 (The Green Beet)	Aramark	Aramark’s brand & Serves food made and packaged at Grey Nuns cafeteria’s kitchen	Follows Aramark’s Food Service Contract
LB Café	Tim Hortons, Freshii, Bento Nouveau	Aramark’s franchise	Each procures through own suppliers/distributors & Does NOT follow Aramark’s Food Service Contract
LB Bookstore Café	Starbucks	Aramark’s franchise	Procures through own suppliers/distributors & Does NOT follow Aramark’s Contract or Fair Trade Campus requirements

*** Follows Aramark’s Food Service Contract**

Loyola Campus

Loyola AD Café is run directly by Aramark, and their procurement practices follow the benchmarks indicated in the food service contract (which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter). The SP Café hosts Aramark franchise Tim Hortons, and Aramark’s home brand The

Market. Therefore, Aramark has full control over procurement practices at The Market, and these purchases are made in line with the food service contract requirements. However, at the SP Café, Aramark doesn't have control over Tim Hortons' procurement as franchises use the suppliers/distributors that of Tim Hortons'.

Loyola CJ Café serves breakfast sandwich, bakery pizza, sandwiches, salads, snacks and fruit prepared at Aramark's Grey Nuns or the Buzz (at Loyola) kitchens, and carries Starbucks brand coffees. Lastly, the Rez Café carries bulk-sized grocery and confectionary items as well as Starbucks brand coffees ("Places to Eat", n.d.).

The CJ and Rez Café serve Café Rico (fair trade) for espresso and Starbucks' Fairtrade certified Estima Blend for regular coffee. The only outlets that don't follow the Fair Trade Campus requirements are the franchises (the full Starbucks at the LB Building, the Tim Hortons at the LB Building and the SP Café at Loyola). The franchise procurement practices are not governed by the food service contract signed between the university and Aramark.

Aramark also runs the catering service 'Seasons Catering' at Concordia. The procurement of Seasons Catering also abides by the food service contract. When organizing an event on campus, there is also an option to select from a varied list of 'University Approved Caterers'. These caterers manage their own supply chains.

Table 2. Loyola Campus - Food Retail Locations contracted to Aramark			
LOCATION & YEAR	ORGANIZATION	ROLE	PROCUREMENT
The Buzz Dining Hall (Loyola Residence) *	Aramark	Serves Mandatory Meal Plan	Follows Food Service Contract signed between Concordia and Aramark
AD Café*	Aramark	Aramark's own brand	Follows Food Service Contract signed between Concordia and Aramark
SP Café	Tim Hortons & Aramark - The Market	Aramark's franchise & Own brand	Does NOT follow Food Service Contract, procures through own suppliers/distributors & Follows Food Service Contract
CJ Café	Starbucks	Aramark's franchise	Does NOT follow Food Service Contract. Procures through own suppliers/distributors
Rez Café	Starbucks	Aramark's franchise	Does NOT follow Food Service Contract. Procures through own suppliers/distributors.

*** Follows Aramark's Food Service Contract**

3.3.2. Student-run campus food initiatives

These initiatives are comprised of cafés, a food cooperative, and two kitchens serving hot meals. All of them place a strong emphasis on affordability while adhering to a 'food sustainability' that they individually define according to what their circumstances allow. Those initiatives that serve hot meals cook the food they serve from scratch.

The Hive Café Solidarity Co-Operative

Among the student run food outlets The Hive Café Co-op is a solidarity cooperative that places the most pronounced emphasis on procurement. As well, The Hive is a student-run food initiative that was formed in response to the core food monopoly of corporate food companies on campus (Bauer, 2016). Their procurement policy explicitly proclaims responsibility for environmental, social, political, and economic repercussions of their supply chain choices.

The Hive Café operates as a non-profit organization with three distinct categories of membership, namely user-members, worker-members, and support or community-members. The predominantly student-operated cooperative serves as an affordable food outlet that is aimed to be “a model food system at Concordia University that provides food through sustainable practices [while] empower[ing] the student community” (“Mission”, 2017). An average of 800 people visits the Hive Café’s downtown location on a daily basis (Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017).

The Hive’s other initiative is the free vegetarian lunch (vegan option available) offered at the Loyola campus every weekday during the school year, named the Hive Loyola Free Lunch. Subsidized by the Concordia Student Union (CSU) and an Arts and Science Faculty Fee Levy, the Hive Loyola Free Lunch provides an alternative to the main food provider Aramark’s cafeteria for up to 300 people on a daily basis (the Loyola Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, March 14, 2017). The program is coordinated by two paid coordinators and volunteers who help with prepping, cooking, serving and cleaning up (“Hive Free Lunch”, 2017).

Café X

Café X is a student-run, nonprofit, vegetarian café, with locations in both the Visual Arts (VA) and the Engineering, Computer Science and Visual Arts Integrated Complex EV Buildings on downtown Sir George Williams Campus. Their mission is to be as “environmentally sustainable as possible” while offering with local, affordable, healthy, delicious food (“Café X”, n.d.).

People’s Potato

People’s Potato is a vegan soup kitchen at Concordia University that students started in 1999 in order to” address student poverty” (“Who are we?”, n.d.). Their funding primarily comes from a student fee levy which means that each undergraduate student pays 40 cents per credit and each graduate student pays \$2 per semester (“Funding”, n.d.).

They offer by-donation meals each day of the week during the Fall and Winter terms. They serve more than 400 meals daily to students and other community members with the help of volunteers. Among their commitments is providing education about healthy cooking and food politics as well as broader issues of social and environmental justice (“The People’s Potato”, n.d.). People’s Potato is also committed provide the “Concordia community with a healthy alternative to the restaurants on and off campus” (“Company Overview”, n.d.). They do not serve animal products, and describe their food as “wholesome foods that have high protein contents such as sprouted seeds, grains and beans”, emphasizing the health aspect in relation to food procurement.

People’s Potato does not publicize food sustainability or sustainability per se as an organizational objective. In an online video interview, Jamiey Kelly, a collective member of the People’s Potato, states that sustainability can be seen as a natural byproduct of how they run their

operations (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015b). According to Kelly, their relationships with food bank distributors that deliver them food that would otherwise go to a dumpster is sustainable practice, but People's Potato commitment is not to promote 'sustainability' as an organizational policy project. Rather, they uphold an understanding of a campus food system that pays attention to "anti-oppression, social and environmental justice and [fighting] student poverty" (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015b).

People's Potato does not utter the word 'local' in any of its publications either. Since its inception in 1999, the People's Potato has been an autonomous fee-levy funded initiative that has been serving alternative food on campus for the longest time, and does not have strong ties to the CSU in the way that the CFC and the Hive café do.

Mother Hubbard's Cupboard

Located on Sir George William campus, Mother Hubbard's Cupboard provides a \$2 vegan dinner every Thursday from September to early December and January to early April. The program is offered by the Multi-faith and Spirituality Centre, and there is study space and free tea and coffee available throughout the week ("Sustainable Student-run Food Groups on Campus", 2016).

3.3.3. Major food actors on campus that are not food outlets

Most of the above-presented, predominantly student-run food outlets are groups funded by fees paid by students, or otherwise termed 'fee levy' groups. The status of fee levy group is acquired through the referendum process that CSU governs. Therefore, CSU plays a key role in funding student run food initiatives. The decision to pose a referendum question in regards to the campus food system is taken by the CSU's Council of Representatives, or by a petition of the

members, pursuant to Article 9.6.1 of the By-Laws (“Food System Special Project Funding Policy”, n.d.). Therefore, CSU’s role in realizing student food system projects is paramount.

The other major campus food actors are comprised of the Concordia Food Coalition (CFC), an umbrella organization for student-run initiatives, and the Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) Coordinator affiliated with Concordia’s Office of Environment, Health and Safety (EHS).

With the current global shift towards food system change, Concordia University, like most other North American and European universities, has come to self-identify as an innovator in food sustainability efforts (Barlett, 2011, p.102; Sterling et al., 2013). Near the end of Chartwell’s 13-year-long contract term at Concordia, the university administration demonstrated a similar tendency to award its food service contract to one of the three dominant agribusiness enterprises. This caused longstanding student-led food activism against multinational food service providers gain momentum. (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015a; 2015c; 2015f). The following section comprises a discussion of how and why the most recent food-related student mobilization emerged at Concordia University.

3.4. The evolution of student mobilization

The final section of this background chapter to contextualize Concordia’s food sustainability landscape will trace the evolution of student mobilization on food sustainability since 2013. This movement has been instrumental in solidification of the alternative, coordinated student- run food system. This system also works to shape the broader sustainability orientation which the university must now navigate in and respond to. It further aids in setting the scene for a discussion in the next chapter, which will focus on how the Aramark contract was secured, as well as Aramark’s current procurement practices.

3.4.1. Chartwells term and Java-U's lease comes to an end

2013 marks the year of the first student mobilization towards envisioning Concordia's post-Chartwells food system. Nine out of the twelve student activists I interviewed mentioned 2013 as the year when Dr. Satoshi Ikeda, a sociology professor at Concordia, delivered an inspirational speech that led to student mobilization towards a predominantly student-run food system. 2013 is also the year when the CSU put out two referendum questions that would later have a significant impact on acquiring campus space for running predominantly student-operated food initiatives. The referendum questions were as follows:

1. Would you like to see the CSU actively support the new affordable, sustainable, student-run food service initiatives on campus?
2. The Student Space, Accessible Education & Legal Contingency Fund (SAELC) has been accumulating large amounts of student money for 10 years. The appropriate use of these funds as outlined in the by-laws is open to interpretation. Do you as a member of the Concordia Student Union approve of the use of a portion of this fund for the creation and expansion of predominantly student-run food systems projects on campus? ("Food System Special Project Funding Policy", n.d.)

The timing of the referendum questions was not coincidental. As explained in a November 2013 article in *The Link*, Java U's contract with the CSU's for-profit wing CusaCorp was soon to expire after 15 years of presence at the Hall Building, the largest building on the Sir George William campus²⁷ (Haris, 2013). At the same time, Concordia's contract with cafeteria food provider Chartwells was coming up for negotiation in 2015.

The referendum received significant support from the undergraduate voters (86%) giving the CSU a direct mandate to utilize the space in the Hall Building for a new student-run co-operative café (the Hive Café's former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017; the

²⁷ The Java-U café had leased the space from CUSAcorp—the for-profit arm of the Concordia Student Union—since 1998.

Loyola Hive Café's former coordinator, personal interview, March 14, 2017; student activist, personal interview, March 14, 2017; *The Link*, 2013).

The CSU officially obligated its for-profit arm CusaCorp to discontinue leasing the Hall Building mezzanine space to Java U once the lease expired. CusaCorp had been primarily responsible for running Concordia's official student bar, Reggie's, yet Reggie's had been running on deficit for a few years. CusaCorp had been inactive since May 2014 and there was disagreement within the CSU as to what to do about it. Following the election of a new CSU slate and the referendum questions the new executives launched, CSU decided to completely dissolve its for-profit entity CusaCorp.

3.4.2. An alternative approach to food sustainability

In an interview published in *The Link* in August 2015, the CSU's then elected president Terry Wilkings argued that Reggie's failure in the past was due to its for-profit structure (Caragay-Cook, 2015). According to Wilkings, because Reggie's could not manage to generate profit, the CSU ended up covering any resulting deficit. On the contrary, the new student enterprise would prioritize "financial and social sustainability" over profit, allowing any surplus to be invested into the community (Caragay-Cook, 2015). "The CSU culture avoids making profit off of student activity. We shouldn't be making a profit off of a service students desire," concludes Wilkings (Caragay-Cook, 2015).

Wilkings' statements, complemented with the dissolution of the CusaCorp, reflects ideological undercurrents that the current student-run initiatives have since adopted. Similarly, the Hive Café's former coordinator, who was also elected as a CSU executive in the 2013-2014 academic year, echoes Wilkins' remarks on profit and not embedding sustainability-oriented resources into pre-existing organizational structures. According to the Hive Café's former

coordinator, their initiative has motivations that are “outside of the pursuit of profit” and aspirations “to build something new” that would allow them “to redistribute the surplus, make services/goods accessible to people” (the Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017). Her following comment alluding to the particular ways in which the university tries to procure sustainable food are indicative of the positions the university and the student-run groups hold within the campus food terrain: “We are not trying to come up with a matrix system to measure sustainability” (the Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017).

3.4.2.1. The Concordia Food Coalition: Its birth and its role in Concordia food systems

The Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) was born out of the mobilization and the financial means acquired as a result of the new CSU slate’s election and the referendum questions they posed. While the political mobilization was still in force, student activists and a few faculty members who did not want Chartwells to be replaced by one of the other two multinational food providers, began meeting and discussing the meanings and possibilities associated with a ‘sustainable’ food system (“Our Story”, n.d.). It was largely the same CSU executives who decided to pose the referendum questions about “affordable, sustainable, and student-run food service initiatives on campus” that were also actively involved in starting the Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) and its working group the Hive Café (“Food Systems Reform”, n.d.). Some of these students later took up roles within the Hive Café as café or kitchen coordinators, assuming responsibilities ranging from procurement to education and outreach (the Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017; the Hive’s coordinator, personal interview, March 30, 2017). In the 2013 Fall by-elections, 86% of the students voted in favor of a fee levy group called the Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) (“Food Systems Reform: What’s the Goal?

Local Control”, 2016). CFC was now the official body, authorized and mandated to work towards food systems reform at Concordia.

