

A Difference-Centred Approach to Municipal
Food Policy Planning in Metro Vancouver

Place-Based Food Systems: Making the Case, Making It Happen

Victoria Ostenso & Colin Dring, Aug 10th, 2018

Roadmap

- Problem Context
- Research Question
- Study approach
- Findings
- Implications

Problem Context

- What is a Food Policy Council?
 - A group of people seeking to transform an unsustainable food system
 - Typically through municipal government
- What are they trying to achieve?
 - Food production
 - Food access
 - Food policy/governance
 - Education

Problem Context



<https://www.vancouverfoodpolicycouncil.ca/monthly-meetings/>

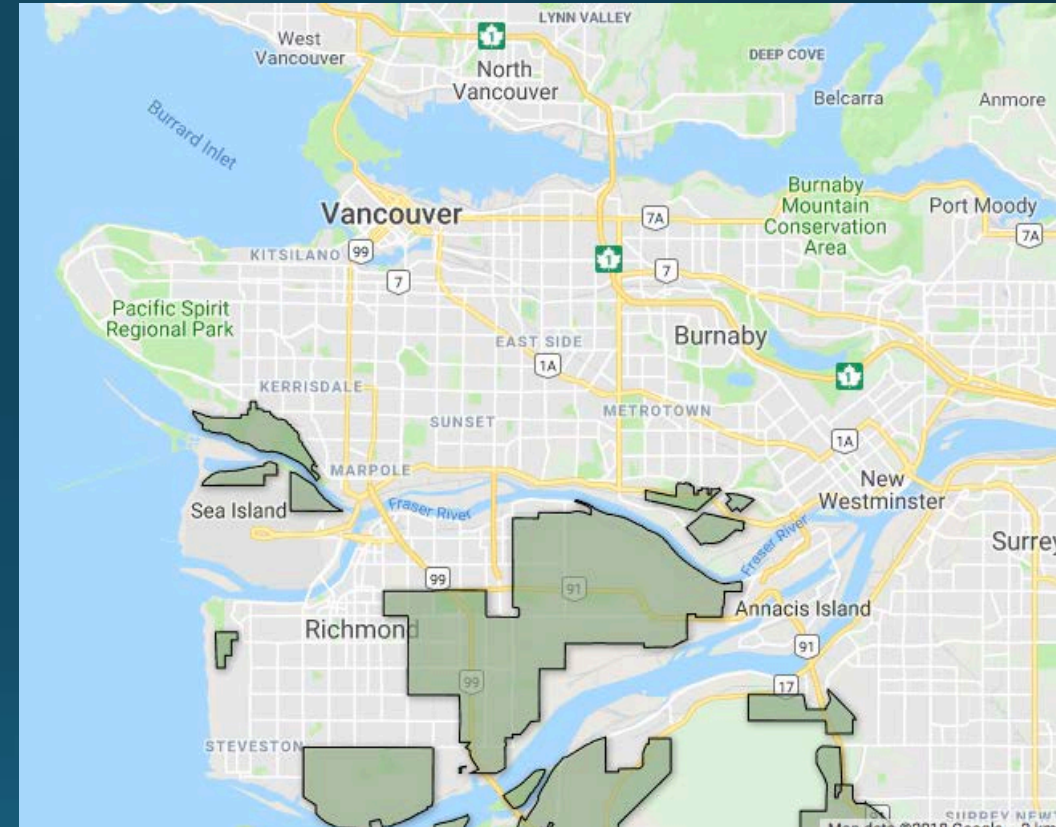
- What are the critiques of Food Policy Councils?
 - Professional
 - White/Western
 - Median to high income earners
 - Formal meeting & embedded in bureaucratic systems
 - Limited ability to address systemic issues
 - Claims of representativeness
 - Emphasizes environmental, nutritional, and economic outcomes

Guiding Questions

1. How are leaders and members of FPCs recognizing difference within their municipality?
2. How are they supporting participation of racial and ethnic groups?
3. Do these approaches to engagement address the role that the food system has played in structural oppression in some of these cultural and ethnic groups face?

Study approach

- Case studies – Metro Vancouver
 - Three areas – Vancouver, North Shore (North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, & West Vancouver), Richmond
- Interpretive/qualitative inquiry
 - Semi-structured key informant interviews with food policy members, past members, and critics of FPCs
 - Document analysis (food strategies, plans, charters, etc..)



<https://fusiontables.google.com/DataSource?docid=172zmzAPkP-qpP-fSjmBUyCFDFKSywx6hJpbaNXts#map:id=3>

Results – two approaches to inclusion

“None of our programs are exclusive, they are open to everybody. We don’t even ask what people’s nationality is, or their gender, we don’t really care [...] I would hate to say that we are not already meeting the needs of cultural populations because we just don’t know that. **Just because it hasn’t been explicit doesn’t mean it is not already happening.**”

“[The first step towards cultural inclusion is] **being able to name that race and culture is not being addressed** and that [race] has historically and continues to segregate and reinforce a Western base of food practice.”

Colour-blind Approaches

- Assumes universalism, equal capacity to participate
- Failure to recognize implicit group bias
- Failure to accommodate individual differences or needs
- Generally, limited ability to assess exclusion in processes or outcomes
- Can fail to acknowledge structural inequalities
- Resists discussion about different experiences and perspectives

Colour-blind Approaches

- Definition of what resources are important features of the local food system (e.g. farmers markets, community gardens)
- Prioritizing nutrition/environment over culture or social relations
- FPC membership criteria based on food system components
- Deflect responsibility to a subgroup of “diversity experts” or cultural organizations

Racial Justice Approaches

- Names implicit group norms
- Identifies existing power relations and shifts power to under-represented or marginalized actors
- Includes a more diverse array of racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds in decision-making
- Acknowledges Whiteness and other privileges (e.g. socioeconomic status, physical ability)

Racial Justice Approaches

- Build relationships with food systems work led by ethnocultural community organizations and actors
- Working group bringing attention culture and racial justice (a starting point)
- Reaching outside of the 'usual suspects' of food work
- Self and group education regarding food system inequities

Implications

- Cultural inclusion needs to be embedded across FPCs and their supporting documentation
- Development of FPC competencies in cultural inclusion should be pursued for all members, not just champions or those with an interest
- Principles for inclusion include:
 - Reflexivity
 - Attending to Power Relations
 - Social-Emotional Learning & Practice
 - Transparency, Accountability & Accessibility

Questions

Contact: vostenso@mail.ubc.ca
colind@mail.ubc.ca