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Food welfare as a new paradigm to deal with food poverty. The case study of Turin

Veronica Allegretti and Riccardo Giovanni Bruno
Affiliation (Università degli Studi di Torino, Torino, Politecnico di Torino, Italy (veronica.allegretti@unito.it; riccardo.bruno@polito.it).

Short Bio

Veronica Allegretti, PhD candidate in Sociology and Methodology of Social Research, specializing in food poverty studies and welfare policies. She currently collaborates with the Atlante del Cibo project at the University of Torino, where she co-coordinates the "Food Poverty in Torino" research project. She is also teacher assistant in Sociology of Work at the University of Torino.
Riccardo Bruno, PhD candidate in Urban and Regional Development, specializing in urban food policy and urban food system studies. He currently collaborates with the Atlante del Cibo project at the University of Torino. He is also Cultore della Materia in International Cooperation for Development: Practices and Project Design.

Abstract – The present research aims to highlight the political systems' inability to address emergency and incidental approaches behind food aid, on one side. On the other side, we mean to debate how local political systems may develop innovative transversal approaches to deal with food security.
Much effort is put into the comprehension of the issue of "food welfare", meant as a new conceptual term through which it may be possible to set up a series of structural measures regarding food accessibility.
The research is carried out by addressing a theoretical level in which we analyse the literature advancements regarding the theme of "food welfare"; successively, we intend to carry out empirical research in the City of Turin to determine the number of food aid-related actors, their locations and their capacity of providing solutions for people's needs. Hence, we intend to figure out how food aid is conceived and structured in Turin.
The third and final part of the research consists in interviewing a series of policy-makers from the City of Turin meaning to comprehend their perceptions regarding the necessity of stronger and more effective food aid strategies, inserting them in a broader food welfare approach.

Keywords **– food welfare; food aid; urban food policy, food poverty**

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The length of the short paper - or extended abstract - is maximum *1500 words*. References are required.

Use the following guidelines: the titles of the sections should be in capital letters as in the title of this section. Please, do not change the font sizes or line spacing. We recommend you to structure your manuscript. You can use figures and tables. If they do not fit in a column, place them at the end of the document, but do not forget to reference them in the text! Figures and tables should be titled in *italics* and numbered.

Please, place figure captions below the figures; place table titles above the tables. For example:

Table 1. This is an example

Example	Example	Example
Example	x	x
Example	x	x
Example	x	x

[a] Tables can use this format or any other

For the references, we recommend using APA but any other reference format that meets the following two specifications is welcome: the name is

visible in the text (e.g. (Author, 2022)) and the references are listed alphabetically.

PROCEDURE FOR EXTENDED ABSTRACT

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The Organising PhDays 2023 Committee

The present paper is part of the growing body of studies on food accessibility, that aim at highlighting, on one side, the severe inability of political systems to overcome the emergency and incidental approach behind food aid; on the other side, they want to propose innovative transversal approaches aimed at implementing more effective and widespread food distribution tools.

In this context, we intend to discuss the issue of "food welfare" as a new dialogical and political means, useful to structure valid opportunities for food accessibility. The need for this perspective is motivated by the absence of an effective approach to food welfare, due to, presumably, a severe lack of knowledge behind the concept of food welfare itself. Indeed, perceiving welfare as the set of socio-economic measures promoted by the state and aimed at protecting the well-being of individuals, it is evident that the food dimension cannot be excluded from this sphere. In this sense, it is relevant to emphasise that, although the academic literature promoted several debates on the importance of treating food assistance as a matter of welfare conditions and not as a purely emergency instrument, there are no globally shared structured definitions of "food welfare" and, consequently, there are no valid policies in this field at any level.

Several previous studies (see Riches, 1997) reflected with stimulating interest on the importance of juxtaposing "hunger", "food security" and "welfare policies"; however, no successive work kept the focus on these themes meaning to advance the research and to find proper points of junction among the several. This gap generated further serious voids in research which were clearly visible in the field of socio-geographical studies; more precisely, due to the theoretical voids, descriptions of conditions of urban food aid below systemic perspectives are today absent or incomplete, since they are not included within a broader approach. In other words, some studies on food aid services tended to be incapable of providing clear knowledge of the food aid experiences in the territory and, from this, extrapolating useful information to propose a strategic food welfare plan.