Aligned with the ideological stances of the CSU and the Hive, the CFC points to similar values. They declare their mission as one of establishing

a community food system at Concordia University that is outside of the pursuit of private financial profit, constituted and grounded in inclusivity & cooperation (not hierarchy & competition); structured in a way that innovates on successful alternative models, committed to being affordable, nutritious, and sensitive to cultural needs, approaches food sovereignty/security from a critical perspective, built to apply and integrate research in urban farming techniques and other parts of the food-cycle. (“Our Mission”, 2017)

CFC’s website describes the envisioned food system on campus as one that considers the diverse impacts food can have on the environment/ecosystems, economic systems, social systems, and structures of governance (“Our Story”, 2015). A more specific description of the desired food system at Concordia is laid out in detail in the organization’s constitution. These descriptions portray the envisioned campus food system as “sustainable and health-promoting”, “local and organic” as well as “encourag[ing] and expand[ing] local-organic practices (CFC Constitution, 2015, p.3). In defining an alternative campus food system, the CFC places notable emphasis on its opposition to the large-scale food corporations due to their complicity with socially and environmentally harmful industrial agriculture practices. Their discursive intervention also touches upon a critique of the current prevailing economic model on campus. In response to the dominant economic thinking at Concordia, they propose a “social economy model which is based on giving, sharing, and reciprocal exchange, as opposed to the profit-driven system of food production, processing and distribution” (CFC Constitution, 2015, p.3).

Rather than reflecting a weak form of food sustainability, the discourse put forward by CFC and the Hive resounds more closely with ‘systemic change’. This discourse problematizes the ways in which food is produced, processed and consumed today within a broader economic

and cultural system. Although the student groups share the university's (and the broader food relocalization movement's) discursive commitment to local procurement, their opposition to the agrifood industry's profit-driven structure coupled with the Hive's cooperative governance model, create different challenges and opportunities in relation to their procurement practices.

4. CHAPTER 4: Aramark Concordia's current food system practices

This chapter focuses on the university's current food service practices. It begins by tracing the 'Request for Proposals' (RFP) process, which sets up the conditions for the kind of food provider the university chooses and the forms of supply solicited. In particular, the chapter examines the RFP as a discursive tool, one that foregrounds community participation while, in practice, delimits the means of participation. In this way, the RFP shapes the kinds of participants (specifically, the 'student-consumers') as well as the end result of the sustainable procurement process.

Following an examination of the RFP process, the chapter will problematize the ways in which Aramark Concordia attempts to operationalize the 'food sustainability' narrative that dominates both Aramark's and Concordia's online and offline discourse. In this narrative of food sustainability, food locality takes primacy. In addition, food certification is viewed as a means to ensure a sustainable food system that is environmentally and socially just. Both of these sustainability objectives of localization (through supply chain modification), and food certification are governed through the lens of market-favoring rationalities, including the prominence of profitability and consumer choice.

4.1. Tools for governing student-consumer bodies: the request for proposals (RFP) process

The criteria that form the basis of Concordia University's sustainable food commitments and practices today were first laid out in the Request for Proposals (RFP)²⁸ document put out to potential food service providers in the Spring of 2014. Since then, the RFP document has been framed as the university's opportunity to describe and declare its sustainable procurement expectations from food service companies. Therefore, Aramark's food service contract stipulations that describe the sustainable procurement strategies to date, date back to this very document.

Propped up by the university-managed online and offline discourse, the RFP is presented as a product of close collaboration among the Food Advisor Working Group members (FAWG). The FAWG, as stated on Concordia University's website, was composed of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and staff ("FAQ: Concordia's food service contract and RFP Process", 2014). Concordia University describes both the drafting of the RFP and the food service contract as a community-informed and transparent process owing to the collaborative activities the Concordia community jointly undertook. The activities are described as "sharing research on food-related issues, including nutrition and sustainable practices" ("University Communications Services", 2014).

However, despite the university's presentation of the FAWG's work as a "partnership with the campus community", Concordia Student Union (CSU) or the campus-based fee levy

²⁸ "The public tender process promotes transparency along with the fair and equitable treatment of potential bidders. As such, all information required to execute a contract must be made available in French at the time of posting. This falls under provincial legislation governing public contracting (LCOP C.65) in effect as of October 1, 2008, and to which Concordia University is subject" ("FAQ: Concordia's food service contract and RFP Process", 2015).

groups such as Concordia Food Coalition (CFC) and Sustainable Concordia (SC) do not celebrate Aramark's status as the main food service provider on campus due to its "corporate and capitalist structure" (Sustainable Concordia, 2016).

Considering the sustainability policies and open calls for food systems reform issued by the CSU, the CFC and SC, the allegation that the RFP process was a 'collaborative' one raises questions of legitimacy.

My findings point to two main points of contention between the student-run food organizations and the university administration in regards to the RFP process: (i) the allegation that there was close collaboration with the students and faculty, and (ii) conditions of the RFP that would not allow small or medium scale food providers to apply as a bidder.

4.1.1. Participatory decision-making and its limits

4.1.1.1. The legitimizing 'community consultation' discourse

Concordia University's website announces that the process leading up to the Concordia Food Services' launch of the Request for Proposals (RFP) has been "highly consultative in nature" ("Food contract to go to tender in 2015", 2014). It is stated that the criteria of the new food contract were "drawn up by Food and Beverage Services in collaboration with the Concordia community" ("Concordia Communication Services", 2015).

Local and sustainable food procurement discourse has been popularized among the North American food networks, in part, due to a plethora of publications, i.e. toolkits that prescribe similar action plans for developing local/regional food networks ("Campus Food Systems Project, 2014; Cawtorne, 2015). In addition to the legitimizing discourse of sustainability, these documents frequently refer to 'community involvement' as an integral part of the sustainable food project.

Why is community involvement / participatory decision making required in the process of preparing a RFP? The local procurement toolkits typically define the RFP document as a set of recommendations for soliciting proposals, reviewing and selecting them, and formulating and auditing the food service contracts. Community participation in the RFP's preparation process is considered as an opportunity for steering large institutions' conventional food purchasing models towards supporting local farmers and local food enterprises (Food System Alliance, 2012). This in turn can ensure that the public institution will have used its purchasing power for cultivating "food security, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity" in the region (Landman et al., 2009, p.2).

Sustain Ontario's (2015) *Local Sustainable Food Procurement Toolkit* for public institutions describes the RFP process in public sector institutions as one that can give institutions "tremendous power to influence the food system" (p.1). Sustain Ontario (2015) argues that community inclusion in preparing the RFP is crucial because as the consumers of food, the 'community' needs to internalize the *culture* shift required for local and sustainable food consumption (p.25). [emphasis mine]

Most Canadian universities contract their food services out to one of the Big Three²⁹. Since the universities are increasingly being identified as catalyzers of food systems change and sustainability not only on campus but also in their geographical locale, the food service contractors are inevitably required to align their purchasing models with the new change maker role attributed to the universities. Therefore, the suppliers to whom the university chooses to

²⁹ The RFP process is framed as an opportunity to include public opinion in the university context in matters of "building local capacity" and "achieving transparency across the supply chain" (RFP Trent University, 2017; RFP University of King's College, 2017; Reynold & Hunter, 2017, p.19)

outsource its food services has direct bearing on the university's ability to fulfil its food sustainability commitments.

In line with the rationale of such framing, a re-localized food system is viewed as one that “creates jobs in the region, encourages entrepreneurship, and strengthens community identity” (McClintock, 2014, p.151). In order for this model to serve both ends, i.e. the university and the local community, consumer engagement is necessary. In the case of Concordia, students are seen as the main body of consumers. Therefore, drawing the roadmap to a more ‘local and sustainable’ food system has to be a collective project with student-consumers’ participation.

Despite the administration's insistence on the collaborative nature of the bidder selection process, student representatives who sat on the selection committees hold different opinions. For instance, Hugo Martorell, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) representative who attended the RFP food committee, recounts that undergraduate student representative Lucy and himself were given the two bid proposals “perhaps three days in advance” which left them “absurdly little time to look at the two huge binders and critically evaluate these proposals” (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015e). According to Martorell, the decisions in the RFP evaluation stage were made first by going through the different chapters of both bids, and then grading each section out of a 100 in accordance to previously-set RFP criteria. In case there was a difference larger than 15% between the highest grade and the lowest grade each committee member assigned, a discussion was required and consensus needed to be reached. These steps constituted the first phase of the evaluation which was comprised of two days. On the first day, the bidders' submissions were graded. On the second day, the bidders gave presentations, and the food samples they offered were graded. This first phase was followed by the ‘financial bid’ phase which was closed to student participation. Martorell was told that the second phase was comprised of a similar

evaluation scheme and the resulting mark would represent a quotient to be multiplied by the mark from the first phase. Then the applicants would be reevaluated with that new number (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015e).

Lucy Marshall-Kiparissis, who attended the bid evaluation process along with Hugo Martorell, clarifies that the students who were present at the RFP committee were there only during the evaluation process, but they were not part of the *formulation* of the RFP criteria, neither were they allowed in the financial bid phase that followed the first phase. [emphasis mine] While Marshall-Kiparissis notes that her input was taken into consideration on the first day while discussing the bid proposals and that she was not “talked over ... or slighted” as a student, she also points out that the student representatives were there only for one part of the process “to check off that box as there being student presence on the committee for that evaluation” (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015d).

While both students point out that for the time that they sat on the evaluation committee, they felt respected and they were given equal contribution in the discussions, they knew that their input would not have much power to make a change at that stage, particularly after seeing that the two bidders were the two of the Big Three. Another incident that points to the reasons of student distrust in the collaborative nature of the process was the fact that the two student participants were not even informed about the decision afterwards. In fact, Lucy Marshall-Kiparissis, who attended the RFP evaluation committee as the undergraduate student representative, states that she heard about the outcome of the bidding process through Facebook (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015d).

According to Martorell, the RFP process simply served to stifle participation from students who ultimately are the users of the food services. He also adds that student participation

in the RFP evaluation process was limited. Although his opinion, like that of Marshall-Kiparissis, would be listened to at the committee, he did not believe that it would have an impact on the final decision. Moreover, Martorell underscores that having a few students sit on the RFP evaluation committee does not necessarily translate to having included public opinion in the decision-making process. Rather than a narrow representation of having two students sit on one committee, Martorell states that a “broader consultative process where students would be consulted as users of the food services” would be much more beneficial (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015e).

4.1.1.2. Students are not mere consumers but also active community members

Students, especially the 900 student-consumers who are mandated to purchase the cafeteria meal plan, make up the largest body of food consumers on campus. However, seven of my student informants indicated that they do not see the students as mere ‘consumers’ in the food system discussions on campus. In fact, one of my informants interpreted the business partnerships between universities and corporations as one which enables “corporations [to] purchase access to students as consumers through exclusivity agreements such as food service contracts” (Student representative on the FAWG committee, personal interview, March 15, 2017). In the *FAQ: Concordia’s food service contract and RFP Process*, a document issued and published online by the university administration, the university states that a set of criteria reflecting Concordia’s values was released as a result of the consultation period which was attended by students, faculty and staff members (n.d.). Yet, the only faculty member who participated in the FAWG meetings informed me that he attended the FAWG meetings since he was the only active faculty member in the campus food movements, and by no means, had any claim to represent all faculty members.

Further, because CFC decided to bid for the food service contract during the RFP process, Concordia's legal department asked the faculty member to step down from the FAWG due to potential a conflict of interest as he was involved with the CFC as a Board Member at the time. No other faculty member was recruited after he left. Therefore, he performed limited participation in the FAWG. He also stated that the administration did not initiate a formal recruitment process among the faculty members (faculty member, personal interview, March 28, 2017).

Community consultation is not free from power dynamics that ultimately steer the process towards increasing political legitimacy of the outcomes. As a result, the administrators' concerns with mere procedural compliance can lead to increased distrust between the administration and the campus community representatives. Further, at Concordia, the target group for which the administration is using the term 'community' is quite abstract. For example, the executive director of Hospitality Concordia and chairperson of the Food Advisory Working Group Sabrina Lavoie states that the FAWG aimed to "give voice to those who actually consume the food" (Duval, 2013).

Given that the food contract concerns the resident students the most, Lavoie's statement seems to allude that resident students were present in the FAWG, which is not the case. Since Aramark runs other food retails on campus, and both cafeterias offer commuter plans to all Concordia students, having non-resident students on the FAWG group has relevance in the context of community consultation. However, as my findings demonstrate, student representation was significantly limited even in that case.

When discussing the public consultation process, my informants from the university administration did point out that in addition to the FAWG meetings, there was an extensive

survey³⁰ conducted in the Fall of 2013. As mentioned earlier, there are approximately 900 students who are mandated to purchase the meal plan before securing a room in either of the residences. However, the survey results clearly indicate that only an insignificant number of resident students took part in this survey, resulting in remarkable underrepresentation of those who are actually obligated to purchase the costly meal plan (“Concordia University Campus Foodservice Survey”, 2013, p.22). (see Figure 3 below)

³⁰ The Survey was conducted by fsStrategy Inc., a professional consulting firm serving the hospitality with special emphasis on foodservice (“About”, n.d.). According to a phone interview Toronto Media Coop conducted with the fsStrategy Inc’s Arthur Jeff Dover, Dover listed four other universities fsStrategy has consulted for, Ryerson, University of Toronto Scarborough, University of Regina, and Dalhousie all of which have had contracted their food services to Aramark (Ruitter, 2012). At Concordia, fsStrategy Inc. began the survey process in September 2013 with the aim to “gain insight into the foodservice needs and preferences of the Population” (“Concordia University Campus Foodservice Survey”, 2013). 7,233 individuals attended the survey out of 49,376 over a period of 18 days from September 17 to October 5 (“Concordia University Campus Foodservice Survey”, 2013). The Survey remained open for 18 days from September 17 to October 5. Survey questions related to this study were about the availability of the following: Information, Labelling, Food Origin Labelling, Labelling of Local Foods, and Labelling of Organic Food, GMO Labelling, Free Nutritional Information.

