Envisioning Pathways toward Transformative Food Systems Change: Understanding the Role of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement at the Culinary and Nutrition Center in Springfield, MA

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Envisioning Pathways toward Transformative Food Systems Change: Understanding the Role of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement at the Culinary and Nutrition Center in Springfield, MA

A Thesis Presented

By

KRISTEN WHITMORE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Envisioning Pathways toward Transformative Food Systems Change: Understanding the Role of Multi-Stakeholder Engagement at the Culinary and Nutrition Center in Springfield, MA

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I offer this project to the City of Springfield and all communities working to claim their collective right to the city.

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ABSTRACT

ENVISIONING PATHWAYS TOWARD
TRANSFORMATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE:
UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
AT THE CULINARY AND NUTRITION CENTER IN SPRINGFIELD, MA
SEPTEMBER 2019
KRISTEN WHITMORE, B.A., MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE
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Directed by: Professor Mark Hamin

The alternative food movement claims varied goals such as building environmental sustainability, strengthening local economies, and promoting health equity, yet critics argue that the movement’s transformative potential is threatened by a lack of shared vision. Literature suggests that community-based multi-stakeholder coalitions are a useful tool for building consensus around food systems futures. But what kinds of futures? Home Grown Springfield is a school food initiative aimed at reducing hunger in Springfield, MA by serving healthy, homemade, and locally-sourced meals via the Culinary and Nutrition Center, a brand-new full-service commercial kitchen and storage facility. This qualitative case study examines the engagement process of the Culinary and Nutrition Center’s Advisory Council, a multi-stakeholder coalition convened in 2018 to guide the project. The engagement process was envisioned by the Springfield Food Policy Council, Springfield Public Schools, and Sodexo, and funded by the Henry P. Kendall Foundation. Research findings suggests that engagement of diverse
actors promotes expanded project visions, which results in more holistic, progressive, and potentially transformative food systems change. In addition, it reveals challenges around the process of authentic community engagement and the dynamics of power-sharing between project leaders and community members. This research has multiple objectives: 1) to document the first year of the Advisory Council’s process for its own reflection; 2) to demonstrate the need for planners to help facilitate diverse cross-sector engagement for more holistic and progressive regional planning; and 3) to highlight the critical need for community leadership and decision-making in planning for sustainable and equitable community development.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Characterizing and Envisioning the Alternative Food Movement

While feeding ourselves is an essential and ordinary part of life, the process has become deeply entrenched in complex systems of power. Since the mid-19th century onset of industrialization and urbanization in the United States, the processes associated with food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management have changed rapidly (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999), becoming increasingly woven into the fabric of global, neoliberal, free market capitalism (Holt-Gimenez, 2017). Over this time period, there have been a series of distinct transitions in how political and economic systems shape the global food system, defined by Friedman (1987) as food regimes.

The first half of the 20th century was characterized by the technological innovations of the Green Revolution and policies which increasingly deregulated markets, resulting in today’s dominant industrialized corporate agricultural model (McMichael, 2009). This conventional food system is not only fully industrialized, but also globalized, relying on complex transnational supply networks to stock first world supermarkets with a constant supply of cheap food from around the world. While the conventional food system is described by global leaders as “largely successful in meeting the world’s effective demand for food” (World Bank, 2007, 8), it has been sharply criticized for worsening significant social, environmental, and economic issues, including
climate change, loss of biodiversity, decimation of rural livelihoods, increased diet-related illness, and lack of food sovereignty (Altieri, 2009). Moreover, critics argue that 850 million people worldwide suffer from chronic undernourishment (World Bank, 2007). Both in the United States and around the world people struggle with persistent hunger, inaccessibility to fresh food, loss of farmland, disappearing rural livelihoods, and decreased control over local foodsheds (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). It has become evident that the hazards of the neoliberal corporate food regime far outweigh the benefits, and people are organizing for change.

In response to the contemporary corporate food regime, the alternative food movement emerged in the mid-1990s and has continually gained momentum since (Kloppenburg, Lezberg, Master, Stevenson, & Hendrickson, 2000). A part of the “movement of movements” (Wallerstein, 2006), a wave of international anti-neoliberal social and political activism launched in the 1990s, some argue that the alternative food movement is one component of a much greater transnational response to the increasingly unbearable impacts of neoliberal globalization. These scholars argue that the alternative food movement’s primary goal is to effect transformative social change. Transformative change is defined as “the capacity to create a fundamentally new system when ecological, economic, or social (including political) conditions make the existing systems untenable” (Walker, 2004, 5). Yet, while many alternative food system activists seek to scale community-level activities into broader food systems change, the process is messy, and actors in the alternative food movement take widely varying approaches. Critics argue that while some approaches build equity and justice, others only replicate existing
oppressive systems (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; Slocum, 2007; Mares & Alkon, 2011).

The alternative food movement includes ideologies such as land reform, agroecological production methods, labor rights and solidarity economies, fair trade, local food, community food security, good food, and food sovereignty (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). Activities and initiatives associated with the movement are as diverse as emergency food distribution, food banks, farm-to-school initiatives, farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), community gardens, local food enterprises, homesteading, food cooperatives, community land ownership, land-based reparations, seed saving, anti-racist organizing, and movements to dismantle industrial corporate agriculture (Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011).

The variation within the movement demonstrates its power; stakeholders from a wide range of fields and perspectives care about their food systems and want to work to change it. But, the variety of discourses, models, visions and pathways toward better food systems within the movement is also confounding, making it difficult to understand what kind of change is sought after, what are the appropriate pathways toward social change, and how diverse actors in the movement can collaborate to gain strength and power in reaching their goals. Furthermore, critical scholars argue that there is real risk of building an alternative food movement which only replicates oppressive social and economic systems on a smaller scale (Slocum, 2007; Mares & Alkon, 2011; Born & Purcell 2006; Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011).

Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) argue that multi-stakeholder engagement processes provide essential social movement spaces where actors can coalesce around
diverse goals to build consensus about shared visions for transformational food systems change. They argue “the political effectiveness of this ‘convergence of diversity’ will depend on the nature and strength of the strategic alliances constructed between [the varying] trends of the food movement” (136). Mares and Alkon (2011) also suggest that this cross-sector and community engagement processes are critically important for advancing wider, transformative food systems change. But questions remain around how, where, and when those shared visions emerge and advance.

Over the past thirty years scholars working in a wide range of interdisciplinary fields including urban planning, public health, applied anthropology, community psychology, geography, and political science, have pointed to cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder, community-based coalitions as a primary tool for building strength across sectors, organizations, missions, and goals. The literature in the field states that “a coalition develops when different sectors of the community, state, or nation join together to create opportunities that will benefit all of the partners” (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002, 157). Since Arnstein’s (1969) seminal contribution to the field of public participation in urban planning, scholars have also recognized the importance of including those most affected by decisions in the decision-making process, including and especially in community coalition-building (Himmelman, 2001; Wolff, 2016). Community coalitions are described more specifically as groups that “bring people together, expand available resources, and focus on a problem of community concern to achieve better results than any single group or agency could have achieved alone” (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002, 157). Yet, while scholars and practitioners agree that community coalitions play an important role in advancing social change, there are many documented challenges and scholarly
debates around how to employ best practices on the ground (Kania & Kramer 2011; Wolff 2016). This is particularly true as power relations complicate important components of the engagement process like who holds decision-making power, who sets meetings agendas, and who has the time and capacity to participate in coalitions. With food systems scholars calling for global alliance and coalition building as a strategy for effecting broad-based systems change, questions emerge around how essential multi-stakeholder coalition-building processes scale up, and particularly, how these processes remain equitable and representative of community members when scaling up means including powerful interests (i.e. transnational corporations, governmental lobbying groups, and super-wealthy donors/investors).

In this paper, I address the questions of whether and how multi-stakeholder community-based coalitions advance transformative social change in the alternative food movement. I do so from a local scale, utilizing reflective case study methodology to analyze the engagement process of the multi-stakeholder Advisory Council of a healthy school food initiative called Home Grown Springfield based in Springfield, MA. Home Grown Springfield is a public-private partnership between Springfield Public Schools and their food service provider, Sodexo, one of the world’s largest multinational corporations. Through an analysis of Home Grown Springfield’s multi-stakeholder engagement process I document how diverse participants conceptualize possibilities for changes in food systems, as well as a variety of intersecting fields including education, local economies, and public health, within the context of this healthy school food project. I also attempt to understand whether opportunities for transformational food systems
change emerge and where tensions and barriers arise which threaten or obstruct pathways toward change.

In doing so, I hope to contribute to the literature in the field by engaging with and examining its calls for cross-sectoral collaboration and strategic alliance-building as a tool for advancing transformative food systems change. By analyzing the on-the-ground experiences of the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council, I hope to offer a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges of scaling up collaboration in the alternative food movement in order to understand its potential. It is my hope that this work may provide useful insight to scholars and practitioners engaged in this work on the ground. In addition, I aim to provide the Home Grown Springfield initiative with documentation of their processes at this early stage in program development, hopefully facilitating conversation and reflection in order to strengthen and refine their process to better meet their goals.

**Research Question**

The alternative food movement will be effective when it creates transformative change, disrupting and replacing oppressive social and economic systems. Social movements are built through movement cohesion, which emerges when a movement is representative, inclusive, and intersectional (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck 2011). A central challenge for effecting transformative change is converging diversity within a splintered and scattered alternative food systems movement. Building consensus around transformative goals relies on developing a clear understanding of the varying stakeholders, including the discourses they use to talk about their work, the models they use to do their work, and the goals around which they envision the future (Mares and
Alkon, 2011). Through on-going, relationship-based dialogue, needs assessment, agenda-setting, and systems-thinking diverse stakeholders can be engaged in community coalitions to do this work to advance transformative change (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). But what does the process look like in practice? In this paper, I investigate these questions in the context of the Home Grown Springfield initiative. I ask:

- How do diverse stakeholders seek to enact social change in the alternative food movement?
  - Who are the actors in the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council?
  - What discourses, models, and visions do they utilize for the project?
- Does multi-stakeholder engagement cultivate new possibilities for transformative food systems change?
  - How does the engagement process evolve and inhibit transformative change?

By analyzing the engagement process of Home Grown Springfield’s Advisory Council, I attempt to understand the diversity of the alternative food movement through the diversity of the Advisory Council stakeholders, illuminated by their chosen discourses, preferred models, and envisioned pathways toward enacting food systems change in the context of the Home Grown Springfield initiative. In doing so, I investigate the areas of intersection among goals, strategies, and barriers as well as places of divergence where consensus lacks around vision, approach, and action. I also observe the Advisory Council structure itself, assessing its role as a governing body, looking at what serves and what obstructs the group’s goals. By observing this process, I investigate
whether the act of engaging across difference results in new, transformative possibilities, as well as where dissonance and challenge arises.

**Contextualizing Healthy School Food Programs**

Before considering the way that a multi-stakeholder coalition may influence the goals of the Home Grown Springfield program and its wider goals of improving public health, education, and economic development, it is essential to understand the context around what healthy school meal programs are, why they are needed, and the histories of their successes and challenges. The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute’s 2009 report called *The Geography of Opportunity* argues that there are several key factors which contribute to building a “community of opportunity,” or a neighborhood where residents have access to the environments, services, and opportunities which allow them to live healthy, happy, and dignified lives. They say these factors include “a high-quality education, a healthy and safe environment, sustainable employment, political empowerment, and outlets for wealth building” (Ohio State University Kirwan Institute, 2009, 5). They go on to state that based on decades of social science research, it is clear that low-income communities and communities of color experience limited access to these critically important opportunities, which results in long-term detrimental impacts, particularly on children.

In many cases these impacts play out on the physical bodies of children in low-income communities and communities of color, often surfacing as public health crises. For example, in the United States today over 12.5 million children age 6 to 11 years are considered obese, accounting for about 20% of the population of children in the United
States. This is a significant increase from about 6% of children considered obese in 1970 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Childhood obesity is correlated with a variety of illnesses such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes, all of which can have long-term impacts on health, wellbeing, and quality of life (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Health impacts are disproportionately experienced by low-income people and people of color. In 2017, nearly 45% of children living in low income households were reported to be obese, compared with 22% of upper income children. In addition, almost 40% of Black and Latino children were reported obese compared with 29% of white children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016).

While it is critical to recognize that obesity or fatness on its own is not objectively problematic, it is problematic when a group of people are systematically excluded from accessing opportunities (i.e. healthy food, safe outdoor spaces for exercise, preventative health care), which results in the systematic and well-documented increase in targeted health problems described above (Wann, 2009). This is referred to as health inequity, or poor health outcomes driven by social factors. Today more than 23.5 million people, including 6.5 million children, live in food deserts, or areas located more than one mile from a supermarket (The American Civil Liberties Union & New York Law School Racial Justice Project, 2012; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017). Studies demonstrate that food deserts are predominately located in low-income communities and communities of color (The American Civil Liberties Union & New York Law School Racial Justice Project, 2012). In recognizing that health inequity is created by the historical and systematic exclusion of communities of color from accessing
fresh, healthy food (and therefore, is not a naturally occurring phenomenon), food justice activists increasingly refer to this as food apartheid (Penniman, 2018). Food apartheid is the result of centuries of structural forces (i.e. residential segregation, redlining, suburbanization, white flight, discriminatory zoning policies, neo-liberal economic development policies, gentrification) that have limited access to land, employment, and health care to poor people and people of color (The American Civil Liberties Union & New York Law School Racial Justice Project, 2012; Penniman, 2018). As a result, children living in poor communities and communities of color lack access to fresh, healthy foods, experience food insecurity, and often do not receive adequate nutrition to grow and develop. Health inequity is a social problem which perpetuates the oppression and marginalization of these communities and steals away opportunities to thrive.

While access to fresh, healthy food is a major challenge in many communities, scholars agree that the second primary challenge in promoting healthy lifestyles among kids today is consumption of healthy foods. That is, getting kids to choose healthy food over junk food. Schools are a primary site where these challenges play out and therefore represent an ideal opportunity for intervention and policymaking. The National School Lunch program was established in 1946 to provide all students across the United States free or low-cost lunch (and increasingly, breakfast) every school day (USDA, ERS, 2018). Today over 30 million students at more than 100,000 schools eat at least one third of their meals through the National School Lunch program (USDA, ERS, 2018). With more districts offering breakfast programs than ever before, many children eat about half of all their meals at school each week.
With children eating more school food than ever before, policymakers have begun to consider the responsibility of ensuring that students not only have access to food at school, but that school food is healthy. When President Obama entered office in 2008 he took up this cause by signing a flurry of legislation relating to healthy food access and consumption in schools. Under his leadership the United States Department of Agriculture established a Farm to School team in 2008. In 2010 the USDA began offering federal funding to promote the procurement of locally grown foods by school dining services in order to increase fruit and vegetable consumption at school (School Nutrition Association, 2011). In the same year President Obama also passed the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) which established national nutrition standards for all federally funded meal programs emphasizing increased fruit, vegetable, and whole grain consumption and decreased levels of sodium, sugar, and trans fats in school food. Promoted alongside First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move Campaign the HHFKA was passed with bipartisan support and was celebrated for bringing healthy food to millions of children. It was implemented in the 2012-2013 school year.

While Farm to School programs and the promotion of more fresh fruits and vegetables in schools seemed like an excellent strategy to address access to healthy foods for children, there was little research and few evaluations available which demonstrated that these programs resulted in increased consumption of healthy food. During the mid-2000s and early 2010s, researchers began presenting evaluations demonstrating mixed results about the effectiveness of healthy meal programs in increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. In a comprehensive review of the academic literature at the time, Joshi, Azuma, and Feenstra (2015) identified and documented 10 research studies
across the nation which demonstrated increased fruit and vegetable consumption as a result of healthy food programs. For example, Slusser, Cumberland, Browdy, Lange, and Neumann (2007) which found that a salad bar program in Los Angeles increased fruit and vegetable consumption among low income students. Stables et al. (2005) found that four out of seven projects across the nation reported significant changes in fruit and vegetable consumption. Finally, Schwartz, Henderson, Read, Danna, and Ickovics (2015) found that students consumed more fruit, threw away less vegetables, and consumed the same amount of milk after participating in a healthy school meal program.

Yet, others found that the correlation between access to healthy food and consumption of healthy food was weak. In an evaluation of nine elementary schools in Wisconsin, Yoder et al. (2014) found that Farm to School programs did not result in increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. In another often-cited study of fruit and vegetable consumption before and after the HHFKA requirements were implemented, Amin, Yon, Taylor, and Johnson (2015) found that consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables decreased as a result of the program, while waste increased. Combined with a report by the United States Government of Accountability Office which stated that participation in the National School Lunch program decreased by 1.2 million students between 2010 and 2013 after having increased for many years (US Government Accountability Office, 2014), these findings cast doubt on the effectiveness of healthy school meal programs.

In 2018 the Trump administration responded to these findings by signing legislation that rolled back the Obama-era healthy school food legislation, loosening the minimum requirements around sodium and whole grain levels, as well as allowing higher
milk fat and flavored milks in school meal programs. In 2019, Attorneys General in six states collaborated to sue the Trump administration, claiming that the rollback of the HHFKA violates the National School Lunch Act and undermines critical advances in public health, particularly in low income communities and communities of color (Aubrey, 2019).

Yet, studies continue to emerge which suggest that getting kids to eat healthy food is more complex than just serving it. These studies report critical findings that help clarify what makes successful school food programs work. In Yoder et al.’s (2014) evaluation which found that Farm to School programs did not result in increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetable, they found that the program correlated with positive changes in attitudes and knowledge about fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as willingness to try new foods. Yoder also found that increases in fruit and vegetable consumption were greater in schools that had implemented Farm to School programs for longer periods of time. Similarly, Schwartz et al. (2015) found that with each new fruit introduced, student selection of fruit increased by 8% and that overall, entrée consumption increased by 13%, significantly reducing waste. In a study of two Boston middle schools participating in healthy school meals program, Cohen (2012) found that scratch cooking with an emphasis on palatability improved the health of school lunches, while consumption remained stable.

These studies demonstrate that in order to be successful, school meal programs must be stable, long-term, and well-funded (Yoder et al., 2014). They must focus on food that is healthy, but also tasty (Cohen, 2012). They must be cost-effective (Woodward-Lopez et al., 2014), and they must address student’s knowledge, familiarity, and comfort.
level through nutrition education, cooking courses, school garden curriculum, and school
leadership opportunities (Berezowitz, Yoder, & Schoeller 2015).

**Overview of the Case Study**

*Springfield, Massachusetts*

In order to properly assess this case study, it is imperative to understand the
history and development of the city and population of the city of Springfield. Springfield
is a Gateway City, a designation given to mid-sized post-industrial cities in
Massachusetts which often struggle economically, but retain many assets including
culturally diverse neighborhoods, existing infrastructure and transportation networks,
historical architecture, and major institutions including hospitals and universities (Mass
INC, 2018). Located in Hampden County in the Connecticut River Valley of western
Massachusetts, Springfield is about 90 miles west of Boston. The third largest city in the
state (after Boston and Worcester) and the largest city in western Massachusetts, it is a
cultural, economic, and transportation hub of the region.

