EDICIONES COMPLUTENSE

Cuadernos de **Trabajo Social**
e-ISSN: 1988-8295

ARTÍCULOS

Assistentialism in food aid resources. An analysis of the problematization of food insecurity through the *What's the Problem Represented to Be* (WPR) framework

Amaia Inza-Bartolomé
Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU)

Leire Escajedo San-Epifanio
Universidad del País Vasco/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU)

https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cuts.96795

Recibido: 30/06/2024 • Aceptado: 02/01/2025

EN **Abstract.** Third sector food aid resources have responded to food insecurity situations in rich countries. A certain problematization of said insecurity has brought about certain conveniences of a secondary order, such as the profitability that the food industry achieves with the recommodification of donated food or that would otherwise be wasted, and the de-responsibilization of governments with respect to the right to food. This problematization helps to perpetuate the assistentialist entity of resources. However, the biased view of poverty, which appears to be easy to compensate through these channels, has had harmful effects on users. The assistance-oriented nature of the aforementioned food aid resources stigmatizes and reinforces exclusion. It also offers us important information about the quality of welfare systems. The methodological framework of the *What's the problem Represented to Be* (WPR), through a series of questions, helps us investigate the roots of the construction of the prevailing problematization, explore the taken-for-granted truths, and offers us keys for debate, as well as for an alternative problematization.

As a main conclusion, this work suggests that it is necessary to repoliticize the link between food insecurity and aid resources, problematize food poverty in light of the right to food, avoiding stigma and taking care of inclusion pathways.

Key words: assistentialism; food aid resources; food insecurity; problematization; WPR

How to cite: Inza-Bartolomé, A.; Escajedo San-Epifanio, L. (2025). Assistentialism in food aid resources. An analysis of the problematization of food insecurity through the *What's the Problem Represented to Be* (WPR) framework. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social 38*(1), 149-157. https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cuts.96795

1. Introduction

In high-income countries, the supply chain of food aid resources has been fine-tuned to feed the economically vulnerable, taking advantage of donated or otherwise wasted food. While they arose as an emergency device or to provide an outlet for surplus food, as in the case of food banks, they have become part of the welfare system. However, the effects of their work, and the fact that they are a growing phenomenon, need to be emphasised. An extensive literature offers a broad overview of the many consequences of its action on users, as well as elements for the analysis of the secondary conveniences to which it has given rise, which have become a necessary object of analysis in order to understand the phenomenon. The response to food insecurity through assistentialist food resources has resulted in a lack of autonomy, stigma or the deepening of the exclusion of users, and can be a useful phenomenon for assessing the health of welfare states in high-income countries.

Several studies have highlighted the expansion of food aid resources and their effects on users, and have contextualised the phenomenon in countries with strong economies. Following an extensive study of the emergence and consolidation of food aid resources in five liberal welfare countries in the 1980s and 1990s, Graham Riches (1997) concluded that, as these countries were food exporters and food secure through domestic production and imports, hunger was an issue of distributive justice and human rights. Subsequently, after extending the study to twelve rich countries (Riches and Silvasti, 2014), it was found that food insecurity in these societies had increased and charitable food resources continued to expand and consolidate. More

recently, this researcher (Riches, 2018, p. 51) points to the importance of large food companies or so-called Big Food, which have become a dominant player in privatised charitable food security networks in rich countries, as well as an inversely proportional depoliticisation of hunger in these countries.

Taken together, this, points to a certain direction in the understanding of food insecurity in high-income countries, as well as in the way in which it is responded to. It is pertinent, therefore, to recall Ander-Egg's (2011, p. 39) critique of assistentialism

> '*does not point so much to what is done, but rather to the fact that it is a proposal for social intervention that does not transcend other possibilities than relations and situations of assistance (...) This form of social action, far from eliminating the problems it addresses, contributes to their maintenance and reproduction*'.

This study adopts the policy problematization perspective using Carol Bacchi's methodological procedure "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) to characterise a widespread approach for responding to food insecurity in high-income countries. As Bacchi explains, "the aim is to step back from taken-for-granted objects and concepts to determine how they came to be by studying the heterogeneous strategic relations - the politics – that shape lives" (Bacchi, 2012b, p. 5). Applying WPR to address food insecurity in high-income countries was based on reviewing both the institutional documentation that reflects the approaches to addressing food insecurity and the related specialised literature. Unveiling the prevailing problematization of the problem is a first step to be able to analyse the impact of this hegemonic perspective; understanding the particular interests of the various actors and establishing keys for debate can mark a route to build alternative relationships around the response to the need for nutritious and adequate food that meets the social standards of each country, through measures based on the right to food. This paper first describes the WPR approach, secondly, it uses the questions provided by this framework to identify and highlight the conditions of possibility that have made this particular representation of the problem dominant through a logical-critical reflection, so as to finally pose the keys to a debate that can contribute to more just alternatives.

