Franchising the Disenfranchised? The Paradoxical Spaces of Food Banks.

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Across the United Kingdom today the experience of food is uneven, inconsistent and chaotic. Food has never been a universal experience, enjoyed by all, nor a common ground experienced equally, but rather access to food reflects an ongoing relation of poverty and inequality. Such relations demonstrate ongoing crises in our society; crises of food, hunger, welfare and alienation, but also crises in the corresponding responses, considering how (in)effective these responses may prove to be. Responses typically emerge from charities and individuals, from our apparent 'moral conscience' and a desire to help others in whatever way possible. Motivations to both donate food and time in response to the crises of hunger today are mediated through contemporary spaces of food aid, specifically through the development of food banks that provide emergency, short term food parcels to an ever growing number of people. The rapidity with which these spaces have emerged is prodigious, indicating not only the severity of the crisis for those who are hungry, but illustrating the need for a comprehensive response from both the state and the charitable sector across the UK. Food banks in 2015 are becoming familiar and normalised, evolving into charitable enterprises and social franchises. But through food banking charities, by sharing and gifting food, are we franchising the very people who are disenfranchised? And if so, to what end?

The very notion of 'charity' is generally accepted in society today as an ideal moral response to the various forms of ongoing contemporary crises locally and world-wide, as an opportunity to 'make things better' in an effective and straightforward way – through giving. In this way, charity appears in many forms, often as positive individual, community or state action, across the spectrum from local to global. Yet charity perpetuates crises ridden, fragile and destructive capitalism. Charity is diverse and unique to a particular cause, yet it is limited in effecting transformative social change as it has become an inherent form of capitalism. One space which offers insight into this charitable paradox is the food bank. Food banks are 'relational…internally complex' (Massey, 2004: 5) spaces, representative of social practices and crises. Although it can be argued that the charitable giving of food has been a feature of society for centuries and is not a modern concept, the beginning of this century has seen the development of food banks as a new, alternative form of charity in response to the increase in hunger and food poverty. This chapter considers the space of the food bank in the UK today, by linking the context of their development to the influence of the state, austerity and welfare reforms with the specific, day to day experiences of food redistribution. It considers relations of both the evolving system of food banking generally and more particularly, the operation of food bank outlets in a critique from the left.

Food banks are an interesting concept, offering people the opportunity to donate and volunteer, to proactively engage with their local communities, to feed and to nourish. But what are the social relations driving the evolution of food banks across the UK? What can the space of the food bank tell us about our social form and our everyday experiences of, and responses to, capitalist crises? Antagonisms in food banking become apparent when the politics of the welfare state are considered and the government's detached position examined, when the direct effects of such detachment are manifest in the way people live in the UK today. It becomes clear that the redistribution of food indicates an increasingly unequal society. This chapter considers the evolution of food banking in the UK and is an initial conceptualisation of their spatiality through three distinct but interconnected narratives:

1) The first narrative begins by offering context on the development of food banking and government response in the UK, informed by literature which reflects the food banking experience internationally.
2) The second narrative unpacks the form of charity itself and sets a wider conceptual perspective, grounded in the left.
3) The third interprets the social relations which create the space of the food bank in UK by interweaving the conceptual perspective into theorising both the state response from a broader perspective (i.e. the system of food banking) and the more specific methods of operation adopted by food banks.

1) Perspectives on Food Banking

The charitable provision of food aid can be viewed as a typical feature of society, rooted in altruistic motivations, which has been ongoing in myriad ways for centuries. However, the manner in which food is redistributed and provided has shifted and continues to alter in line with the fluidity and dynamics of capitalist society, reflecting interconnections between the state form and social relations. This section of the chapter considers the intertwined narrative of food aid and government, considering the ongoing evolution of food banking and the relations of the state in the UK and across the world.