Known as the “city of firsts,” Springfield lays claim to building the first gas
powered automobile and motorcycle, as well as inventing the game of basketball. In
addition, Springfield was the home to the nation’s first National Armory, which
manufactured military weapons from the mid-1700s through the 1960s. It is no surprise
that Springfield is known for its firsts, since the city was settled as early as 1636. Situated
at the junction of the Agawam and Connecticut Rivers, the city’s riverside location was
initially selected for its rich agricultural soils and easy access to trading and transportation routes. But with the development of hydropower, the Connecticut River became a major source of energy, driving Springfield’s transformation into a thriving industrial hub. Known most for its manufacturing of metal works, particularly for the National Armory, the city drew in thousands of immigrant workers. Industrialization transformed the city’s economy, bringing supplemental businesses like banks, insurance companies, and a newspaper to Springfield. At the same time, the city’s growing Irish, Polish, French-Canadian, and Italian immigrant populations transformed the city’s culture, bringing restaurants, stores and schools. Springfield continued to grow and expand through 1960 when the city experienced its peak population at almost 175,000 residents (City of Springfield, 2018).

The city’s story into the middle and end of the 20th century is a different one. As the United States began to experience a period of deindustrialization and suburbanization, many Springfield manufacturers moved overseas, leaving thousands of people unemployed or shifting to service-oriented work requiring higher education. Urban planning of the mid-20th century encouraged automobile-centered communities which segregated residential neighborhoods from commercial and industrial areas. In addition to land-use segregation, discriminatory policies and practices also fueled racial segregation in the region. As many upper and middle class white people moved to the city’s suburbs, thousands of Latino and Black residents began to arrive in Springfield, drastically changing the racial and economic demographics of the city.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the majority of Springfield residents today are people of color with about 44% Latino, 21% Black, 2% Asian, and
30% white residents. In addition, about 29% of residents are below the poverty level, compared with just 11% of Massachusetts residents (US Census Bureau, 2018). The city also has the lowest per capita income in the region (MA DPH, 2007). In a 2010 study conducted at the University of Michigan researchers found that the Springfield metropolitan area, including Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties, is one of the most residentially segregated areas in the country (City of Springfield, 2013). A 2018 study by the city of Springfield’s Office of Housing found that within the Springfield metropolitan area, 75% of Blacks and 74% of Hispanics live in Springfield or Holyoke, compared to just 16% of the region’s whites living in these cities. This report correlates racial segregation with economic disparities, and particularly, access to affordable housing in Springfield and Holyoke (City of Springfield Office of Housing, 2018).

The city’s concentrated low-income communities of color have suffered severely as a result of systemic oppression and segregation, including lack of adequate access to healthcare, good jobs, and healthy food, among many other challenges. This has resulted in serious health inequities in the city. For example, the infant mortality rate in Springfield is double that of the state. The diabetes rate for adults who live in the city is also more than double that of the rest of Massachusetts. People in Springfield visit the doctor for hypertension and diabetes-related problems at rates 100% higher than the rest of the state. HIV/AIDS rates and asthmas rates are both higher in Springfield than in the rest of the state (MA DPH, 2007). These health problems do not only lead to decreased quality of life and additional challenges related to disability, but they result in higher death rates. The diabetes death rate for Springfield residents is nearly 50% higher than residents of the state as a whole, and the heart disease death rate is 13% higher. These
statistics demonstrate the severe negative health outcomes that residents experience, due in part to the simple fact that they live in the city of Springfield.

The Culinary and Nutrition Center

In the early 2000s the Springfield Public School (SPS) district began a partnership with the food service and facilities management company Sodexo. Unable to manage the task of feeding over 26,000 students daily, the district hired Sodexo to lead the procurement, menu development, meal preparation, and meal delivery in its nearly 60 schools across the city. In bringing Sodexo on as a partner, the district hoped to increase efficiency, reduce spending, and improve the quality of their school meal program.

Sodexo is a French company based outside Paris, but with operations in 72 countries around the world, serving over 100 million people every day. It is the 19th largest employer in the world, with over 460,000 employees. Branding itself as a “quality of life services” company, Sodexo offers services beyond food service and facilities management including workplace and technical services, benefits and rewards services, and personal and home services (including senior and child care). While the company operates around the world, their mission emphasizes community-based approaches. Their website states,

We employ locally and we serve locally. From the desert in Australia to a school in your local suburbs, our employees are also your neighbors. We are deeply woven into the social fabric of every community we serve. It's natural for us to work together solving local challenges, creating equal opportunities and contributing to economic development (Sodexo, 2019).

Sodexo has demonstrated their commitment to this mission through their work in Springfield. For example, when district leaders shared early-on the city’s challenges with hunger and food access, as demonstrated by the district’s high rates of student nurse visits
due to hunger pains, Sodexo and SPS collaborated to implement the first district-wide Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) initiative in the state. Through this program all students in the district receive breakfast in their classroom every morning. Since 2014, the district has offered the BIC program, as well as the school lunch program, free of charge to all students through the Community Eligibility Provision, a poverty-based federal reimbursement program for low-income communities. While the BIC program is paid for with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) dollars, no other district in the state has offered the program to all students in Kindergarten through 12th grade, making Springfield a leader in district-wide BIC. Reducing the stigma of “free lunch” and ensuring that kids have access to breakfast every morning, the district has seen hunger-related nurse visits reduce by 90%.

In 2016, the district and Sodexo decided to launch on another innovative strategy for addressing hunger in the city. While the BIC program was extremely successful in addressing student hunger, district and Sodexo leaders were not satisfied with the quality of food products available on the market for breakfast. They found many of the products to be highly processed, sugary, and packaged. In a strategic plan to improve Sodexo’s operational facilities and warehouse, improve school food, and reduce student hunger, SPS and Sodexo developed the idea for the Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC). Opened in April 2019, the CNC is a 62,000 square-foot full-service commercial kitchen, bakery, processing center, storage facility, and training center, which prepares healthy, locally-sourced, scratch-cooked meals for all Springfield students. The CNC focuses on making scratch cooked meal components, such as sandwich rolls, sauces, salad dressings, and house-roasted meats, which it will send to on-site school kitchens for assembly. For
example, on spaghetti day, the school may receive a homemade bolognese sauce made with locally grown tomatoes and house-cooked beef, along with house-made dinner rolls, pasta, lettuce, and sliced vegetables, all ready for assembly in the kitchen. The idea is to not only improve health and taste of the food, but also consistency across all school kitchens. Schools that don’t have kitchens (there are only a few in the district, which they are hoping to update in coming years) receive the meal prepared.

While the city initially hoped to pay for the center using USDA school meal funding, the agency refused to allow spending on infrastructure. In an innovative and resourceful solution, SPS and the city worked together to secure a bond, which the district is paying back via savings gained through the new model. For example, the district previously rented freezer space and outsourced all their baking and vegetable processing. Now, they have their own large scale cooler and freezer space, a bakery, and a vegetable processing room on site. By moving these operations in-house, the district and Sodexo plan to save significantly. Project leaders are also eager to point out that the project does not rely on tax dollars, avoiding further burden on community members. USDA funding will continue to be used for food purchases, as well as some equipment.

While some people are skeptical of the public-private partnership between SPS and Sodexo, so far, the partnership has yielded only positive impacts for Springfield students. For example, the district is not introducing the CNC’s new food as the sole solution to resolving student hunger in the city. Instead, they are also launching Home Grown Springfield, a comprehensive healthy school meal program that they hope will impact not only Springfield students, but the entire city.

*Home Grown Springfield*
Home Grown Springfield (HGS) is an innovative, comprehensive school food program that was designed to address food quality, food access, and student learning in Springfield through its three program goals: 1) Improve the quality of food served to students, 2) Increase student participation in meal programs, 3) Increase student learning opportunities.

HGS addresses the first goal by serving students healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced meals. The program does this through a strategic public-private partnership between SPS and their food service provider Sodexo. Through this partnership SPS and Sodexo collaborated to build the Springfield Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC), a 62,000 square-foot full-service commercial kitchen, bakery, processing center, and storage facility. The CNC opened its doors in April 2019. Through this hub for scratch cooking and local sourcing, the district plans to improve the quality of food served to students, resulting in students enjoying and becoming satisfied with school meals.

HGS addresses the second goal by offering free breakfast and lunch to all students in the district every day. This is critical in Springfield, where the poverty rate is about 30% compared with the statewide poverty rate at about 10% (US Census Bureau, 2018), and thousands of people lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2014). Therefore, schools play a major role in feeding children in Springfield. With an existing participation rate in the school meal program over 80%, HGS will ensure that the food offered to thousands of Springfield students every day is healthy.

HGS addresses the third goal by engaging students in menu planning, nutrition education, and school gardening curriculum. Through partnerships with Food Corps,
UMass Extension Nutrition Education, area hospitals, and a team of Sodexo dieticians and student/community engagement coordinators, HGS will expand its nutrition education, gardening, and health and wellness programming in all Springfield public schools. Through this program students will learn about healthy living, gardening, and food systems through curriculum integrated into their existing courses. In addition, students participate in taste tests and focus groups to inform menu planning for the meal program and are engaged in field trips, cooking workshops, and internship opportunities at the CNC.

The HGS theory of change is summarized in Figure 1. For additional information on HGS program theory, please see Appendix A: Home Grown Springfield Logic Model.

![Figure 1: Home Grown Springfield Theory of Change](image)

**Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council**

As the CNC was built in early 2018, Springfield Public Schools and Sodexo collaborated with the Springfield Food Policy Council and Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), two local nonprofit organizations working on food systems issues in Hampden County, to submit an application to the Henry P. Kendall
Foundation to fund a multi-stakeholder engagement process to help guide the project. Later that year they received funding and convened a diverse group of local and regional food system leaders to help guide the development of the logistics and programming for the center, calling the group the Advisory Council. Advisory Council participants were identified and invited to participate by leaders at Sodexo, SPS, and Fertile Ground, the consultant firm hired to facilitate the Advisory Council engagement process.

The Advisory Council is composed of approximately 40 stakeholders, primarily leaders, from a wide array of organizations and institutions engaged in the food systems, economic development, and public health work in the region. Stakeholders represent many different missions and models of the enacting social change. Advisory Council participants include Sodexo administrators and staff, Springfield Public School administrators and staff, local nonprofit leaders (e.g. food system organizations, health care organizations, universities) and strategic advisors. The Advisory Council meets four times per year.

**Advisory Council Population**

Sodexo: 13 stakeholders  
+  
Springfield Public Schools: 5 stakeholders  
+  
Partner Organizations: 22 stakeholders  

40 stakeholders

*Figure 2: Advisory Council Population*
Within the Advisory Council there are four sub-committees: 1) Food Production, Local Sourcing, Menu Planning, and Development 2) Marketing, Student and Community Engagement 3) Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum 4) Operations. Each sub-committee is composed of about ten representatives from the large group, with several stakeholders participating in multiple sub-committees. The sub-committees meet on varying schedules, but at least four times per year, with some committees meeting more frequently.

![Diagram of Advisory Council Sub-Committees]

Figure 3: Advisory Council Sub-Committees

Engaging stakeholders from a plethora of sectors, with different models, visions, and goals for the future of the Home Grown Springfield project, the Advisory Council provides a useful case study for interrogating how the alternative food movement characterizes itself in its diversity, what goals it aims to achieve, and what pathways it envisions for meeting those goals.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two hundred and fifty years, the process of feeding ourselves has changed significantly and at a pace more rapid than ever before (McMichael, 2009). Today, the global food system can be characterized by the neoliberal capitalist system in which it operates, notorious for both its purported capacity to feed the world (World Bank, 2007), as well as its insatiable dependence upon natural resources, production of highly processed unhealthy foods, and reproduction of deeply inequitable social and economic systems (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). In the past several decades, the alternative food movement has emerged in response to the conventional food system (Kloppenburg, Lezberg, Master, Stevenson, & Hendrickson, 2000) claiming to offer a wide range of benefits to both food producers and eaters. The movement claims to work toward diverse goals which include increasing environmental sustainability (Altieri, 2000), fostering vibrant community-based economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006), and cultivating purposeful connections to place (DeLind, 2002), which has resulted in a struggle for the movement to define its central goals. Within the literature there are discussions around what types of activities, initiatives, policies, and actors should be considered alternative, to what extent they improve upon the conventional food system, what ideal visions for the movement include, what the tools and pathways are best suited to shifting the movement toward its goals.

First, I will present the scholarship around what constitutes the alternative food systems movement. I will introduce discussions in the literature which characterize the movement, particularly around its goal to change the conventional food system through
transformative systems change, including how that goal is defined and measured. I will also present the challenges and critiques of the movement, considering who and what belong in the “alternative” movement. In doing so, I aim to better understand what kind of social change the movement seeks to enact and how scholars have envisioned the realization of those changes.

Second, I will present a review of the literature on coalition building as a tool for advancing transformative social change. I will provide a history of coalition-building, considering the various types and models of coalitions, particularly with regard to inclusion and exclusion of community members. I will also summarize the literature’s debates around best practices and recommendations from the field. The purpose of this review is to contextualize the work of Home Grown Springfield’s Advisory Council in order to understand how it functions compared to other coalitions that have been researched.

Overall, this literature review aims to provide history and context for the issues of food security, food access, and food sovereignty, as well as an overview of coalition-building as one particular tool utilized for effecting transformative social change.

**Contextualizing the Corporate Food Regime**

The conventional food system has gained recognition primarily for its ability to feed billions of people (World Bank, 2007). Yet scholars in the field of alternative food systems movements argue that the system not only fails to adequately feed the global population, but that its effects have been devastating to the global environment, local economies, and community social structures. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) describe the neoliberal corporate food system as characterized by
unprecedented market power and profits of monopoly agrifood corporations, globalized animal protein chains, growing links between food and fuel economies, a ‘supermarket revolution’, liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership, [and] a shrinking natural resource base. (111)

They argue that together these impacts have driven the inequalities that exist within the food system, which play out on the bodies and in the lived experiences of the world’s most marginalized populations.

In order to contextualize the emergence of the alternative food movement, scholars outline key shifts in the global political economy. They identify the changes that began to occur in the food system around processes for harvesting, processing, aggregating, distributing, selling and consuming food. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) begin with the onset of urban industrialization in the western world in the middle of the 19th century. This period of urbanization and industrialization marked a shift away from the ways that food had previously been produced (on family farms, through large plantations relying on the labor of enslaved Africans, and by importing products from exploited colonial states) toward the mechanization of large-scale industrial farming in the United States.

Driven by the Green Revolution beginning in the 1930s, industrial agriculture began to flourish. The Green Revolution propelled industrial agriculture forward, quickly making it the dominant agricultural method in the United States. Through this system, farmers were able to massively increase the production of commodity crops, representing a massive and distinct shift in the way Americans eat. Commodity crops include corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, rice, oilseeds, and other crops that cannot generally be consumed as whole foods, but instead must be processed to be used as fillers in packaged food, processed meats, hydrogenated oils, and animal feed. With this shift, the American diet
began its long metamorphosis from reliance on whole grains and dairy, fruits and vegetables, and limited animal protein toward the consumption of highly processed foods, cheap meat, and much less whole fruits and vegetables. Many decades of nutritional research capture the links between this shift in American diet and the increase in a wide variety of health problems including heart disease, metabolic syndromes, diabetes, and disordered eating (Nestle, 2013).

Relying on these high-yield commodity crops grown primarily in monocrops, as well as the use of chemical fertilizers and herbicides and access to expensive machinery, the Green Revolution concentrated land, wealth, and power into the hands of wealthy business owners, becoming the leaders of corporate agribusiness (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck 2011). Altieri (2009) demonstrates the severely negative impacts industrial agriculture has had not only on health, but on the environment and livelihood of farmers. He says, “globally, the Green Revolution, while enhancing crop production, proved to be unsustainable as it damaged the environment, caused dramatic loss of biodiversity and associated traditional knowledge, favored wealthier farmers, and left many poor farmers deeper in debt” (Altieri, 2009, 102).

Altieri (2009) demonstrates that while corporate agribusinesses profit from this method of agriculture, farmers suffer, and farm workers suffer more. With more food being produced per acre, overproduction of commodity crops drives prices below the cost of production, making it difficult for farmer businesses to remain economically viable. Coupled with widespread market liberalization and free trade policies led by the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s, farmers became subject to the volatile market shifts of this increasingly neoliberal economy. In search for new markets
to unload their surplus commodities, farmers in the United States began dumping large volumes of corn, soybeans, and wheat into food markets in the global South (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). Subject to late-20th century Structural Adjustment Policies, nations throughout the global South had eliminated tariffs and price controls, making them unable to halt commodity imports from abroad or regulate their own agricultural products. This weakened the ability of global South nations to produce their own food, and increased their reliance upon the cheaply produced, highly processed foods pouring in from Western Europe and the United States (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011).

While global leaders argue that these strategies are working to resolve global hunger by making food cheap and accessible, 850 million people worldwide suffer from chronic undernourishment (World Bank, 2007). Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) argue that in fact, this 21st century conventional food system functions to keep poor people around the world (including in the United States) indebted to and reliant upon agribusiness, ensuring that corporations have the power to profit off “feeding the world”. Furthermore, it ensures that people become disconnected from their food source and culture, unable to consume culturally appropriate or traditional foods, and instead are forced to purchase imported processed foods, which will likely make them sick.

In the United States, federal agriculture and nutrition policy has encouraged both the production of commodity crops, as well as the consumption of processed foods derived from those crops. Together these policies fuel the demand in national markets for industrial agriculture surplus as well as the myriad of food-related health problems exploding across the world and mentioned above (Nestle, 2013).
Throughout the late 1990s and into the 2000s, both internationally and in the United States, social movements began to emerge in response to persistent hunger, inaccessibility to fresh food, loss of farmland, disappearing rural livelihoods, and increasingly decreased control over local foodsheds (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). Movements have been widespread and varied, including calls for land reform, agro ecological production methods, labor rights, fair trade, local food, community food security, good food, and food sovereignty (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011). During the 2008 global financial crisis, global food crises were a central concern (McMichael, 2009). Marked by unprecedented levels of hunger for poor people around the world and record high profits for agribusiness (Lean, 2008), scholars in the field (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; McMichael, 2009; Dixon, 2010) cite this moment as critical to the growing strength of the alternative food movement. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) go on to argue that the alternative food movement is a part of what Wallerstein (2006) calls the “movement of movements”, described as the wide-ranging social movements emerging at this time in response to the impacts of neoliberalism and globalization.