2. Carol Bacchi's What's the Problem Represented to Be (WPR) approach and its foundations

Carol Bacchi's What's the Problem Represented to Be (WPR) approach, which draws its theoretical foundations from post-structuralism, feminism, social constructionism, and Foucault's notion of governmentality (Rienmann, 2023, p.152), argues that problems are not fixed and uncontroversial starting points for political development (Bacchi, 2012a, p. 23). It shares the idea with other paradigms that policy constructs problems before solutions (Pastore et al., 2022), inventing subjects, objects, and places connected in the responses proposed as solutions (Chao, 2019, p. 140). Even lives are lived in a particular way due to the formative impact of proposals that create particular understandings of problems (Bacchi, 2012a, p. 22).

Problematising policy analysis enables critical thinking that denaturalises what is taken-for-granted (Pastore et al., 2022) and opens up many kinds of material to original and inventive interrogation (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 17). This perspective also aims to interrogate the discursive practices that underpin these representations and expose the assumptions and silences that these practices (re)produce (Clarke, 2017); it implies, in turn, to *work backwards* and revisit and interrogate unexamined ways of thinking to show that they have a history, and insist on questioning their implications (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p.16).

The What's the Problem Represented to be? (WPR) framework (Bacchi y Goodwin, 2016, p. 20), is composed of several questions:

> Question 1: What is the problem represented to be in a particular policy or policies?
> Question 2: What deep-rooted presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?
> Question 3: How has this representation of the problem come about?
> Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently?
> Question 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
> Question 6: How and where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

This methodology permits the use of empirical materials that cover comprehensive productions such as policy documents, legislative texts, and academic texts (Pastore et al., 2022). Furthermore, this analytical approach clarifies that the government involves conventional legislative institutions, political parties, civil society, and social movements, including numerous sites, agencies, and ways of knowing that significantly interrelate to shape social rules (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 5).

3. Unveiling the problematization of food insecurity through the WPR approach.

By means of the WPR questions, this section links together the constituent elements that have formed part of the response to food insecurity through assistance-based resources in high-income countries. Such elements form the links in a chain that it is important to make visible and analyse in order to, as the WPR advocates, look at the origin of inequalities as a means of constructing viable and fairer alternatives.

3.1. Responding to food insecurity and assuming the appropriateness of the approach

Food aid can be defined as "the phenomenon where Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) provide free food to people living in poor social and economic conditions" (Salonen et al., 2018). The network that supports it involves multiple actors and a blend of public and private resources (Webb, 2013), a continuum that adds third-sector initiatives, large and small businesses, and institutional intervention programmes (Galli et al., 2018). Specifically, within the food aid resources, food banks are those that have demonstrated the greatest strength in terms of their expansion, as well as efficiency in their self-organization. These agencies are intermediary organizations that distribute food that in some cases is surplus and, if not donated, would become food waste (Escajedo et al., 2017). The industry that has grown around food banks continues to expand. These resources are entrenched and seem to persist indefinitely, regardless of economic conditions (Ronson and Caraher, 2016, p. 79) and a lack of evidence of being an appropriate response to addressing food insecurity (Middleton et al., 2018, p. 698).

The first question of the WPR methodology, "What is the problem represented to be in a particular policy or policies?" aims to identify a place from which to begin the analysis, to examine the problem representation to see what is being problematized (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 20). Therefore, it is essential to start with the proposed solutions; in this case, high-income countries tend to try to solve food insecurity with food aid resources. A first step to address the problematization of the issue at hand is to look at the definition of food insecurity.

Eurostat measures food insecurity as "the ability to afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent every second day" among household-level items within the EU-SILC indicator "severe material and social deprivation rate"' (SMSD), which distinguishes between individuals who cannot afford a certain good, service, or social activity (Eurostat, 2023a). This indicator is part of the at-risk-of-poverty rate (AROPE) defined in the context of the EU 2030 target on poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2023b). Eurostat (2023c) reported that 8.3% of the EU population was food insecure in 2022.

The EU has been providing food to the deprived since 1987. In 2014, it launched the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) to break the vicious circle of poverty and deprivation by providing non-financial assistance to vulnerable people in the EU (European Commission, 2015). FEAD had a budget of €3.8 billion for 2014-2020, and the EU provided up to 85% of the funding, which is topped up by EU Member States' resources, bringing the total fund value to approximately €4.5 billion (European Commission, 2022a, 2022b). For the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework, FEAD was integrated into the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). Its regulation required that at least 25% of the ESF+ shared management strand be allocated to social inclusion objectives (European Commission, 2022b).