The vanguard response to hunger and food poverty in the UK today is through food banking. However, food banks and banking in the UK are a relatively recent phenomenon, emerging in the last fifteen years, and relevant literature is in its infancy. However, food banking is significantly entrenched and embedded in the social form of other nations, such as Canada (since the early 1980s) and the USA (since the late 1960s). Warshawsky details the key role food banking plays in 'neoliberal urban governance, as they control the conceptualisation of hunger, management of poverty and organisation of food distribution systems' (2010: 763) that 'the state has legitimised…as a central approach to reduce food security' (2010: 772). The network of food banks operating in America today function more like a business providing a service, as distinct non-governmental organisations, reliant on donations and corporate support. However, in Australia, where food banking is continuing to expand, state funding is often directed in support of the systems being implemented (Booth & Whelan, 2014). Similarly, food banks have 'become an integral part of contemporary Canadian society' (Theriault & Yadlowski, 2000: 206), institutionalised through the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) and operating at a national scale in partnership with corporate retailers, or 'sponsors', such as Heinz & Campbell Soup. The food banking networks in North America are well-established and entrenched today as charity, which reflects 'the breakdown of the social safety net and the commodification of social assistance' (Riches, 2002: 648). Indeed, food poverty in the first world globally has become increasingly prevalent as recent years have seen 'the steady rise, institutionalization, corporatization and globalization of charitable food banking in selected rich food secure countries, attested to by the growth of national food bank organizations' (De Schutter, 2014: 3). The second edition of Riches & Silvasti's collection 'First World Hunger Revisited' (2014) has seen food charity considered in twelve countries, compared to the five represented in the first edition (1997), indicating significant shifts in hunger and corresponding charitable food aid provision.

Although the manifestation of the food banking system varies across the countries considered, the neoliberal state response to the expansion of food banking in the so-called 'first world' is consistent, representing detachment and deniability of responsibility in relation to social welfare and food provision (Livingstone, 2015; Dowler, 2014). Reflecting on the situation in Canada, Riches suggests that food banking 'enable[s] governments to look the other way and

neglect food poverty and nutritional health and well-being' (2002: 648). Food banking has not been an integral element within a wider process of eradicating poverty, the emergency response has become normalised and relations of poverty are ongoing and consistently experienced. Indeed, there has been backlash from food bank volunteers, for example the 'Freedom 90' Union of Food Bank and Emergency Meal Program Volunteers in Ontario has created a charter which drives towards the eradication of food banks and therefore poverty, reflecting volunteer disillusionment with the inadequacies of the Canadian state to effect sustainable improvements in inequalities. The union want the government to act to eradicate the need for food banking; as volunteers they want to be unnecessary rather than relied upon to fulfil the state's duties. Their dissent and disappointment is palpable, even though it has been suggested that the very existence of food banks enables government withdrawal (Poppendieck, 1998). Now, more than ever, 'we must seriously examine the role of food banking, which requires that we no longer praise its growth as a sign of our generosity and charity, but instead recognize it as a symbol of our society's failure to hold government accountable for hunger, food insecurity and poverty' (Winne, 2009; 184). Food security is a human rights issue, one which theoretically, should be addressed predominantly by the government. However, considering the development of food banking internationally, it is apparent that the UK is following the governmental precedent set by Canada and the USA.

In the UK, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) defines food security as 'consumers having access at all times to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for an active and healthy lifestyle at affordable prices' (2008: 2), but for a significant number of people across the UK this is out of reach, even if the responsibility for food security rests with the state. All published evidence points to the UK becoming increasingly food insecure, demonstrating connections between hunger, food poverty and the evolution of food aid services (Cooper et al, 2014; Lambie-Mumford et al, 2014; Sosenko et al, 2013; Cooper & Dumpleton, 2013). In response to this, food banking is becoming prolific, through a variety of operational structures and distribution policies, as well as different degrees of formality in relation to user access. Food bank charities typically provide users with the equivalent of three days' worth of food in response to an emergency or immediate crisis, and the majority food is donated to them by the public. The amount of food received is indicative of the number of people for whom food is required, and it is generally non-perishable, dried and often tinned. Food bank charities exist across a spectrum of formality, from the structured, business-like procedures of the Trussell Trust as a more formal provider, to local independently run initiatives. Degrees of formality in this case reflect the varying approaches taken by food providers regarding how each assess the potential need of the users and how regularly such users can access food parcels over a particular time period. For some food banks referrals are needed in order to collect food, but for others this isn't necessary.