**Building the Alternative Food Movement**

By analyzing the development of the conventional food system, it becomes clear that it is built to maintain and protect powerful and dominant political, economic, and social systems; the conventional food system relies on economic inequity and the oppression of poor people and people of color. Within the growing literature around the alternative food movement, scholars have worked to understand whether the growing alternative food system replicates or resists these same dynamics. Several scholars offer frameworks for organizing alternative food movement activities and initiatives, which
they use to measure and analyze outcomes of equity, justice, and ultimately, systemic food systems transformation. These frameworks seek to differentiate the types of initiatives occurring within the alternative food movement based on the types of values ascribed, activities promoted, and the outcomes prioritized within each type of discourse. There is particular attention paid to whether these activities contribute to building more equitable food systems, or if they reproduce the oppressive systems inherent to the conventional food system.

The frameworks in the literature are organized on a spectrum, describing efforts focused around initiatives prioritizing the production and consumption of local food on one end and initiatives focused around shifting the dynamics of power which allow communities to democratically control the production, processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption of food (Holt-Gimenez, 2009) on the other end. The latter refers to the concept of food sovereignty.

Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) use an organizational framework which identifies a model, key actors, typical approach to food crises, and key documents for each alternative food movement category (Appendix B), which is summarized in Figure 4. Using the framework, they identify two models in the alternative food movement; the progressive model, characterized as food justice, and the radical model, characterized as food sovereignty (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011).
Mares and Alkon (2011) offer another framework which draws on the work of Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) to further differentiate activities within the progressive and radical models. They focus their framework on activities practiced and solutions offered within each category. While these scholars find it important to differentiate between entry points to the movement and use the frameworks to evaluate the degree to which alterative food system activities increase equity within the food system, they also acknowledge that there is significant overlap and inter-connection between categories.

Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck outline the progressive model as the “largest and fastest growing grassroots expression of the food movement” (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011, 124), based primarily in middle and working-class communities in the United States, including strong participation from young people and college students. Growing out of the environmental justice movement of the 1960s, Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck claim that actors in this realm promote a discourse around food justice, focusing on community empowerment, structural critiques of racism, and labor activism. Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOOD ENTERPRISE</th>
<th>FOOD SECURITY</th>
<th>FOOD JUSTICE</th>
<th>FOOD SOVEREIGNTY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>monocrops</td>
<td>market-led</td>
<td>the local food movement</td>
<td>transformative politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chemical inputs</td>
<td>corporate sustainability</td>
<td>increasing local and regional production</td>
<td>agroecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unregulated markets</td>
<td>certified free trade/organic</td>
<td>land access cooperative business models</td>
<td>democratic control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overproduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>buy local</td>
<td>collective ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global consumption of industrial food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable livelihoods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Summary of Food Movement Framework
generally focus on strengthening local foodsheds, supporting family farmers, making
good, clean, fair food accessible, promoting urban agriculture, supporting urban-rural
networks, and fostering alternative and social business models including farmers markets
and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), with particular emphasis on ensuring
people of color are leaders within the movement.

Mares and Alkon (2011) describe these same types of activities in their
framework, dividing them into three distinct categories called “local food”, “community
food security”, and “food justice”. They link these three categories through their primary
reliance upon market-based solutions for increasing equity, which aligns with Holt-
Gimenez and Shattuck’s (2011) progressive category.

Mares and Alkon (2011) present the local food discourse as one that centers on
the consumer, encouraging eaters to support their local farmers by purchasing foods
grown within their local foodshed. Activities include CSAs, farmers’ markets, farm-to-
school programs and cooperatives. While Mares and Alkon acknowledge the benefit the
local food discourse has to small-producers and local economics, they critique the
discourse for being exclusionary to poor people. Drawing on Allen (2004) they argue that
because the local food discourse is based on market-based activities, it requires economic
privilege to participate, and therefore, fails to contribute to substantial improvements in
economic equity for marginalized consumers.

Slocum (2006) furthers this argument to include concerns about racial equity. She
argues that the alternative food movement, particularly as defined by the local food
discourse, is a space specifically curated by and for white people, excluding people of
color whether directly or indirectly. She says the whiteness of local food purchasing and
consumption spaces, for example, the farmers’ market, can be attributed in large part to
the economic exclusion of low-income people. Alkon and Agyeman (2014) also support
Slocum’s argument, connecting lack of economic privilege and subsequent exclusion
from the local food movement, with brownness in the United States. Together these
scholars make the case that because market-based solutions within the alternative food
system exclude poor people, which disproportionately includes people of color, the
discourse fails to increase equitable outcomes.

Scholars Born and Purcell (2006) also contribute to the critiques of the local food
movement. They argue that the local food discourse also suffers in making assumptions
about scale, what they refer to as “the local trap” (Born & Purcell, 2006, 195). Drawing
on current scale theory in political and economic geography and reinforcing what Slocum
(2006) and Alkon and Agyeman (2014) have argued, they state that local does not
inherently mean more sustainable or more equitable. In fact, they argue, many of the
systems functioning within the local food movement replicate oppressive systems of
corporate agriculture. They go on to critique the scholarship that conflates localizing the
food system with making it less capitalist, creating what they call “an essentialized view
of scale that sees the global as hegemonic and oppressive and the local as radical and
subversive” (Born & Purcell, 2006, 200). They argue that “local” is completely
subjective. For example, “if the local in question is corn or hog country in
Iowa…consuming local food means consuming conventional capitalist agriculture” (Born
& Purcell, 2006, 200). Instead of focusing on scale, they argue, it is the agendas and
strategies pursued by stakeholders that impacts how equitable a system is (Born &
Purcell, 2006).
Allen (2010) also adds to this scholarship, drawing on Lyson’s (2004) discussion of civic agriculture. Allen argues that there are important components to the local food discourse, noting that “neoliberalization and globalization has meant the loss of local farming livelihoods, practices, and knowledges and has vertically and horizontally integrated agricultural processes on a global scale” (Allen, 2010, 296). Emphasizing how a local focus may work to undo some of the impacts, she recognizes the value of this discourse within the alternative food movement. Yet, she agrees with other scholars making the claim that the alternative food system movement, particularly the organic sub-movement, has done a poor job of centralizing issues of racial and economic justice for low-income people and people of color. While Allen acknowledges that local food systems do alleviate some issues with the corporate food system, such as farmland conservation and supporting rural livelihoods, the movement must actively work to centralize issues of equity to eliminate the replication of the same oppressive systems.

In their framework for organizing the activities within the alternative food systems movement, Mares and Alkon (2011) go on to define their second discourse, the “community food security” discourse. They describe the community food security discourse as bridging the local food discourse’s emphasis on the value of eating locally grown food with anti-hunger and food access concerns. This situates the discourse squarely within Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck’s (2011) progressive model. Within this discourse, Mares and Alkon acknowledge the positive emphasis on “community,” which helps to shift the focus of the food system away from the individual consumer (as is reflected in the local food discourse) toward a larger scale, which they argue is helpful for understanding the broader concept of resolving food insecurity on a community, and
global level. This discourse frames solutions around access and availability of healthy food, yet, they argue, it fails to acknowledge the underlying drivers of hunger. Reinforcing this argument, Allen (1999) says, “there will always be people who need food assistance as long as there is underemployment, unemployment, poverty-level wages, and inadequate pensions and access to food is based on ability to pay” (126).

Much like the discourse within the local food category, this discourse fails to fully realize its potential for achieving equitable outcomes because it functions within a neoliberal market-based system, making it subject to the same critiques as the local food discourse.

Mares and Alkon (2011) then outline the food justice discourse, highlighting both its roots in the local food and community food security discourses, but also its evolution toward more intentional goals around systemic change, as it prioritizes fighting structural racism and class inequality. They argue that while the food justice discourse relies upon the same market-based alternatives outlined previously, it attempts to resolve some of the racial inequities that come up in the previous discourses. It does this by emphasizing that people of color and poor people should be the primary actors within those alternative food system market-based initiatives. Influenced by the civil rights movement and the environmental justice movements, the food justice movement focuses on community self-reliance and social justice.

Within the food justice movement scholars discuss the ways in which placing racial equity at the center of an organization’s mission can lead to increased economic equity as well. Figueroa and Alkon (2017) argue that alternative food projects can operate within the typical market-based model of production and exchange while actively resisting neoliberal logic. They say that this is achieved by focusing initiatives around
community empowerment, anti-racist practice, cooperative principles, and centralizing the needs of the community members over profit generation. Slocum (2006) contributes to this literature as well, drawing on Gibson-Graham’s (2006) notion of “the politics of possible,” arguing that while the food justice discourse has faults, it can be useful for shifting the food system toward equitable systemic change. She says that “friction is ‘the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference. It can lead to new arrangements of culture and power” (Slocum, 2006, 523). Here, Slocum refers to the power shifts that occur within the food justice movement when leadership positions and ownership is shifted to people of color. She argues that these experiences can increase racial integration within the food system, resulting in increased equity.

The literature represents a variety of arguments for the value of the activities occurring within the progressive model for increasing equity within the alternative food system as compared to the conventional food system. Mares and Alkon (2011) outline these activities in their differentiation between the local food discourse, the community food security discourse, and the food justice discourse. Yet, scholars also present critiques. While the progressive movement leads to increased inequity in certain areas, particularly for small-scale farmers and middle class white consumers, and in complex and dynamic ways among other actors, scholars argue that it often fails to do so for poor people and people of color, in both producer and consumer positions. They argue that this is due to the failure of those activities to displace the broader underlying systems.

Both Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) and Mares and Alkon (2011) argue that equity can only be fully realized through systems change. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck call this the radical model, which they argue has the potential to drive such sustained
structural change. The radical model promotes a food sovereignty discourse around entitlement and redistribution of power and wealth, seeking to radically transform society by invoking the “right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture” (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011, 128). The food sovereignty discourse was first presented at the 1996 World Food Summit by Via Campesina, an international peasants’ movement with members from around the world (McMichael 2009). At its core, food sovereignty works to ensure that all people have control over the food they eat, including the ability to produce one’s own food (requiring access to land, seeds, and skills), have access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable, and sustainably produced food, and to be able make independent decisions about what food they choose to consume (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011).

Mares and Alkon (2011) agree that the food sovereignty discourse, which places emphasis on “rights and issues of control shift[ing] the focus beyond the equitable provisioning of food to address more fundamental inequalities related to land distribution, resource management, and the commodification of food crops” (Mares & Alkon, 2011, 78), is the model with the most potential for effecting transformative change. They argue that it is only within this discourse that focus is placed on dismantling systems in order to structurally change the way the food system works. Additionally, they argue, the food sovereignty discourse is the only one that transcends local boundaries and aims to build global solidarity (Mares & Alkon, 2011).

**Pathways toward Transformative Change**

While scholars within the literature agree that the food sovereignty discourse is the most effective model for advancing transformative structural change within the food
system, there continues to be some debate over how to move toward those goals. Altieri (2009) argues that building global solidarity in the food sovereignty movement is critical for effecting change. He says that “change is impossible without social movements that create political will among decision-makers to dismantle and transform the institutions and regulations that presently hold back sustainable agricultural development” (Altieri, 2009, 111). Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) argue that it is precisely through this kind of coalition building, particularly between the actors in the progressive and radical movements, that the alternative food movement will gain the strength to obtain the political power to enact change.

In this debate, J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) offer their “postcapitalist politics,” arguing for a new “politics of possibility” which will drive the new economy of which food sovereignty will be a part. They argue that because we have been socialized to understand the world only through the neoliberal capitalist lens, we are unable to envision alternatives. In order to imagine the possibilities that exist beyond neoliberal capitalism, we must “dislocate” the economy by creating subjects “who construct a new language of economic diversity” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 6). In doing so, we will create spaces and language for collective decision-making around envisioning a transformed food system centered on community economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In their argument, they focus on re-framing the discourse, which they argue will result in the capacity for people to envision ways of organizing the economy that would support the goals of food sovereignty and result in a more equitable food system.

In contrast, Figeuroa and Alkon (2017) engage directly with Gibson-Graham’s (2006) theory of postcapitalist politics, critiquing it by calling it utopian, and claiming
that these kinds of models for alternative food systems are performative, unrealistic, and unpopular, particularly in communities of color. Instead, they argue that it is possible for transformative change to occur as an evolution out of neoliberal systems. They argue specifically that it is possible to simultaneously reproduce and resist neoliberal systems, while still obtaining equitable outcomes. They state that when solutions are focused on meeting community needs, while being grounded in community resources and knowledge, equitable outcomes are achieved. They say this is done by “finding cracks in the concrete of neoliberal capitalism in which they can sow seeds of collective resistance” (Figeuroa & Alkon, 2017, 228).

**Tools for Transformative Change: Multi-stakeholder Coalitions**

While the alternative food movement strives to meet Altieri’s (2009) call for global solidarity around food sovereignty, the movement currently operates on the ground, based in the communities and at the organizations in which we live and work (Figeuroa & Alkon, 2017). While the models presented above help to clarify the frameworks and goals to which the movement aims, it does not distinguish the tools required to get there. Increasingly since the 2000s, multi-stakeholder coalitions have been utilized as a tool for advancing social change. In particular, coalitions are used to identify community needs, build consensus around solutions, share resources, manage collaborative evaluation metrics, and promote long-term solutions that work (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002). Coalitions take many shapes but occur “when different sectors of the community, state, or nation join together to create opportunities that will benefit all of the partners” (Butterfoss & Kegler, 2002, 157). While scholars, practitioners, and organizers have always worked to build collective power by mobilizing community members and
collaborating with like-minded organizations, coalitions differ because they aim to bring together people who are different from each other, whether by mission and goals, community served, or priorities, to work toward common goals with collective benefit. Yet, coalitions are established and conducted in different ways, which scholars argue make them more or less effective in advancing transformative social change.

A primary consideration that scholars make when considering effective coalition-building is where the decision-making power within the coalition exists and whether community members are included. The literature around citizen decision-making and public participation stretches back almost 50 years to Arnstein (1969) who established that all participation in decision-making is not equal. For decades scholars have expanded upon her ideas around the various ways that people can be more or less engaged in decision-making about their communities and the implications that it has.

A commonly accepted and updated version of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation is the International Association for Public Participation’s Spectrum of Public Participation, which presents five categories of inclusion in decision-making, flowing from informing, to consulting, to involving, to collaborating, to engaging. These categories range from notifying community members of a decision, hosting public comment or focus group sessions with community members, inviting community members to participate in workshops or deliberative polling, engaging in citizen advisory committees and participatory decision-making, and using citizen juries, participatory budgeting, and delegated decision-making (International Association for Public Participation, 2007).
In the context of coalition-building, Himmelman (2001) draws on the Public Participation’s Spectrum of Public Participation in his argument that coalitions can be described as either collaborative betterment or collaborative empowerment. He says that most coalitions are classified as collaborative betterment, which he defines as coalitions that are “initiated by public, private, or nonprofit institutions outside or beyond the control of communities or constituencies assisted” (281). He emphasizes that while collaborative betterment coalitions work toward improving conditions in a community, and may even advocate for systems change, they do not “transform power relations or produce long-term ownership in communities by significantly increasing communities’ control over their own destinies” (281). Conversely, Himmelman argues that collaborative empowerment coalitions begin at the community-level, establish a mutually-agreeable power structure, and then invite large institutions and organizations to participate. A collaborative empowerment coalition is marked by its self-determined purpose and power structure and its role in bringing larger institutions and organizations to the table without disrupting the established power relations. In characterizing these different coalition structures, Himmelman emphasizes that they are not meant to be understood as a binary, but rather a continuum along which most coalitions move over time. He also emphasizes that establishing collaborative empowerment coalitions takes a process of trust-building between community members and institutions which can take many years.

The question of community involvement in decision-making is complex because community exists at many levels. For example, in their 2011 article which made a major splash particularly in the funder community, Kania and Kamer claimed that the key to
impactful social change is “collective impact, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem” (Kania & Kramer, 2011, 36). They argue that funders and nonprofit organizations are failing to meet their goals because they are using an “isolated impact” approach associated with funding single organizations each with their own supposedly unique solution to solving a problem, and often in competition with each other for limited funds. Instead, they argue that collective impact works better by promoting coalitions which establish a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and the support of a backbone organization to oversee and facilitate the coalition (Kania & Kramer, 2011). They argue that it is only when funders, nonprofits, government officials, and business executives embrace this model for working together that policies and programs will demonstrate large-scale, community-wide, regional, and nation-wide impacts.

Other scholars argue that the collective impact model is lacking in one major area – engaging those most affected by the issue. Wolff (2016) argues that “coalitions without grassroots voices are very likely to create solutions that do not meet the needs of the people most affected by them and treat people disrespectfully in their community change process” (2). By excluding community members from the table, Wolff says, it does not matter how diverse the stakeholder group is, they will not capture the fundamental needs at the community level. Instead, Wolff says,

what community coalitions need is to engage both the most powerful and least powerful people in a community, finding ways for them to talk and work together to address the community’s priorities for action and the impediments to change in institutions and organizations serving the community (2).
In addition, Wolff argues that Kania and Kramer’s (2011) collective impact model is too simple, not recognizing the complexity and fluidity of coalitions working throughout a matrix of decision-making power, models, and frameworks.

Sands, Duran, Christoph, and Stewart (2018) offer a useful example of how these dynamics play out in practice and in community. They highlight a case study in Holyoke, MA which focuses on a multi-stakeholder coalition called the Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council. Holyoke, MA is a primarily Latino community in western Massachusetts with a large low-income population, although many of the local agencies and organizations are led by white people. The coalition was established by both Latino and white community leaders to develop a vision and implementation plan for addressing health equity by improving access to healthy food and safe places to exercise. The group began with a commitment to engaging community residents and youth as decision-makers and planners in process. In theory, it appeared that the Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council was poised to enact Himmelman’s (2001) collaborative empowerment coalition model and showcase Wolff’s (2016) bottom-up, community coalition by including diverse stakeholders through community-based engagement.

What the group found over a period of ten years was that executing the model was deeply complicated. They faced serious and debilitating challenges, particularly around governance, including navigating decision-making power, agenda-setting, prioritization of needs, and control of resources (i.e. funding, staff) (Sands, Duran, Christoph, & Stewart, 2018). These challenges were primarily a result of unbalanced power dynamics, as Latino and white organizational leaders struggled to build a shared language and vision for the project and coalition participants found that structural racial and economic
inequities were being replicated within the coalition. Sands, Duran, Christoph, and Stewart (2018) explain,

The distinct ethnic and income divide between agency staff and residents become more pronounced. Racial inequities and power were not continuously articulated or explored, and thus manifested in underlying tensions about decision-making and fund allocation between community members, staff, and agencies (65S).

With deep reflection and critical evaluation, the group re-structured in 2017 into a new initiative called Nuestra Comida, which has similar goals to the Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council, but is working with a more transparent, community empowerment model that centers racial equity and community engagement (Sands, Duran, Christoph, & Stewart, 2018). This example illustrates the iterative and on-going process using coalitions as tools for transformative social change, highlighting, like Wolff (2016) suggests, that these processes take years of practice to cultivate and hone.