The data reveal the scale of these policies. In 2022, the members of the FEBA in 30 European countries distributed 876,316 tonnes of food (an increase of 14% compared to 2019 as a pre-COVID benchmark) to 44,884 charitable organisations serving 12.4 million most deprived people (an increase from 29% compared to 2019 as a pre-COVID benchmark), thanks to the commitment of 97,949 staff (93% volunteers) (FEBA, 2023b). The contribution of food banks to food waste prevention is notable, which, according to the FEBA, is a win-win solution to prevent food waste and reduce food insecurity: it is an economically, environmentally, and socially responsible alternative (FEBA, 2023a). Over 58% of the food obtained is surplus food recovered from food businesses and the EU fruit and vegetable withdrawal scheme, thus preventing it from becoming food waste. FEBA members also redistribute food funded through the EU (e.g., FEAD, REACTEU, ESF+), national programmes, and individual and corporate food collections (FEBA, 2023b).

In the case of Spain, the Associated Distribution Organisations (OADs) are the FESBAL (Spanish Federation of Food Banks) and the Red Cross, defined as national, non-profit charitable organisations that receive the food purchased by the FEGA (Spanish Agricultural Guarantee Fund) in their storage and distribution centres and distribute it to the Associated Organisations of Delivery (AODs); The latter are non-profit organisations that receive the food from the OADs and deliver it to the most disadvantaged people, together with accompanying measures (Secretaría General de Agricultura y Alimentación, 2023).

FEAD could be defined as "a redistributive and highly targeted European anti-poverty programme" and "a unique supranational instrument of social protection for European citizens, taking advantage of the need for food aid in most European Union (EU) countries" (Greiss et al., 2021, p.622). In 2020, FEAD supported approximately 15 million people with food (an increase from 12.2 million in 2019), and 30,000 people with social inclusion support, similar to 2019 (European Commission, 2022a, 2022b). The European Court of Auditors (2019) noted that despite the overall objective of the social inclusion of the most deprived, FEAD essentially remains a food assistance programme—83% of the FEAD budget is devoted to food assistance. The initial approach to the problem represented is, therefore, that of tackling food insecurity through the distribution of food through food distribution entities and by viewing the need in a fragmented way, focused on the need for food, not addressing a comprehensive intervention.

The second question posed by Bacchi, "What deep-rooted presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem"?" can be addressed by considering how this particular problem representation identifies being meaningful or intelligible and is constructed (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 21).

When it comes to the knowledge and concepts that underpin the representations deployed in the first question, it is essential to consider the possibility of responding to part of the poverty by redirecting food that has been donated or would otherwise be wasted, which, in any case, has lost its market value. A straight and simple line is thus drawn to respond to the problem of the need for food. Some authors agree that charitable food aid resources are viewed as a practical and simple solution to the food insecurity and food waste

problems (Power, 2015). Some others speak of an active normalisation of food charity as a sensitive, natural, effective, and common solution to poverty Möller (2022, p. 36); according to other experiences (Tikka, 2019), food aid practices, depoliticised as a poverty problem, have gained relevance in the discursive space of the circular economy.

3.2. Some secondary processes that have taken root

In the third question, "How does this representation of the problem come about?" Bacchi suggests that specific decisions and developments must be made in specific institutional spaces, prevailing the representation that is the object of analysis in the first quiestion. If this representation had not triumphed, things could have turned out quite differently (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). This question, according to the author, allows us to see how power relations are woven and generate different structures of domination between representations; it primarily identifies and highlights the possible conditions that lead to the dominance of a particular problem representation and how the representation begins to exist, reflecting on the "gaps and silences" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 12).

For the case under consideration here, it is important to bear in mind the importance of the monetary return on donated or surplus food products that are remarketed outside the usual circuit. On the other hand, the third sector occupies spaces where the public sphere should guarantee the right to food. These issues are fundamental to Bacchi's process of "work backwards", i.e. looking back and analysing the steps in the constitution of the representation of the problem. This can clarify the gaps and silences that, as a whole, have shaped a system with a welfarist profile and can help us to reconstruct it.

Simultaneously, the re-commodification of this donated and/or otherwise wasted food in a secondary cycle has produced a "charity economy" (Kessl, et al., 2020), defined as a system of free distribution of surplus basic goods or their sale at reduced prices to people who cannot participate in the market economy, or only partially, through volunteer work. Increasingly, it is highlighted as part of the welfare system (Kessl et al., 2020; Schoneville, 2018). Redirecting food surpluses to charitable resources is considerably beneficial to businesses. It saves money from sending food into landfills, reduces storage and transport costs, provides tax deductions for donations, and positively impacts corporate social responsibility, all of which are sources of competitive advantage (Caraher and Cavichi, 2014; Silvasti and Riches, 2014). This system accumulates wealth by re-valuing waste as hunger relief (Lohnes, 2021), and it is supported by the food industry or Big Food, as it has become a way to increase its profitability (Booth and Whelan, 2014: Riches, 2018).