The Trussell Trust, a 'social franchise' (Lambie, 2011:9), was established in 2004 and today has a network of over 440 food banks across the UK. Churches and religious organisations become affiliated with The Trussell Trust and through their best practice guidelines set up local food banks. The Trussell Trust is the most visible and recognisable provider of food aid in the UK today and has proved key when tracking the increase of food parcel distribution. The reported figures of growth in food parcel access is consistently accelerating, as the following key statistics demonstrate:

o Between three key providers of emergency food aid (The Trussell Trust, FareShare and FoodCycle) over 20.2 million meals were distributed in 2013-14 (Cooper et al, 2014).

- The year 2010-11 saw Trussell Trust affiliated food banks distribute 61,468 emergency food parcels. By 2013-14 the equivalent figure was 913,138 parcels (The Trussell Trust, 2014a) and by 2014-15 had risen to 1,084,604 (The Trussell Trust, 2015).
- In 2014-15, over 396,000 of the parcels distributed were received for children (The Trussell Trust, 2015).
- The number of people obtaining food aid increased 54% year on year in 2013-14 (Cooper et al, 2014).
- On average, food bank users received two food parcels a year (The Trussell Trust, 2015).

However, although these figures paint a disheartening picture of the situation in relation to the growth of food poverty today, only a limited number of larger charities actively monitor and collate information relating to their food parcel distribution and user access.   Many independent charities and associations provide ad hoc food parcels across the country, through food banks, soup kitchens and drop-in centres. Less is known about these providers therefore it is difficult to quantify or even estimate the volume of food redistributed through these channels. It is likely that in reality there is significantly more food being redistributed through more informal food banks and alternative providers than is recognised in the data above (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014; Sosenko et al, 2013). Across the UK there is a 'lack of systematically collected data on drivers of need' (Lambie-Mumford & Dowler, 2014: 1421), but evidence which does exist has been consistently dismissed by the current government.

The approach of the UK government to the growth of food aid has been to casually fail to respond to the ongoing crises of hunger, failing to address the relations of poverty and failing to acknowledge the role its relations play in perpetuating the daily struggle experienced in food banking. Food bank charities, as an extension of the welfare state are performing the government's remit relating to ensuring food security.   Food banks are becoming institutionalised as a function of the capitalist state. The present neoliberal government has made concerted efforts to earnestly refute any suggestion that there are links between welfare policies and the growth of food banking in the UK, stating consistently that there is 'no robust evidence' (Downing et al, 2014:9) to connect reforms with food poverty. Conversely, Wells & Caraher report that 'the growth in food banking in the UK is contextualized by a squeeze on food and fuel spending…and a programme of welfare reform by the UK coalition' (2014: 1427) – a direct link to government policies in a period of austerity and rising costs. The Trussell Trust reported in 2013-14 that the three primary reasons driving people to use their food banks were benefit delays (30.9%), low income (20.3%) and benefit changes (16.9%) (2015). Further evidence has been collated which links welfare cuts (such as the introduction of the bedroom tax) with increased food bank use (Cooper et al, 2014; Sosenko et al, 2013) and the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry in hunger and food aid in published recommendations on the best approach to address food poverty in their 'Feeding Britain' report (Forsey, APPG Report, 2014a). A substantial amount of evidence gathered for this report emphasises the effects of austerity measures, welfare reform, sanctions and benefit delays among food bank users (Forsey, 2014b). Research by Loopstra et al notes that 'each 1% cut in spending on central welfare benefits was associated with a 0.16% rise in food parcel distribution' (2015: 2) by Trussell Trust food banks. In addition to the links with welfare reforms, food poverty due to austerity and deprivation is evident in the labour market, where zero hour contracts are now common place, many people who are employed in low income jobs experience food crisis (Sosenko, 2013). Given 2015 is an election year, it is unlikely that any decisive action will be taken in response to either the APPG report or the ongoing food crises, however it is ironic that food banking is politicised in campaigns, as it was during the Scottish Independence debate in 2014 (MacNab, 2014). Such politicisation is only effective if it

ameliorates the situation of those experiencing food poverty and reflects a drive towards action, rather than merely being adopted as a tool for political gain. Unfortunately this is the current situation in the UK. Today, our 'government's resistance to acknowledging structural contributions to household food insecurity, to monitoring their effects or to addressing causes, is a clear dereliction of duty to implement the human right to food' (Dowler, 2014: 175) and an impasse of charitable action and state inaction has been reached.