While the literature provides consensus around the role of coalitions in effecting social change, the models for doing so vary. Most importantly, scholars recognize that there is not a single formula that works. While there are best practices, including promoting bottom-up, empowerment-based coalition models, they are real-world barriers including lack of time, funding, capacity, political support, and skillsets for facilitating stakeholders with varying opinions and priorities (Coplen & Cuneo, 2015; Sands, Duran, Christoph, & Stewart, 2018). All coalitions working toward social change do so within the contexts of their communities, organizations, and personal connections, making no two experiences the same. Yet, we can rely on the continuously expanding literature across many disciplines to work toward better, more effective coalitions which truly advance transformative change.
In this review of the literature, it becomes clear that the alternative food movement is both thriving and evolving, as are the tools used to facilitate change within the movement. Through the literature, scholars continually seek to dig deeper on understanding how transformative futures are framed by the activities practiced, discourses used, and the visions and pathways for realizing goals. By interrogating the conventional neoliberal food system, scholars identify the ways that the existing systems replicate oppressive systems. By conceptualizing the alternative food movement scholars attempt to unpack the complex and varied visions for how structural transformation may take place. By interrogating coalitions as a tool for transforming change, scholars present best practices alongside real-world challenges for consideration. In this analysis, the literature demonstrates opportunities for strengthening the movement, as well as the fractures and conflicts which threaten to weaken it. Scholars tend to agree that the food sovereignty model presents the most opportunity for enacting transformative social change, yet their understandings of what food sovereignty looks like and how its goals are achieved vary. Practitioners, organizers, and policymakers are left with well-researched guidance to move forward in practicing in communities and organizations on the ground.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This research project uses a mixed-method approach to interrogate the research questions. Qualitative data was collected in several ways: 1) participant observation of Home Grown Springfield’s Advisory Council meetings, conversations, and other Home Grown Springfield events 2) semi-structured interviews with Advisory Council participants, and 3) review and analysis of organizational documents. Data was collected between October 2018 and May 2019. The research design is based on reflective extended case methodology (Stake, 1995; Burawoy, 1998; Yin, 2009) used to collect and analyze primary source qualitative data relating to a single group of individuals, the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council. This research design is recognized for its strength in providing in-depth examination of complex, real-world scenarios, producing findings which aim to explain how and why social phenomena take place. This methodology benefits from relying on multiple sources of data, allowing the researcher to triangulate data to explore and describe findings more completely (Yin, 2009).

In this project I utilize a critical theory framework with lineages running through urban studies and planning theory, environmental justice, political ecology, food systems, coalition-building, and community-based participatory action research methodology, as elaborated in the literature review section of this paper. These frameworks rely on a systems-thinking approach to addressing social problems. This includes recognizing that oppressive social, political, and economic systems exist at the root of all social problems, and that effecting social change fundamentally requires addressing inequitable systems by transforming them (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011; Mares & Alkon 2011; Norris
2014; Ohio State University Kirwan Institute, 2009). It is essential to situate this research as embedded in these frameworks particularly because the research questions specifically investigate whether and how systemic transformation happens.

This research was also conducted in the spirit of community-based participatory action research methodology (CBPAR). While not fully adhering to CBPAR principles, I was actively engaged in learning about CBPAR throughout this research project and in supplemental coursework. Yet, as a student, I was not prepared to conduct a true CBPAR project. In addition, there were logistical concerns related to time constraints based on the nature of the master’s thesis timeline, especially considering that the Advisory Council was a newly formed coalition when the project began. There were also ethical concerns based on my outsider position in the community, as described further in the Statement of Positionality section of this paper.

As a result of these circumstances, the research design and questions were not established directly in collaboration with community members, although Advisory Council members were included in some initial conversations and iterations of the project. Initial findings have been shared back with the Advisory Council community throughout the research process and Advisory Council members have been engaged in providing feedback and input. In addition, I am committed to sharing my findings with the Home Grown Springfield community, as well as the wider community as is supported and advised by Advisory Council members with close community ties. It is my hope that the findings will support the Advisory Council to better reach its goals, allowing the group to understand its own strengths and weaknesses as it moves forward.
**Statement of Positionality**

As the primary researcher for this project, my own positionality and identity have significant implications for the findings, and therefore must be disclosed (Cresswell, 2013). I am a white woman who identifies as working class and queer. I was raised in western Massachusetts, where I have become a member of the broad community of scholars, practitioners, and activists working to address social and environmental justice through transformative food systems change. To be clear, I do not live in Springfield and have worked only minimally in the city, in a professional capacity, before this project. Therefore I consider myself an outsider to the Springfield community, while and an insider to the community of professional practice that many of the Advisory Council members are also a part of.

My ability to conduct this research was completely based on my relationship with Catherine Sands, Director of Fertile Ground LLC and the consultant hired to facilitate the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council. Catherine Sands is also a committee member on this thesis and we have worked together for about a year. Catherine is also a white person who does not live in Springfield but has spent many years building deep and trusting relationships with community members and professionals who work in the city through her professional practice. Catherine is acknowledged by committee partners as a regional network weaver and equitable community engagement and evaluation specialist with many years of expertise facilitating community-based, equity-focused social change work.

It is through these relationships that I was granted access and welcomed to work with this community. In addition to her work on this research project, Catherine works
professionally for the Home Grown Springfield program, as facilitator for the Advisory Council and liaison between participants. In addition, Fertile Ground LLC is currently collaborating on the evaluation of the Home Grown Springfield program. It is important to note that I supported Catherine on the development of this evaluation, which overlapped with this research project.

Catherine Sands and I recognize that our identities and positionality have influenced this research project, including the research design, data collection strategies, and data analysis. In particular, we are aware of the ways that our positionality may influence power relations, access to spaces, and trust in the community. Throughout this project we have remained tuned into and aware of these dynamics, often discussing and considering their implications. We are also aware of the ways that our multiple roles within the project have influenced our relationships with participants and the findings for this project. We have attempted to balance our close-involvement in multiple areas of the project, as well as our positionality as researchers, by leaning heavily on the critical perspectives, input, feedback, and advice throughout the project from the two other committee members who are not directly involved, as well as Advisory Council members themselves. Research methods, analysis, and findings have been shared throughout the project period with Advisory Council participants individually, at full committee meetings, and at sub-committee meetings, as well as with leaders at Sodexo and SPS directly.
Participant Observation

Overview

Between October 2018 and May 2019, the Advisory Council held 7 meetings. These included three meetings of the full Advisory Council (October 2018, January 2019, May 2019), two meetings of the Marketing, Student and Community Engagement sub-committee (January 2019, March 2019), one meeting of the Food Production, Local Sourcing, Menu Planning, and Development sub-committee (February 2019), and one meeting of the Health, Wellness, Training and Curriculum sub-committee (March 2019). As a participant observer, I attended all 7 meetings, observing the full population of the Advisory Council and participating in conversation with stakeholders before, during, and after meetings. Comments during the meetings were recorded on the computer. Meetings during this period included a participatory evaluation process facilitated by Catherine Sands, which I took part in as a participant observer. In this role I helped the Advisory Council produce a refined Logic Model (Appendix A). At each full committee meeting as well as several sub-committee meetings I also presented information about this research project including an overview of the research project, status updates, initial findings, and opportunities for input, feedback, and shaping of the research questions and process of sharing information back.

While formal meetings are critical spaces for observing the Advisory Council, meetings take many shapes and forms. Scholars in the field of meeting ethnography suggest that as soon as two or more individuals invoke their role as connected to an organization, movement, or project and begin to talk about their shared work, a meeting has occurred (Brown, Reed, & Yarrow 2017; Sandler & Thedvall, 2017). Relying on this
theory, I attended countless meetings during the research period, which have also informed my thinking on this research project. Some meetings were planned among smaller sub-sets of the sub-committees, while others occurred at events, and before or after other meetings.

In January 2019 I attended a student taste test at one elementary school in the district, facilitated by three Food Corps volunteers and attended by about one hundred students. I participated in the taste test by talking with students about the dishes they tried and helping students vote on their level of satisfaction with the dish. Notes were taken on the computer after leaving the event.

I also attended the Culinary and Nutrition Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in April 2019, the grand opening of the facility at the center of the Home Grown Springfield program. The event was free and open to the public, drawing over 100 people including political leaders, industry and nonprofit leaders, business owners, SPS and Sodexo staff, community members, and students. The Springfield Science and Technology band played, Putnam Vocational Technical Academy’s ROTC group led the flag raising, and speeches were made by local and regional leaders including Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, Superintendent of Schools Daniel Warwick, Sodexo District Manager Mark Jeffrey, and Director of MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Office for Food and Nutrition Robert Leshin, and Director of the Springfield Food Policy Council Liz O’Gilvie. Audio of the speeches was recorded (also available publicly online) and notes were taken afterward. This protocol has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.
Analysis

The notes and reflections from participatory observation were analyzed using grounded theory and qualitative coding. Relying on the codebook established for the semi-structured interview analysis, I used content analysis to establish major themes based on the thematic codes, triangulating the data with findings from the interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

Overview

Between January and March 2019 I conducted semi-structured in depth interviews (Appendix C) with 15 Advisory Council participants. To identify interviewees, I used a combination of purposive sampling, reaching out to all AC members, as well as stratified sampling based on professional affiliation. My intention was to speak with representatives of all sectors of food systems work represented on the Advisory Council. The opportunity to participate in an interview was announced at the January 2019 full group Advisory Council meeting, where stakeholders were reminded of the project purpose and goals, invited to participate in an interview, and given a hand out describing how to reach me to set up an interview time (Appendix D). In addition, ideal candidates for interviews were identified and emailed directly with an invitation to participate in an interview (Appendix E).

As a result, I conducted 15 interviews with Advisory Council stakeholders. All interviews were conducted in a private space in the interview participant’s workplace or at the Culinary and Nutrition Center, with the exception of one, which was conducted in a private room at UMass. Interviews were recorded on my MacBook Pro using QuickTime player software and lasted between 20 and 50 minutes. Afterward, interviews were
transcribed into MS Word using NVivo software to slow down the audio. Transcripts were given a code to identify the document file and stored securely on UMass Box. This protocol has been approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.

**Analysis**

Interview transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory and qualitative coding. First, I used deductive sorting to establish broad themes associated with the interview transcripts (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Saldaña, 2013). Then, I used inductive sorting to open code 6 transcripts, identified as diverse in professional representation and food system sector affiliation (Galman, 2013). Through this process I established about 90 specific themes, which I tracked using a code book. I reviewed the themes to condense and eliminate duplication, resulting in 40 parent codes, 15 child codes, and 5 grandchild codes. I coded all interview transcripts using thematic and discourse coding using NVivo software. I then analyzed the coded data through text searches, word frequencies, matrix coding, and review of thematic buckets.

**Document Analysis**

**Overview**

Upon approving my research project with the Home Grown Springfield project, the staff at SPS, Sodexo, and Fertile Ground granted me access to many organizational documents used in the development of the program. For example, these documents include the program’s strategic plan, an Advisory Council participant list, the grant proposal which secured funding for the Advisory Council engagement process, meeting minutes and notes from June 2018-September 2018 (including four meetings which I was
present before this research project officially began) and evaluation materials including a working logic model and a working theory of change.

Analysis

I reviewed these materials using content analysis during the research process, triangulating data presented with findings from the interviews and observations.

Limitations

The methods used in this research project present some limitations. Case study, participant observation, and semi-structured interview methodology are all limited by small sample size, which weakens the ability to generalize findings to other groups. In addition, these methods are subject to researcher bias, which may also impact the validity of the results.

Specific to this research, the full committee and sub-committee meetings I observed were not always attended by the same group of people, making comparisons across meetings difficult. In addition, due to the small sample size of the interview group, there are concerns around the potential breach of internal confidentiality due to deductive disclosure among the Advisory Council members (Tolich, 2004). This means that because the interview participants know each other and work together, it is likely that some will be able to ascertain who has made what comments, as highlighted in the findings section of this paper. In order to address this concern, interview participants were notified of this possibility multiple times before consenting to participate in an interview. The risk of a breach of internal confidentiality is also stated in the consent form which all interview participants signed. Due to this risk, participants were also
asked before the interview to exclude any personal details from the research process and provide their opinions and thoughts in their professional capacity as related to the project.
CHAPTER 4
PARTICIPANTS, STRUCTURE, AND PURPOSE

Based on a thorough review of the case study data, major themes emerged around who food systems change-agents are, how they envision food systems change, what kinds of governance structures they use, and where opportunities and challenges for transformative change exist.

Building the Coalition

Every coalition has a structure, a purpose, and a group of engaged participants. Understanding these components of a coalition, along with its origin and history, is essential to contextualizing and situating its potential for effecting transformative social change. The Springfield Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC) Advisory Council came into existence in 2018 to support the development of the CNC and Home Grown Springfield program. At the time, the CNC facility was under construction and Springfield Public Schools (SPS) and their food service partner Sodexo had defined the mission and major goals of the project in their strategic plan. The plan states the mission of SPS Food Service, “to eliminate student hunger by increasing the quality, sustainability, and efficiency of the student nutritional programs in our schools and community.” It also outlines the program’s primary three goals: 1) Improve the quality of food served to SPS students 2) Increase the participation rates of these students in the offered food programs; and 3) Increase student learning about the life-long benefits of eating healthy.
With the mission and goals established to transform the Springfield school meal program, and a large-scale construction project underway, district and organization leaders began to consider the possibilities of what this project could mean for Springfield and the broader region. In conversation with SPS and Sodexo administrators, leaders of two community organizations proposed that a coalition be convened to guide the project. Both organizations strive to build an equitable local food system in the region, with one based in Springfield and led by a SPS parent of color and well-known community activist and the other based outside of Springfield but in the region, with a primarily white staff and Board. Together the two organizations developed a grant proposal and were awarded funds from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation to support the engagement of a multi-stakeholder coalition.

Close analysis of this early coalition-building process illuminates several themes which carry through the Advisory Council’s first year.

**Participants**

*White Professionals from Diverse Sectors Lead the Project*

The Advisory Council is made up of 40 participants who are professionally diverse and represent the wide network of interests invested in healthy school food and food systems change in western Massachusetts, as demonstrated in Figure 5. Generally, Advisory Council participants can be separated into three groups: food service company staff employed by Sodexo, public school staff employed by the SPS district and the city of Springfield, and partner organization staff, employed by a myriad of nonprofit organizations, consulting firms, and businesses. Throughout this paper, participants will be identified by these categories.
Of the 40 Advisory Council participants, about 33% (13 out of 40) are Sodexo staff, including primarily people in leadership positions but varying in type of work from operations, administration, community engagement, nutrition, education, and information technology. About 13% (5 out of 40) of participants are staff from SPS, all in administrative-level positions. About 55% (22 out of 40) of participants are staff from partner organizations. All partner participants are leaders in their organizations, but organizational affiliations vary widely, as demonstrated in Figure 5. Most represented in the Advisory Council partner group are nonprofit food organizations (32%) followed by partners that fall into the Other category (23%), including consultants and funders. Universities and private businesses are represented at the same rate (18%) and hospitals are represented by 9%.

Figure 5: Advisory Council Participants
While Advisory Council participants are diverse in their professional affiliations, they are not racially diverse. The majority of Advisory Council participants are white, which is typical among business, institutional, and organizational leaders in the Connecticut River Valley, despite its significant communities of color, particularly in Hampden County. While almost all Advisory Council participants are white, many have personal and professional affiliations to the city of Springfield, with over half of the participants working in Springfield regularly and almost all involved in some other project in the city. In addition, at least one quarter of the participants live in the city and several of the participants are current parents of SPS students or have adult children that were once SPS students. Also notable, the Advisory committee limits direct participation of students, parents, family members, community members, teachers, and school-level administrators, which has critical implications for who has access to information, decision-making power, and the ability to influence the project. This is discussed in detail in the Structure section of this paper.
Professional Diversity is a Strength

Advisory Council participants see their professional diversity as a major benefit and strength of the coalition. Participants come from different professional fields, have different priorities, and weave together different discourses, which they feel brings a breadth and depth of perspective to their process that is unique and necessary. For example, Advisory Council participants include chefs, small business owners, dieticians, administrators, policy advocates, marketing experts, educators, funders, food system experts, and nonprofit staff. One participant commented on the impact that having professionally diverse stakeholders involved in a project brings, saying, “When you have a group of people like that, each one of them coming with their own expertise, it’s a great learning opportunity for the key decision makers of that facility.” (Food service, Interview, 2019). Having participants from many sectors illuminates perspectives which key decision-makers may not be aware of otherwise, which participants believe has significant positive impacts on the project.

For example, one participant was particularly glad that the Advisory Committee’s diverse stakeholders bring the varied needs of their communities to the table. This includes conversations that highlight the structural and systemic challenges that Springfield residents face. They said, “Thinking about race and poverty and barriers to access, I’d say some of those conversations have just sort of deepened my appreciation for the process. [I’m glad] there are people involved that make sure that they are raising [those issues] in every conversation” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Because of the lack of community involvement on the committee particularly from low-income people and people of color (the communities which are most impacted by the program), having people at the meetings who represent the interests of those communities is critical. The
inclusion of diverse representatives including those who work closely with Springfield residents is a major strength to the coalition, according to participants.

Other participants mentioned that they have never seen or been involved in any other coalition like the Advisory Council, with such a wide array of professionals working on a project of this size and scale. One participant compared Springfield’s process to that of the city of Boston saying,

In Boston they’re doing a lot to transform school meals, but they don’t have this sort of cross-sector coalition of stakeholders, and I think it’s really missing there, because I think community awareness, city-wide support, that kind of stuff… happens when it’s talked about in multiple circles. It’s really important and invaluable (Partner, Interview, 2019).

From a regional perspective, there are not many examples of multi-stakeholder coalitions working together to advance such a large scale project. Participants identify this process as unique and beneficial.

**Structure**

Who gets to be included in the Advisory Council is a direct result of the coalition’s structure. As noted above, students, parents, and community members have limited direct representation on the Advisory Council and there is limited participation at meetings from community members not professionally tied to the project. This is due to the initial construction of the Advisory Council as a top-down, representative-leadership type model which calls on leaders who are professionally employed by organizations and businesses to engage in the coalition, rather than community members themselves. Relying on this model, Advisory Council participants were selected and invited to be a part of the group by SPS and Sodexo administrators along with the committee’s hired facilitator. This model is what Himmelman (2001) refers to as the collaborative
betterment model, a coalition structure that relies on institutions and organizations outside the control of community members to enact change. Himmelman compares this to the collaborative empowerment coalition model which is community-based, made up of people who are personally impacted by the project, and aims to transform power relations and increase community control (Himmelman, 2001).

