Edible inquiries:
Food Policy Research Connections

Evolved and Dissolved: Lessons Learned from the Transience of Food Policy Councils

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3-4:15 PM EST
NATIONAL

- FPN listserv with ~1200 members
- Food Policy Council Directory of 300+ councils
- Food Policy Resource Database with 900+ resources
- Monthly webinars on federal, state and local food policy

TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Chesapeake Food Policy Leadership Initiative
- Pre-conference workshops & conference sessions
- One-on-one technical assistance
Speakers

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The dynamic nature of food policy groups

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Outline

• Background on research
• Relevant findings:
  • Emergence, restructuring, dissolution of FPCs
  • Loose, fluctuating memberships
  • Fluid interactions
• Key takeaways
Research goal

Explore the emerging phenomenon of trans-local networks of local food policy groups – and their potential implications to facilitate transformative food system reform – through a comparative analysis of the Food Policy Networks project in the US and the Sustainable Food Cities Network in the UK.
Why “local food policy group”?

• In North America, **food policy council (FPC)** is most common term to describe place-based multi-stakeholder groups that work to make their food systems healthy, equitable, and sustainable.
  - Other names include: food councils, food coalitions, committees, food policy task forces, food alliances

• In Europe, groups more often identify as **food partnerships** (especially in UK), boards, steering groups
Questions explored

• How are LFPGs coming together and relating to one another through the emergence of trans-local networks like FPN and SFCN?

• How do these trans-local networks shape local food governance ideas, practices, and policies?

• What is their role in building more sustainable and just food systems?

• Could they help scale food system reform up from place-based initiatives to regional, national, and international levels and out to more municipalities?
Methods

• Participant observation in FPN and SFCN member and advisory group meetings
• Document analysis of websites, resources, listserv archives
• 22 semi-structured interviews with key participants in each network from January – August 2016
Relevant findings on dynamic nature of LFPGs
Rise of local food policy groups—and the networks that connect them—globally
Temporality and internal instability of LFPGs

• How to characterize “existence” of LFPGs

• Fluctuating census counts:
  • On average, 19 LFPGs removed from FPN directory each year from 2013 to 17 while ~30 entered a period of hiatus or questionable status (e.g., outdated webpage, unresponsive)
  • Some re-emerge (e.g., 12 currently active councils were inactive/dissolved for several years)
  • As of 08/2018, another 120 remain inactive

• Many groups don’t officially dissolve but undergo significant internal restructuring
  • 41 (12%) US and Canadian FPCs reported being in state of transition (redefining purpose/structure) in 2018 survey
  • Often prompted by changes in leadership and/or membership, funding, political climate, priorities
Loose, fluctuating memberships

• Varying “memberships” often built into group structure:
  • Listserv subscribers
  • Organization reps and citizens who sometimes attend meetings
  • Participants who attend most meetings and participate in working groups or steering committee
  • (sometimes) Paid staff

• Allows “members” to participate according to their level of availability, interest, experience

• Makes defining who constitutes the group challenging

“I use ‘network’ loosely. We have a governance group, but no official membership”
Fluid interactions

- LFPGs also have many cross-sectoral and cross-scalar relationships with others beyond their immediate “memberships.”
- Such relationships were fundamental—not just tangential—elements of LFPGs’ work, influencing their ability to affect change beyond their local situations.
Key takeaways
Dynamic structure and membership

• **Benefits:**
  - Groups can adapt actions to be relevant to policymakers, funders, public
  - Builds in resilience to survive changes in political or economic support (see quote)
  - Allows LFPGs to build flexible alliances outside scope of traditional “members”

  **Quote from one group leader:**
  “We kept re-shuffling ourselves... so we could take a hit and be resilient, a big goal after the governor took away the [first] council. Then we thought ‘we’ll get this legislated to live forever’ and that didn’t work. So we said, ‘why aren’t we thinking about this as less rigid, institutional and more living up to what we can in the moment?’”

• **Limitations:**
  - May make it difficult to develop long-term relationships (internally and externally)
  - May restrict groups’ abilities to compose collective voice to institutionalize or advocate for change at higher levels
Thank you!

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Full article available at
Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition: Past, Present, and Future

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Evolved and Dissolved: Lessons Learned from the Transience of Some Food Policy Councils
November 15, 2018
Cleveland-Cuyahoga County FPC Mission

Promote a just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system in the City of Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and Northeast Ohio.
Life Cycle of Coalitions

Tuckman’s Stages of group formation

- **Forming**
  - Expect: confusion about purpose, little agreement, enthusiasm
  - Requires: strong direction and guidance

- **Storming**
  - Expect: conflict, ‘turf battles’, increasing clarity of purpose
  - Requires: coaching, listening, clarification, compromise

- **Norming**
  - Expect: developing trust, efficiency, roles emerging
  - Required: facilitation, feedback, review, training

- **Performing**
  - Expect: focus on goals, clear purpose, productive and efficient
  - Requires: delegation, future planning, recognition

- **Adjourning / Transforming**
  - Expect: natural end or plan new project and goals
  - Requires: review, recognition and reward

Time & Effectiveness

Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition
History of FPC

• Established in 2007
• 2007-2012: Over 30 Coalition and Working Group Accomplishments
• 2013: Strategic Planning
• 2015: Survey indicating importance of FPC
• 2016: Formation of Steering Committee
• 2017: Launch of new Steering Committee and Convening model
Example: City of Cleveland Urban Garden District Ordinance