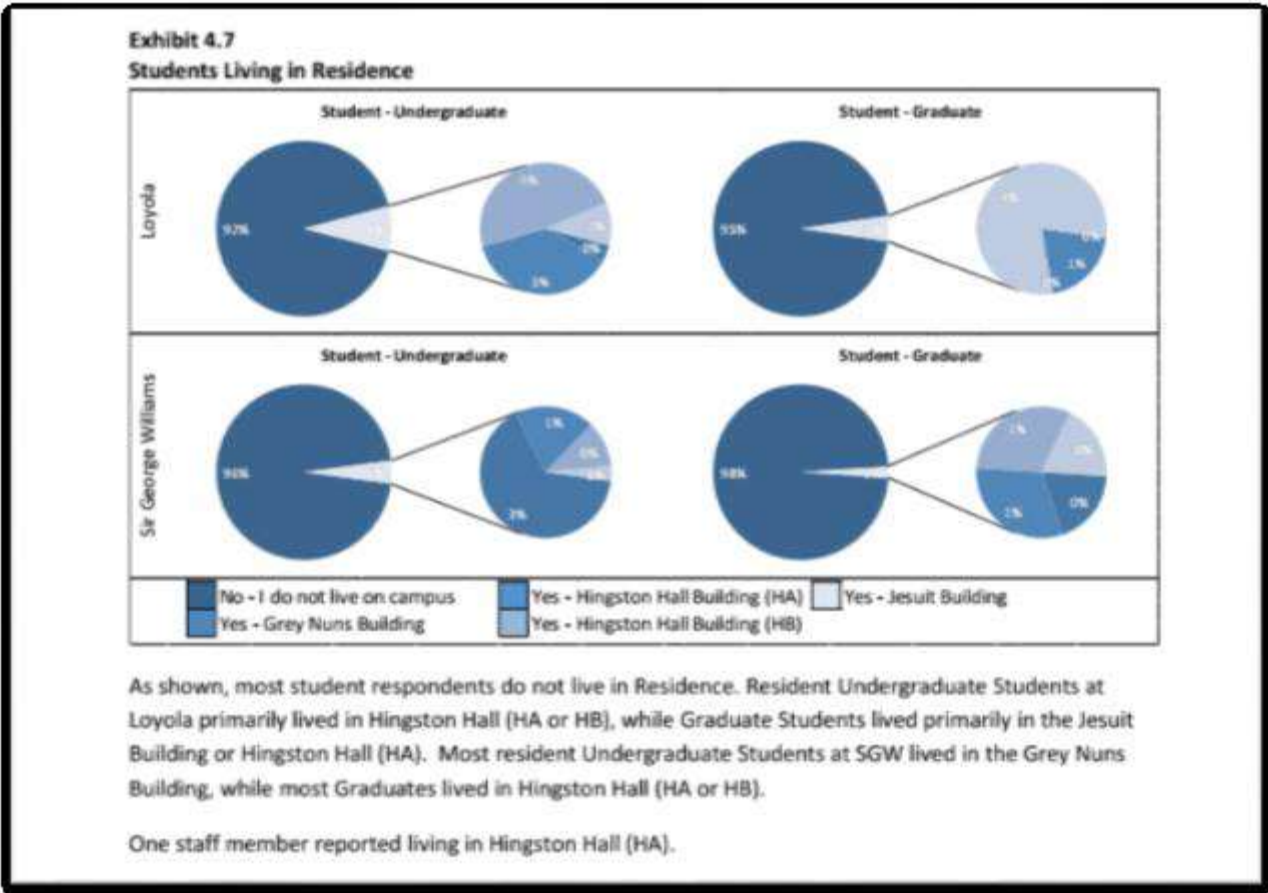


Figure 3. illustrates the share of respondents who lived in residence by residence, and shows that most student respondents do not live in Residence. From “CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY Campus Foodservice Survey” on Concordia University Media Relations/News Webpage, January 22, 2014. <http://www.concordia.ca/cunews/main/stories/2014/01/22/7-000-weigh-in-onfoodatconcordia.html>

As another technique used to facilitate ‘public consultation’ during the post-bidding period, the Residence Life Team at the Grey Nuns Residence has been hosting monthly food advisory meetings open to resident students after Aramark began operating two cafeterias and other food retail spots on campus. The regular attendees of this meeting are Aramark’s general and Health, Wellness and Sustainability (HWS) manager, operations and marketing managers, the chef and the sous chef on occasion, the food contract administrator (Concordia staff), director of Residence Life, residence managers and assistants (Aramark HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017). Although resident students attend these meetings, as explained by Aramark’s HWS manager, they have not mentioned or asked any questions about food

sustainability or local procurement during these meetings so far³¹. During the same group interview, the SFS coordinator commented that “not all student desires are necessarily geared towards food sustainability” (group interview, February 21, 2017). This comment is compelling as it demonstrates how the predominantly semiotic tension between the major student actors and the university administration is not informed by the resident students who are directly affected by Aramark’s procurement strategies.

Evidently, the university administration wanted to form a public opinion that the decision to grant the food contract to Aramark was taken based on an open and democratic process. The dissemination of such discourse can be observed in the university’s news outlets, publications, and other occasions of individual interactions with officers. At times, when the tension between the dominant neoliberal imperative of constant economic growth and the oppositional environmental and social movements make a peak, new discourses start circulating. Yet, in such times of flux “hegemony can be maintained through concessions to dissent to such a degree that dissent is diffused” (Hall, 1986). The role of public relations is argued to be key in this ‘diffusion’ process (Roper, 2012, p.70; see also Motion & Weaver, 2005; Roper, 2005). Essentially public relations practitioners can be seen as “discourse technologists” who, by profession, use texts and speech strategically to promote certain socio-cultural and technological practices over others (Roper, 2012, p.73).

To illustrate the latter, i.e. individual interactions with officers, I will convey an incident from my group interview with Concordia University’s Sustainable Food Systems (SFS) coordinator, Aramark Concordia’s Health, Wellness & Sustainability (HWS) manager and the director of Hospitality Concordia. As I was asking questions regarding who made the

³¹ “I have never heard ‘local’ or ‘organic’ once in any meeting”, said the HWS manager.

procurement decisions, it was made clear to me that procurement was not the SFS coordinator's job, but all purchasing decisions fell under Aramark's responsibilities (Director of Hospitality Concordia, group interview, February 21, 2017). Ultimately, this conversation meandered on to conclude that the current food service contract – the end result of the RFP – was the source of all decisions made. The contract was (jokingly) referred to as the 'Bible' [of procurement] and, once again, it was emphasized that the current food contract was a direct result of a "broad community consultation" (Director of Hospitality Concordia, group interview, February 21, 2017). In fact, while exchanging e-mails in order to schedule this group interview, I was reminded that the food contract was particularly important due to its role as "a lever for change", and that the group would like to discuss this particular topic during the interview (the SFS coordinator, personal communication, December 7, 2016).

4.1.2. The RFP format is suitable only for large-scale food providers to bid

A key feature of the RFP is that its inherent design is suitable only for large-scale food service providers, and this feature has constituted another point of contention between the student activists and the administration. Before the RFP process resulted in the submission of only two applications, i.e. Chartwells and Aramark, *The Concordian* asked Executive Director of Hospitality Concordia Lavoie to comment on the possibility of a student-run organization taking part in the new contract. Lavoie responded that such organizations may not be capable of providing almost a thousand meals per day. Yet, she also noted that this did not mean food retail outlets cannot be run by students, "as options [were] still open and a divided contract [was] a possibility" (Duval, 2013). Although the university ended up signing an exclusivity agreement with Aramark shortly after this statement, Lavoie's emphasis on the scale of operations is not overlooked by others who took part in the RFP process.

As Hugo Martorell, the graduate student representative who participated in the bid evaluation process, points out: “the challenge for universities as big entities with thousands of students . . . is to think outside of the framework of having larger, private entities as their food service providers” (Chevrier and Gagnon, 2015e). Martorell reminds that during the post-Chartwells period many argued for the contract to be divided into smaller pieces (smaller volumes) allowing for competition with the three larger food service providers.

In fact, The CFC decided to put together a consortium bidding team comprised of smaller retailers (for individual retail spots on campus) and COOPSCO, a prominent food provider in French universities and CEGEPs. As Lauren Aghabozorgi, the CFC’s coordinator at the time, explains in an article published in *The Link* newspaper, the CFC considered COOPSCO as a good fit for operating the two large cafeterias while smaller businesses or student-run initiatives would run the food outlets on both campuses (Wrobel, 2015). However, COOPSCO dropped out of the process at the last minute as “they were not prepared enough for a formal proposal” (Caragay-Cook, 2015). As a result, the CFC ended up not competing for the bid. Like Martorell, Aghabozorgi also commented that the RFP was designed for a corporation in its requirements (Wrobel, 2015).

The Hive Café’s former coordinator gave a similar account. According to the coordinator, the RFP preparation process took much longer than the university initially announced. During the last three months of this process, the administration stopped students from attending the FAWG and began holding closed sessions which included the final stages of creating the new sustainability regulations within the contract. In the meantime, CFC’s consortium committee was trying to prepare a multi-stakeholder bid proposal that aimed to bring together local small businesses to rent the multiple retail spots available on both campuses. CFC’s consortium

committee had been giving tours to the interested food retailers in the summer of 2014, but because the administration took much longer than expected to finalize the RFP process, the CFC could not keep these retailers on board for too long. With COOPSCO's last minute pull out, the consortium disintegrated. Finally, the RFP required the applicants to have had at least \$1 million annual revenue over the last 5 years that they had been active in the food provision sector. These criteria were too difficult for any smaller organizations to meet. That is why the only two bidders that qualified to move to phase two after the RFP process was initiated, were Chartwells and Aramark (Loyola Hive's former coordinator, personal interview, March 14, 2017)

4.1.3. Governing transitions into sustainability: sustainability as a site of struggle and contention

The transitioning into a 'new' form of food sustainability at Concordia has been a controversial period, since during this period, the Concordia administration has produced and disseminated narratives of community collaboration, and transparency regarding the RFP and bidder selection processes. These narratives have served to emphasize how Aramark Concordia's new food service contract comprises a commitment to unprecedented campus food sustainability practices. The practices in question have heavily relied on seemingly measurable shifts in institutional procurement, while like the majority of North American universities, Concordia University chose to contract its food services exclusively to another private agribusiness giant (as opposed to, for example, establishing in-house food services), thereby mandating a costly meal plan in its residences.

When institutions undertake socio-technical transitions into sustainability, they tend to prioritize questions of supply/technological considerations over questions of demand/social considerations. Shove and Walker (2010) suggest that instead of "treating societal functions as given", we should start asking questions of how/why sustainable practices come into existence,

how/why they cease to exist, and what forms of interventions are possibly implicated in these dynamics (p.476) From an institutional governance perspective, lack of clarity on the governance goals for implementing sustainability stems from sustainability's inherent ambiguity and subjectivity (Walker & Shove, 2007, p.213). Nevertheless, discussions of ambiguity or multiplicity of meaning do not have much currency in the technological, numerical, hence measurable domains inherent to institutionalized sustainability (Shove & Walker, 2007, p.766).

At Concordia, the university's current campus food service model bases food sustainability on a set of seemingly quantifiable procurement commitments, most surrounding the objective of 'local'. Therefore, the university cannot afford a formal discussion of how ambiguous concepts such as 'local' food or food sustainability are, as such scrutiny would undermine the certainty the food service contract signifies. The next section provides a closer look at how the objective of 'local procurement' is being attained in practice.

4.2. Food consumption as a reaction to industrialized, globalized and corporatized agriculture: Local food in the global food system

All of the aspects of agricultural industrialization discussed in the literature review coupled with agriculture's globalization (and most recently financialization) have generated a series of reactive movements, including organics, Fair Trade, localization, farmers' markets, Slow Food and community supported agriculture (CSAs) in the global North (Allen et al. 2003 and Morgan et al. 2006, as cited in Friedland, 2008, p.197; Allen, 2010, p.296). Industrialized agriculture in North America and Western Europe is characterized by the consolidation of land in fewer hands, resulting in the consolidation of supply chains and presenting challenges for small retailers, farmers, and processors who are not equipped to compete in the market. As a result, fewer but larger units of production have taken hold (Marsden & Whatmore, 1994; Grey, 2000; Reardon & Hopkins, 2006; Qualman, 2011), in a new regime driven by "an emerging global

food/fuel agricultural complex” that has increasingly come to be viewed as in tension with various forms of localism (McMichael, 2009, p.142).

The anti-globalist consumer reaction to a range of environmental, social/ethical, and health concerns has triggered an interest in knowing where one’s food came from and relocating food production systems. Posited as an antidote to globalization, food system localization is largely presumed to be a “progressive and desirable process” (Hinrichs, 2003, p.33). However, this reasoning, underpinned by a local–global binary, is not so easy to operationalize, as an elaboration of Aramark’s own practices illustrates.

4.2.1. Aramark Concordia’s sustainability commitments

(Why these particular commitments? The market defines what is possible)

It should be noted from outset that all of the commitments on local, sustainable food purchasing in Aramark Concordia’s contract are set exclusively for the residence dining hall and for the non-franchised outlets. These targets apply to all of the purchases Aramark Concordia has a say on, but the food service contract does not concern the franchised campus food outlets such as Starbucks, Tim Hortons or Freshii.

As the Concordia food services indicate on their webpage, the targets that they set for the campus food service provider during the RFP process are quite “ambitious” (“Our top commitments”, n.d.). The food service provider is expected to procure 75% of its total fruits and vegetables locally in the summer months, 50% in the fall and 25% in the winter/spring seasons (with exception to citrus) (“Sustainable Eating”, n.d.).

These particular RFP criteria were set as a result of the collaboration between the sustainability coordinator and former CFC research coordinator³². The collaboration consisted of

³² During the FAWG period, Concordia’s Office of Environmental Health and Safety asked its Sustainability office for ‘best practices research’ on food service providers at Canadian universities and the RFP process. Concordia Food

finding out what was “feasible and reasonable to ask of the food services to accomplish” since “the market was not quite there yet to be able to just plug in and have all the elements of sustainability implicated in the RFP” (sustainability coordinator, personal interview, April 5, 2017).