In general, the third sector can adequately build relationships between the different actors involved in food security (Baglioni et al., 2017), assuming the gaps in intervention (Strong, 2020), as well as to work in interconnection with public social services (Galli et al., 2018). An interrelationship has thus been generated where these "voluntary shadow state institutions" (Mitchell, 2001), play a fundamental role in the governance of welfare systems. Researchers Lambie-Mumford and Silvasti (2020) have encompassed under the term "food charity", a series of services or resources, of voluntary initiative, that help people to access food that they could not otherwise obtain, including the distribution of food parcels, food banks of all kinds, soup kitchens or solidarity supermarkets.

Considering the above, the fourth question posed by WPR, "What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently?", allows critical practices to think differently, imagine unproblematized circumstances, or problematize differently (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 22). In this particular case, the dominant problematization of food insecurity neglects the right to food and the structural reasons for poverty. It could be said that the fact of being in a situation in which there is a need for food and the means to obtain it is depoliticised and, as some sources have observed, this process implies an intentionality from a neoliberal ideological perspective.

The relief of these resources in moments of adversity and austerity has favoured seeing them as social goods, cementing the shift from food as a right to charitable provision (Caraher and Furey, 2018). But, it should be noted that the charitable provision of food results in an erosion of social rights (Lorenz, 2012, p. 393; Lambie-Mumford and Silvasti, 2020, p. 7), and does not offer legal protection (Douglas et al., 2015, p. 311). On the contrary, this human rights-based approach can potentially consider the impact of government action or inaction and include the structural causes of social inequalities, not just symptoms (Pollard and Booth, 2019). Meanwhile, it can be considered that the resources deployed by the third sector allow the deresponsibility of public powers with respect to the right to food and fill the gaps in the welfare system, making sustainable the deficiencies of policies to protect people from poverty (Ghys, 2018, p. 177).

The fundamental problems of emergency aid should also be noted. Janet Poppendieck (1999) listed seven of them: insufficiency (when the food available through donations is not sufficient), inadequacy (the food available at food banks does not match the preferences of the people served, their restrictions in relation to religious beliefs, or their needs with regard to their health), nutritional inadequacy (much of the food provided by food banks does not meet nutritional recommendations), instability (donations, voluntary work and financial donations are unpredictable and unstable), inaccessibility (food banks are not necessarily where they are most needed), inefficiency (matching people in need of food with available resources comes at a very high cost) and finally, indignity (often causing shame and a sense of humiliation). Subsequently, other research brought other problems to light: ineffectiveness (a critique that questions whether the food bank has met the goal of reducing food insecurity); inequality (creation or reproduction of unequal relations in the food bank, usually between different classes); institutionalisation (a process in which food banks become institutions and concern for sustainability replaces service to clients); invalidation of rights (a process in which

the creation of the food bank as an acceptable response to hunger overrides the right to food); invisibility (the process by which the presence of food banks gives the impression that poverty is managed and therefore unseen) (McIntyre et al., 2015).

Many authors have highlighted the influence of neoliberal ideologies on the growth of charitable resources. For example, Lambie-Mumford and Silvasti (2020) highlight the parallels in the rise of food charities across Europe in the last 20-30 years in a context of increased conditionality and reduced entitlements in social security characterised by neoliberal social policies. Others (Spring et al., 2022) suggest that years of neoliberalism and austerity have positioned corporate charity as an acceptable resource despite household food insecurity, obscuring rights-based solutions based on income redistribution and food justice/sovereignty. In this background, "welfare state shadow institutions" are a tool for neoliberal adjustments by commodifying public goods and services (Evans and Shields, 2000).

3.3. Effects of the assistentialist character of resources

The fifth question of the WPR on the effects of problem representation invites analysts to consider three types of interrelated effects: discursive effects, which establish the limits of what can be said and thought; subjectification effects, which are the forms in which subjects are constituted in discourse; and lived effects, which directly affect people's material lives (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016: 23; Pastore et al., 2022). This study reflects on the implications of problematization and promotes interventions to reduce the harmful consequences for specific groups of people (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 23).

While constructing the limits of an alternative answer, food aid must no longer be seeing as an emergency aid but as a social fact (Lorenz, 2012, p. 393), convenient for food industry (Fisher, 2017). Numerous agents present food insecurity as a problem disassociated from broader societal issues and systemic solutions (Fisher, 2017, p. 37), favouring individual behavioural explanations (Caraher and Furey, 2017). Apolitical approaches are central in the imaginaries of the fight against hunger (Spring et al., 2022). Poppendieck (1994) argues that the institutionalisation of such programs, undermines the cultural basis of support for the welfare state by making people in poverty dependent on the generosity of strangers and discretionary donations.