Yet, the Advisory Council’s structure is complicated and made distinct by the fact that despite its top-down, community betterment model, the group prioritizes and values community engagement. The Advisory Council engagement process was funded by the Henry P. Kendall Foundation with an explicit plan for bringing community voices into the project through student, parent, and community engagement. This includes engaging students and parents in taste tests around school food changes, relying on student and parent feedback to develop the school food menu, introducing an integrated health and wellness curriculum that teaches students and families how to think critically and express their ideas about food systems and health, creating opportunities for students to participate in the branding and marketing of the program, and including students on the Advisory Council itself. Some of these goals have already been met and exceeded, while others are still in progress. This unique structure, being both top-down and community oriented, has presented unique challenges and benefits to the CNC Advisory Council, particularly considering the size and scope of the project, and its collaboration between the city and a private global corporation. This section will explore in depth this structure and highlight some of its challenges and opportunities.
Because project leaders decided to engage the Advisory Council using a representative-leadership model, communication with the wider community is a priority and a challenge. In the first year of the Advisory Councils meetings, conversations often came back to marketing and communication. Specifically, conversations focused on when and how to disseminate information about the project’s implementation, particularly what changes students could expect to see in the school meal program and when they would start to see those changes. Advisory Council participants expressed concern about managing expectations and communications around the project. Many felt that communication was not happening clearly or quickly enough, and that this may result in miscommunication and misinformation that could negatively impact community expectations about the project. One participant said, “Communication…that’s our weakness right now, people don’t even know about it. So the branding, marketing, communication, I think that kind of thing needs to keep going” (School, Interview, 2019).

The primary concern of project leaders and Advisory Council participants was that community members would expect an immediate and complete transformation of the school meal program in Springfield, which the district emphasized was unrealistic. (This was at the time that the CNC was being built, but in a remote part of the city. Without representatives at the Advisory Council and little direct communication from the group about the facility or the program, many Springfield community members, including students and families, did not know about it.) The project roll-out was planned to be phased, with new and improved food items being added to the menu over the course of the next year or more. One school leader captured this sentiment, which was expressed often by other Advisory Council members, stating “I think there’s some people who think...
you’re gonna flip a switch and everting’s going to change overnight, so it’s managing those expectations” (School, Interview, 2019).

The Advisory Council represents the hub of knowledge and information about the CNC and Home Grown Springfield projects. Even for Advisory Council participants, who are most up-to-date on project developments, the meetings are major places of learning and knowledge sharing. When discussing the value of the Advisory Council, one participant said, “I would…say that being able to attend those meetings and have that level of information is crucial because the information discussed in those meetings that would be very difficult for me to obtain in my day to day” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Therefore, the exclusion of students, parents, and community members from the meetings directly correlates with lack of access to information.

Obviously, this is a concern for community members themselves, but one they may not be aware of since they have little knowledge of the project in general. For project leaders, it poses a challenge because it means they are responsible for effectively communicating in a manner that “manages expectations” while building excitement and acceptance of the project. For example, one Advisory Council partner staff person stated, “There will be challenges along the way from folks that feel like change is not happening quickly enough or comprehensively enough and that will be due to being uniformed about what is involved in making the change” (Partner, Interview, 2019). The perception that community members do not understand “what is involved in making the change” is likely due to their exclusion from the process. For example, what if students, parents, and community members were brought into the process so that they could better understand “what is involved in making the change?” Might they become ambassadors in the
community for sharing knowledge and setting reasonable expectations? Having an ear at
the table matters, even just to gain knowledge and understanding about the project and its
process, helps both project leaders and community members know what to expect.

Because the Advisory Council places students, parents, community members, and
even teachers and school-level administrators, in a separate category of people that are
targeted by marketing and communications and must be informed about the changes to
the school food program, the Advisory Council acknowledges that these groups are not
being included in the process of shaping that change. This introduces risk around whether
community needs are accurately and adequately being addressed and feeds the existing
power-structure where community members are disempowered to make decisions about
the programs and policies which effect their lives. While the reasons for utilizing a
coalition structure which limits participation from those impacted by the project are
complex and likely justifiable in many ways (i.e. limited resources, lack of political will,
the need to build trusting relationships between project leaders and community
members), it is important that project leaders acknowledge the power dynamic that exists,
and constantly re-assess opportunities to bring community members into the process as
the project continues to develop.

*Legacies of Power in Urban Development*

The anxiety and concern around managing community expectations for this
project are grounded in a deep history of discriminatory urban development and
community disempowerment, which must also be acknowledged. In reflecting upon the
Advisory Council’s communication with the wider community, one participant stated,

I think there is also that reluctance because change takes a long time and promises
have been made for a long time, so there is a little bit of hesitation in being too
overly optimistic because we understand it’s a staged roll out and we have to kind of temper expectations (Partner, Interview, 2019).

When this participant recalls that “promises have been made for a long time,” they allude to the fact that those promises have gone unfulfilled. This comment highlights a concern specific to Springfield, and other low income communities and communities of color.

The construction of the $21 million CNC is a big deal for Springfield. While the city has had a few major investments in recent years, including the MGM Casino project, it has experienced a decades-long period of deindustrialization and economic disinvestment. Many years of business closures, decreasing property values, and aging infrastructure have left a mark on the city’s built environment, as well as its residents. This is particularly true in the city’s low income communities and communities of color, which have faced decades of marginalization as a result of urban policies and practices, often at the hands of their own municipal governments. These policies and practices include things like being excluded from neighborhoods through redlining and discriminatory zoning regulation, being robbed of properties by urban renewal initiatives celebrated for bringing infrastructure to the city, and being displaced by gentrification veiled as progressive economic development policies.

While most of the Advisory Council members are white professionals, many have long-standing personal ties to the city of Springfield and understand these dynamics. They understand why Springfield residents may be distrustful that a municipal-sponsored project will result in the outcomes promised, especially when it is in partnership with a multi-national corporation. By keeping the details of the project quiet, project leaders protect their own reputations (should the project not go as planned), while also protecting city residents from expecting something the city cannot deliver on, again.
Yet, the Advisory Council also misses a key opportunity here. It is not their responsibility to be the gate-keepers of information in order to protect community members from being hurt by failed city programs, like they have in the past. Instead, it is their responsibility to bring community members, especially low-income people and people of color, into the process as decision-makers and leaders. Doing so may resolve the current challenges around “marketing and communication,” instead transitioning toward shared knowledge production and shared management of expectations. Again, these community-based processes take time and face serious barriers. But the Advisory Council has already articulated its commitment to community involvement, and would benefit from continually pushing the project to become more inclusive of community members.

Decision-making Power

Who gets to be included in a coalition is important, but the decision-making power they hold once at the table is also critical. Most Advisory Council participants do not see themselves as decision-makers, but instead listeners and contributors. Yet, Advisory Council members in powerful positions, and with decision-making power, perceive participants as decision-makers. This presents an opportunity for conversation to build transparency within the group, which may build trust and perhaps illuminate opportunities for power-sharing that are not currently understood. In addition, Advisory Council participants have conflicting opinions about the long-term purpose of the Advisory Council, as well as their ability to effect change as an Advisory Council member. These differences are also aligned with the level of power the Advisory Council participant has on the project.
Most Advisory Council participants see themselves as either listeners or contributors, but not as decision-makers. One participant stated clearly, “I wouldn’t say I am a decision-maker” (Food Service, Interview, 2019). Another said, “Well, it isn’t called the decision making body…so I never thought… the group would make the decisions” (Partner, Interview, 2019). One more person said, “All the Sodexo employees, I think, are making decisions. And SPS of course” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Yet, a few Advisory Council members, often those with more decision-making power themselves, stated otherwise. When asked what the purpose of the Advisory Council is, one participant stated, “A governing body” (Food service, Interview, 2019). When asked the same question, another project leader stated, “Bringing them in and letting them be part of the decision process” (School, Interview, 2019).

Here we are reminded of the ways in which power and influence snakes its way into our coalition-building processes. Those with more decision-making power perceive that they are granting power to Advisory Council participants, while participants experience it otherwise. This may be an important dynamic for Advisory Council members to consider, particularly as they begin bringing students, families, and community members into the process. Previous case studies and scholarly research suggest that this is an opportunity for dialogue. Participating in an intentional facilitated conversation about the way that decisions are currently made, and how that process is working for Advisory Council participants, could be a good way to build transparency, trust, and relationships among Advisory Council participants, as well as the wider community. It may also illuminate an opportunity for more power-sharing opportunities.
than Advisory Council participants realize. Challenges arise in finding the time and space in the busy Advisory Council meeting schedule to have these kinds of conversations.

While Advisory Council members do not generally feel like they have decision-making power, many are grateful for the opportunity to participate. Participants again discussed the opportunity to participate in the coalition as unique and uncommon. They stated that they did not feel like Sodexo and SPS leaders were obligated to invite them to the table, and that by doing so, they extended an opportunity for partnership that did not previously exist. One participant stated, “To be quite honest, I am kind of shocked that...they took as much time to bring in as many people as possible. Because they could easily make decisions without the opinion of a lot of people that they invited” (School, Interview, 2019). Again, this represents a new type of collaboration for Advisory Council participants, particularly as it involves both the city and Sodexo, a global corporation. Some participants alluded to this type of collaboration being more common among non-profit and community organizations, not among large corporations or even city government. Being given the opportunity to work outside the silos of their sectors on a project of this scale is surprising and appreciated for Advisory Council participants.

In general, Advisory Council participants feel like their opinions are valued, their feedback is heard, and their suggestions are acted upon. One participant offered, “We’re an advisory committee and I feel like they listen and they’ve dedicated the time, and it’s a big chunk of time...so, I really feel like the commitment is there” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Here a participant draws a connection between project leaders taking the time to convene and participate in the Advisory Council with their demonstrated commitment. Another said, “What I appreciate about the process is that it recognizes the importance of
having diverse stakeholders be informed” (Partner, Interview, 2019). This participant recognizes like others that there is value in the very act of convening a coalition to guide this project, something that project leaders did not have to do, and often in projects of this scale, do not.

This is an important distinction about this project compared to other case studies which study coalition-building. The construction of the CNC and the roll out of the Home Grown Springfield program is a large-scale project, and unlike any other in the country. This project was not community-based from the beginning in part because it has resulted from a decade-long alignment of the ideal scenario – committed school and Sodexo administrators, legitimate and demonstrable infrastructure needs, opportunities for cost saving and efficiency improvement, cooperation from the Mayor and City Council, and a blossoming local food movement in the region. All of these factors and more have aligned to make this project happen, and the result is a multi-million dollar investment in better school food, local agriculture, and holistic student and community learning. Perhaps because of the massive scale of the project and its potential impact, participants feel that their inclusion is more meaningful, and also, more impactful, even if they are not making decisions.

Instead, the convening of a multi-stakeholder coalition on a large scale public-private partnership like this, is a win, at least for now. This is also demonstrated by conversations at Advisory Council meetings highlighting that this kind of diverse stakeholder engagement is not happening in many other places, especially in the realm of community food systems or school food. One participant said, “I think it’s really unique here to see a food service management company, a district, and all the community
partners that sit around this table, [it’s] incredibly unique, I haven’t seen this in any of the other districts that we work in” (Nonprofit, Interview, 2019). Perhaps because this project is large scale in reach, leadership, funding, and potential regional and multi-sector impact, the inclusion of Advisory Council members in information-sharing, brainstorming, providing feedback, and guiding the project means more.

Another place where those with more power and those with less power on the Advisory Council do not necessarily share perspectives is around the long-term plan for the Advisory Council itself. Project leaders tend to suggest that they would like to see the Advisory Council go on indefinitely. One participant said, “I never want this committee to go away. I would love to see this go on forever” (School, Interview, 2019). Another said, “At some level I think that a lot of the Advisory Council doesn’t want to go anywhere, they want to keep seeing what’s going on” (School, Interview, 2019). But others had some doubts. For example, one participant said, “Well, I assume the small group will keep going, I don’t know what’s happening with the big group, whether it’s needed or will keep going” (Nonprofit, Interview, 2019). This suggests that there may also be an opportunity for clarifying among the Advisory Council what their long-term goals are as a committee. This may help concentrate efforts or solidify commitment if there is uncertainty among some members about their involvement into the future.

With regard to when the Advisory Council started, many participants suggested that the group should have convened earlier. One participant stated, “If we had this vision earlier and realized the importance of having a community engagement partnership like this…I wish that we had recognized that a little earlier in the process” (School, Interview, 2019). Another project leader said, “If I was a consultant…the first thing I would do is
start the Advisory Council earlier in the process” (School, Interview, 2019). This is helpful knowledge to have for others who hope to launch a similar project. It also again demonstrates the value that project leaders assign to the engagement of the Advisory Council. Conversely, it may also illuminate a lack of full understanding around the resources needed to support a coalition like this one. Coalitions are known to take a lot of work and energy from their participants and require on-going resources to be long-lasting. This may be another opportunity for dialogue around what participants need to continue their participation.

_Toward Collaborative Community-Based Coalition-Building_

While Himmelman’s (2001) community empowerment coalition model may be ideal, he acknowledges that these coalitions take years of relationship-building, reliable funding, and political willingness. He also acknowledges that most coalitions fall somewhere along a spectrum between top-down and bottom-up. In addition, many good examples of community-based coalitions come out of small-scale grassroots programs and projects. The CNC Advisory Council represents an example of a large-scale project with regional impact that although utilizing a top-down structure, works to prioritize community needs, integrate community engagement, and contribute to developing a healthy and thriving city.

With funding from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, the Advisory Council supports the creation of two consultant positions, the Student Engagement Coordinator and the Nutrition and Wellness Coordinator. The Student Engagement Coordinator is responsible primarily for engaging students around the CNC’s menu development to ensure that food is tasty and that kids enjoy it, driving student participation in the meal
program. This position coordinates and conducts taste tests with students, where they have the opportunity to provide specific feedback through surveys and focus groups about the food. Feedback is shared with Sodexo’s chefs and meal planning team, who integrate the changes into the menu. In the first year of the program students have provided feedback and seen updates to their yogurt, rice and beans, and various salads. Longer-term plans include the development of a menu app as well as digital feedback surveys to solicit student feedback about the meal program and integrate their suggestions. While this tactic may seem basic, in the realm of corporate public school food service, it not common. Even if some food service companies solicit student feedback, the likelihood that they integrate it into the menu is low. In the case of the CNC, the Student Engagement Coordinator ensures that student voices are being listened to and their suggestions being implemented. While students are not attending the Advisory Council meetings themselves (yet), they are certainly impacting the program.

The Advisory Council also supports the Nutrition and Wellness Coordinator who works with the Student Engagement Coordinator. This position develops and implements nutrition and wellness education curriculum in Springfield schools. The Nutrition and Wellness Coordinator has also worked to include parents in the project by sharing information about the new school meal program, soliciting feedback, and offering nutrition education courses.

Finally, this funding supports the FoodCorps program. FoodCorps is a national organization that connects kids to healthy food in school, promoting healthy living through hands on learning and by creating a schoolwide culture of health. FoodCorps partners with AmeriCorps to place service members (who are paid a living stipend) in
schools to teach cooking and gardening, promote healthy meal choices in the cafeteria, and support teachers and staff to celebrate healthy food. In Springfield, FoodCorps service members teach lessons on a wide array of holistic wellness topics including gardening, plant and soil science, environmental science, nutritious eating, physical education, and local food systems education.

Both of these Coordinators and the Food Corps service members are deeply engaged in the Springfield school community and regularly interface with students, teachers, and parents. As Advisory Council members, the Student Engagement Coordinator and the Nutrition and Wellness Coordinator are major contributors to meetings, often looked to by other Advisory Council participants and project leaders for feedback and consultation. Their knowledge is deeply valued on the committee and considered critically important for informing decision-making by project leaders. At this time FoodCorps service members are not members of the Advisory Council, but their administrative staff are.

In addition, the initial project proposal includes the development of a Student Board of Directors in the second year of the project. This was proposed as a group of high school students who would meet quarterly with the Advisory Council to share their feedback on the program, particularly in the areas of menu planning, communications, and sustainability. While the Student Board of Directors has yet to be established or attend meetings, Advisory Council participants acknowledge and reference its convening as a goal for the future. Perhaps in an initial effort to establish this Board, Springfield students were engaged in the development of the program’s name and logo. Through a graphic design course at one of the city’s technical high schools over 80 students
participated in a competition to design and brand the program, which became Home Grow Springfield. The logo pictured in Figure 7 was designed by the winning student.

![Home Grown Springfield Logo](image)

*Figure 7: Home Grown Springfield Logo*

While the Advisory Council’s structure does not currently allow for direct involvement of students, parents, and community members, it has developed a model which still prioritizes community involvement in ways that many projects like this do not, particularly at this scale.

**Purpose**

Developing a shared understanding of the purpose and vision of a coalition, or the reason people have convened and the goals they hope to reach through their engagement, can be a source of cohesion or division among coalitions. In some cases, coalitions with top-down structure struggle when coalition participants and project leaders do not have a shared understanding of purpose and vision. For the Advisory Council, purpose is clear and aligned among participants and project leaders who all aim to provide accountability to the project, offer expertise from the field, and collaborate on ideas. Vision, on the other
hand, is more varied. Vision refers to the long-term, big picture ideas about what the project can be, what goals it can reach for, and how it should grow into the future. While all participants share the goal to make school food healthier and reduce student hunger in Springfield, participants have a wide variety of other goals for the project, including visions around education, local sourcing, economic development, equity, and policy. The range of hopes that participants have for the project is not particularly surprising given their diverse professional backgrounds, but it highlights how bringing so many different people to the table can expand the possibilities of the project.

When considered together, participant visions converge around the Ohio State University Kirwan Institute’s (2009) concept of building “communities of opportunity,” Norris’ (2013) idea of “healthy communities,” and the Center for Whole Communities’ work around “whole communities.” These theories are based in the practice of addressing social problems through a systems-thinking approach, which is rooted in ecological systems theory. In community development, this means recognizing that the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of an individual is dependent upon not just one factor, but many, including access to: fresh healthy food, reliable and safe transportation, affordable housing, a job with fair wages, and affordable health care, as well as respect, dignity, security, and liberty. Addressing social problems in this spirit requires integrated and collaborative networks of actors who understand the complexity and inter-dependence of the problems and solutions. The Advisory Council’s wide scope of possibilities for the CNC reflects this kind of thinking, expanding the project’s possibilities far beyond improving school food.
Accountability, Expertise, and Collaboration

When asked directly what the purpose and role of the Advisory Council is, participants agreed on three major reasons for their coalition: to hold the project leaders accountable to the project goals, to offer expertise from their various fields and professions, and to collaborate on problem-solving and strategic thinking.

With regard to accountability, participants see themselves as responsible for ensuring that project leaders do what they said they would do. Participants feel that the Advisory Council ensures that project leaders move forward on all the goals set out by the project, particularly the ones that may be more challenges to meet. This includes the district’s commitment to local sourcing, a component of the project that participants feel is particularly vulnerable. In meetings, participants discuss the challenges that local sourcing presents, including building relationships with local producers, consistently accessing the volume of products required, creating reliable supply chains, and coordinating delivery logistics. In addition, participants discuss food safety regulations and certification requirements as a major barrier for small-scale local food producers to accessing institutional markets, including buyers like Sodexo. Participants feel that the role of the Advisory Council is to circle back to discuss these challenges and engage in collaborative problem-solving as a group every few months, which ensures that project leaders continually push forward on these harder to reach goals.