• The “Urban Garden District” is hereby established as part of the Zoning Code to ensure that urban garden areas are appropriately located and protected to meet needs for local food production, community health, community education, garden-related job training, environmental enhancement, preservation of green space, and community enjoyment on sites for which urban gardens represent the highest and best use for the community. (Ord. No. 208-07. Passed 3-5-07, eff. 3-9-07)
Example: City of Cleveland
Healthy Cleveland Nutrition Guidelines

• To align the Healthy Cleveland Initiative with the USDA Dietary Guidelines and consumer recommendations
• To improve the health and well-being of greater Cleveland residents by creating clear nutritional guidelines by which food will be purchased, donated, prepared, and served
• To improve the quality and nutrition of the foods purchased, donated and served by local government, agencies and organizations
• To promote healthy eating, improve the community health and the quality of life of greater Cleveland residents
Where do we go from here?

*Strategic Plan*

Mission

Structure

Community Survey
What are Food Policy Coalitions?

Group of diverse stakeholders working to change decisions that impact our local food system from production to consumption. This includes efforts to have an impact on formal legislation, voluntary guidelines, and administrative processes that allow for certain programs to flourish.
Cleveland-Cuyahoga County FPC
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Community Survey Results

How interested are you in actively engaging in the work of the Food Policy Coalition in the future?

- Don't know
- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not at all interested

84%
How important is it for there to be an organized coalition around food access/local foods in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County?

95% Very Important or Important

Very Important or Important

Not very important/Don't know
Structure

Formal or Informal?

Paid or Unpaid Staff?

Who Will Do What?

When Will Who Do What?

Requirements for Membership?

Officers?

When Will We Meet?
Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition Structure
FPC Steering Committee: Representation within Food System

- Production
- Processing
- Distribution
- Retail
- Consumption
Standing Committees

✓ Convening

✓ Fundraising

✓ Advocacy
Working Groups

✓ Emergent
✓ Task oriented
✓ Limited duration

- Advocacy
- Communications
- Membership
- Ohio Food Policy Network Liaison
FPC Moving Forward
Generating Consensus on Policy Opportunities

1. Reducing Food Waste (34)
   - Incentivize businesses to reduce organic waste/educate and create infrastructure (21)
   - Guidelines/incentives for certain percentage of food waste to be donated (9)
   - Curbside composting (4)

2. Healthy Food Access (30)
   - Public transportation to food retail (includes farmers’ markets, prepared food vendors, grocery stores) (16)
   - Re-open supermarket in Buckeye Neighborhood (14)
FPC Moving Forward
Building Consensus on Policy Priorities for 2018

**Priority #1:** Provide a letter of support for Ohio EPA increasing composting square footage from 300 to 500 SF

**Priority #2:** Conduct Farm Bill advocacy to raise awareness about the role of the Bill in promoting food security and health especially for low-income populations receiving SNAP

**Priority #3:** Conduct targeted research about food waste policy opportunities in Greater Cleveland composting regulations for organizations/businesses and infrastructure development.
FPC Moving Forward and Recommendations

Keep Funding Separate

Be Patient

Community Involvement

Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition
Thanks! Questions?

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Dissolved: Lessons learned from the Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council

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Purpose of the Research

- To investigate the challenges of citizen engagement in local food policy
- Offer lessons learned to help other food policy councils succeed
Methods

- 10 interviews
  - Former council chairs, members, and meeting attendees; city and county staff liaisons
  - Represented different stages of the lifetime of the PMFPC
- Cross coding and analysis of council documents and meeting minutes
Welcome to Portland

- Leader in the sustainable food movement
  - Abundance of farmers markets, community gardens, urban farms, food non-profits
  - Political climate of progressive food and land use policies

- Portland is a leader in citizen engagement
  - 70+ citizen boards, commissions, councils
Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council 2002-2012

- Joint City-County citizen advisory board
  - Housed under Sustainable Development Commission
  - Advisory Board
  - 11 members selected by city and county (restaurant and grocery store owners, university faculty, health-care professionals, a retired farmer, other food, hunger, and nutrition experts)
  - City and county staff liaisons
Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council 2002-2012

- Some Achievements
  - Multnomah Food Action Plan
  - Healthy Retail Initiative Beginning
  - Urban Farmer Apprenticeship Program
  - Urban Food Zoning Codes
Emergent Themes

- Role and function of citizens in the policy process
- Role and function of government in facilitating public participation in the policy process
PMFPC Struggles

- Lack of Autonomy, Authority, and Influence
- Absence of Strategic Planning and Communications
- Lack of Training and Capacity-Building
- Policy Versus Projects Versus Programs
- Defining Expertise and Inclusivity
Losing Relevance

- New food-related organizations on the scene
- Elected officials seek niche expertise
- Food policy work is institutionalized with full-time staff positions
The Current State of Local Food Policy

- No central entity working to further food policy
- Integrated into issues related to social determinants of health at county and state levels
- City of Portland continues with a food program, though less public
- Organizations continue to develop and administer programming
Recommendations

- Conduct robust strategic planning and evaluation of roles, structures, and processes
- Conduct policy literacy and capacity building trainings
- Clearly define the role of the council, its members, liaisons, and elected officials
- Foster open communication and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Define “expertise” and who should be represented
- Ensure robust community engagement to gain input from a diverse constituency
Thank You!

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