Simultaneously, food charity reminds users of not being part of a normalised society, contributing to a pervasive sense of marginalization (Power, 2014, p. 1048). It serves as an instrument of polarisation, distancing the life-world of the disadvantaged and affluent majority, with the former excluded from food acquisition practices in contemporary society (Salonen et al., 2018). Recipients are seen as passive recipients because they have no other choice when they are hungry (Lorenz, 2012, p. 393), their needs and aspirations are often overlooked (Salonen et al., 2018), they are forced to eat cheap, easy-to-prepare, and filling food (Gartwaite et al., 2015), and they must prove their eligibility to receive it (Tarasuk and MacLean, 1990).

Although the food distributed by food banks is seen as free food, evidence of some hidden costs for users exists (Purdam et al., 2016). Apart from the feelings of exclusion and marginalization mentioned above, people experience shame to demonstrate their deprivation to someone in their community to access food (Beck and Gwilym, 2020; Van der Horst et al., 2014), are stigmatised (Baglioni et al., 2017; Pfeiffer et al., 2011), or suffer from feelings of degradation (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2012). Therefore, in high-income countries, it is important, when defining food insecurity, to see whether it has been taken into account a socially acceptable access to food. Dowler and O'Connor (2012, p. 45) explain that food security means that people can obtain food with dignity by following social norms, i.e. access to nutritionally adequate food that is appropriate, safe, and in accordance with social norms.

The sixth question of the WPR asks how and where problematization is produced, disseminated and defended, as well as the possibility of disrupting and replacing it. It focuses on practices that authorize certain problem representations and the dominance of some representations over others (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016, p. 24). In other words, it involves how these representations of problems reach the public and gain legitimacy (Bacchi, 2009, p.19).

Food insecurity instruments, such as the FEAD, also seem to establish legitimate charitable food aid in Europe as FEAD-funded food aid is increasingly formalised and harmonised due to regulatory requirements (Greiss et al., 2021). The very existence of food banks and charitable food aid organisations also facilitates self-perpetuation. According to Seibel (1996), these organisations are "successful failures" as they require infinite resources to meet endless demand. However, the voluntary or faith-based nature of these organisations fails to meet the needs of the people they are supposed to be helping but protects them from criticism. Furthermore, commodified poverty relief offers donors a bonus of instant emotional gratification and makes them useful members of the community (Möller, 2022, p. 168).

Food delivery through food aid resources would imply the prevalence of informal or warm solidarity, which, as defined by De Beer and Koster (2009, pp. 20-21), spontaneously stems from direct involvement and sympathy for whom one has warm feelings regarding food aid. Contrarily, formal or cold solidarity stems from a commitment to anonymous others and is mediated by an institution. In other words, while warm solidarity exists between generous donors and grateful recipients, cold solidarity exists between donors fulfilling their obligations and recipients exercising their rights (Van Parijs, 2021, p. 96). This is why the coexistence of these types of solidarity shows a side of welfare states that needs to be considered and assessed, given the delegitimising effect it could have.

4. Concluding remarks

The role played by charitable food aid resources in high-income countries today can be an indicator from which to analyse the problematization of the response to food insecurity and its implications. Indeed, it is a necessary starting point in addressing the representation of an issue, that of food insecurity. Some of the solutions proposed have a stigmatising impact because of the way food is accessed. Eurostat's definition of food insecurity, for example, has been the basis on which a number of resources have been unleashed through the FEAD since 2014, welcoming its appropriateness as a way of redirecting surplus food. Thus, it is an example of how poverty is compartmentalised and compensated in a fragmentary and occasional way, and as such, has not been part of a broader understanding of the potential for comprehensive inclusive processes for people in situations of vulnerability. This simple practice of providing food, which is common sense because it also makes use of the surplus and as a way of showing warm solidarity, has become a widespread and widely legitimised practice.

A look at the fundamental elements on which food insecurity in rich countries has been problematized following the WPR framework, allows us to consider many issues: what processes have constructed the dominant perspective through which the third sector respond to the hunger of people in vulnerable situation, and how charitable food provision has become an uncritical instrument of expression of community solidarity. Taking a look at the secondary conveniences rooted in the exercise proposed by the WPR, we can also identify the silences and gaps that have been created, especially in terms of the effects on the people who use it and in the sphere of action of welfare states. In other words, attention should be paid to the interrelationship of the elements in order to see how the representation of the problem has been constituted, to observe the triumphant perspective of power relations in order to establish ways of gauging how circumstances could have developed differently and, above all, to observe the aforementioned gaps and silences, given the consequences of the absence of criticism in relation to the failures of structures and the effects on people, issues which have been relegated. These latter aspects exemplify a welfare intervention that violates the right to food and contributes to the maintenance and reproduction of the problem.

The re-commodification of food that would otherwise be wasted or destroyed, i.e. the so-called charity economy, is the perfect representation of the second-order expediencies that make it difficult to turn back the clock on the approach at hand. It constitutes a useful process for the corporate social responsibility of the food industry and has a positive reading in terms of environmental impact. Yet that is one of the silences to be highlighted, given that economic profitability shapes powerful interests that make it difficult to bring the debate about rights to the foreground.