Many participants correlate accountability with sustainability. They believe the plan for this project is a good one, therefore if project leaders stick to the plan, the project will be successful. One Advisory Council participant articulated this by saying, “I think that because this committee was created and…helped to shape what [the project] looks like, I think that there will be long term sustainability through the bumps” (Partner,
Interview, 2019). This person suggests that the coalition is serving its purpose, and its ongoing existence will help promote the long-term success of the project. Another participant said, “I...think about the sustainability of the effort. I think it holds industry, it holds district leadership, it holds the city, to [their] commitment” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Another agreed, adding, “[The Advisory Council is the] eyes and ears of the community. Eyes and ears of the industry.” (Food service, Interview, 2019). By being held accountable to a wide variety of stakeholders who are themselves accountable to many different communities, the Advisory Council participants believe they will remain transparent and steadfast in meeting their stated goals.

Providing expertise is also viewed as a key purpose of the Advisory Council, particularly for those directly involved in day-to-day operations and decision-making. One participant expressed some initial hesitation about the value of the Advisory Council, before realizing how useful having the expertise from so many industries might be. They said, “I was a little hesitant of [the Advisory Council], and then...I talked with [my team], and we're like wait a minute, we get the right professionals from the right industries to come in and add their expertise, this could be a major benefit to our team” (School, Interview, 2019). Another participant said, “They all are an invaluable resource being brought together. Every one of them with a different perspective and a different expertise.” (Food service, Interview, 2019).

The expertise of Advisory Council members, all professionals and leaders in their fields, is considered a strength of the group. One participant related the Advisory Council to a team of doctors collaborating to address the complex needs of a sick patient. By drawing on the expertise of leaders from so many fields, the Advisory Council is better
able to make informed decisions. This is particularly true given the fact that the project has goals that reach beyond the school cafeteria to impact staff, parents, families, and community members. By engaging leaders of community organizations, hospitals, and small businesses, the group can make better decisions that address community needs more completely. One project leader captured this aptly when they said, “I think we recognized that we’re not experts” (School, Interview, 2019).

Finally, participants see the value of their ability to collaborate across disciplines to address complex issues. That includes challenges related to this project, but also perhaps other city-wide and regional challenges that benefit from a multi-sector approach. With regard to collaboration on this project, one participant wondered, “How do they take their expertise, and their knowledge, and all of that, and, and bring it to help us get this program off the ground?” (School, Interview, 2019). By bringing together diverse stakeholders, the CNC and Home Grown Springfield are able to leverage the expertise and knowledge of a group much larger than their internal project leaders. This is seen as a major opportunity and benefit of the Advisory Council. With regard to potential opportunities for collaboration beyond this project, one participation said, “You know, those people used to be scary to me, now, I look at them as partners, I love it” (School, Interview, 2019). This comment highlights the networks that are being built through this coalition, which did not exist before, and represent opportunities for future collaboration. Among professionals who work in the same city, there is often a major lack of communication, never mind collaboration. For participants, the practice of coming to Advisory Council meetings and getting to know each other, opens up space for potential opportunities to collaborate in the future. That same participant added, “To hear
their stories, and their missions, and what they want, we’re all on the same page, we all want the best thing for our students and families” (School, Interview, 2019). This also demonstrates the acknowledgement of shared goals, within this project and beyond this project. Even though participants come to the table with varying missions and organizational goals, they are all working toward a better Springfield, a better Connecticut River Valley, and a better Massachusetts.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

**Goals Diverge, Visions Coalesce: Whole, Healthy Communities of Opportunity**

Coalitions work best when they are focused on a common goal, one that all participants have a stake in and are willing and able to collaborate on. Often, a coalition has a stated goal, which defines the work of the coalition, including its participants, structure and purpose. But coalition participants usually bring their own hopes and visions to the coalition as well, based around their own specific work areas. In a coalition that is diverse, like the Advisory Council, this results in a wide range of additional hopes for the CNC and Home Grown Springfield program.

The Advisory Council shares a common mission, which is stated in the project’s strategic plan: to eliminate student hunger by increasing the quality, sustainability, and efficiency of the student nutritional programs in our schools and community. The plan identifies goals for enacting this mission, including 1) To improve the quality of food served to students, 2) To increase student participation in meal programs, 3) To increase student learning opportunities. Advisory Council participants recognized and articulated that meeting these goals is their primary purpose as an Advisory Council. The language most commonly used was to serve “better food”. Participants understand “better food” as scratch-cooked, locally sourced, healthy, tasty, and well-presented food. Many people agreed with one participant who said, “Giving kids the opportunity to eat wholesome, nutrition foods every day” (School, Interview, 2019).
With regard to health, participants hope that the program will lead to healthier food, which will result in long-term child health impacts. When asked about their long-term vision for the project one participant answered, “Increased participation, more fresh fruits and vegetables, better health for children in the system” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Re-iterating the common goal of serving kids improved school meals, another person stated, “The biggest thing, just to me, in my core and my gut, is that kids are gonna get better food.” (Partner, Interview, 2019). They elaborated by connecting consumption of healthier food to health impacts, stating,

Our health disparities, the highest childhood diabetes rates in the state, the highest childhood obesity rates in the state, are…related to food. I deeply believe both in my head and in my soul that two, and potentially three, healthier meals a day could change health outcomes (Partner, Interview, 2019).

Another participant also saw the opportunity for long-term health impacts, and potentially, shifts in health equity. They state, “Generation to generation, it’s gonna have a huge effect on health outcomes” (Food service, Interview, 2019). Participants understand that because students eat at least one-third and up to one-half of all their meals at school, improving the healthiness of school food has huge potential for impacting overall child health in the city. They also understand that improving school food will not only change child health for the school year, but instead, could have life-long impacts. These broad impacts have the potential to shift community health on a large scale and move toward health equity.

While participants found consensus around their primary purpose and vision, they spoke about a wide variety of additional visions for what the project means to them and their work. They often tied different themes together, again demonstrating that this group
understands change to be cross-sectoral, systemic, and networked. The themes most often discussed include education, local sourcing, economic development, equity, and policy.

Education

Aside from the primary goal of making school food healthier and reducing student hunger in the district, student learning is the other primary goal articulated in the mission and goals of the project. The Home Grown Springfield project is unique because it operates under the assumption that student learning is essential to increasing participation in a healthy school meal program. The assertion that students must be educated and engaged around healthy food and food systems in order to fully appreciate and participate in healthy lifestyles is not a given in the school food environment. In fact, many school meal programs disregard this connection entirely. One project leader expresses this, stating, “A lot of people in my shoes, my counterparts across the state and across the country, they view food service as an auxiliary program, like a compliance thing” (School, Interview, 2019). Instead, the Home Grown Springfield program asserts that school meals are not only an opportunity to reduce student hunger and reverse harmful health impacts, but a chance to engage students in lifelong learning about health and wellness and food systems. The same project leader went on to say, “I’d love for the lunches to be the reasons our kids come to school every day” (School, Interview, 2019).

Many Advisory Council participants care about education and agree that the school meal program should be in collaboration with health education, nutrition education, physical education, school garden curriculum, and school wide wellness policy making. When asked about their long term vision for the CNC, one participant
said, “The whole nutrition aspect of what they can learn from this” (Food service, Interview, 2019). Another participant states,

I want them to...know how the garden grows in their science curriculum, bring [the vegetables to the CNC], see how it’s all cut and cleaned, brought back to their school and cooked in their cafeteria. And be able to understand that. (School, Interview, 2019).

In addition to food-related learning for students, some participants also hope that the CNC will offer students learning opportunities in other areas related to the CNC facility operations, such as Human Resources, Food Service Operations, Finance, Information Technology, and Hospitality. The CNC has already developed an internship program which offers Springfield students the opportunity to work in the facility in many of these areas. The positions are paid, providing both training and a stipend to Springfield students, also suggesting Sodexo’s commitment to economic justice in the city.

Advisory Council participants and project leaders aim to utilize the Home Grown Springfield program and the CNC to integrate a wide range of skill-building into the curriculum and experience of student learning in Springfield. This illuminates the broad possibilities that the project brings to the district and the community. Another participant captured this when they said, “We want to get as many learning opportunities as possible for the kids. And those leaning opportunities can...take many shapes and forms, like some of it in a classroom, some of it in field trips, and then the jobs and co-ops.” (School, Interview, 2019).

Some participants also expect the CNC to benefit families and the wider community. The CNC plans to offer cooking and nutrition courses in its training room. One participant says,
Our goal is to have some community outreach where we’re bringing in the families of our students to teach them good healthy cooking habits and recipes and trying to change that philosophy of the way that our families are thinking about food (School, Interview, 2019).

By inviting community members into the CNC to participate in healthy cooking and wellness workshops, Advisory Council participants hope that the facility will provide opportunities to impact the culture of healthy eating in the wider community. In fact, one project leader stated, “[The CNC] is in fact a community center. It is not just a building that’s gonna support the child nutrition program, it’s gonna support the entire community” (Food service, Interview, 2019). In an Advisory Council meeting another participant made the same assertion, furthering that the city needs a place like the CNC, an education-oriented gathering space, where no one has to spend money to visit. Situating this center as a hub for community members and for community education further emphasizes the commitment the program has to the community, as well as its potential to effect long-lasting community-wide change to health and wellness in Springfield.

Local Sourcing and Economic Development

The CNC and Home Grown Springfield program have also committed sourcing as much locally produced food as possible. Therefore it is not surprising that many Advisory Council participants see the expansion of the local food economy as a potential impact for the center. Participants discuss the impacts that this could have both on the local economy and healthy food access in the city. Currently, many neighborhoods in Springfield are considered food deserts, or places where there is limited access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Some participants believe that the CNC will provide a
market to nearby farmers in Hampshire and Franklin counties that do not currently distribute their products in Springfield. Because the CNC will source large quantities of fresh vegetables, it could push local food producers to consider Springfield as a viable market to expand into. One participant stated, “I think that as farmers see the economic opportunity [of] selling to Sodexo…they’ll begin to think about other economic opportunities [in the city].” (Partner, Interview, 2019). In considering what impact this could have, they continued, “I think this is [the] beginning of, potentially, a food hub for our city” (Partner, Interview, 2019). The CNC presents an opportunity to promote economic development for food and farm businesses, which could result in more local food access in the city. Participants believe this could have long-lasting impacts on community health outcomes, as well as culture around healthy living.

One participant draws out the bigger impacts that healthy food access has on a city, particularly one with a large low-income community of color. They describe their vision, “That farmers in the Valley are talking about selling food to Springfield, and people are thinking differently about Springfield, including people who live in and run the city of Springfield” (Partner, Interview, 2019). This captures the depth of impact that healthy food access may have on Springfield, particularly around the way people see the city, and the way residents see themselves. Becoming a viable market for local growers means having access to fresh foods in grocery stores and at farmers markets. It also means changing the reputation of the city, to a place where people are interested in eating healthy, locally sourced foods, where markets, supply chains, and infrastructure exists to accommodate the local food system, and a place that deserves the same access to good food as other, more resourced communities.
In addition to the increase in access to fresh, locally grown food for Springfield residents, other Advisory Council participants consider the impact that this market expansion could have on local food producers, especially farmers. While the Connecticut River Valley is an ecologically and culturally rich agricultural hub, farming is a challenging livelihood to sustain. Access to markets is one of the biggest barriers that farmers face to sustaining economically viable businesses. With Springfield being the largest city in the region, opening up this market could be a game-changer for the local food economy. One participant explains,

Hopefully [the CNC] can help be part of a rising tide with other institutions in the region contributing to a more stable and resilient food system based on people wanting to farm and being successful at it because they have clients who buy their food for a fair price” (Partner, Interview, 2019).

Another participant also sees the benefit that the CNC could have for farmers and other local food producers, particularly given the size of the facility and its stable client base. They say, “I think that working at scale, like this, has the potential to change really our landscape in Massachusetts, and support farmers in a way that would finally be sustainable” (Partner, Interview, 2019). In committee meetings, participants discuss the integral role that institutions play in supporting the local food system by providing large volume, stable markets, suggesting that the CNC is poised to fill this role. Scaling up the local food economy has long been a goal for local food systems advocates. For many participants, CNC represents an ideal opportunity to source more food locally, in a city that badly needs access to it.
Equity and Policy

Advisory Council participants understand that many neighborhoods in Springfield are low-income, that thousands of Springfield residents lack access to fresh and healthy food, and that the city reports some of the worst health outcomes in the state. They also recognize that those occurrences are not random, but the result of centuries of systematic oppression, contributing to serious health inequity in the city. Addressing the social and structural barriers to food access and health equity are priorities for some Advisory Council participants, and they see the CNC and Home Grown Springfield program as an opportunity for facilitating systemic change by increasing access to healthy food for kids in the district, educating students and community members about healthy living, and empowering community members to participate in decision-making about their own health and wellness. One participant discusses their understanding of how healthy food access correlates with health equity, stating, “Here we have people who don’t have access to a supermarket in a lot of these schools, they don’t have many resources” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Yet, they go on to say, “10 out of 21 meals are being supplied by the public school, so it should be really nutritious food and my hope is that it’s locally grown as often as possible.” Ensuring that school food is healthy ensures that up to 50% of a Springfield child’s diet is composed of fresh, healthy foods. These are the kinds of shifts that can result in changes in health equity and food justice, and Advisory Council members understand that.

In addition, as mentioned above, providing the infrastructure and markets to draw local food producers into Springfield will provide access to fresh food to kids in the cafeteria, but also families and community members throughout the city. In a city with high rates of diet-related illness, increased access to healthy food could have life-
changing impacts for thousands of Springfield residents. As described above, some participants see this as an opportunity for the city to re-imagine itself as a healthy city and thriving community. These are the types of transformative changes that shift systems and facilitate justice. One Advisory Council participant captures it completely, offering this,

Communities of color, we see ourselves through the lens of whiteness. And that’s never been a mirror that has been…clean. If it’s a mirror we’re looking in, we look as distorted to ourselves as we do to other people, right? And [the CNC project] has an opportunity to sort of like be Windex on the glass….to change not just what other people think, but what we think about ourselves (Partner, Interview, 2019).

This participant captures how this project could be a catalyst for change in the city of Springfield, not only impacting health, education, and the local economy, but re-framing how residents see their own city, and themselves. Harvey (2008) calls this the “right to the city” or “the right to change ourselves by changing the city” (1). During an Advisory Council meeting one participant discussed how Springfield has not historically been the recipient shiny new spaces like the CNC, and certainly not places dedicated to health and wellness. Again emphasizing that the CNC is a community space, and one where people do not have to pay to visit, participants see this project as changing the landscape of the city. By contributing to the city’s transformation into becoming a place where residents can access fresh food, engage in nutrition and garden education, and participate in the development of their own healthy school meal program, the city will change, and so will its residents.

With the CNC’s broad goal to become a replicable model, some participants also consider how urban landscapes may change if programs like this roll out across the country. The concept that this could be a replicable model is discussed frequently at meetings and among Advisory Council participants. One participant says, “I think it’s
going to go far beyond the walls of Springfield…and is going to be a role model that is able to be duplicated” (Food service, Interview, 2019). Participants consider the CNC an opportunity to refine the model so that other cities may be able to utilize it. This vision of replication and expansion of the model widens the potential impacts, potentially driving transformative change across the United States. One participation explains, “The ultimate success would be that this is copied in many school districts across the United States so that all students can have access to healthier, fresher foods” (Food service, Interview, 2019). Another person adds, “[I] think about the hundreds of thousands of children that could be eating in a different way” (Partner, Interview, 2019). These participants see how increasing access to healthy food can change people’s lives in their own community and envision what that change would look like on a national scale.

Participants also see this as an opportunity to inform policy and business practices which institutionalize health equity and food justice in the city, the state, and the nation. Using the CNC as an infrastructure model and Home Grown Springfield as a programmatic model, participants hope that healthy school food can become the norm.

This is particularly true because SPS is working with Sodexo, a multi-national corporation that feeds millions of people across the world every day. One participant said, “We’re pushing a big conglomerate like Sodexo, they are an international big corporate company, we are trying to get them to change their practices, saying this is what we want in Springfield” (School, Interview, 2019). Encouraging Sodexo to serve healthier food and support the local food economy in Springfield means beginning to institutionalize the business practices around serving better school food. If Sodexo begins to shift here, it is likely they will begin to shift in other cities.
Another participant considers the way the CNC could impact state and national food policy. They say, “I think this can be a model that will inform state policy around local food procurement and values-based procurement at the state level” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Again, participants see the CNC as a model that will be replicated, and when it is, policies will adapt to institutionalize healthy food. Another participant adds, “We have the ability here with what we’re doing to change the way that people across the nation, not just the Commonwealth, but across the nation, are looking at feeding out kids” (School, Interview, 2019).

The diversity of concerns that Advisory Council participants bring to the table demonstrates the strength of their “whole community” approach. The Home Grown Springfield program itself recognizes that a multi-faceted approach to food systems change is essential. By bringing stakeholders to the table from so many different sectors, the project is stronger and more able to effect systemic change.

**From the Cracks in the Pathway: Transformative Possibilities**

In their framework for analyzing food movements, Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) state that transformative food systems change occurs when cohesion is developed among the varied actors participating in the movement. They argue that forging alliances between “progressive” and “radical” actors and organizations is essential in advancing the goals of food justice and food sovereignty, along with associated goals of economic and racial justice. They argue that “if Progressives tilt toward radical agendas, the food movement will likely be strengthened” (Holt-Gimenez & Shattuck, 2011, 136). But, in considering what alliances between progressive and radical food movements look in practice, many scholars (Mares & Alkon, 2011; Slocum, 2006; Alkon & Agyeman, 2014)
warn that progressive approaches are often tainted by market-based solutions rooted in racialized capitalism, which only replicate and exacerbate economic and racial inequities. They argue that even if these approaches enhance local economies and communities, they cannot be considered transformative. These criticisms are valid and these dynamics play out in community food projects often.

Yet, scholars and practitioners are left wondering how to move forward. Do the problematic parts of progressive approaches keep actors from working with radical organizations and actors? How do we begin to forge real alliances between progressive and radical movements that acknowledge and work to displace racial and economic injustices? Where are the spaces for progressive and radical actors to share dialogue, collaborate on ideas, and develop strategies for working together? Can those alliances and spaces result in transformative possibilities? Figeuroa and Alkon (2017) argue that it is possible for transformative change to occur as an evolution out of oppressive systems, and in fact, that this is the only starting place. They argue that we must start here, where we are, by building programs and projects that are grounded in community resources and knowledge, meet the real needs of community members, and work to empower people to shape their own futures. Figeuroa and Alkon say that we must “find cracks in the concrete of neoliberal capitalism in which [we] can sow seeds of collective resistance” (Figeuroa & Alkon, 2017, 228).