Based partly on the benchmarks used by other universities, including McGill since it is in the same geographic area, the contract specifies the sustainable procurement requirements as follows³³:

- Reasonable efforts to purchase local frozen fruits and vegetables
- Reasonable efforts to purchase soy-based products produced or processed locally
- Free-run eggs only
- Canadian dairy products only
- Meat and poultry raised without cruelty
- Poultry: 15% raised in Québec and 3% organic
- Pork: 70% grown in Québec (with exception of processed pork products)
- Beef: Canadian beef only and 15% grown in Québec

Coalition’s former research coordinator Mikayla Wujec had already prepared a report for the CFC. The report, titled *A Guide to Concordia’s Food System: Current Operations & Future Directions*, was comprised of a detailed historical and spatial analysis of the university’s food system, a comparative review of food provision at other Canadian universities and a conclusion that defined the elements of a “healthy food system” (Wujec, 2013). Interestingly, this report, prepared before the actual RFP process, also frames RFPs as “major opportunities to change the food being sourced, purchased, served and consumed” (Wujec, 2013, p.7). All of my activist informants, who had had an involvement with the CFC at the time, clearly stated during their interviews that they did not see Aramark’s contract commitments as an opportunity (about 3 years after the process). Based on the accounts of the sustainability coordinator (personal interview, April 5, 2017), and the SFS coordinator (group interview, February 21, 2017), the former CFC research coordinator Wujec played an instrumental part in formulating the criteria for the RFP document. According to the sustainability coordinator, during the Food Advisory Working Group’s (FAWG) monthly meetings in 2014, Hospitality Concordia asked the Office of EHS to join the FAWG to advise them on some “solid, action items that could be incorporated into the RFP” (personal interview, April 5, 2017). Upon Hospitality Concordia’s request, the sustainability coordinator contacted the former CFC research coordinator Wujec, who at the time had completed her CFC research contract and was the CEO of Sustainable Action Fund (SAF), another fee levy group at Concordia University (“What is SAF”, n.d.). Together they prepared the RFP recommendations for the view of the FAWG group. The recommendations became the RFP criteria without any modification (sustainability coordinator, personal interview, April 5, 2017).

³³ The benchmarks are also based on the availability of local products on the market. For example, Québec is known for producing a lot of pork, but very little beef. This situation is reflected in the benchmarks of the RFP.

- ❑ Seafood: 90% certified sustainable seafood and No seafood that is on the red list of the Union for Conservation of Nature (UFCN) or any similar organization
- ❑ 90% of coffee and tea has to be Fairtrade certified. Generic coffee will not be accepted in non-franchise outlets
- ❑ Reasonable efforts to purchase organic products (“Normes en matiere de Durabilite et d’Approvisionnement, June 1, 2015).

The sustainability coordinator’s comments demonstrate the normalized market-oriented thinking and practice that underpin the ‘reasonable’ sustainability commitments. In other words, Concordia’s food system sustainability is predicated on broader market and institutional frameworks. These food sustainability commitments are deemed ‘reasonable’ only within the particular confines of an exclusivity contract signed with yet another agrifood corporation. Further, the broader rationale excludes - and refuses to learn from - other food systems practices, including those already being performed at Concordia.

The university’s orientation aligns with a neoliberal market logic, as discussed by Harvey (2005, p.3), where an economic, social and moral philosophy “emphasizes the significance of contractual relations in the marketplace” and seeks to re-orient a new kind of ethic of its own. This new ethic, then, redefines the ideal human being as one who seeks to perform all human action in the domain of the market (Harvey, 2005, p.3).

4.2.1.1. Sustainable food procurement challenges: Localization

As previously discussed, the growing interest in alternative food systems as a way to reduce the negative social and environmental consequences of industrialized agriculture has fueled the popular food localization strategy. Localization goals, now adopted by a wide array of actors from activists, provincial and federal governments to multinational food corporations, range from incremental changes from within the dominant food system to advocating for

grassroots alternatives that prioritize social and environmental analyses over the economic, aligned with the concept of ‘strong sustainability’ (Watts et al., 2015).

The challenges Aramark Concordia faces to localize food production, processing and distribution manifest as the lack of economic, organizational, and operational networks of a fitting scale. To surpass these challenges, the SFS coordinator position’s funder the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and therefore Concordia, propose local food hubs as potentially alternative organizational and operational systems (the SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017; “Regional Food System Assessment Fund”, n.d.). Morley and Morgan (2008) define food hubs as “partnership-based arrangements that coordinate the distribution of a range of food products from producers of a uniform provenance to conventional or hybrid markets” (p. 77).

The following section presents a discussion of the predominantly operational local food procurement challenges Aramark Concordia (along with the university’s EHS team) have faced since their contract began in September, 2015. A detailed discussion of these main findings aims to contribute to an understanding of the barriers to local food procurement at Concordia University. The data underpinning the analysis are primarily retrieved from a group interview held with Concordia’s SFS coordinator, Aramark’s HWS manager and Hospitality Concordia’s Director, as well as a total of 13 *food hub* and *sustainable food services advisory committee meetings*³⁴, and 2 campus-based food system events organized by the SFS coordinator.

³⁴ In her efforts to build community around campus food at Concordia, the SFS coordinator initiated the Food Hub Working Group meetings, first of which was held on November 9, 2015. As the name suggests, the meeting was planned to serve as a campus ‘food hub’ bringing all of Concordia’s food actors or those who were interested in food together. During the first meeting, the SFS coordinator introduced the concept of community mapping to the group, and explained how mapping out all the actors of Concordia’s food system would help “build community awareness”, “understand different perspectives”, and “identify synergies” (personal meeting notes, November 9, 2015). The food hub’s google group page defines it as “a collective of Concordians who are actively involved in the development of a sustainable food system” (“Concordia Food Hub”, n.d.). Some of the food hub mission statements are “feeding the conversation about food and sustainability at Concordia, promoting the diversity of food initiatives

Complementary to these methods, discourse analysis (see the methodology chapter for a more detailed discussion of this method) has been applied to (i) present findings as to the challenges Aramark Concordia has faced in implementing modifications across Aramark's food commodity chains; and (ii) illuminate what role the university's discourse plays in the practice of restructuring commodity chains and logistical pathways, largely through certification.

4.2.1.1.1. Getting to the meaning of 'local'

'Local food' is a rather broad term denoting different aspects of food, i.e. food as an object of culture and as an object of economic value, i.e. as a commodity. In parallel, the vast body of research on local food grapples with either the 'cultural aspect' of the food product or the 'geographical aspect', which essentially refers to the spatial deployment of production and distribution networks (Carolan, 2016). Within this framework, there is often a conflation of 'local' and sustainable, which can assume that 'local' is inherently 'sustainable' (i.e. that it always facilitates democracy, environmental justice and food justice) (Born & Purcell 2006). This conflation is upheld by essentializing scalar conceptualizations of local and global. Neglect of local-global linkages also play into this (Harvey, 1999). The tendency "to conflate the

on campus, providing opportunities for knowledge and resource sharing and collaboration, passing down knowledge through the generations of students, faculty and staff who have been involved in food sustainability at Concordia" ("Concordia Food Hub", n.d.). Although representatives from student food groups such CFC, CSU, the Hive, Cafe X as well as a member of Graduate Student Association (GSA), one faculty member, and a few independent students joined the food hub meetings, the attendance was irregular. In order to improve the attendance, the SFS coordinator made a couple of interventions that included a name change for the group, and two new attendees. Starting from October 2016, the group was called the *Sustainable Food Services Advisory Committee* and its new attendees were Aramark's HWS manager and the director of Hospitality Concordia. Eventually, these meetings became gatherings where Aramark's HWS manager presented monthly progress reports on the company's procurement commitments and received questions from the participants. In the SFS coordinator's words, after the modification, the meeting "came to be more about transparency" (personal communication, October 22, 2016). After a couple of the advisory committee meetings, the focus of the group had shifted to updates from participants, and updates on waste management and procurement from the university side. Occasionally participants made announcements regarding food events on campus. Overall, the repeated concern voiced was a lack of active participation from different student groups.

structural or spatial/scalar characteristics of alternative food networks with socially, economically and ecologically desirable outcomes” manifests itself within Concordia University’s food networks, be they led by student groups or the university administration (Tregear, 2011, p.425). Yet, it is important to keep in mind that rather than scale per se, it is the “actors and agendas that produce particular social relations in a given food system” which may have more bearing on the desired food system transformation (Born & Purcell, 2006, pp.195-96).

The office of Environmental Health and Safety’s (EHS) at Concordia defines local food as “produced and processed in a radius of 500 kilometers of Montreal Island” (“Our Sustainable Food System Guide”, n.d., p.3) (see Appendix A). However, as both Concordia’s SFS coordinator and Aramark’s Health, Wellness and Sustainability (HWS) manager noted, in practice, it is hard to know the exact number of kilometers unless the purchase is made directly from a farm. The tracking system Aramark uses with their distributors for food safety reasons is not fine-tuned enough to indicate the number of kilometers that food travels before reaching its site of consumption. Therefore, Aramark Concordia finds it easier to trace local products based on the province it comes from, rather than the kilometers which is not available information (the SFS coordinator, group interview, Aramark HWS manager, February 21, 2017).

4.2.1.1.2. Tracking along the supply chain: The origins of food, role of distribution and establishment of food hubs

Watts et al. (2005) coins the terms “weaker” and “stronger alternative food networks” in the context of food relocalization (p.23). While debates over quality and food labels present “weaker” alternative systems of food provision, “stronger” alternative food networks are characterized with a shift of emphasis from the quality of food to the food supply chain structures (Watts et al., 2005, p.23).

Since the 2015-2016 academic year, Concordia Food Services has publicized complementary strategies to render Aramark Concordia's procurement practices sustainable. The strategies consist of first finding out where Aramark's existent purchasing is made from (provenance), then shifting these purchasing practices to local purchasing practices, and finally, making links with the farmers/food hubs in the province to establish shorter supply chains.

Dictated by the availability of the provenance information, the first step Aramark Concordia took in the 2015-2016 academic year was attempting to sort out the origins of food purchased through already existing supply chain actors. The SFS coordinator and Aramark Concordia's HWS coordinator worked on this task together. According to their account, Aramark's HWS manager went through all the invoices manually on the first year of Aramark at Concordia (group interview, February 21, 2017).

Since the food service contract fixated the meaning of local procurement as a measurable statistical entity, 'data' has served not only as a means but also as an end to define food system change at Concordia. In this particular definition of 'local food procurement', the act of tracing the commodity chain has become twofold: First, one had to identify what 'numbers' were already secured in the working order. Second, how much more 'local food' Aramark had to procure to meet the contract targets.

Although the contract serves to construct a sense of numerical order grounded in measurability and certainty, the main indicators of food sustainability in the contract, i.e. the quantities of local and organic products purchased, are of ambiguous nature. Vague requirements obligating Aramark to make 'reasonable' efforts to purchase local and organic foods invites skepticism, as questions of "reasonable for whom?" and "who defines reasonable?" emerge. Coupled with the dubious 'collaborative' RFP discourse, the self-confessed difficulties of setting

up food hubs in Québec, and the climate-inflicted challenges in the face of local procurement, the contract requirements posit a contradiction with ‘food sustainability’.

As an indicator of problems with traceability, the SFS coordinator reports that the provenance data garnered in the first year was “skewed” due to both Concordia’s and Aramark’s lack of experience in acquiring such information as well as the occasional impossibility to access such information (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017). According to Aramark’s HWS manager, the biggest challenge faced in the first year was trying to meet the contract targets while, at the same time, having to conduct the research to find out where the food comes from (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017).

While dealing with uncertainty implicated in traceability, producing monthly procurement reports has been a challenge for Aramark Concordia. As Aramark’s HWS manager indicated, these reports were imperative for providing metrics and analysis of the local procurement data due to the contract requirements and the need to know where Aramark Concordia was at in meeting their commitments (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017).

In addition, Aramark’s HWS manager touched upon the challenge that comes with Aramark having lock-in agreements with the multinational distributor Sysco. She mentioned that the contracted suppliers of Sysco, by and large, did not know where their food came from. Therefore, “to be super precise”, she had to “check every single case that came in and then call the distributor and ask them about this week’s batch”. She described this as “so time consuming” (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017). Yet, even this tedious task did not guarantee clear-cut answers.

Since the operation flows of agribusiness giants such as Aramark and Sysco are embedded in complex global commodity chains both logistically and legally, this does not come

as a surprise. Yet, the narratives of achieving food sustainability by way of localizing food production continue to circulate on campus and in Concordia University's and Aramark Concordia's online domains.

By way of example, a news article published on Concordia's webpage announces that "it just got easier to eat local on campus" (Baker, 2017). The article's heading "It just got easier to eat local on campus" coupled with its simplicity and brevity serves to confuse the reader. The article cites the SFS coordinator on the difficulty of pinning down the meaning of local food or local procurement (i.e. "It wasn't always clear what was meant by a 'local' meal") (Baker, 2017). Operating within a complex and fluid commodity chain of multiple actors where the actors do not have a shared understanding of 'local food' explains, in part, why the Concordia-Aramark partnership has not made much progress in terms of food traceability. Therefore, the language that accompanies this uncertainty is also paradoxical and controversial.

More specifically, both Concordia's and Aramark's longer-term strategy and vision of food sustainability are typically presented through equivocal language, i.e. "improv[ing] procurement practices and supply chain relationships in order to serve healthy, local and sustainable food in the dining halls and eateries", "developing constructive and collaborative relationships with contracted food service providers, local food suppliers, on-campus food initiatives and academic units" or "identifying local food purchasing needs and opportunities" (Sustainable Food at Concordia, n.d.).

On a different note, the narrative claiming that it got easier to eat local food on campus also serves to erase the fact that the procurement tackled in the article is limited to some of the Aramark-run spaces on campus, not the entire campus (see Tables 1 & 2 on pages 58 & 59).

Similarly, Aramark’s website that features their ‘Menu Commitments’ highlight “seasonal selections with local and sustainable products when available” (“Menu Commitments”, n.d.). Under the subheading ‘Environmental Sustainability’, the ‘Responsible Sourcing’ reads: “We firmly believe responsible sourcing has a direct impact on our local and global economies, our health and wellness and the environment. With every purchase we engage suppliers and partners in an effort to source environmentally and socially responsible products” (“Green Thread”, n.d.).

Yet, in practice, Concordia Aramark has been facing difficulty both in finding strategies to procure local food and in quantifying their procurement practices. As mentioned earlier, due to the challenges faced in quantifying and reporting the ‘progress’ in local procurement, data gathered and disseminated in Aramark’s first year at Concordia was significantly distorted (SFS coordinator and Aramark HWS manager, personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017) (see discussion below under ‘Certification’).