Moreover, the warm solidarity exercised by individuals and voluntary third sector resource persons, i.e. goodwill, helps to relegate critical practices to think otherwise, prevents the establishment of routes to facilitate the redress of the right to food and circumvents reflection on the structural reasons for poverty, while the response to food insecurity remains somewhat depoliticised and reminiscent of liberal ideological frameworks, aiming only to partially palliate the symptoms. On the other hand, it undermines a cold solidarity of redistribution of resources embodied by a welfare state that seek a society of equals, and perpetuates the shortcomings of policies. Users are perceived, within the uncritical discourse on food aid resources, as passive subjects, without the possibility of claiming their right to food, and are forced to accept the food offered to them through resources that often disregard established social norms, without the possibility of choice and out of the consumer society.

In summary, in the face of the depoliticisation of intervention to solve food insecurity and in the interest of constructing an alternative problematization of the issue, it is necessary to underline the involution that the reinforcement of charitable resources entails for the design of welfare systems, the significant economic return for the food industry, the government's responsibility for the right to food, and the implicit concealment of the structural causes of food poverty. A critical debate on these aspects would facilitate the consideration of measures that favour the processes of inclusion, based on the comprehensiveness of the intervention, not on assistentialist measures, given that these resources can be the entry point for the detection of vulnerabilities, and for individualised monitoring. In any case, access to food should avoid stigmatisation, and allow the choice of food taking into account nutritional, religious, health, cultural, etc. requirements, also considering the variety of profiles, old and new, of the people requesting support. Constructing a different problematization and re-politicising the taken-for-granted truths become necessary to ensure that vulnerable people need the help of the welfare system to achieve food security and their path is protected by the right to food.

5. References

Ander-Egg, E. (2009). *Diccionario del Trabajo Social*. Brujas/ICSA.

Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: what's the problem represented to be?.* Pearson.

Bacchi, C. (2012a). Introducing the 'What's the problem represented to be?' approach. In A. Bletsas and C. Beasley (Eds.), *Engaging with Carol Bacchi: Strategic interventions and exchanges* (pp. 21-24). The University of Adelaide Press.

Bacchi, C. (2012b). Why study problematizations? Making politics visible. *Open Journal of Political Science,* 2 (1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2012.21001

Bacchi, C. and Goodwin, S. (2016). *Poststructural Policy Analysis, A guide to practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Baglioni. S., De Pieri, B. and Tallarico, T. (2016). Surplus Food Recovery and Food Aid: The Pivotal Role of Non-profit Organisations. Insights From Italy and Germany. *Voluntas,* 28, 2032–2052. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9746-8