The 'wicked problem' (Booth & Whelan, 2014;1400) of food insecurity is experiencing a desperate renaissance, one which is being exacerbated and dismissed by the current government, as food banking responds in their stead. Considering the commodification of food provision as a social franchise, the detached illusions of the neoliberal government and the ongoing drive towards food bank charities becoming an extension of the welfare state it seems likely that the social form of food aid is moving towards a similar experience to that of North America. As Marx said with reference to Hegel's assertion that history repeats itself, 'the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce' (Marx, 1973b: 146), the social relations of charitable food banking are moving towards becoming yet another farce of capitalism's crises. Why is the UK not learning from what has gone before?

2) Capitalist Charity.

There is no shortage of accessible research into the charitable and third sectors. A wide and varied spectrum of research exists, examining myriad perspectives, from faith-based research projects (Bassous, 2015; Johnsen, 2014), effective management and governance in non-profit organisations (Pallotta, 2008; Parsons & Broadbridge, 2004), the function and purpose of charity retailing (Livingstone, 2011; Gregson et al, 2002), to patterns of donor behaviour and motivations for giving (Breeze, 2013; Michel & Rieunier, 2012). There has, however been minimal interpretation of the form of contemporary charity and the relations which it mediates in line with the spaces it creates. This chapter is moving towards addressing this lacuna through interrogating the system of food banking and the operational space of the food bank, to unsettle the preconceived assumptions of charity and how we give, through a critique grounded in a polemic from the left - in this narrative the conceptual scene is set.

Open Marxism is a relational approach which emerged in the 1970s as an alternative discourse, moving away from the enforced categorisations of structural Marxism, to a process of thinking which is 'dynamically open' (Bonefeld, 1987: 36), as ongoing and incomplete. Through interpretation of ongoing processes, open Marxism moves towards a narrative of 'form'. Form can be understood as a 'mode of existence of the contradictory movement in which social existence consists' (Bonefeld et al, 1992a: xv) and illustrates the interconnected relations inherent in society. Form recognises the intricacies of social reproduction and struggles as free from classification, metanarratives and totalising discourse. In adopting open Marxism and interrogating the 'mode of existence' in society, the approach is grounded in capitalism's 'negation… [and] this negativity is expressed through the category of form' (Holloway, 1993: 18). Charity is a social form of capitalism, which operates in order to negate and move past the outcomes of capitalism, but which also continues to simultaneously create capitalism. Therefore charitable spaces of food banks and the system of food banking, are both antagonistic and contradictory - paradoxical spaces. In order to augment understanding of food banks and food banking as part of the social form of charity in the UK, the idea of 'charity' itself must first be interpreted from an open Marxist[1] perspective.

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[1] For more on open Marxism see Bonefeld, Gunn & Psychopedis (eds.) (1992a & 1992b), Bonefeld, Gunn, Holloway & Psychopedis (eds.) (1995), Holloway (2010, 2002), Bonefeld (ed.) (2003).