4.2.1.1.3. Distributors

As an institutional food service provider, the majority of Aramark’s purchases come from the broadline distributor Sysco (Aramark’s HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017). Other large-scale distributors Aramark Concordia works with are Hector Larivée, JG Rive-Sud, Diadelfo and Farinex (SFS coordinator and Aramark HWS manager, personal communication, July 10, 2017). Despite the joint efforts of the SFS coordinator and Aramark’s HWS manager for almost two years now, building direct relationships with the suppliers/local producers has proved to be difficult. Currently, the amount of direct purchases among the ‘locally’ purchased products is limited, and those purchases are made from MacDonald Campus Farm³⁵ (Mac Farm) at

³⁵ Aramark had built a relationship with Mac Farm when they were the food provider for part of McGill’s Food Services. Mac Farm is able to supply Concordia Food Services some local produce from September until the end

McGill University. However, a reliance on Sysco and a few other broadline distributors for the majority of purchases results in challenges to “know the origin of the product as well as the information regarding sustainable practices” (SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017).

In addition, Aramark’s HWS manager voiced concerns about distributors’ will to disclose their product’s origin information (group interview, February 21, 2017). This remark raises questions of power dynamics and trust relations across the chain/circuit. A nuanced understanding of the commodity chain/circuit as “a network of labour and production processes” rather than a domain operationalized only towards selling a finished commodity (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1994, p.17) helps to highlight the contingent challenges faced within each chain’s particular context.

More specifically, considered as an arena where the actors compete for creating or appropriating value that circulates, the concept of commodity circuit calls for an explicit consideration of power relations (Stringer & Heron, 2008, p.3). When seen merely as a research and innovation tool for business, commodity chain analysis focuses only on the supply side of the chain without paying due attention to value creation or appropriation, and diverges with the thinking crystallized in Harvey’s (1990) call for lifting the veil on the relations of production of commodities.

Since the commodity chain is extremely complex and fluid, the distributors’ ability to provide product origin information can be limited due to their current supply chain structures. This demonstrates that the claim to traceability poses a challenge not only for the chain leader (i.e. Aramark Concordia or Sysco), but also for the other major intermediaries involved in this

of October. After that period, they don't have anything left in the fields to harvest. Sometimes this period can extend to November.

intricate web of logistic and economic operations. While Concordia University places persistent emphasis on how tracking local/sustainable product purchases is integral to documenting the success of its sustainability commitments, the purchasing actors who deal with fulfilling these commitments on the ground as part of their everyday life, clearly express that data / transparency is difficult to obtain when operating on such a large scale (both geographically and volume-wise) within such an intricate network.

Logistically speaking, a majority of institutional purchasers in the agrifood industry rely on their distributors to coordinate their food purchases. Global food supply chains have operated remarkably effectively in terms of transporting goods to customers. As global economic forces dominate the markets, the ability to meet the customers demand in ever-shorter delivery times while “ensur[ing] that the supply can be synchronized to meet the peaks and troughs of demand” have come to define the competitive edge of a company over others (Christopher, 2000, p.37). In the supply chain management literature, a company with such adaptability is considered “agile”, and the key feature of an agile organization is flexibility (Christopher, 2000; Power et al., 2011; Yusuf et al., 2004).

The supply chain is in constant flux. As Aramark’s HWS manager stated, tracing the origins of the purchased products has proven to be a very complex task, in part, because they work with a variety of distributors for different types of products, with Sysco being the major distributor (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017). As a multi-billion-dollar food distribution company, based in Houston, Texas, which procures and distributes food products and food services to food outlets in the U.S. and Canada, Sysco alone represents a behemoth. Retired Sysco CEO, Rick Schnieders, attests that systems developed over decades to meet

demand for “fast, convenient, and cheap” do not accommodate the product details and diversity that customers demand today (Cantrell, 2009).

It is the previously-explained agility and flexibility – one that is characterized by distant and fluctuating sourcing relations which have been instituted over time by the various actors of the supply chain – that makes traceability challenging today.

Notwithstanding the complexity of the supply chain, the university’s food sustainability discourse is ordered and disseminated so as to depict the food service contract as a binding business arrangement governing the relationship between Aramark and Concordia exclusively. This presentation, leaving a whole network of major actors, such as broadline distributors and one direct supplier (producer Mac Farm), outside the frame does not reflect the challenges faced.

On May 22, 2015, Concordia University’s media relations office published an article on the university’s website titled “And the winner of the food contract is...” (Peden, 2015). The article announces the beginning of “a new era of food services at the university” due to the “unprecedented number of sustainability and nutritional requirements, including sourcing food locally, offering more vegetarian and vegan options, and fair trade and ethically raised products including affordable options” (Peden, 2015). The article displays the pattern of assertive rhetoric by making broad statements including Aramark’s commitment to “environmental protection, consumer health and strengthening communities” (Peden, 2015).

Similarly, Concordia Food Services’ webpage (under the headings ‘Eating Responsibly’ / ‘Sustainable Eating’) features a section titled “Read about Aramark's commitment to sustainability”. In this section, the viewer is informed about Aramark Concordia’s pledge to “making environmentally responsible decisions throughout its operations in order to minimize its footprint while still providing quality food and service” (Sustainable Eating, n.d.). The section

also includes three sub-sections, describing Aramark’s commitment to food sustainability. The section headings are ‘Sustainable Food’, ‘Responsible Procurement’ and ‘Waste Management’. The ‘Sustainable Food’ tab has four key ‘purchasing and providing’ points identified as ‘Locally Grown Food’, ‘Sustainably Grown & Raised Food’, ‘Sustainable Fish & Seafood’, ‘Socially Responsible Products’ (Sustainable Eating, n.d.). The following are provided as ‘initiatives’ taken to operationalize the procurement commitments (see Figure 5 below).

While Concordia began promoting Aramark’s dedication to ‘sustainable’ food procurement with the aid of the below illustrated discourse since the beginning of the contract term (August 2015), Aramark’s HWS manager explained how she was starting to hold meetings with everyone involved in purchasing to make sure that they are ordering the correct products³⁶ due to a set of ordering mistakes that staff had been making (personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017; group interview February 21, 2017).

³⁶ Aramark’s HWS manager stated that both executive chefs at downtown and Loyola residences are responsible for “basically for every order made”. The only ordering that the chef is not responsible for made by the franchises. Aramark-run food retail outlets such as the Green Beet or The Market make their own ordering on certain products.

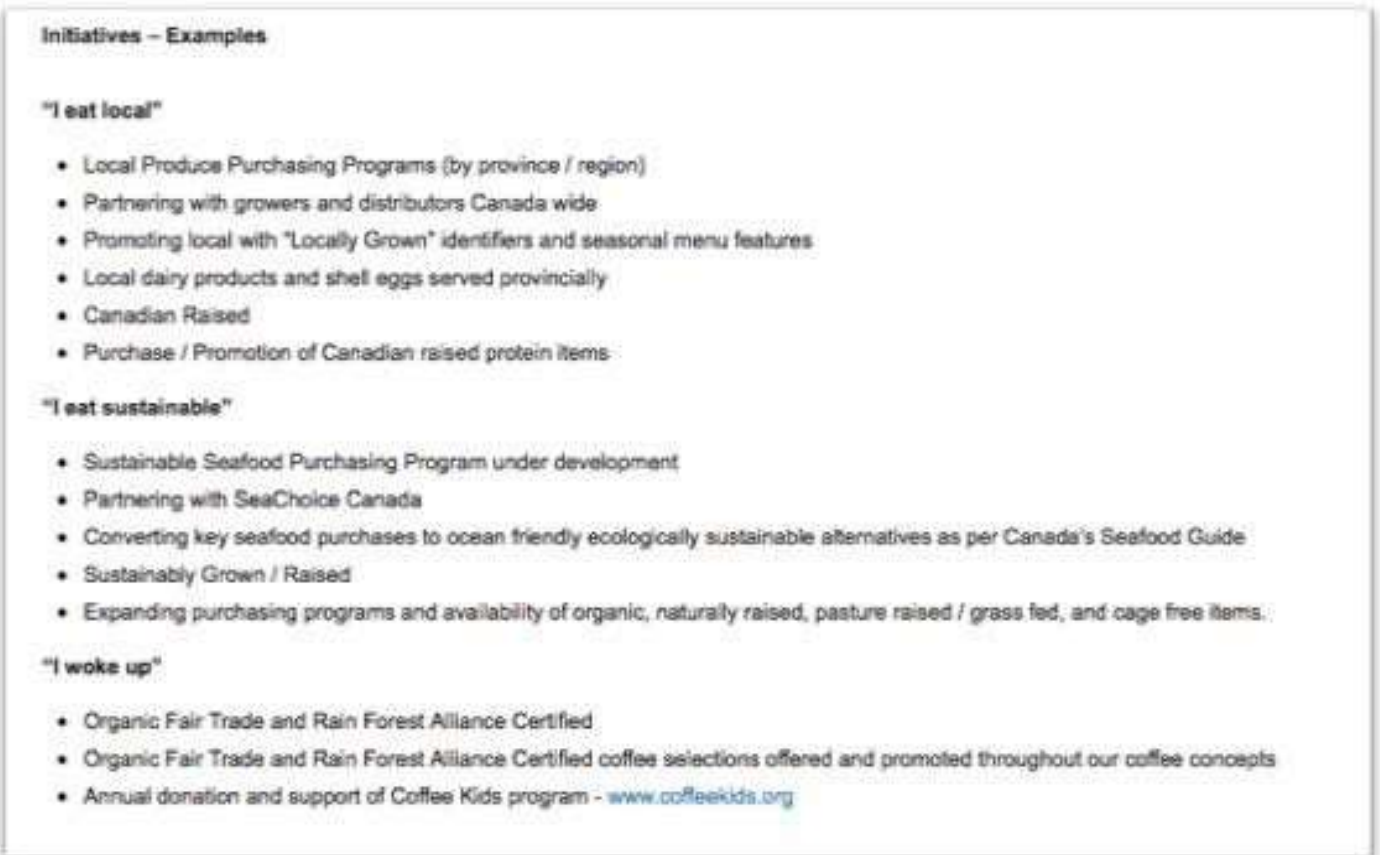


Figure 5. Sustainable eating tab on Concordia University Food Services webpage features Aramark's commitment to sustainability under a sub-section titled 'Sustainable Food'. From "Eating responsibly/Sustainable eating", n.d. <https://www.concordia.ca/campus-life/food-services/eating-responsibly/sustainable-eating.html>

4.2.1.1.4. Regional food distribution networks

The second step at Aramark Concordia was looking into the *possibility* of shifting from the non-local suppliers to local ones, hence reconfiguring a new supply chain by collaborating with regional food distribution networks. According to Watts et al.'s (2005) classification, this practice would be considered an attempt to establish a "stronger" alternative food system. The advantages Aramark Concordia sees in regional procurement via food hubs and regional distribution networks are availability of information regarding the origins of the product, and the ability to ask for more information on the agricultural practices of the producers within the food hub (The SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017).

Additionally, member farms within a food hub typically offer produce that cannot be purchased through larger distributors as these distributors would not sign contracts with smaller farms due to issues of volume. As a potential solution to the distribution issues food hubs face, regional distribution networks are being initiated. Accès Québec is one such organization that received funding from the McConnell Foundation's 2014 Regional Value Chain program, and was launched as a local/regional food distribution network to support the development of sustainable and viable regional food economies ("Evidence of change", 2016). Accès Québec aims to facilitate the marketing and distribution of regional products from Eastern Townships, Montérégie and Center-du-Québec to HRIs (hoteliers, restaurateurs and institutions) and retailers. Around thirty producers grouped together under this distribution network offer different seasonal products ("Accès Québec Distribution Alimentaire", n.d.). Accès Québec positions itself as a gateway to new markets for producers, and as a distributor of high-quality local products for individual or institutional consumers ("Home", n.d.).

Also, the majority of the products Accès Québec distributes are 'niche' products that Aramark Concordia rarely uses (e.g. maple products), or that are too expensive (e.g. Les Bobines trout) (SFS coordinator, personal communication, July 7, 2017).

One of the reasons why purchasing produce from Accès Québec has not become commonplace at Aramark Concordia is the price limitation. On one occasion, Aramark Concordia served Accès Québec-distributed local pears and plums at the resident cafeterias because price did not pose a particular purchasing challenge at the time. The producer was able to offer options of organically or conventionally grown pears and plums. Since the latter was cheaper, Aramark was able to fit the purchase of these products in their budget (SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017). Further, even if conventionally-grown pears, plums and

apples are available at a competitive price, another issue is that Accès Québec has limited volumes of these fruits. All of their fruits come from one orchard, i.e. Verger Ferland, and when the orchard runs out of produce, Accès Québec stops offering these fruits. Finally, although Accès Québec delivers to the door, their delivery truck comes to Montreal twice a week. This is not a distribution timeline compatible with the way Aramark Concordia's kitchen operates.

In the SFS coordinator's words, the purchasing relationship with the food hub is still one of a "developing" kind as it represents a scant amount of total purchases to date (group interview, February 21, 2017).

4.2.1.1.5. Large-scale food service providers like Aramark purchase meals prepared elsewhere

Lack of cooking from scratch in institutional food services coupled with the convenience of existing collaborations with broadline supply chains (ex. uniformity of products, financial benefits from committing to purchasing volumes, and consistent availability), makes localizing food procurement difficult for an agribusiness giant such as Aramark. Typically, institutional food service providers rely on processed food products and meals because this model keeps the labour costs low.

Although the SFS coordinator interpreted the purchase of prepared meals (e.g. lasagna) as "not [being] part of institutional food services culture", and Aramark's HWS manager expressed that it should be the distributor's responsibility to undertake the task of clarifying the origins of what goes into the prepared meal, training the cooks and obtaining the necessary equipment in order to prepare cafeteria meals are not unprecedented practices on university campuses, especially at Concordia where there are student-run cafes and a cafeteria (People's Potato) that have fully equipped kitchens.