The Culinary and Nutrition Center (CNC) and Home Grown Springfield program represent one project engaged in the practice of building equitable food systems change out of an unexpected, creative partnership. While the project is not transformative at its roots, it provides an example of how many different types of people working toward a
variety of goals can collaborate to advance equitable outcomes. The Advisory Council is made up of participants that fall all along Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck’s (2011) spectrum, from neoliberal, to reform, to progressive, to radical. Yet, instead of remaining steadfast in their categories as Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck suggest, participants frequently weave in and out of the spectrum, making comments and revealing affiliations that are often surprising and seemingly paradoxical. Through the Advisory Council they forge sometimes unlikely connections with each other across sectors, discourses, and approaches, by creating a shared space for exchanging information, perspectives, and stories. Accessing this space has helped to shape the visions for the project and has expanded the possibilities of what the CNC and Home Grown Springfield can stand for.

The relationships forged within the Advisory Council displace business as usual, even among project leaders that are accountable to the city and Sodexo. These shifts lay the groundwork for policy change promoting health equity and food justice on the city level, and perhaps even the state and national levels. These shifts represent Figeuroa and Alkon’s (2017) cracks in the concrete, from where progressives and radicals can collaborate, and from which transformative change can grow.

Expanding Visions through Shared Spaces

What happens in the physical space of Advisory Council meetings is important. For many Advisory Council participants, meetings are the only time they interact with each other. Participants expressed gratitude for being able to come together as a cross-sectoral group, especially since they do not often get a chance to do so. One participant said, “I didn’t realize how many other players that we would be able to work with, so that’s been…a benefit” (Partner, Interview, 2019). By coming together as diverse
professionals, Advisory Council participants have been able to build new relationships and develop stronger networks. That same participant continued, “It makes you just aware of all the players that can be at the table” (Partner, Interview, 2019), highlighting a major benefit of the coalition – to illuminate new potential partnerships. This is particularly important when it happens not only across sectors, but across approaches to food systems change.

The exchanges that occur during Advisory Council meetings have pushed the group to become more intentional, community-minded, equity-focused, and systems-oriented. Through conversations and interactions that take place during meetings, participants have expanded the possibilities for the project, and pushed project leaders toward more progressive decision-making.

One way that participants achieve this is by using neutral language. Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) argue that food systems actors use varying discourses, depending on what part of the food movement they are associated with. Oftentimes, competing discourses can complicate communication, illuminate intra-group tensions, and extinguish open dialogue. By shutting down communication and dialogue, cross-sectoral coalitions fail fast, squashing any opportunity for building strength in their alliance.

While the Advisory Council has no explicit ground rules about language or communication, they have been able to foster open dialogue by avoiding politically charged discourse and rhetoric, staying focused on themes related directly to the project, and avoiding generalizations. The group benefits greatly from this collaborative communication style, which is fostered intentionally by the group’s experienced facilitator.
In addition, participants come to meetings as engaged listeners, and ready to participate and ask each other good questions. Doing so allows not only for good conversation, exchange of information, and sharing of perspectives, but it also gives participants room to navigate differing opinions and ideas with civility. Given the current political climate in 2019 and the discouragement on the national level from engaging in civil dialogue with those who have differing beliefs, this group presents an example of how this can be accomplished and the benefits of doing so.

Fostering effective communication at Advisory Council meetings is due in part to good modeling by project leaders. Those with the most power at the meetings are exceptional listeners and group participants, almost never using their power to commandeer meetings or dominate the conversation, which can be a problem in coalitions made up of leaders. Instead, project leaders are notably open-minded, empathetic, and emotionally available. When discussing the potential impacts that the project may have on reducing hunger, improving livelihoods, and changing people’s lives in the city of Springfield, it is not uncommon for some project leaders to shed tears, recognize and congratulate staff and Advisory Council members, and gush about the project. It’s also not uncommon for project leaders to talk candidly about the reality that their students face in regard to health, hunger, and poverty, demonstrating an empathetic understanding of the problems, as well as a commitment to addressing them.

This willingness by project leaders to show up fully to meetings, not only as project leaders and professionals, but also as a people with emotions, feelings, and connection to the project, gives permission to others to do the same. This is particularly
true when project leaders are school and Sodexo administrators, including people with significant power to impact the project.

A primary tool utilized among the group for accessing this space of vulnerability is through story-telling. By sharing stories about how the project is advancing, impacts that they have seen the project have, and outcomes they are dreaming about, the group is able to deepen their connection to the project and to each other. For example, conversations during Advisory Council meetings often occur between individuals who may otherwise not engage with each other. This may be a conversation between a Sodexo chef and a policy advocate, or between a school administrator and a small business owner. The exchange of perspectives and stories that occurs between these participants in the context of a meeting is where people’s minds begin to change, new ideas develop, and transformative possibilities emerge. One food service participant demonstrates the power of these exchanges, stating,

I just completely focus on getting the food out the door and… I never really thought of what happened after that… I heard the story of the teacher that gave out his breakfast because the kids weren’t getting breakfast at home. To hear all the different sides of it and understand that” (Food service, Interview, 2019).

For a food service staff person who works primarily on developing menus and cooking food, student hunger may not be at the forefront of their mind. But, through an Advisory Council meeting, this participant developed a much deeper understanding of their own work and its connection to promoting health equity in the city. Another example is when a small business owner suggested that the CNC promote its food at a large insurance company nearby. A nonprofit staff person asked, why? Through exchange of information and perspectives, the group came up with the idea that perhaps the company may be interested in offering internships to Springfield students, or
purchasing food from the catering department for meetings and events, which could generate revenue to be re-invested into the program. Almost always the ideas that come out of these exchanges are community-oriented and equity-focused, pushing participants toward systems thinking and structural change.

Through storytelling Advisory Council members from varying sectors are able to better understand and more authentically connect with many different aspects and outcomes of the project. This is particularly true of stories coming from Advisory Council members who regularly interact with students and community members. These exchanges create spaces where relationships form and grow. From these relationships participants deepen their connection to the project, the coalition is strengthened, and the potential for advancing toward transformative changes expands.

Many participants feel that they have met new people, built stronger relationships, and made connections that they otherwise would not have. One participant said, “We have had a lot of relationships that have materialized” (Food service, Interview, 2019), demonstrating the connections that have come out of the Advisory Council process. Another person said, “For me, it’s great to meet all of these people who are really experts in their fields” (Food Service, Interview, 2019), again showing the importance of networking at the meetings. Yet, one participant expressed a desire for more networking opportunities, stating that “It’s also the networking that could be happening…I think that could be increased” (Partner, Interview, 2019). Considering that participants do not often get around a table with such a wide array of people thinking about the same issues, it makes sense that some desire more opportunities to interact, network, and build relationships. As the Advisory Council moves forward, this may be a place to focus
attention. It may also be a good strategy for keeping participants engaged as the burden of coalition-building can become heavier as time passes.

**What Does Transformative Change Look Like? Displacing Business as Usual**

The possibilities for what transformative food systems change looks like in the context of the CNC and Home Grown Springfield program are numerous. First, there are opportunities for transformative change related to health equity. By increasing access to and consumption of fresh, healthy food in the city, residents will likely become healthier in the long term. This is one step toward liberating low-income communities and communities of color from long histories of food apartheid and the associated health impacts. In addition, there are opportunities for transformative change related to food sovereignty. By giving students the opportunity to participate in decision-making about the food they eat at school, they gain agency over their lives and their bodies. Together impacts like these may begin to shift the ways that Springfield residents feel about their city, and about their own lives, which is truly transformative.

In her address to attendees of the CNC Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on April 12, 2019, Liz O’Gilvie, the Chair of the Springfield Food Policy Council, said,

I happen to believe that ten years from now when people are asking questions about Springfield and wondering how we went from the sickest and the poorest city in the Commonwealth, that nobody expected anything from, to a city where…life outcomes for children have changed, [the CNC] is going to be one of the markers.

She went on to say, “And all of this is happening in a city that is majority people of color, that are majority poor. That’s why it matters.” Here, O’Gilvie captures the breadth of this project for the city of Springfield, and depth of impact that it is expected
to have on a low-income community of color. This is also representative of transformative change.

While not necessarily transformative in nature, the project also includes some progressive components that may be unexpected from a partnership with a global corporation. This includes the program’s inclusion of Sodexo staff in the project. Firstly, Sodexo is one of the largest employers of Springfield residents in the city. As Advisory Council participants often discuss, Sodexo cafeteria staff are feeding the children of their neighbors, friends, and family members. Through its commitment to employing city residents, the company demonstrates its investment in Springfield. When the district announced that it would be opening the CNC, current Sodexo staff were given first chance at the new jobs. Offering additional job skills training and in many cases pay raises, many Sodexo employees benefitted from having their position moved to the CNC. As the Home Grown Springfield program unfolds, staff are not being left out. Advisory Council participants have also discussed offering nutrition education courses to Sodexo staff, suggesting that this is a method of shifting the culture of healthy eating not just among students, but throughout the community.

While all of these represent ways that the program pushes the boundaries of business as usual, there is another part of the project that has particular potential to change big systems. This is the way the project could place pressure on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the primary funder of the school lunch program. Currently, “the USDA Foods in Schools program supports domestic nutrition programs and American agricultural producers through purchases of 100% American-grown and -produced foods for use by schools and institutions” (USDA, 2013). While the USDA
offers some opportunities for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables through the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program, many of the products offered are the same unhealthy, processed foods that the CNC and the Home Grown Springfield program hope to eliminate from the menu. Instead, the CNC is moving toward purchasing more foods locally, from small-scale producers. While the local food supply chain is still developing and cannot meet the demand of the school district, the hope is that they will be able to steadily increase their purchase of locally grown foods. Combined with the plan for increased scratch cooking, this could move the district toward its own form of self-sufficiency and food sovereignty. While the USDA is unlikely to feel any impact of Springfield’s program, it could produce an impact if this model is successful, and if it begins to replicate across the United States.

It is no surprise then that the USDA was not initially supportive of the CNC. It took the district over a year of negotiation with the agency to gain approval to use federal funding toward their initiative. For more background on the history of this process and the development of the CNC model, see the *Overview of the Case Study* section of this paper. Again, while this project alone does not produce the kind of transformative systems change that could shift federal policy toward increasing funding for local procurement, increasing the quality of school food, or advancing the goals of food sovereignty, it does present a long-term opportunity for structural change, and therefore must be noted.

While the CNC and Home Grown Springfield program’s ability to effect change to federal nutrition policy or the Farm Bill on its own is not likely at this time, it could certainly impact city and state policy. Advisory Council participants see this as a priority.
and opportunity in the longer term. Since many participants see the CNC as a model that may be replicated across the state and even the country, they also see opportunities for state and federal policy developments. Some of the policy initiatives discussed by Advisory Council participants include state support for the district-wide Breakfast in the Classroom initiative, which Springfield was the first city in the Commonwealth to implement. This includes advocacy around a provision to ensure that school breakfast and lunch remain free of charge to all students, even if the city’s median income level rises above the federal poverty line. Another policy priority discussed is around federal support for local purchasing preference, meaning that districts can use more federal dollars to purchase locally grown products. In addition, participants discuss a universal application for all state support programs, including SNAP, WIC, Mass Health, and reduced price school meal eligibility. This means that if a person or family applies for one of these programs, their application for the others would automatically populate and process, letting people know what programs they are eligible for without having to apply separately. In addition, participants discuss changes that they may effect to Sodexo’s company policies, particularly around local sourcing.
CHAPTER 6
RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations for the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council

Based on this research, I have several recommendations for the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council: 1) The Advisory Council should identify and communicate the need for more resources to support its engagement process to ensure it continues; 2) As planned, the group should focus in year 2 on bringing more community members to the table, both physically to Advisory Council meetings, as well as into the project more broadly, including in providing feedback about school food, shaping changes to the program, leading marketing and outreach efforts, and becoming decision-makers; 3) The Advisory Council should engage in a series of facilitated conversations about the group itself – its purpose going forward, needs of participants, and decision-making processes to clarify and illuminate the group’s purpose, expectations, and goals going forward; 4) The Advisory Council should clarify and articulate its commitment to social, economic, and racial justice, discuss existing power dynamics, and identify opportunities for including community members in decision-making. Based on literature in the field, these actions will support the group as it moves forward as well as hold project leaders accountable for continually engaging community members in the project.

Implications for Regional Planning

This research is relevant to regional and urban planning because it contributes to building best practices for planners in two areas: food systems and community engagement.
Re-defining Food Systems as a Planning Problem

While the literature in urban planning only began to formally include food systems studies in the past several decades, the two areas have long been connected. Debates in the field of planning have historically been focused on the uses of urban and rural spaces, often rooted in food systems questions around agricultural production, land-use and land management, economic opportunity, and cultural heritage. Some of the planning field’s earliest and most widely known contributors including Ebenezer Howard (1902) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1935) based their theories and models for community development and city planning on organizing space based on agricultural production and access to a sustainable food supply. Campbell (2004) makes the argument that the early emphasis on food and agriculture by people like Howard and Wright created a direct historical lineage between food systems and planning. She calls Howard (1902) an intellectual ancestor of the alternative food movement and its associated planning activities, emphasizing the importance of these early planners in creating a steadfast connection between the two fields (Campbell, 2004).

This case study, which focuses on a school food initiative aiming to provide healthier food to kids in Springfield, MA, provides a window into how the contemporary food system impacts communities today. The experiences of residents in Springfield demonstrate how systematic exclusion and disconnection from the land and fresh food drive poor physical, emotional, and mental health outcomes. Most people would agree that access to food is a basic human right. Increasingly, many would also agree that access to green spaces, including community gardens, school gardens, urban farms, and protected farmland, are also basic rights which all people should enjoy, regardless of their income. If planners are dedicated to ensuring the health, well-being, and safety of their
community, then ensuring access to healthy food and green spaces is critical. In recognizing this, planners must take responsibility for identifying and prioritizing community projects which address challenges all along the food system including healthy food access, local food production, protection of agricultural lands and urban farms, and political advocacy in these areas. By doing so, planners can become engaged in advocating for food sovereignty as a right to the city.

*Becoming Radical Planners: Transferring Power through Engagement*

This research supports other scholarly arguments that the primary role of the planner is to empower community members to make their own decisions about the places where they live. Kennedy (2018) calls this transformative community planning, or planning which “empowers the community to act in its own interests” (Kennedy, 2018, 1). This includes community decision-making around the allocation of budgets, the use of community property, access to services, and the protection of basic human rights. Miraftab (2009) calls this radical planning, auguring that transfer of power is at the root of transformative social change. Miraftab critiques business-as-usual public engagement calling it surface-level, routine, inaccessible, and unproductive. Instead, she argues that radical planners can support communities best by moving between formal and informal spaces and practices, “us[ing] the hegemonic system’s political openings to make counter-hegemonic moves, and vice versa” (483). By taking action beyond the “invited spaces” of the political sphere, she argues, radical planners create new spaces of participation (Miraftab, 2009). Miraftab highlights the unique role that planners may play in advancing structural change, a role which presents itself as a wholly new conceptualization of what the planner’s role should be.
In defining food systems issues as those of major concern for planners, and recognizing the emerging role of the radical planner, this research suggests that planners must be engaged in advocating for food sovereignty, and thereby the empowerment of community members to make their own planning decisions. This case study illuminates one example of how planners may become engaged in this work by advocating for food sovereignty through the engagement of diverse multi-stakeholder coalitions. While food sovereignty (or any kind of transformative change) was not a stated goal of the Home Grown Springfield project, it became a part of the project’s vision through the process of diverse multi-stakeholder engagement. Despite the fact that the establishment of the project’s Advisory Council was not entirely community-led and that the group is made up of mostly white organizational and business leaders, the engagement process pushed the group to expand their visions for the project. From this, planners can take the coalition model as a good example of a tool for building support for more progressive projects. In employing this tool, planners will benefit from continually bringing more community members into the process. In making authentic community engagement and power-sharing a priority, planners will also need to recognize, articulate, and work to bring in the resources required to do this work.

*systems approach to regional planning*

This project also provides support for regional planning, that is, planning that truly engages diverse stakeholders across the region in decision-making, especially on issues and projects that have broad impact. The Advisory Council benefits greatly from bringing together organizational and business leaders from across the three counties of the Connecticut River Valley, and from fields related to operations, marketing, public
administration, community engagement, nutrition, education, and information technology, among others. By engaging people who are different from each other and who represent different community interests, Advisory Council members share knowledge, build relationships, and develop holistic understandings of the problems they work on. In doing so, they develop a systems approach to problem-solving which recognizes communities as living organisms with constantly changing ecologies, in need of broad-based, networked, and holistic approaches that require cooperation among many stakeholders. By including people with varying levels of power in this process, it also generates more opportunities for power sharing. Planners of all kinds are benefited by understanding and engaging with diverse perspectives from across the region, particularly when solving the complex issues that face many communities today.

Finally, this research suggests that planners must acknowledge their role in facilitating and building support for policy change, which is the bedrock of transformative change, and ensures new systems are institutionalized. In honing our skills for holistic problem-solving, we must identify and promote policies which effect change in the same way. With regard to food system planning, one opportunity for doing so in the Connecticut River Valley may be the Good Food Purchasing Program. The Good Food Purchasing Program “transforms the way public institutions purchase food by creating a transparent and equitable food system built on five core values: local economies, health, valued workforce, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability” (Good Food Purchasing Program, 2019). A set of policies and programs, the initiative is currently operating in 28 institutions and coalitions in 16 cities across the United States. This initiative is particularly relevant to this research because the model was both
developed by a multi-stakeholder coalition, and most often adopted in cities that have diverse cross-sectoral coalitions working together. Planners in the Connecticut River Valley can play an important role in facilitating the adoption of programs like the Good Food Purchasing Program by centralizing food system planning and building support through community empowerment.

**Conclusions**

This paper seeks to address two research questions: In what ways and to what extent do diverse stakeholders seek to enact social change in the alternative food movement? In what ways and to what extent does multi-stakeholder engagement cultivate new possibilities for transformative food systems change? Through this systematic analysis of the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council’s first year of meetings, I find useful insights into both questions.

First, I find that Advisory Council participants envision social change in the alternative food movement using a variety of discourses, models, visions and pathways, affirming the arguments of Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) which frame this research. In this case, participants converge around their shared goals of providing Springfield students with fresh, healthy school food, but beyond that, diverge in their wide-reaching visions for the project. These include visions for changes in educational curriculum, economic development, equity and justice, and policies at the local, state, and federal levels. Within their visions, participants vary in their models for change as well. Coming from different sectors, some prioritize teaching children about health and wellness, others focus on providing access to capital for small-scale farmers, and others develop new recipes for large-scale scratch cooked and locally sourced school food. Their daily work
and skill sets are wildly different, the institutions, companies, and organizations they work for have disparate missions, and the language they use to communicate varies.