We, therefore, intend to formulate a definition of "food welfare", setting its theoretical basis on the body of work that the discipline produced over time, and, consequently, intersecting it with the empirical evidence of its usefulness. To this end, we will conduct research in the City of Turin meaning to determine the number of food aid-related actors, their location on the territory, the population's needs that they meet, and their proposals for assistance, to understand how food aid is conceived and implemented in the city, and what role local government plays in this context. Moreover, given that the City of Turin is currently engaged in the process of Urban Food Policy structuring, it is relevant to recall it within the research because UFPs may also address the different facets of food aid policies from a systemic perspective (see Bruno, Dansero, & Tesfay, 2023). Further, this piece is crucial since Turin is already implementing some food welfare-related policies, which take place in the so-called "Torino Solidale" framework; nonetheless, the existing measures are few and far from the potential benefits of a specific food welfare system.

Therefore, by combining the aspects mentioned above, we intend to understand which opportunities the urban context may experience if the concept of food welfare was adopted as a fundamental approach to formulating systemic responses to food poverty (Q). This question primarily means to clarify the concept of food welfare, determining which elements should be included in the structuring of the definition; to do this, the concept of food poverty is particularly relevant as it describes the dimensions of the phenomenon and the framework within which, welfare must act. Then, once the guidelines of the definition have been cleared, its potential is then explored by the following sub-question: "what social and political opportunities can take place if the food welfare definition is adopted at the level of urban governance and in food aid contexts?" (SQ1). Although the answer must once again be structured primarily on a theoretical level, this is not sufficient for an overall comprehension of the question. Hence, it is necessary to consider the real characteristics of a territory and its capacity to react to food poverty situations. To this end, it is therefore fundamental to place the issue in the political and geographical context of reference, Turin in the present case, and to ask which elements in the conceptual City of Turin's food welfare system, should be considered. Indeed, if we consider that, on the one hand, there are numerous food aid experiences, but these are not well coordinated, and, on the other hand, an Urban Food Policy is being structured, but it does not yet possess the capacity to implement real measures, it is essential to comprehend which pieces may play a crucial role in the food welfare setting process (SQ2).

To answer these questions, we want to adopt different study methodologies in terms of means and targets to produce wide and comprehensive knowledge despite the numerous aspects considered.

The first tool consists of an accurate literature review of the studies that have already investigated the possible correlations of the concepts of "hunger", "food security", "food poverty", "food aid" and "welfare", to produce a kind of work that prosecutes what has been produced so far. Next, we mean to map the several actors who currently provide food aid services in the Turin area and connect their food aid proposals, to ascertain whether the city has a sufficiently large number of food aid initiatives for the needs (see Allegretti *et alii*, 2022; Allegretti, 2020; Toldo et Allegretti, in review). This phase is carried out using the

cartographic software QGIS, which is useful to geographically understand the location of the various food aid services in Turin. In fact, assessing the positioning of these experiences allows a better understanding of the city food aid system. Carrying out a series of semi-structured qualitative surveys, we, therefore, intend to carry out a number of interviews subdivided as follows: first of all, we want to delve into the contents of the various food aid proposals, asking the managers of these projects to describe the structure of the service (whether structural or emergency), the ability to coordinate with other similar relevant actors and the perception of the usefulness of acting within a food welfare framework. We then interview a number of policymakers in the City of Turin in order to understand their perception of the need for a systemic and no longer emergency-guided approach to challenge food poverty and, more precisely, to determine whether a process of production and implementation of food welfare-based measures is taking place at the level of urban governance or not. The sample is purposive; this choice is motivated by the intention of gathering all the necessary information, and, to do so, interviewing particularly relevant individuals coming from food aid-related organizations.

Given the particularly innovative targets of this research, it is difficult to define which results will emerge; however, it is expected that this work will provide a solid theory in the food welfare field of studies, even reaching a clear definition of the topic, which will be then applied to the empirical context of the research. Indeed, such a definition becomes the tool by which we intend to ascertain whether the ongoing food aid processes are emergency-guided or are rather part of a broader political framework; moreover, albeit with difficulty, it is possible to assume that the nature of the food aid support is well-structured and long-term if adopting the organisations' perspective; however, they are emergency strategies if reasoning from the systemic perspective of the potential food welfare approach. Evidently, in this context, policymakers may expectedly be unlikely to describe a well-conceived and structured model of food welfare and, instead, may be likely to explain that the process is still far from complete.

The present socio-spatial analysis of the food welfare situation in Turin is thus intended as a cognitive and data set tool for multi-stakeholder actors who are carrying out the UFP setting process; relying on these data, policymakers may be able to go beyond the usual emergency-guided food aid system and integrate food welfare policies within a larger set of political tools. By relying on a rights-based approach, food may be addressed as a matter of right, not anymore as a matter of need.

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