4.2.1.1.6. Meal Plan has to keep under an average cost

Price can be a big prohibitor of buying sustainably, i.e. locally and/or organically. Another barrier price poses for sustainable food procurement within large-scale food providers is linked to the mandated meal plan. Aramark Concordia's food service contract stipulates the food service provider to make "reasonable efforts to purchase organic products" ("Normes en matiere de Durabilite et d'Approvisionnement, June 1, 2015). Yet organic procurement becomes a target not so reasonable as the average cost Aramark Concordia sets per meal for the mandated meal plan is \$5. Bringing in organic foods and dairy in Aramark Concordia's procurement causes a significant rise in the food costs, which the company cannot maintain within the limits of its budget (Aramark's HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017).

Further, Aramark Concordia gets an upfront payment for the mandated 8-month meal plan, and limits its purchasing budget to that certain amount (\$4,100 for the Resident Meal Plan and \$200 Dining Dollars Plan). It is this advance payment on which the menu is prepared and following that, "the budget is almost set in stone" (Aramark HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017). However, it is important to note that the cost of the meal plan increased by \$300 since Aramark and Concordia signed the 2015 food service contract which had an "unprecedented number of sustainability and nutritional requirements" (Peden, 2015).

4.2.1.1.7. List of preferred / approved distributors and suppliers

Aramark Concordia has a list of preferred distributors and suppliers³⁷. The company makes approximately 85% of its food purchases through the distributor Sysco, and Sysco has its own list of preferred suppliers. Since the distributor/supplier contracts have already been negotiated, Aramark has group purchasing power over certain items. Therefore, dealing with new distributors/suppliers might not be the most cost-effective option (Aramark HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017).

Additionally, there are specifications required from a supplier entrant such as HACCP certification³⁸ or liability insurance³⁹. Being costly, these requirements encumber the entry to Aramark's approved list for small-scale producers. Especially for the high-risk protein products Aramark's list of required certifications is lengthy (Aramark HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017).

The distributor ('Sysco') has their own procedures that they ask the supplier to follow, including provision of liability insurance and respective food safety certifications. Even if Aramark wanted to make an exception for a certain supplier, the supplier still will not be able to

³⁷ The list referred to in this study is comprised of food products only, and does not include packaging or cleaning products. The list of Aramark's preferred distributors/suppliers is predominantly populated by *distributors*, the main one being Sysco. According to the definitions provided on p.53, the one *supplier* Aramark Concordia works with is the Delicious Without Gluten bakery. There is no information as to from which producers this supplier makes its purchases from.

³⁸ HACCP Canada is a HACCP System Certifying Body which evaluates retail HACCP systems for their food safety measures. The company who defines itself as "an independent and impartial national organization" offers certification for the retail food supply chain. The prerequisite criteria follow the industry standards, i.e. World Health Organization, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and National and Provincial Food Safety Acts. The implementation of the criteria are validated through the use of field agents and manual/digital auditing.

³⁹ Aramark's liability insurance standards require coverage for "products liability, completed operations, acts of independent contractors and blanket contractual liability coverage with a combined single limit of not less than \$5,000,000 per occurrence for bodily injury, personal injury, property damage and advertising injury which shall be written by a financially responsible insurance company ... [as well as] automobile liability insurance covering all owned, non-owned and hired vehicles with a limit of liability for each accident of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence combined single limit for bodily injury and property damage" (Aramark's Vendor Warranty document, p.2). (see Appendix B)

obtain the distributor's approval without meeting the insurance or food safety requirements. The overall intricacy of the approval process ends up denying entry to smaller scale farmers who do not have the means to meet the requirements (SFS Coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017).

4.2.1.1.8. Volume

For Aramark Concordia, being able to make purchases in large quantities is seen as a must as the number of students fed per day borders on a thousand. When Aramark purchases through their approved distributors, they are assured that the stock they need will be available to them in a timely manner. On the contrary, the smaller farms, food hubs or regional distributional networks can provide produce in limited volume, and they cannot always ensure frequent deliveries. Yet, Aramark's operational structure mandates an assurance of when the supply will come (Aramark HWS manager, group interview, February 21, 2017).

Products in demand such as vegan cheese are found only in retail format, and it is not feasible for a food service provider to purchase retail items primarily due to "cost restraints", inconvenience regarding use of storage space, and the amount of packaging waste that such purchase would produce (Concordia SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017). Further, when the Aramark HWS manager *is* able to spot an opportunity to purchase special items like vegan cheese in bulk, then she faces challenges regarding the item's 'format' (group interview, February 21, 2017). 'Format' refers to the pre-processed foods such as shredded or sliced cheese, demonstrating the product specificity and uniformity cafeteria cooking requires.

4.2.1.1.9. Can institutional demand help restructure global supply chains?

Concordia's SFS coordinator expressed her belief that if more institutions were asking distributors for the origins of the food they provide, traceability would be easier to achieve (the SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017).

This is a commonly held conviction among alliances of non-profit, public and private entities, including *Sustain Ontario*, *Food Matters Manitoba*, *Farm to Institution* (in the U.S.) and most recently, *Food Secure Canada*. The plethora of online local procurement toolkits is proof of this conviction (Cawthorne, 2015; "Food Matters Manitoba", n.d.; Obadia & Stoddard, August, 2015; Reynolds & Hunter, 2017). The toolkits share the argument that universities can have significant positive impact on the local economies by making their large volumes of food purchase from local producers.

Increasing demand for large food service providers to supply local food poses new opportunities and challenges for food localization. While there is potential for local suppliers to sell more product volume, undeniable challenges are faced when reconciling the business needs of foodservice companies such as Aramark with the direct producer-consumer trade approach. And this direct trade approach is the main driver for the growth of the local food movement (Kennedy, 2007, p.100).

4.2.1.2. Certification

At Concordia University, Aramark Concordia is taking the route of food certifications such as Aliments du Québec or Fair Trade Campus to substantiate its sustainable campus food system claims. This is the route taken due to the barriers to entry Aramark's list of preferred distributors/suppliers⁴⁰ pose, as well as Aramark's inability to negotiate price and volume when

⁴⁰ Although this process is easier for low-risk products within a 'reasonable' price range such as conventionally-grown fruits. Some products have made it to Aramark's list of approved items.

directly dealing with alternative distributors such as Accès Québec. In addition, the fact that food hubs are not well-established in Québec, and that the cold climate hinders year round food production is also influential on the popularity of certification regimes in institutional sustainable procurement.

4.2.1.2.1. Certified Local and Fair Trade

4.2.1.2.1.1. Aliments du Québec au Menu, Équiterre, Fair Trade Campus

The ambiguity of the term ‘local food’, the consequential difficulties faced in measuring/quantifying how sustainable the purchases are and the irreconcilable differences between agrifood giants and small-scale producers/food hubs concerning issues of distribution and volume are the major challenges Aramark Concordia has faced in meeting its contract commitments. Specifically, as previously mentioned, tracking food commodities was a big challenge for Aramark Concordia in the first year (Aramark HWS manager, personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017).

For example, in regards with the procurement commitment for Québec poultry⁴¹, Aramark’s HWS manager explained that there was a decrease in the percentage of local poultry purchased because they found out that many well-known Québec poultry brands such as Olymel were not actually from Quebec. Yet, they assumed Olymel was and kept purchasing its poultry products until they realized their mistake (Aramark HWS manager, personal meeting notes, February 3, 2017).

⁴¹ The contract mandates that 15% of the poultry Aramark Concordia serves should be raised in Québec, and 3% of the poultry is to be organic. However, it is imperative to note that the percentages are not exclusive to the food served at Concordia’s Grey Nuns and Loyola residence cafeterias. For example, the 3% organic chicken procurement applies only for campus events Aramark Concordia caters for. To put it slightly differently, none of the chicken served at Concordia’s residence cafeterias is organic as organic product prices do not fall within the ‘reasonable’ range.

As well, determining whether the beef products were local or not has constituted a challenge. In trying to meet the contract requirement regarding the procurement of only Canadian beef, 15% of which would be from Québec, Aramark purchased beef products from one of Canada's largest meat processing companies, Lesters, because the company carried *Aliments préparés au Québec* certified deli-meat products. Yet, this particular certification signified that Lesters' beef products were only processed, not raised, in Québec.

As Aramark Concordia's HWS manager mentioned numerous times, the task of tracing the origins of food products takes up a lot of time and effort. Given that Aramark Concordia has faced multiple challenges to forge direct links with the small-scale provincial producers and thereby shorten its supply chain, they chose the path of certification.

Concordia University is a participant in *Aliments du Québec au Menu*⁴², a certification program that demands use of local products in the menu items.

Aliments du Québec au Menu provides two options for institutions to attain certification. First, the entire food service is certified as 'Aliments du Québec au Menu'. For this recognition, the total annual food purchase is considered local (enough) based on a minimum percentage of food from Québec. This "predominantly Québécois" menu, for a minimum period from May to October of each year, must have approximately 80% of its items made with Québec content.

Second, the institution (or its food service contractor) offers dishes labelled as 'Aliments

⁴² Founded in 1996 by the members of the Québec Agrifood Sector, Aliments du Québec is a non-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote the agrifood industry through the Aliments du Québec and Aliments préparés au Québec brands and their respective derivatives. Aliments du Québec and Équiterre have joined forces to develop a recognition program targeting institutions that place the Aliments du Québec and Prepared Foods in Québec in value in the menus of their food services. The objective is to help institutions gradually increase the purchase of local products. As part of a pilot project, Aliments du Québec and Équiterre are currently working with some thirty institutions across the province (health care institutions, child care, elementary and secondary schools, Cégeps and Universities) and companies). Adapted to the realities of institutional environments, this initiative aims to highlight institutional approaches to local procurement.

du Québec'. To obtain this kind of recognition, a dish must consist of a minimum of 50% of ingredients originating in Québec and can therefore be labelled as 'Aliments du Québec au menu' on the menu or at the counter. The Aliments du Québec certification is generally held by products with little processing, such as various cuts of meat, or products that are not at all processed, such as fruits and vegetables or any other vegetable product. ("About Us", n.d.).

Being registered under *Aliments du Québec au Menu* mandates 50% of the ingredients (by weight) to be local in order for a recipe to be certified as Aliments du Québec. Currently there are more than 70 recipes in rotation on the menu that are recognized as Aliments du Québec. Aramark Concordia is pursuing the second kind of certification to meet their local procurement targets.

While Pratt (2009) urges us to consider the specificity of agrarian histories, and how they influence the possibilities for small-scale producers, Guthman (2014) cautions that the conventionalization or the mainstreaming of organic farming has become possible because of the particular ways in which organic farming has been codified. She situates this codification in how organic commodity chains ended up being appropriated by agribusiness. The business logic strives, first, for the expansion of the market and then for domination. And does so by substantially re-defining the commodity in question. Ultimately, many of such enterprises codified as 'alternative' ultimately abandon sustainable practices (Guthman, 2014, pp.173-4). So the question this raises is whether 'local' can be conventionalized in the way that 'organic' has?

Guthman (2014) highlights how questions of standards in the domain of agrifood are profoundly political. Her analysis of the conventionalization organic farming in California went through, raises significant questions of land and labour (pp.51-53; p.208).

The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation’s Institutional Food Program, which aims to “influence supply chains towards more local and sustainable production” and in which Concordia University currently participates, is led by the Aliments du Québec au Menu pilot project. The project is run by non-profits Aliment du Québec and Équiterre (“Institutional Food Program, n.d.). Aramark Concordia’s dishes are certificated through this pilot project. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation also funds Concordia University’s SFS coordinator position, thereby the university’s joint efforts with Aramark to achieve food sustainability based on the food services contract. Institutional Food Program is a result of a partnership between the J.W. McConnell Family and Food Secure Canada (FSC). In the scope of this partnership, Food Secure Canada is mandated to assist the Institutional Food Fund recipients with technical support. The organization also facilitates a learning group which involves Concordia University, Centre de santé et service sociaux (CSSS) des Sommets, QC, District scolaire francophone Sud, NB, Ecology Action Centre, NS, Edmonton Northlands, AB, Équiterre, QC, Farm Folk/City Folk, BC, and North Island College, BC. The Institutional Food Program aims to encourage procurement-based food sustainability practices on the institutional level. Therefore, the Foundation supports institutions whose endeavours intend to embed food system changes within mainstream procurement practices. Both non-profit organizations, i.e. Aliment du Québec and Équiterre, also offer some insight into the objectives of such a program on their respective websites.

According to Aliment du Québec’s website, it is of paramount significance that institutions purchase Québec products because of freshness, potential contribution to the development of a province economy, and contribution to job creation and retention. It further states that, offered at competitive prices, Québec products are also easily accessible and available

for any occasion (“En Quoi Est-Ce Important ?”, n.d.).

Équiterre is a non-profit organization that sees the “everyday choices we all make, such as food, transportation, housing, gardening, shopping, as an opportunity to change the world” (“Mission”, n.d.). The organization’s institutional food program aims to facilitate the procurement of healthy, local and sustainable food in public facilities and organizations in Québec. The organization also has a network of family farmers all of whom made a formal commitment to use organic farming practices. Équiterre also accepts “transitional farms” into its network. Transitional farms are not yet certified organic, but are in the process of getting certified. These farms are required to follow organic farming standards, but are not allowed to label their produce as ‘organic’ (“Family Farmer”, n.d.). Équiterre maintains that purchasing their organic baskets help the local economy, reduce food miles and provide better quality food.

Neither of these organizations mentions farm workers and labour standards. Reading Équiterre’s website, one gets to think that family farmers *are* the farm workers themselves. Yet, there is no specific information to either deny or confirm that. Correspondingly, Aliment du Québec does not mention any parameters pertaining to local labour standards. Yet, research on Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) indicates that farm labour in Canada’s agricultural sector is increasingly being sourced through temporary foreign work programs (Westlake & Begg, 2010; Flecker, 2010) without governmental auditing be built into the SAWP, allowing employers to not uphold their contractual and legal obligations (Worswick, 2010).