Yet, given their differences, participants do not fit squarely into the spectrum outlined by Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck (2011), which categorizes food system actors as neoliberal, reformist, progressive, and radical. Instead, Advisory Council participants traverse the categories, making statements and offering ideas that move swiftly between categories. While participants are bridled by their institutional affiliations, this research demonstrates the flexibility that individuals exhibit in re-shaping their thinking beyond what may be considered typical of a professional in their position.

These findings have implications for the question of whether multi-stakeholder engagement cultivates new possibilities for transformative food systems change. Through participation in the Advisory Council, this research suggests that participants developed and expanded their visions for the project. This occurred not only as information sharing, storytelling, and relationship-building deepened participants’ connection to the project, but as it widened their perspectives on what this project could mean, what goals it might achieve, and what visions it may promote. This research finds that in its first year, Advisory Council participants developed and expanded their understanding of systems approaches to community development, including building “communities of opportunity,” (Ohio State University Kirwan Institute, 2009), “healthy communities,” (Norris, 2013) and “whole communities” (The Center for Whole Communities, 2009). Through cross-sector and multi-stakeholder engagement participants deepened their knowledge and appreciation for a systems-approach to community development which recognizes that individuals and communities need a network of opportunities to thrive.
That is, community members need not only access to fresh, healthy food, but also high quality education, reliable and safe transportation, affordable housing, fair wages, and accessible health care, in addition to respect, dignity, security, and liberty. Kania and Kramer (2011) call this model “collective impact,” highlighting the drastically enhanced impact a project can have when it uses a systems approach.

While the collective impact model enacted by the Advisory Council advances new, more progressive possibilities for the project, it does not inherently indicate transformative social change. Wolff (2016) argues that the collective impact model is missing one critical component: direct engagement and decision-making power of those most impacted by whatever problem the program aims to address. While Walker (2004) argues that transformative social change is “the capacity to create a fundamentally new system,” Himmelman (2001) adds that those new systems must “transform power relations or produce long-term ownership in communities by significantly increasing communities’ control over their own destinies” (281). New systems must not replicate existing power structures, but instead displace them.

While the Advisory Council is not currently community-led, its engagement process has expanded the possibilities for the project, which include increasing community engagement and leadership. In the second and third years of the Home Grown Springfield program, there are plans to develop a Youth Advisory Council as well as a Parent Ambassador program. Both of these groups will provide opportunities for community members to increase their participation in the Advisory Council’s leadership and guidance of the project, hopefully leading to increased decision-making power for community members.
Springfield Public Schools (SPS) is also collaborating with Mercy Hospital and Trinity Health to conduct a multi-year evaluation of the Home Grown Springfield program. The evaluation will be managed by two firms, one of which is Fertile Ground, directed by Catherine Sands. Fertile Ground’s evaluation aims to be community-led and participatory, supporting the Springfield Food Policy Council to build the capacity of community members through the expansion of Parent Ambassador groups at schools in the city. Capacity building will focus on communication, interviewing, and surveying skills so that parents can lead data collection efforts by having conversations about the program directly with Springfield students, parents, teachers, and other staff. This evaluation style represents SPS’ commitment to continually expanding opportunities to engage community members more deeply in this project, giving them more decision-making power and leadership.

In addition, the multi-stakeholder engagement process of the Advisory Council has pushed toward other types of transformative change. These include potential advances toward health equity and food sovereignty as Springfield residents begin to access more fresh, healthy food, as students continue to contribute to decision-making about school meals and learn how to grow their own food, as parents become more deeply engaged in leadership around the initiative, and as staff benefit from better wages, benefits, and job satisfaction as a result of their positions at the Culinary and Nutrition Center. In addition, there are opportunities for transformative food system change in strengthening the local food economy and dis-engaging from the industrial corporate food supply chain. As small-scale farmers in the region expand their marketing into Springfield, the local food economy (and adjacent economies) may grow. Finally, there
are significant policy possibilities, which could have transformative impacts. These include policy initiatives to make all school meals free of charge for all students regardless of their family income or city poverty rate, as well as enforcing local purchasing requirements for all municipal departments.

While the above list demonstrates examples of potentially transformative possibilities, this research suggests that they have become realistic possibilities at all due in part to the cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder engagement and coalition-building of the Advisory Council. While engagement alone does not create transformative change, it strengthens coalitions, which together create and advocate for new, transformative possibilities.

This case study of the Advisory Council for the Home Grown Springfield program offers insight into how a professionally diverse multi-stakeholder coalition working on a large-scale city-wide project can begin to create space for advancing transformative social change. In response to critical theory which suggests that top-down, representative-leadership style coalitions rooted in market-based solutions only reproduce and exacerbate issues of economic and racial justice and never correlate with radical visions such as food sovereignty, this research suggests that social change work is only as good as the work that is happening. When scholars, practitioners, and organizers working in community feel stifled by the insurmountable impossibility of executing the “perfect” community-based project, this example encourages us to begin where we are. When the task of obtaining funding, convening the right organizations, mustering political support, and finding the time to work on so many competing projects appears daunting and feels unlikely, this case study suggests that if we start here, the possibilities are emergent.
By coming together as a coalition, the Advisory Council faced both immense opportunity as well as legitimate critique. With its top-down structure developed by project leaders, its lack of broad-based community representation, and its partnership with a global corporation, there were skeptics who questioned the depth of impact that the project could impart. Yet, Advisory Council members showed up and began their meeting schedule. From the start they identified the Springfield community as their top priority, continually bringing the experiences of students, parents, and families into the conversation. In building relationships they continually develop their shared understanding of the challenges that face Springfield residents as structural and requiring systems change.

In taking part in this process, the Advisory Council creates a shared space where they exchange information, perspectives, and stories from their communities. With genuine interest in collaboration, project leaders foster an open-minded, civil, and apolitical dialogue which lends itself to ideation, collaboration, and creative problem-solving. By building trust in the space, participants who are different from each other are able to listen, ask questions, and connect. With people with more power and people with less power engaging in this practice, project decision-makers have deepened their understanding of the problems and begun to consider new solutions. This practice will deepen if the Advisory Council brings more community members to the table, including students and parents. It is in this space that the coalition moves along the spectrum from Himmelman’s (2001) collaborative betterment toward his collaborative empowerment model. This process takes time, relationship building, trust building, and capacity building among community leaders and project leaders. It is through this on-going
process that Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck’s (2011) progressive-radical alliances may form, shifting project goals toward more transformative possibilities.

In engaging in this process the Advisory Council has expanded the scope of the Home Grown Springfield project to include goals outside its initial vision, including community-wide health equity, food justice and community empowerment. This process has moved the project’s toward social justice. Yet, this is not a perfect process, nor a terminal one. It is rife with challenges, which must continually be examined, reflected upon, and addressed. It is the responsibility of Advisory Council participants to ensure that the process continues, that they use their privileged position to continually find the cracks within the structures and push on them to generate transformative possibilities that did not exist before. In doing so they begin to grab hold of their “right to the city” (Harvey, 2008).

These conclusions leave many opportunities for further research, which will enrich the fields of both regional planning and food systems. First, continued observation and analysis of the Home Grown Springfield Advisory Council as it moves through its second, third, and many more years of operation could provide interesting insight into the evolution, sustainability, and impact of community-engaged regional food projects. Researchers interested in longitudinal study could track this project over time to understand whether and how project goals are reached, whether the project realizes its transformative visions, and what role multi-stakeholder engagement plays in that process. In addition, researchers would benefit particularly from studying the evolution of community leadership and decision-making within the project to understand and document how community-based program planning translates to implementation. This
research could help planners and others learn how to support and cultivate effective multi-stakeholder coalition-building, cross-sectoral and regional collaboration, and authentic community empowerment in all types of planning projects. This case study would be particularly suited to longitudinal study because it is the first comprehensive school food program of its kind.

More broadly, researchers could build on these findings by studying more closely the role of race, class, and gender in developing effective multi-stakeholder coalitions and community engagement processes. Using an intersectional lens to examine these dynamics will illuminate critical information for strengthening and deepening the work of building equitable and empowered communities.

Finally, I recommend that future researchers interested in these topics turn to the communities they work with to understand what kinds of research would be most useful to them. As radical planners and scholars, it is critical that we cultivate our own practices of honoring community knowledge, creating accessible spaces for diverse participation, resourcing those processes, and stepping aside to support community-led decision-making.
## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

### LOGIC MODEL DRAFT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Planning and Launch</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDENT</strong></td>
<td>Engage students in menu development through taste tests, focus groups, and surveys</td>
<td>Students articulate what foods they want on the menu: quality, local, fresh, cultural foods</td>
<td>Students co-lead in evaluating, advising for, and sustaining the CNC meal program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DISTRICT</strong></td>
<td>Switch % meat components to scratch production</td>
<td>Increase % scratch cooking for all meals</td>
<td>Increase % scratch cooked meals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand vendor approval policies to include small and mid-sized local producers</td>
<td>Increase local sourcing through newly approved vendors</td>
<td>Institutionalize expanded vendor approval policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish warehouse and distribution protocols to accept local produce</td>
<td>Test and implement strategies</td>
<td>Streamline protocols to maintain local sourcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a definition and goal for local sourcing</td>
<td>Increase local purchasing to 16%</td>
<td>Increase local purchasing to 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY</strong></td>
<td>Establish purchasing relationships with local producers</td>
<td>Increase if local producers CNC has relationships with</td>
<td>Institutionalize relationship-building systems with local producers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GOAL 1: Improve quality of food overall: fresh, healthy, locally sourced, culturally-relevant homemeats.

| **STUDENT** | By new healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods | Students consume healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods | Students eat a healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced diet |
| **STUDENT** | Students enjoy dishes that represent true culture | Students see their cultures reflected in school meals | School meals reflect diversity of cultures in Springfield |
| **STUDENT** | Students enjoy taste tests of healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods | Students change food preferences toward healthy, scratch cooked, locally sourced foods | Students enjoy school meals |

### GOAL 2: Cultivate positive schoolwide wellness culture and increase program participation.

| **DISTRICT** | Build awareness of the changes to the meal program among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff | Develop engagement and alignment among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff about school food change | Develop skills among administration, teachers, and cafeteria staff to talk about the program and its impacts to become Ambassadors of the program |
| **DISTRICT** | Develop district communications strategy | Build internal and external communications strategy and benchmarks | Build communications strategy |
| **DISTRICT** | Pilot food and nutrition focused hands-on learning in gardens and classrooms with St. Louis Sustainability Teams & FoodCorps | Incorporate FoodCorps curriculum into classroom learning standards | Include food and nutrition focused wellness learning in curriculum |
| **DISTRICT** | Examine, update, and approve District Wellness Policy | Embrace District Wellness Policy at the school level | Champion District Wellness Policy in all schools |
| **DISTRICT** | Offer wellness training opportunities to staff, teachers | Establish schoolwide multi-stakeholder wellness teams | Model wellness at school leadership and staff level (teachers, principals, administration, food service) |
| **FAMILY & COMMUNITY** | Families and community partners participate in family health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.) | Families and community partners demonstrate knowledge in health and wellness and food systems for themselves and their families | Families and community partners become Ambassadors to champion schoolwide policy changes around health and wellness and food systems |

### GOAL 3: Increase student learning and leadership.

| **STUDENT** | Students participate in health and wellness and food events and activities (gardens, wellness teams, cooking classes, etc.) | Students obtain new skills (gardening, cooking, advocacy) | Increased student awareness and knowledge about food and health |
| **STUDENT** | Students are aware of the changes to the meal program through participation in taste tests, tours of the CNC, and new menu items | Students are excited about and engaged in school food change and learning opportunities | Students develop skills to talk about the program and its impacts, becoming Ambassadors of the program |

### GOAL 4: Leverage district systems and policy change.

| **DISTRICT** | SPI develops Student CNC Ambassador program | Student CNC Ambassador system scaled in designated schools | Student CNC Ambassador program becomes part of school district structure |
| **DISTRICT** | Student internship positions (cooking, food services, gardening, wellness) are created giving students opportunities to develop critical thinking and hands-on experiences | Internship program established | Students use internship learning to achieve career goals |
| **DISTRICT** | District pilots components of health and wellness and food learning program | District invests in wellness and food learning program infrastructure | District invests in health and wellness and food learning program |

### Goal: Leverage district systems and policy change.

| **FAMILY & COMMUNITY** | Advisory Council partners and their networks connect the value of the CNC to their missions | New collaborations and resources for child and community health, local procurement, and food access emerge | Community partnerships influence state policies for procurement, health, and food access |

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## APPENDIX B

### FOOD MOVEMENTS FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICS</th>
<th>CORPORATE FOOD REGIME</th>
<th>FOOD MOVEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEOLIBERAL</td>
<td>REFORMIST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Food Enterprise</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Institutions</td>
<td>International Finance Corporation (World Bank); IMF; WTO; USDA; USAID; GAFSP; Green Revolution/CGLAR; Millennium Challenge; Global Harvest; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Cargill; Monsanto; ADM; Tyson; Carrefour; Tesco; Walmart</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank); FAO; HLTF; CFA; CGIAR; IFAP; mainstream Fair Trade; Slow Food; some Food Policy Councils; Worldwatch; OXFAM-AMERICA; CARE; Feeding America and most food banks and food aid programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Corporate/Global market</td>
<td>Development/Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Overproduction; corporate concentration; unregulated markets and monopolies; monocultures (including organic); GMOs; agrofuels; mass global consumption of industrial food; phasing out of peasant &amp; family agriculture and local retail</td>
<td>Mainstreaming/certification of niche markets (e.g. organic, fair, local, sustainable); maintaining northern agricultural subsidies; ‘sustainable’ roundtables for agrofuels, soy, forest products, etc; market-led land reform; microcredit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Interview Guide for Advisory Council Research Participants

General

1. What is your title and organizational affiliation?
2. What is the core work of your organization?
3. Are there any larger organizations, government agencies, businesses, or other entities that your organization formally aligns itself with? What about informally?
4. What is your role in the Advisory Council process? What sub-committee(s) are you a part of?

Outcomes

5. Tell me about the most significant challenges that will be addressed through this project?
6. What are the most significant opportunities that may emerge?
7. What would “success” look like in its most grand form for this project?
8. On a small scale, what are the most important tangible outcomes that you hope to see from this project? (What specific things would you like to see change as a result?)
   a. What are the concrete steps or strategies you believe are necessary to reaching those outcomes? (How would we get there?)
9. Are there any additional outcomes you hope will impact the broader regional food system?
   a. What are the concrete steps or strategies you believe are necessary to reaching those outcomes?

Process

10. What are the biggest barriers to reaching your goals in this process?
11. How could those barriers be overcome?
12. Have you met new people through this Advisory Council process?
13. Has being a part of this Advisory Council changed your perspective or expectations about the outcomes of the project?
14. Do you foresee working with any of these individuals or organizations in the future? How so?
15. What has been your favorite part of this process so far?
16. What has been missing or could be improved?
17. What is one event or activity that has stood out for you and why?
Good afternoon, my name is Kristen Whitmore, I am a graduate student in Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I am working with Catherine Sands, the facilitator of the Advisory Council, who is also an Adjunct Lecturer at UMass, which I would like to invite you to be a part of.

I would like to start out by giving you a brief overview of my research, and why I am asking you to participate. The purpose of this study is to understand how a multi-stakeholder engagement process can shape the development of a shared vision for food systems change among diverse stakeholders. I am interested in how participants from a wide array of disciplines and backgrounds can use the engagement process to develop unique strategies for changing the way our food system works.

In order to conduct this research, I will observe Advisory Council and sub-committee meetings, taking note of the ideas that emerge and evolve. I will also ask for volunteers to participate in short recorded interviews. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please email me at kwhitmore@umass.edu. Interviewees will be asked to sign an additional Informed Consent form before the interview takes place. Are there any questions at this time about what I have just discussed?

The research that I will be conducting will contribute to my master’s thesis in Regional Planning. I may also use this information in articles that might be published, as well as in academic presentations. In addition, my final report will present the Advisory Council with a summary of its engagement process, documents goals and outcomes for project evaluation, and demonstrate the areas of strength as well as weakness in developing a shared vision for the Culinary and Nutrition Center, as well as in the broader food movement.

There are no significant risks to participating in this research. Your individual privacy and confidentiality of the information you provide will be maintained in all published and written analysis resulting from the study, to the best of my ability. That means that your name or identifying characteristics will never be used in connection with your comments. You should note that because of the small size of this group, it may be possible to use deductive reasoning to guess where comments have originated. In addition, because this is a group discussion, your comments will not be confidential to others who are in the room. Please refrain from making comments that you would not feel comfortable sharing to the wider group.
As a benefit, the project will receive added capacity, including the production of a report that may be useful in evaluating the project’s progress.

Your participation in this study is on-going through June 2019. Please understand your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate. You will receive no monetary or otherwise material benefit from participating in this project.

If you decide not to participate, you will not be asked for an interview and your comments will not be noted in observation.

If you have any questions, please ask me directly or email me at kwhitmore@umass.edu or Catherine Sands at chsands@pubpol.umass.edu. If you would like to speak with someone not directly involved in the research study, you may contact the Human Research Protection Office at the University of Massachusetts by email (humansubjects@ora.umass.edu); phone (413) 545-3428; or mail (Human Research Protection Office, 100 Venture Way, Suite 116, Hadley, MA).

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing to me observing your meetings. You are not agreeing to an interview, which will require an additional Informed Consent form, filled out before the interview. If you do not wish to be observed, please let me know directly at any time during this meeting or by email at kwhitmore@umass.edu
APPENDIX E

EMAIL TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Human Subjects Institutional Review Board
Sample Interview Invite Email

Dear Advisory Council Member,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study conducted by Catherine Sands, MPPA, of the University of Massachusetts and Kristen Whitmore, a graduate student in the Regional Planning department at the University of Massachusetts.

The purpose of this study is to understand how a multi-stakeholder engagement process can shape the development of a shared vision for food systems change among diverse participants. Particular attention will be paid to transformative possibilities that emerge from the process, meaning structural or systemic changes to the food system. The study will focus on the Advisory Council at the Culinary and Nutrition Center in Springfield, MA. The hope is to present the Advisory Council with a report that summarizes its engagement process, documents goals and outcomes for project evaluation, and demonstrates the areas of strength as well as weakness in developing a shared vision for the Culinary and Nutrition Center.

I am interested in conducting a one-on-one interview with you to talk about your experiences and opinions as an Advisory Council member. The interview questions will focus on your professional affiliations and experience, the goals and barriers you see for the Culinary and Nutrition Center, and your opinions on the Advisory Council engagement process so far. The recorded interview would last about 45 minutes, and I could travel to your workplace or school to conduct it. If you prefer to meet elsewhere, I could reserve a space at UMass Amherst.

Please note that you should decide on your own whether or not you want to be in this study. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to participate, you have the right to tell me at any time that you no longer wish to participate, and you will stop being in the study.

If you are interested, please email me at kwhitmore@umass.edu or call me at 413-695-5246 to set up a time to meet.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Kristen Whitmore
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