Capitalist relations rupture and fragment, yet we constantly reproduce capitalism. We are the authors of our own fate, but not under conditions of our own choosing. As such 'it is not the *unity* of living…which requires explanation…but rather the *separation…*a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage-labour and capital' (Marx, 1973a: 489). The ongoing realisation of the 'value-form, whose fully developed shape is the money-form' (Marx, 1983: 19), drives the vast process of commodification in society where our expended labour power finds expression 'not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things' (1983: 78). In this case, it is the question of separation from access to food and money resulting in spatial relations represented through operational food banks. Our existence is mediated and socially conditioned; we are all separated, but in a way which appears to be unified. But it is this precarious unity which represents the fragile façade of capitalism that continually needs to reconstitute relations of power and money, thus exposing its vulnerability. The experience of separation-in-unity is oppressive, dehumanising and limiting, but it is something which we must struggle against (Holloway, 2002) in order to transcend the instabilities and uncertainties perpetuated by capitalism. Charity is a form of this struggle even though it has become an inherent part of this precarious capitalist society, becoming a commodity and a fetishised idea, representative of the very material relations between people that Marx discusses. The spaces of food banks created by the form of charity reflect relations of power and capitalist inequalities, which stimulate a proactive response. The experience of precarity permeates the system of food banking – from the fragility of capitalism itself to relations of precarity experienced by those accessing food, a precarity of hunger, of labour, of money, of uncertainty and insecurity. Waite's understanding of the concept of precarity 'explicitly incorporates the political and institutional context in which the *production* of precarity occurs' (2009: 421). In this case, precarity is represented through the production of the charitable spaces of the food bank and the food banking system in capitalism through which relations of separation are manifest.

Charity is a paradox, an antagonistic discourse riddled with contradictions and struggles, even though it is presented as hopeful, progressive and inherently positive. Charity is an indication of sharing and giving, a benevolent act which presupposes some benefit to others, but typically such donations are in the form of money or commodities. Charity therefore, is antagonistically determined by the capitalist market economy, the very repercussions of which charity seeks to remedy. Money may be the social form of capitalism, manifest through the wage-labour relationship, but it is also the social form of charity and essential for its continued existence. On the one hand the act of giving, contributing or donating time, money or commodities in some way in the pursuit of a cause which actively improves and positively contributes to the lives of others is an inherently altruistic action. However, charity is a limited response, rather than transformative action as it is charity that is directly mediated by capitalism (which perpetuates inequality)[2]. This is what makes the consideration of charity so complex and intriguing, as it is at once reflective of human nature, an indelible moral imperative, a desire to help. However, by helping are we merely appeasing our own social conscience: do we think about the consequences of our giving and whether the act of charity itself is for ourselves, or because society expects it of us, or indeed what the outcomes of our charity is in the longer term? By directing our giving through established charities we are inter-passive (Pfaller, 2003), happy in the assumption that the charity will act appropriately with donations. Our struggle for change is displaced through charitable channels, for both those who donate and those who receive charity, as any changes in the social form are mediated by capitalism. However by contributing to charities, altruism is apparent (even if it is interpassive), there is a

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[2] For a more detailed discussion on charity in capitalist society see Livingstone (2013).

moral social force at work, a 'care for distant strangers, others with whom one has no personal connection' (Sack, 2003: 29). Such relations find expression through food banks, forming 'new modes of spatial relationship[s]… constituted through institutionally mediated practices of generosity' (Barnett & Land, 2007: 1073). Our experience of charity is representative of mediated relations of giving, generosity and morality, but also of capitalism, spatiality and social form. Via charity, capitalism's inherent crisis ridden tendencies are somewhat regulated and appeased.

Our interactions and relationships are mediated by capitalist relations, reflected in how we utilise our labour power, spend our wages, create commodities and donate to charities. Charity today is an ideal to be consumed, which strives towards unattainable utopian concepts such as equality for all, and the eradication of poverty and hunger. However, it cannot be said that charity is without purpose or indeed positive outcomes. For those who receive and benefit from the action of charity, the contradiction lies in the fact that the benefit is restricted, as it is one which reinforces the perpetuation of alienation, of poverty, of inequality. As capitalist society encourages the creation of wealth, consequently it produces and exacerbates relations of greed, class, poverty and charity. It is through these relations that food banks have emerged, as a space of charity and therefore of paradox. The following section further breaks down these relations in the case of food banks and the system of food banking from the perspectives of the state, the operations of food banks and the recipients of food, as a complex and antagonistic space.

3) Relations of Food Banking – Franchising the Disenfranchised?

Food banks are becoming a common feature of the urban landscape across the UK, a feature which is representative not only of the social form of charity and detached state relations, but also of the spaces themselves. This section of the chapter seeks to uncover the specific actions which reproduce and create food banks, considering their methods of operation and user interactions, concentrating on drilling down to the 'substance of key processes' (Katznelson, 1992: 6) that form food banks.