In addition, food localization does not necessarily translate to regional economic development in the long run. Once ‘local’ becomes a label that adds market value to the food product, local food production can easily get susceptible to restructuring by multinational agrifood actors, ending up utilizing the same processes that characterize the industrial

agricultural system to which it was once juxtaposed. Following the conventionalization debate, local food production can also be coopted into the capitalist forms of organization. The exchange value added via the ‘local’ food label ends up ascribing the commodity a price premium in the marketplace. Studies have shown that the extra profits that can be obtained by growing certified local produce are then capitalized into land values. Ultimately, entry into the local food sector gets increasingly harder for small-scale producers, and, large-scale actors may end up being the most powerful landowners in local farming (Guthman, 2004b, pp.178-85).

4.2.1.2.1.2. Fair Trade

Concordia University was granted the Fair Trade Campus status granted by Fairtrade Canada, the Canadian Fair Trade Network and l’Association québécoise du commerce équitable in the summer of 2016. This designation means that all residence dining halls, non-franchised campus cafés and student-run cafés are required to carry 100 % ‘fairly’ traded coffee, at least three types of fair trade teas and a minimum of one fair trade chocolate (where chocolate is served).

On August 30, 2016, Concordia University’s Office of EHS organized a public event named *Fair Trade Campus Celebration*. The event’s invitation includes the heading ‘What is the impact of being designated a Fair Trade Campus?’. In response, the invitation describes Fair Trade Campus certification as “an opportunity to further awareness and to extend discussions on social sustainability” (see Appendix C).

Further, the event included an activity where participants were asked to write down (on easel pads) their answers for the question: “Why do you support Fair Trade?”. Quite a *fait accompli*, the assumed support of all of the event participants reflect the university’s forceful discourse on its commitment to food sustainability. It also renders Fair Trade certification as *the*

way to achieve social sustainability within the food sustainability discourse. [emphasis mine] Emergent themes among the responses, clustered around the concepts of justice (freedom of association and collective bargaining), consumer responsibility towards farmers, workers and future generations, as well as environmental sustainability (fair trade encourages organic production)

Guthman (2004c) argues that ‘ethical’ labels such as Fair Trade that largely underpin ideas of alternative supply chains still operate within the bounds of “commercial marketing networks” (see also Reynolds, 2002). Even as mere communication, these labels do not necessarily make the social relations of production all that transparent (Goodman, 1999). Similar to Aliment du Québec and Équiterre’s intrinsic exclusion of workers, and growers with lower-quality products, Fair Trade labels serves to fetishize the commodity. Only this time the commodity is fetishized from an ‘ethical’ perspective. Shored up with the neoliberal discourse of consumer responsibility, Fair trade labels perform global capitalism’s prescription for an alternative agrifood economy carried out by international bodies, private firms, and local governments as a substitute for state reform regulation (Allen & Guthman 2006, p.402). As demonstrated by Concordia’s Office of EHS’s Fair Trade discourse, the consumer is expected simply to trust that the label speaks for itself (Freidberg, 2003; Guthman, 2007).

4.2.2. An alternative campus food system at Concordia

So far, I have demonstrated the challenges Aramark Concordia has been facing in fulfilling its contract requirements. In addition, I showcased how Aramark Concordia has taken the certification route to fulfil its food service contract stipulations. This is so, due to an attempt to overcome/obscure the tension riding between the large-scale operational agribusiness structures and the already-made discursive commitments to procure from small-scale local farms

and/or distribution networks.

An in-depth comparison of the predominantly student-run, alternative food systems on campus and Aramark Concordia based on procurement policies and discourse is beyond the scope of this study. However, alternative campus food initiatives such as the People's Potato, the Hive Café Solidarity Cooperative or the Hive Free Lunch program at Concordia University illustrate that campus food services can operate outside the mainstream, profit-driven business models that require exclusivity contracts.

In particular, comparing the discussions student groups have initiated around the RFP process and university's exclusivity contracts with agribusiness since 1990s can be quite revelatory. Co-founder and former coordinator at People's Potato, Zev Tiefenbach recounts the period when Sodhexo-Marriot's contract term was almost over in 2002 and how student organizations including the CSU saw this as a window of opportunity for galvanizing a student movement, aiming to eradicate corporate monopoly over campus food. By proposing a new operational model for Concordia's cafeteria, the student organizations wanted to show how student-run initiatives could successfully implement a new cafeteria model to feed hundreds of students on campus with better quality food (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015e). The new cafeteria model that the student groups came up with was based on a "mosaic concept" where different student organizations would run their own kiosk, serving the kind of food they wanted in a common area similar to a food court. Since the students were well aware that they were not able to meet the parameters of the RFP and hence could not win the contract, they asked the administration to hold off on the RFP process, and consider their mosaic model separately (Chevrier & Gagnon, 2015e). This request was denied.

Similar to Aramark's discursive commitment, Concordia University's predominantly

student-run cooperative cafe, the Hive, has also been investing some of its resources into “decentralizing [its] supply chain” (the Hive Café 2015-16 procurement policy, n.d.). However, in contrast to the university’s current food service model, student groups prefer a non-profit, solidarity cooperative model in their enterprises. Specifically, the Hive Café does not operate within a conventional business model with a large-scale operational structure. Instead, while still situating their food procurement practices as a means to strengthen the local food system, the Hive aims for a “flexible resource flow between local organizations with similar core values” (the Hive Café 2015-16 procurement policy, n.d.). In the context of Concordia, the Hive commits to purchasing when possible from the other student-run initiatives on campus that produce, transform, and distribute food goods. The collaboration with such groups can also be in the form of pooling resources together such as placing orders together with Café X. Other prioritized suppliers are campus fee-levy groups, cooperatives (e.g. Coop Alentour), non-profit organizations, and small scale providers (individual entrepreneurs or local small businesses) (the Hive Café 2015-16 procurement policy, n.d.; the Hive Café’s former coordinator, personal interview, February 24, 2017).

4.2.2.1. What differentiates the ‘alternatives’ from the mainstream food system at Concordia?

In reflecting on the example of the Hive, one overriding theme and six recurring sub-themes emerged from my interviews with the current and three former coordinators at the Hive Café. All of these individuals performed responsibilities directly related to procurement decisions. The recurrent theme which emerged when they described (i) their ideal campus food system and (ii) how it differed from the current one was ‘values’. They also strongly emphasized the significance of values in their definitions of food sustainability. The concept of ‘value’ was juxtaposed against the pursuit of profit, and was associated with motivations outside of this

pursuit. In one interview, values were clearly associated with a moral economy that put people before profit.

The six sub-themes that were discussed in relation to the overarching moral/value based governance included the following: The first was the need to build *regenerative* food systems rather than ‘sustainable’ ones as the word sustainable has become ambiguous. Regenerative food systems were defined as being regenerative of human and natural capital. Second, the imperative to establish smaller-scale food production and distribution networks that are democratically controlled where the people who are directly consuming the food have a say. The third point emphasized being cognizant that a non-profit food enterprise is still running in the backdrop of a market economy, and therefore being ready for constant struggle to balancing out price/affordability with the social mandates such as having higher labour standards and environmental sensitivities. The fourth theme was accepting to confront uncertainties that stem from context-specific actors and agendas if the objective is to build *new* operational models. [emphasis mine] The fifth emergent theme was being aware that full traceability across the commodity chain is almost impossible due to the number of intermediaries involved, a lack of personnel to do the tracking, and the fast pace at which supplier ownership changes, i.e. small businesses get bought by big companies. In addition, it was mentioned that there was no way to access provenance information pertaining to processed products such as beverages. And it was impossible to produce every single menu item in-house from scratch. Also most of these processed products came from abroad. And the sixth theme was the decision to run operations on a small-scale, and build relationships with the people and organizations that are part of the supply chain. This allowed for flexibility in relationships with most small-scale suppliers, including lowering or raising orders from time to time. Also, since there was no multi-year lock

in contracts in place, the search for partnerships (mostly sought for on the basis of the commodity) would help the social mandates of organizations such as the Hive remain ongoing.

5. CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Gap between discourse and practice

It is evident that one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the global food system is the economic and social distancing it creates, and the wide range of problems associated with it (Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson 1996, p.35).

In recent years, major non-profit sector actors, including Food Secure Canada, Meal Exchange, Sierra Youth Coalition, and Local Food Plus along with the major provider of national grants and contracts for of sustainable food systems J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, have led the way in facilitating the entry of multinational agribusiness corporations into potential local food networks through university partnerships. The rationale behind this facilitation is based in the conviction that university-agribusiness partnerships can change the food landscape via purchasing power. In other words, these non-profit organizations aim to intermediate and ultimately link production and consumption through the act of purchase. As such, growing numbers of universities with contractual commitments to sustainable food procurement demonstrate some capacity to have an economic impact on the conventional food supply circuits. Yet, caution is needed not to get carried away with the belief that purchasing power will suffice to ensure more transparency across the commodity chain, which in turn will translate to a socially and ecologically sustainable food system. Although these commitments are heavily focused on local, small-scale producers and others on certification regimes, verifiable proof of the extent to which these commitments are or can be met remains rare (Barlett, 2011, p.111). In the case of Aramark Concordia, there is evidence that the local procurement data was

derived from unreliable implementation. In addition, each criterion of sustainable purchasing represents only partial progress toward removing environmental, social, or economic concerns (Barlett, 2011, p.111). For example, an Aliments du Québec au Menu recipe requires only 50 % of the ingredients to be local. Given the cost barriers organic procurement has invariably faced at Concordia and the questionable nature of what /who these certifications reveal or hide, Aliments du Québec au Menu's 'local' recipes can very well include foods produced with heavy chemical use by poorly paid immigrant workers. As Barlett (2011) notes, tension between localist and social justice goals will surely continue as price pressures on local farmers grow (p.111).

In addition, the conviction that public university-private agribusiness partnerships can make significant change in the established supply chain practices with their 'purchasing power' and can enhance local/regional economic development is heavily reliant on food certifications. Given that these certifications cannot capture the complexity of the contexts in which social relations of production occur, campus food sustainability will remain an ideal in the realm of discourse. Further, certifications serve to fetishize the de-fetishizing of commodities as if an unveiling of how commodities are really produced is guaranteed. Yet this alleged unveiling is also a crucial means of adding market value to those food commodities, hence mainstreaming them back into the market with new surplus value.

The findings of this study show that the organization of political and economic relations along the global food commodity chain has a larger impact on food sustainability than the particular characteristics attributed to the foods themselves. Specifically, the application of the global commodity chain analysis framework on Concordia University's recent food system developments has revealed that the producer-consumer relationship is more complex and variegated than reflected with a linear supply chain imagery. It was also demonstrated that this

complexity muddles accountability and curtails the possibilities for alternative governance structures and practices to emerge or expand.

5.2. Governance practices with neoliberal motives

Since the food consumption in question is taking place in a public institution such as Concordia University, the power to define sustainable food has emerged as a particularly key factor in determining what plausible and imaginable campus food system change can mean. Questions of decentralizing the power to define and perform campus food sustainability both semiotically and materially are inevitably linked to the university's governance practices. The remarkable amount of discursive power that the university administration has channeled towards publicizing both the hiring of the SFS coordinator and the promotion of the so-called community consultation in the RFP process are proof that governance practices in public institutions should be carefully scrutinized. This kind of scrutiny is imperative to disentangle neoliberal rationalities that tend to download heightened responsibility on individuals or groups to manage their own choices. Yet, these rationalities, normalized by the power to create and disseminate a certain discourse, privilege the market thinking as the superior form of allocating resources and risk.

Complementary to the administration's community consultation discourse, the SFS coordinator's role in building community among campus food actors also calls for a closer look. The SFS coordinator listed 'community building' as one of the major challenges she has faced in her role. The issue here is with the way the administration conceptualizes Concordia's food system as *one* system. [emphasis mine] I suggest that the student groups and the university constitute two separate food systems based on their different governance models, and value sets in reference to the ways in which they define their ideal campus food system.

To put it in the SFS coordinator's words,

There are different opinions as to the definition of a sustainable campus food system. We can respect that. We can respect what the student groups think, but they can also respect the challenges that big corporations like Aramark are facing. Maybe it is not clear to people what those challenges are. Yes, we can respect what they feel or think, but we have to put all that together. (SFS coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017)

Despite the conspicuous practical and discursive polarity between the university and student activists⁴³ in regards to the campus food system, the SFS coordinator's role centers on 'building community' without the due acknowledgement of this polarity, and the historical and structural power asymmetry between student food groups and the university administration. This role, time and time again, has served as an apparatus to normalize Concordia's choice to contract

⁴³ However, it should not be presumed that Concordia student activist comprise a homogenous group of individuals who are in full agreement in regards with campus food issues. The SFS coordinator's below analysis reflects the diversity of opinions among the student groups:

There are two kinds of student activism at Concordia. One activist choice is more like critical and that's important to be critical. What I would like to see in the coming years is a type of activism or interest in research that is conducted to understand how to *reform*, rather than *revolutionize*. Because we are not doing a revolution right now. The question is how to improve from this situation that exists right now. Rather than take everything down. There is room for both type of activism. In both arguments, there is a lot of room for learning. (SFS Coordinator, group interview, February 21, 2017). While some student activists conflate their opposition to conventional food systems with their fundamental opposition to the capitalist system, other student activists do not state strong opinions against capitalism. More so, they are inclined to seek alternatives within the capitalist socioeconomic system in their immediate context. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), who employ food regime framework coupled with Karl Polanyi's 'double-movement'⁴³ to locate current political / social trends within food movements and the corporate food regime along the reformist - neoliberal spectrum. Within the reformist pole, they identify two types of food movements, namely *progressive* and *radical* (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, p.115). They argue that the *progressive* wing in food movements is characterized by advocating practical alternatives to industrial agrifood sector. These proposed alternatives mostly position themselves within the economic and political frameworks of existing capitalist food systems when envisioning "sustainable, agroecological and organic agriculture and farmer-consumer community food networks" (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, 115). Generally self-defined as anti-imperialist, anti-corporatist and/or anti-capitalist, the *radical* wing also argues for food systems change, but centers a more defined focus on rights and privileges, structural change concerning market and property regimes. Organizations addressing issues of labour abuse in the food system, i.e. farm, processing, distribution, retail and restaurant workers, are also included in the *radical* typology (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, pp.115-116). I suggest that these two kinds of food movements are complementary in their views both in general, and in the context of Concordia University's food movements. Further, they are convergent in the directions of their present practices and imageries for a self-operated food system. Therefore, while introducing practical innovations to shift the current campus food system away from environmentally and socially unsustainable and unjust practices, they also look for ways to inflict structural change within the university system through empowering students, hence democratizing the decision-making processes that shape the campus food system.

its food services to Aramark. More in-depth analysis of the student groups' opportunities and challenges in having a voice and/or accessing supports from the administration could serve to identify and potentially alter current modes of input as well as the recognition and legitimation of other food system approaches.