Beck, D. and Gwilym, H. (2020). The moral maze of food bank use. Journal of Poverty and Social Justice, 28 (3), 383-399. https://doi.org/10.1332/175982720X15905998909942
Beer, P. de and Koster, F. (2009). *Sticking together of falling apart? Solidarity in an era of individualization and globalization*. Amsterdam University Press.
Booth, S. and Whelan, J. (2014). Hungry for change: the food banking industry in Australia. *British Food Journal*, 116 (9), 1392 – 1404. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-01-2014-0037
Caraher, M. and Cavicchi, A. (2014). Old crises on new plates or old plates for a new crises? Food banks and food insecurity. *British Food Journal,* 116 (9). https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-08-2014-0285
Caraher, M. and Furey, S. (2017). Is it appropriate to use surplus food to feed people in hunger? Short-term Band-Aid to more deep-rooted problems of poverty. *Food Research Collaboration,* 1-22. https://foodresearch.org.uk/publications/is-it-appropriate-to-use-surplus-food-to-feed-people-in-hunger/
Caraher, M. and Furey, S. (2018). *The economics of emergency food aid provision. A financial, social and cultural perspective*. Palgrave.
Chao, D. (2019). Problematizaciones, problemas representados y gubernamentalidad. Una propuesta analítica para el estudio de las políticas públicas y el Estado. *De Prácticas y Discursos*, 8 (11), 123-152. https://doi.org/10.30972/dpd.8113807
Clarke, A. (2017). Analyzing problematization as a situated practice in critical policy studies: a case study of 'customer focus' policy in urban compliance services. *Critical Policy Studies,* 13 (2), 190-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2017.1414619
Douglas, F., Sapko, J., Kiezebrink, K. and Kyle, J. (2015). Resourcefulness, Desperation, Shame, Gratitude and Powerlessness: Common Themes Emerging from A Study of Food Bank Use in Northeast Scotland. AIMS Public Health, 2 (3): 297-317. https://doi.org/10.3934/publichealth.2015.3.297
Dowler, E. A. and O'Connor, D. (2012). Rights-based approaches to addressing food poverty and food insecurity in Ireland and UK. *Social Science&Medicine*, 74, 44-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.08.036
Escajedo San-Epifanio, L., Inza-Bartolomé, A. and De Renobales, M. (2017). Food banking. In P.B. Thompson and D.M. Kaplan (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics* (pp. 1-7). Springer.
European Commission (2015). The Fund for European aid to the Most deprived FEAD): Breaking the vicious circle of poverty and deprivation. *Publications Office of the European Union*. https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=14777&langId=en
European Commission (2022a). Study supporting the monitoring of FEAD – data collection systems implemented by Member States. *Publications Office of the European Union.* https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8475&furtherPubs=yes
European Commission (2022b). Report from the commission to the council and the European Parliament. Summary of the annual implementation reports for the operational programmes cofinanced by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived in 2020. *European Commission.* https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b048bb80-0753-11ed-acce-01aa75ed71a1.0018.02/DOC_1&format=PDF
European Court of Auditors (2019). *FEAD-Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived: Valuable support but its contribution to reducing poverty is not yet established. Special report No 05/2019*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR19_05/SR_FEAD_EN.pdf
Eurostat (2023a). Glossary: Severe material and social deprivation rate (SMSD). *Eurostat.*https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Severe_material_and_social_deprivation_rate_(SMSD)
Eurostat (2023b). Glossary: At risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE). *Eurostat.* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE)
Eurostat (2023c). How many people can afford a proper meal in the EU? *Eurostat.* https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230710-1
Evans, B.M. y Shields, J. (2000). Neoliberal restructuring and the third sector: reshaping governance, civil society and local relations. *Working Paper Series 13,* Metropolitan University. https://doi.org/10.32920/ryerson.14637483.v1
FEBA. European Federation of Food Banks (2023 septembere 11)(2023a). *10 facts about food banks and food waste prevention. FEBA.* https://www.eurofoodbank.org/publications/10-facts-about-food-banks-and-food-waste-prevention/
FEBA. European Federation of Food Banks (2023 september 11). (2023b). *Legally binding targets to reduce food waste. The position of FEBA and its members.* https://www.eurofoodbank.org/publications/special-edition-eu-monitoring-report-on-legally-binding-food-waste-reduction-targets/
Fisher, A. (2017). *Big Hunger. The Unholy Alliance between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups*. MIT Press.
Galli, F., Hebinck, A. and Carroll, B. (2018). Addressing food poverty in systems: governance of food assistance in three European countries. *Food Security,* 10, 1353–1370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-018-0850-z
Garthwaite, K.A., Collins, P. J, and Bambra, C. (2015). Food for thought: An ethnographic study of negotiating ill health and food insecurity in a UK foodbank. *Social Science & Medicine,* 132, 38-44. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.03.019
Ghys, T. (2018). Taking stock of the ambiguous role of foodbanks in the fight against poverty. *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 26 (2), 173–189. https://doi.org/10.1332/175982718X15200701225188
Greiss, J., Cantillon, B. and Penne, T. (2021) The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived: A Trojan horse dilemma? *Social Policy and Administration,* 55, 622–636. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12647