Food is a commodity, something which 'by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether for instance they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference' (Marx, 1983: 43), they are something to be consumed under capitalism. As we know today however, the hunger springing from the stomach is being addressed and mediated by the system of food banking and the consequential operation of food bank charities. As discussed, food banks represent the detached relations of the state form, the consequences of welfare reform and the precarity of the labour market. Marx's material relations between people are reflected in the charitable redistribution of food. Such material relations form and are formed through the interaction of the systems in place, the users and the volunteers within the space of the food banks themselves, which represent experiences of poverty, dispossession and ongoing separation.

Food banks can adapt a formalised or informal system in redistributing the food they collect. The social franchise of The Trussell Trust is formal in their parcel distribution as in order to collect food from one of their banks you must first be referred. Giving is conditional and contingent; with frontline professionals (such as social workers and doctors) judging if a voucher for food should be issued depending on individual circumstances. It is also unlikely that more than three parcels of food are distributed by The Trussell Trust to the same person over a period of six months (although discretion can be used). This is due to the emergency short term nature of The Trussell Trust food banks provision and is effectively a method employed to prevent dependency on them as a food aid provider. It is also prescriptive and criteria driven, harking back to Victorian style determination of the 'deserving' and

'undeserving poor'. Access is limited and restricted, as relations of poverty are managed by the food bank, as they reconstitute capitalist relations of alienation whilst becoming increasingly formalised into the extended welfare state. Although access to food is limited and based on judging specific criteria, for many people three days' worth of food is a welcome respite (albeit a short term and finite one), even if it does very little to actively alleviate everyday social relations of poverty. But accessing food banks are a stigmatised last resort for many, an act of desperation and indignity (The Scottish Parliament, 2014; Power, 2014; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999). Van der Horst et al discuss the emotional experiences of food bank users, noting feelings of shame and negativity; accessing emergency food aid 'may be harmful to the self-esteem of receivers' (2014: 1506). Also, the giving of food may be a temporary short term benefit, but what happens at the end of the three days? Food crises are generally a representative symptom of a deeper cause of poverty or challenging social relations and it is unlikely that such a crisis will be ameliorated due to three days of food. Those who need to access the food parcels are engaged in a pseudo-bureaucratic process which then determines if they qualify. Today, notions related to conditional giving like judging 'worthiness' in society is a method of operation for some food bank providers even though 'holding the poor responsible for their own fate undermines the anger that poverty and inequality provoke while removing the blame from the system that is responsible' (Jones & Novak, 1999:5). The moral question of giving is complex and antagonistic. Conditional giving further stigmatises the experience of food banks for users, provoking feelings of humiliation and failure, reconstituting material relations of class and poverty – reinforcing our separation and 'difference'. Indeed, Riches suggests that 'the stigma associated with charitable food banking suggests it is not a normal channel of food distribution and is a socially unacceptable way to obtain food' (2002: 648). Although food banks are becoming visible and familiar spaces across the urban landscape of the UK, the experience of the spaces themselves and the various systems in play reflect extreme variations in social relations: There are those for those whom accessing food aid is representative of ongoing experiences of social relations of poverty and deprivation. Conversely, those operating food banks and mediating these social relations do so in a way which provides temporary respite from crisis, but actively controls and manages access to their food and concomitantly reinforces separation. Therefore, the paradox of food aid charities is perpetuated.