5.3. The resident students are missing from the picture

Another conclusion derived from this study's findings is that the predominantly semiotic tension between the major student actors and the university administration at Concordia University is not informed by the resident students who are directly affected by Aramark's procurement strategies. As well, there is nearly no representation from the resident students on the Hive's or the CFC's board. This is a weakness on the part of the student food movements on campus. As one of my informants pointed out, one way to close this gap could be reaching out to resident students when campaigning against corporate food service presence on campus.

One confounding fact about the residence cafeterias is that they constitute the major nodes of discursive intervention where food sustainability narratives are anchored. The neoliberal narratives at work within the cafeteria spaces are geared towards downloading responsibility on individual students as 'healthy consumers' whose food choices will contribute to social and environmental sustainability. Yet, the linkage between student's 'choice' and the 'sustainability' of the meal plan is conceptually untenable due to the fact that the students are *mandated* to purchase the meal plan to be able to stay at either of the residences. [emphasis mine]

Additionally, during my group interview with the SFS coordinator, Aramark's HWS manager and the director of Hospitality Concordia, all three individuals clearly stated that not a single resident student have voiced any concerns with regards to the cafeteria food's

‘sustainability’ (largely associated with local and organic food procurement according to the contract criteria). The SFS coordinator clarified that Aramark Concordia’s contract commitments were more of a concern for the “campus food system stakeholders” (group interview, February 21, 2017). This comment is also telling of the disconnect between the student food groups on campus and the resident students. Yet again it is the resident students who paid the \$300 increase in the cost of the meal plan since Aramark and Concordia signed the 2015 food service contract with unprecedented sustainability commitments. Further research about the experiences and impressions of students in residence is warranted given their critical place as consumers, who actually have little say in their consumption options.

While student bodies are mandated to pay for the meal plan, they are discursively mobilized within the context of ‘responsibility’ to support campus food sustainability via their healthy eating ‘choices’. Although both cafeterias are sites of contestation between the student food groups on campus and the university administration due to these reasons, there is still a need to center residents in the food system domain, showing the challenges ahead to attaining sustainability across Concordia’s food service provision sectors – conventional *and* alternative.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Our Food Systems Guide, Concordia University



From a food system perspective, there are several factors to consider when buying more food with sustainable products, such as:

- Buy local products or farm-to-table products
- Buy seasonal and local produce
- Buy products that are sustainably sourced from local farms

However...

- Local products often cost more than imported products
- Local products may not be available year-round
- Local products may not be as diverse as imported products

At Concordia University, we define "local" as products that are sourced from within a 100-mile radius of the university.

The following map illustrates the area which is defined as "local" by Concordia.

100-MILE RADIUS

At Concordia University, local food days are held once a month and rotate through the different categories. Each month has a theme (e.g., "Community") and showcases local products.

Our goal is to support local farmers and producers by providing a platform for them to sell their products. We encourage students to visit these events and support local food systems.

This is the best way to engage with local food systems and support the local economy. We encourage students to visit these events and support local food systems.

APPENDIX B: Aramark Concordia Vendor Warranty Document

VENDOR WARRANTY

1. The Vendor ("Vendor") warrants and guarantees to ARAMARK Canada Ltd. and its subsidiaries and affiliates (collectively, "ARAMARK") that all products and services provided by or on the behalf of ARAMARK from Vendor: (1) shall be produced in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and other legal requirements; (2) shall be labeled to reflect true net weight, net volume, net content, size and nutritional information pursuant to, and shall otherwise comply with, all applicable laws, regulations and other legal requirements; (3) shall be good and merchantable; (4) shall be fit for such purposes of ARAMARK as have been made known to Vendor, including without limitation, any purposes stated on the face of any applicable ARAMARK purchase order; and (5) shall neither infringe nor cause ARAMARK products herefrom to infringe, the trademark, patent, copyright or other intellectual property rights of any third party.

2. Vendor shall indemnify, defend and hold ARAMARK harmless from and against any claim, lawsuit, tort, liability, damage, settlement or judgment including without limitation, legal fees and other expenses incurred in the defense of a claim, arising out of or alleging that such claimant's injury was caused, in whole or in part, by: (1) the breach by Vendor or its distributor or subcontractor of any warranty hereunder, (2) a defect in a product or service supplied under this agreement or (3) a negligent act or omission in the design, manufacture, preparation, or packaging of a product or service supplied to ARAMARK.

3. Vendor's duty to defend and indemnify shall apply to claims for bodily injury or property loss and shall include amounts which ARAMARK shall become obligated to pay as damages in reasonable settlement of a claim as well as in satisfaction of a judgment. Vendor shall not dispute the reasonableness of the amount of any settlement entered into by ARAMARK of any claims of which Vendor has received reasonable notice and either has refused to defend or has denied (or reserved its right to deny) an obligation to defend and indemnify ARAMARK. In the event of a breach of any warranty hereunder, Vendor agrees to reimburse ARAMARK for any damages to ARAMARK resulting from such breach.

4. Vendor shall provide to ARAMARK, upon request, a certificate from a financially responsible insurance company evidencing that the insurance coverage required below is in force, naming ARAMARK and such other persons as are specified below as additional insureds and providing that such coverage may not be canceled without 30 days' prior written notice to ARAMARK, at 811 Islington Avenue, Toronto, ON M6K 3W8 ATTN: legal@epam11.net.

(a) Vendor shall carry, at his own expense, so long as Vendor provides products or services directly or indirectly to ARAMARK, comprehensive general liability insurance, including without limitation, coverage for: products liability, completed operations, acts of independent contractors and bodily injury, property damage, personal injury, advertising injury which shall be written by a financially responsible insurance company. In addition, the products liability coverage shall contain a Broad Form Vendor's Endorsement naming ARAMARK as an additional insured. In addition, Vendor shall carry automobile liability insurance covering all owned, non-owned and hired vehicles with a limit of liability for each accident of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence combined single limit for bodily injury and property damage. All policies shall name ARAMARK and its officers, directors, employees and agents as Additional Insureds and shall stipulate that the insurance afforded to Additional Insureds under Vendor's policies shall apply as primary insurance and that no other insurance carried by the Additional Insureds shall be called upon to contribute to a loss covered by the Vendor's insurance. The Additional Insureds are the responsible party of the Vendor.

(b) If any of the above required insurance is written on a non-admitted basis, Vendor shall maintain the policies without endangering any aggregate limit. In the event of such policies, Vendor shall purchase extended discovery/reporting coverage for an adequate amount of time to cover injuries arising out of products sold under this agreement, but not less than five years after the last purchase by ARAMARK from Vendor.

(c) Any such policy shall include a provision for 30 days' written notice to ARAMARK in the event of any pending material change or cancellation of the insurance. A Certificate of Insurance for such coverage shall be

Vendor's Name: _____
Vendor's Address: _____
Vendor's Contact: _____

delivered to ARAMARK within 10 days from the date of execution of this agreement and Vendor shall provide renewal or replacement certification within 30 days prior to expiration.

(d) Vendor shall maintain all of its subcontractors used in connection with this agreement to provide the same terms, conditions, kinds and amounts of insurance as stipulated herein. It shall be the Vendor's obligation to obtain evidence of insurance coverage from its subcontractors. Failure to obtain the specified insurance coverage will not relieve Vendor of responsibility for losses arising therefrom.

5. In providing u-18 end... to ARAMARK, Vendor shall comply with all applicable Federal, Provincial and local regulations, codes, ordinances, orders and legal requirements. Vendor shall also comply with ARAMARK's food safety and quality management system (FSQMS) and the International Safe Food Standards (ISFSS) excluded from ISFSS. This agreement shall be governed by the laws of Ontario without regard to its conflict of laws or choice of law provisions.

Vendor intends to be legally bound by the above terms, and has made the above representations as a material inducement for ARAMARK to purchase Vendor's products. Except as the parties expressly agree in writing, this Vendor Warranty shall not be modified or overridden by the printed or typewritten terms of any invoice, purchase order, sales confirmation or other writing submitted by either party after the date thereof.

Vendor (Company) Name:

By: _____
Name: _____
Date: _____

Vendor (Company) Address:

Primary Contact and Number: _____
Secondary Contact and Number: _____

FOOD SAFETY AND SANITATION STANDARDS FOR SUPPLIERS TO ARAMARK
(Current and subject to revision)

Food Safety and Sanitation Standards for Suppliers to ARAMARK ("ARAMARK")

- A. All Suppliers must establish and administer the following programs:
1. An operating Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Program ("HACCP"), under which the Supplier shall:
 - Identify all hazards associated with products
 - Determine a Critical Control Point required to control identified hazards
 - Establish standards for all Critical Control Points
 - Establish procedures to monitor each Critical Control Point
 - Establish corrective actions to be taken when there is a deviation
 - Establish verification procedures to determine that the HACCP system is working effectively, including a record-keeping system for each Critical Control Point.
 2. A documented and actionable Pest Control Program that incorporates integrated pest management practices to ensure the facility is free of insects and rodents.
 3. A documented Cleaning and Sanitation program.
 4. A documented Product Safety and Recall Program that can track specific production lots of products and destinations, and incoming — materials and finished products, ensuring appropriate "trackability." Mock recalls shall be conducted every 12 months to assess the effectiveness of such Program.
 5. A documented Listeria Environmental Program, for suppliers manufacturing and providing to ARAMARK ready-to-eat products.
 6. A documented E. coli O157:H7 Program for raw ground beef products for suppliers manufacturing and providing to ARAMARK ground beef products.
 7. To the extent Supplier supplies meat products, or products containing meat, Supplier specifically represents, warrants and covenants that Supplier, and its "dora," are in compliance with Title 21 C.F.R. § 589.2000 (effective August 4, 1997), prohibiting the feeding of ruminant meat and bone meal to ruminants, as now or hereafter amended or supplemented. If any such Supplier is not federally inspected then Supplier shall ensure that all supplies of meat products used in completed product are acquired from federally inspected sources.
- B. Compliance with all standards shall be monitored in 3 ways:
1. Annually, each Supplier shall certify in writing to ARAMARK that the Supplier is in compliance.
 2. All Suppliers shall be subject to inspection by ARAMARK's Director of Food Safety or his designee annually. Inspections shall include evaluating good manufacturing practices ("GMP's") and reviewing the Programs listed above. A minimum score of 85% is required for each inspection. If a score is below 85%, a re-inspection shall be done within approximately 30 days, to verify correction of deficiencies. A score of less than 85% on re-inspection may lead to de-certification of the Supplier.
 3. Suppliers shall undergo inspections by independent nationally recognized inspection services, at least annually. Such inspections shall include evaluating GMP's and the Programs listed above. ARAMARK recommends GFTC, Silliker Laboratories, American Institute of Baking and American Sanitation Institute, NSF/Cook & Thutber, NFPA and Randolph & Associates as independent inspection services for use by Suppliers. Suppliers are free, however, to use other nationally recognized inspection services. Suppliers shall bear all costs for these inspections. If requested, Suppliers shall provide ARAMARK with access to records and results of these inspections.

C. Product Recall

1. All ARAMARK manufacture, and distribution, must have a documented product safety and recall program which can track specific lot of product and -**NI**lono. Mock recall shall be conducted every six months to **-the** of such program. For manufacturers, the POU must include both incoming and finished product.
2. The following ARAMARK must be notified when a recall occurs:

John Kostyk – Senior Director of Procurement – john.kostyk@aramark.ca
Larysa Ihnatowycz – Director of Distribution – larysa.ihnatowycz@aramark.ca
Cheryl Appleton – Senior Director of Procurement – cheryl_appleton@aramark.ca
Brian Riley – Health and Safety Manager - brian_riley@aramark.ca
Murray Webb – Vice President Supply Chain Management – murray_webb@aramark.ca

Notification shall be made by fax at 416 255-6626 and 416 2 791 and email as indicated below, within 24 hours.

All ARAMARK products received in the past 24 hours must be notified within 24 hours, by fax or telephone. The notification must identify the product, and include lot or code number, product description, and other relevant information. It may be required to provide a list of which is currently included in recall notification. All recall information must be to the of the of the

APPENDIX C: Invitation - Concordia Fair Trade Campus Celebration

INVITATION- Fair Trade Campus Celebration on August 30th

We are glad to announce that, thanks to the efforts of our wonderful food community on campus, Concordia University is recognized as a Fair Trade Campus!

On Tuesday August 30th come out and show your support for Concordia's commitment to fair trade! Enjoy a fair trade coffee and snack to celebrate the good news with us.

Tuesday, August 30th, 2016
at 1:00 p.m. EV Atrium
1515 Ste-Catherine St. W.
Sir George Williams Campus



What does it mean to be a Fair Trade Campus?

- This status is granted by l'[Association québécoise du commerce équitable](#), [Fairtrade Canada](#) and the [Canadian Fair Trade Network \(CFTN\)](#) to colleges and universities that prioritize availability and visibility of fair trade products, and promote fair trade values including:
 - In food services and student-run cafés, 100% fairly traded coffee, 3 fair trade teas and 1 type of fair trade chocolate (where chocolate is available).

What is the impact of being designated a Fair Trade Campus?

- It is an effective way to formalize and to continue to build the University's commitment to fair trade;
- It involves increasing the scope and availability of fair trade products on campus;
- It provides an opportunity to further awareness and to extend discussions on social sustainability.

Visit the [CFTN website](#) for more information on the Fair Trade Campus designation.

Sustainable Food System Coordinator
Environmental Health & Safety
Concordia University
514-848-2424 Ext.7863

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