Kessl, F., Oechler, M. and Schröder, T. (2020). Charity economy and social work. En F. Kessl, W. Lorenz, H.U. Otto and S. White (Eds.), *European social work-A Compendium* (pp. 361-378). Bucrich Publishers.
Lambie-Mumford, H. (2019). The growth of food banks in Britain and what they mean for social policy. *Critical Social Policy,* 39 (1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018318765855
Lambie-Mumford, H. and Silvasti, T. (2020). Introduction: exploring the growth of food charity across Europe. In H. Lambie-Mumford and T. Silvasti (Eds.), *The rise of food charity in Europe* (pp.1-18). Policy Press.
Lohnes, J.D. (2021). Regulating surplus: Charity and the legal geographies of food waste enclosure. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 38, 351–363. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10150-5
Loopstra, R. and Tarasuk, V. (2012). The Relationship between Food Banks and Household Food Insecurity among Low-Income Toronto Families. *Canadian Public Policy,* 38 (4): 497-514. https://doi.org/10.3138/CPP.38.4.497
Lorenz, S. (2012). Socio-ecological consequences of charitable food assistance in the affluent society: the German Tafel. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy,* 32 (7/8), 386-400. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443331211249011
McIntyre, L., Tougas, D., Rondeau, K. and Mah, C. (2015). In-sights about food banks from a critical interpretive synthesis of the academic literature. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 33, 843–859. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9674-z
Middleton, G., Mehta, K., McNaughton, D. and Booth, S. (2018). The experiences and perceptions of food banks amongst users in high-income countries: An international scoping review. *Appetite*, 120, 698-708. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2017.10.029
Mitchell, K. (2001). Transnationalism, neo-liberalism, and the rise of the shadow state. *Economy and Society,* 30 (2), 165-189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085140120042262
Möller, C. (2022). *Food Charity and the Psychologisation of Poverty: Foucault in the Food Bank.* Routledge.
Pastore, G., Gorostiaga, J.M. and Tello, C.G. (2022). El enfoque de la problematización de políticas y su aplicación a la investigación sobre política educativa. *Revista Latinoamericana de Metodología de las Ciencias Sociales*, 12 (2). https://doi.org/10.24215/18537863e120
Pfeiffer, S., Ritter, T. and Hirseland, A. (2011). Hunger and nutritional poverty in Germany: quantitative and qualitative empirical insights. *Critical Public Health*, 21 (4), 417-428. https://doi.org/10.1080/09581596.2011.619519
Pollard, C. and Booth, S. (2019). Insecurity and Hunger in Rich Countries—It Is Time for Action against Inequality. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16 (10), 1804. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16101804
Poppendieck, J. (1994). Dilemmas of Emergency Food: A Guide for the Perplexed. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 11, 69-76. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01530418
Poppendieck, J. (1999). *Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement.* Penguin Books.
Power, E.M. (2014). Food and poverty in High-income Countries. In P.B. Thompson y D.M. Kaplan (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics* (pp. 1043-1050). Springer.
Power, E.M. (2015). Food Banks. In K. Albala (Ed.). *The Sage encyclopedia of food issues*. (vol.2) (pp. 552-557). Sage Publications.
Purdam, K., Garratt, E.A. and Esmail, A. (2016). Hungry? Food Insecurity, Social Stigma and Embarrassment in the UK. *Sociology*, 50 (6), 1072–1088. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515594092
Riches, G. and Silvasti, T. (Eds.)(2014). *First world hunger revisited. Food charity or the right to food?.* Palgrave Macmillan.
Riches, G. (2018). *Food Bank nations. Poverty, corporate charity and the right to food*. Routledge.
Riemann, M. (2023). Studying Problematizations: The Value of Carol Bacchi's 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) Methodology for IR. *Alternatives,* 48 (2), 151–169. https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754231155766
Ronson, D. and Caraher, M. (2016). Food banks: big society or shunting yards? Successful failures. In M. Caraher and J. Coveney (Eds.), *Food poverty and insecurity: international food inequalities. Food Policy* (pp. 79-88). Springer.
Salonen, A.S., Ohisalo, M. and Laihiala, T. (2018). Undeserving, Disadvantaged, Disregarded: Three Viewpoints of Charity Food Aid Recipients in Finland. *International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health,* 15 (12), 2896. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15122896
Schoneville, H. (2018). Poverty and the transformation of the welfare (state) arrangement. Food banks and the charity economy in Germany. *Social Work and Society. International Online Journal,* 16 (2). https://ejournals.bib.uni-wuppertal.de/index.php/sws/issue/view/33
Secretaría General de Agricultura y Alimentación (2024 june 14) (2023). *Guía para las Organizaciones Asociadas de Reparto participantes en el Programa de Ayuda Alimentaria 2023 del Fondo de Ayuda Europea para las personas más desfavorecidas (PO FEAD 2014-2020) en España.* FEGA. https://www.fega.gob.es/sites/default/files/files/document/rm-guia_oar-2023.pdf
Seibel, W. (1996). Successful failure. An alternative view on organizational coping. *American Behavioural Scientist,* 39, 1011-1024. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764296039008006
Silvasti, T. and Riches, G. (2014). Hunger and food charity in rich societies: what hope for the right to food?. In G. Riches and T. Silvasti (Eds.). *First world hunger revisited. Food charity or the right to food?* (pp. 191-208). Palgrave Macmillan.
Spring, C., Garthwaite, K. and Fisher, A. (2022). Containing Hunger, Contesting Injustice? Exploring the Transnational Growth of Foodbanking- and Counter-responses- Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Food ethics,* 7 (6). https://doi.org/10.1007/s41055-022-00099-y

Strong, S. (2020). Food banks, actually existing austerity y the localisation of responsibility. *Geoforum,* 110, 211-219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.09.025

Tarasuk, V.S. and MacLean, H. (1990). The institutionalization of food banks in Canada: a public health concern. *Canadian Journal of Public Health,* (81), 331-332.

Tikka, V. (2019). Charitable food aid in Finland: from a social issue to an environmental solution. *Agriculture and Human Values,* 36, 341–352. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-019-09916-3

Van der Horst, H., Pascucci, S. and Bol, W. (2014). The "dark side" of food banks? Exploring emotional responses of food bank receivers in the Netherlands. *British Food Journal,* 116 (9), 1506-1520. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-02-2014-0081

Van Parijs, P. (2021). European Values: Solidarity. *Ratio Juris,* 34, 95-105. https://doi.org/10.1111/raju.12310

Webb, K.L. (2013). Introduction–food banks of the future: Organizations dedicated to improving food security and protecting the health of the people they serve. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition,* 8 (3), 257–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2013.817169