In order to get a referral and access food via a Trussell Trust affiliated food bank, the crisis experience of hunger and poverty must fall within certain boundaries. In this respect The Trussell Trust is actively disengaging and distant from the apparently 'undeserving' who fail to meet specific criteria, namely those whose social relations are too chaotic to firstly successfully obtain a referral voucher and then get to the food bank to collect a parcel. Through their system, the Trussell Trust food banks manage the relations of poverty, but only for those who are deemed eligible. However, there are food banks which provide food in an unconditional way, offering parcels to the same people on a regular basis (Sosenko et al, 2013). These food banks are typically independently run, not affiliated with a social franchise network and do not require referrals for accessing their parcels. Access is not conditional; the spaces are entirely open to anyone requiring food assistance. Relations of poverty are addressed differently in these spaces, but although giving is unconditional and therefore potentially a less stigmatised process of access, the underlying structural causes of poverty remain unaffected. Independent food bank may not be 'franchising the disenfranchised' and the experience of those accessing food is less prescriptive and bureaucratically bound, but as with franchised food aid providers the end result is the same: The gifting of food is an inherently antagonistic and contradictory struggle for those who access and distribute it, as a process subsumed into reproducing capitalism.

The state form consistently attempts to 'manage' the struggle of poverty in varied and fluid ways, which reconstitute the social form in terms of economic relations. The state itself is fragile as it enforces the precarious relations of labour power and the value form (wage labour and money relations). Each form of the state seeks to 'impose its will not only upon its opponents but upon the anarchical flux, change and uncertainty to which capitalist modernity is always prone…struggling to impose its will upon a fluid and spatially open process of capital circulation' (Harvey, 1989: 108). The state is ensnared in the reproduction of capitalist relations and mediates the social form of existence through our separation, it is 'limited and shaped by the fact that it exists as just one node in a web of social relations' (Holloway, 2002: 13), which is it consistently trying to control. Shifts in the labour market, such as increased employment levels, access to easy credit and improved state welfare support previously contributed to the mediation of antagonisms in the social form, therefore ensuring challenges to the capitalist form were 'controlled'. However, the post-war welfare state is being slowly dismantled and reformed by neoliberalism; the labour market is becoming increasingly precarious through zero hour contracts, the repercussions of the financial crises and the resulting austerity measures implemented demonstrate that the mediation of antagonisms represents a false displacement, revealing the insecurities and alienation of our social form. How the state form operates is directly related to the systems in place relating to food banking, influencing and controlling the role of charities in the UK. By refusing to address and accept the food poverty experienced across the UK today the state form has become detached, but this detachment has resulted in a response through food banks and food aid providers, who are effectively performing the state's welfare role through charity. In this respect, relations of capitalism are being reformed and fundamental social transformation evaded, as food banks are operating in a way which can only fail to effect radical change under capitalism.

The food crises continues…?

It is unlikely that we will ever see a society without relations of charity, sharing and giving – relations which attempt to overcome the daily crises experienced by a multitude of people throughout the UK. Crises of hunger, of poverty and as a result of these, crises of food. Through three connected narratives, this chapter has explored how politics and the capitalist state form perpetuates these crises, while actively distancing itself from an effective welfare response, accepting that charities act in their stead. The practices of food banks and the systems of food banking in place indicate that the UK will soon follow the trend of other 'first world' economies, such as the US and Canada. The practices of the state and the lack of response would imply that the crises is indeed here to stay, although its form is likely to change. Food banks are an increasing presence on the urban landscape – both a force for progress, a moral response to denial of the right to food for all and an effective recourse in the short term to those experiencing crises. However, although food banks cannot eradicate hunger through provision of emergency parcels and are limited as spaces of neoliberalism today, the space of the food bank is an implicit social presence, where there are indelible opportunities to move past the current situation by continuing to struggle towards negating capitalist relations. Whether this struggle is possible considering the antagonistic spatial relations food banks represent, as extensions of the welfare state, as capitalist charity, as conditional and unconditional providers, as spaces of volunteers and users: there are a mass of complexities but also opportunities. Food banks are currently in limbo, somewhere between the extremes of becoming pure functions of the state form and spaces of radical change. In order to move beyond the paradox of food banking and actively transform social relations, to ensure that the disenfranchised do not become indefinitely franchised, there must be a drive to recognise that food banking charities as forms of capitalism can become unsettled and ruptured; as spaces which can move towards something alternative, something less chaotic, less uneven, increasingly equal and universal. Only time will tell what form these alternatives

may take, but in order to progress, the paradoxical spaces of food banks and the systems they adopt in line with state relations must be exposed and confronted in order to progress towards a more just and equitable society.

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