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Achieving equity (with)in Food Policy Councils: Confronting structural racism and centering community

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Abstract

This thesis investigated if Food Policy Councils (FPCs) are effectively democratizing and shaping a more equitable food system for all, or are they replicating the existing structural inequality embedded within the contemporary food system. Through a literature review outlining the history of structural racism in the food system, historical and contemporary efforts to dismantle it in the United States, and various frameworks to approach food systems work, I argued that implementing policy through a framework of community food security is integral in creating a just and equitable food system. After analyzing national survey data sent out to 309 FPCs in North America and conducting semi-structured interviews and participant observation with FPCs in Oakland and Baltimore, I examined how councils are committing to equity both in their own council and the surrounding food environment. Though both Baltimore and Oakland FPCs are confronted by institutional barriers in their respective equity work, each had adapted innovative ways to confront structural racism and centering underserved communities and communities of color in their organizational structure, council representation, and policy advocacy. I conclude with key questions to achieve desired equitable outcomes.

Key Words: Food Policy Council, Food Equity, Food Justice, Agroecology, Diversity and Inclusion

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Key Abbreviations

FPC	Food Policy Council
OFPC	Oakland Food Policy Council
DFPC	Detroit Food Policy Council
DBCFSN	Detroit Black Community Food Security Network
BFPI	Baltimore Food Policy Initiative
BFPAC	Baltimore Food Policy Advisory Committee
RFEA	Resident Food Equity Advisor
LAFPC	Los Angeles Food Policy Council
CFS	Community Food Security
AFM	Alternative Food Movement
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion

1. Introduction

While the agro-industrial food system's adverse socio-ecological impacts on regional and global ecosystems are well documented (see: Vandermeer et al., 2017), the impacts and legacies of structural racism on the food system are less explored in scholarship (Davy, Horne, McCurty, & Pennick, 2017; Ramírez, 2014). These legacies, compounded with confronting symptoms of systematic problems rather than root causes, have exacerbated negative impacts on low-income communities and communities of color (Allen, 2008; Holt-Giménez and Wang, 2011; Chappell, 2017). Patricia Allen (2008) draws attention to various exploitations of the contemporary US Agrifood system: food insecurity disproportionately affects women and persons of color (Harper and Giménez, 2016), farm workers live in poverty and work in dangerous conditions, and People of Color own only 2% of all US farms, while supplying over half of farm labor (USDA, 2018). Several food scholars and activists have even described the current state of agriculture as a "food apartheid" (Harper & Holt-Giménez, 2016; LaDuke, 2017).

There are many ways to trouble this issue, which begin with an acknowledgment of the existence of structural inequality and discrimination (Allen, 2008; McCullagh and Santo 2014; Harper and Holt-Giménez, 2016; Penniman, 2018). The food system is broadly defined as the overlapping and interacting activities across the food supply chain - from production to processing and distribution to consumption - and the related drivers of such activities including economics, policy, marketing, and culture (Neff, Palmer, McKenzie, & Lawrence, 2009). One method to confront the political and economic structures that bolster inequities across the food system is through democratizing the system to reflect the goals and values of *all members* of society and utilizing agroecological principles (Dahlberg, 2001). Agroecology aims to build a restorative food relationships based on "equity, participation, and justice" encouraging community participation in the design and implementation of socio-ecological food systems (Folke, 2004; Gliessman, 2015 p. 5).

Food Policy Councils (heretofore referred to as FPCs) developed as a way to scale out agroecological solutions to confront the ecological and socio-political challenges of the existing agro-industrial system. These solutions include transitioning towards decentralized decision-making, relying on the active participation of a range of key stakeholders from various food

sectors, and engaging with a "holistic, systems-level understanding of food system sustainability" (Gliessman, 2018) to transform the food system (Dahlberg, 2001; Harper, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez, Alkon, & Lambrick, 2009; Méndez et al., 2016). FPCs serve as facilitating forums for discussion, policy consultants and advocates, and building connections between the silos in the food system (Harper et al., 2009).

Since the 2000s, a minority of FPCs have begun committing to an equity lens in their work. Food equity refers to everyone - regardless of race, gender, residence - being able to "access and afford a basic healthy diet and [can] work to support a food system that produces that vision" (Center for Social Inclusion, 2013, para. 11). This challenge spans across the food systems' cultures, structures, and processes (Jones, Cooper, Noor, & Parks, 2018). An equity lens involves recognizing that patterns of historical injustices have fueled disparities across the US and that it's imperative "to engage all community members in the policy process in order to create a fair and just food system" (FPN Commitment to Equity, 2018). Several older councils have reevaluated their programs and structures to confront inequitable institutions and foster an inclusive culture and a few younger councils initiated with food equity as a key priority. While some FPCs have attempted to incorporate diversity into their organization, many times these efforts serve as window-dressing rather than sincere attempts to shift an organizational culture and decision-making process towards equity (May, 2015; Stewart, 2017; Jones et al., 2018).

Though scholars and activists have analyzed FPCs role and function in food systems, there is little scholarship documenting their shift towards an organizational commitment to equity. Similarly, there is a lack of comparative analyses of different FPCs successes and challenges, and their overall effectiveness in addressing farm and food justice issues. Several scholars and activists have questioned whether injustices within the food system be challenged without addressing the power dynamics in broader political and economic institutions (e.g., capitalism, patriarchy, legacies of colonialism, white supremacy) (Harper et al., 2009; Ramírez, 2014; Kepkiewicz et al., 2016; Farnsworth, 2017)?

1.1 Research Questions

This thesis examines whether Food Policy Councils are uniquely positioned to effectively democratize and shape a more equitable system for all or are they replicating the existing structural inequality embedded within the food system. The background section is comprised of a literature review that discusses the history of structural racism of the food system, efforts to dismantle it in the United States, and various frameworks that were designed to improve outcomes for producers and consumers across the food system. This is followed by analysis of North American survey data collected on Food Policy Councils by Johns Hopkins University Center for a Livable Future, and a deep dive into two case studies in Baltimore, Maryland and Oakland, California. Through a literature review and primary research, I aim to investigate the following questions:

1) How have FPCs centered equity into their organizational structure and operations?
2) In what ways are FPCs engaging or committing towards an equity lens?
    a. What are the barriers to this transition and implementation of new objectives?
    b. What policy, programs, and institutional changes are occurring under this lens?

This thesis contextualizes why these specific questions were being asked and proceeds to outline several ways in which FPCs in the US are shaping and conducting their work to build a more equitable food system.

2. Background

Prior to delving into the stated research questions, it's imperative to first briefly unpack the historical context of the 21st century broken food system in order to understand why FPCs were founded and how they understand the root causes they aim to address. I argue that the differences in interpreting the food system's history and the roots causes of contemporary challenges lead policymakers, community leaders, and food system practitioners to utilize different frameworks and terminology when addressing these problems. Therefore, in order to understand the differences in the way various FPCs address contemporary challenges, we must first understand which framework of understanding informs their work.

Alongside understanding different frameworks and terminology, I identify a pathway towards a more equitable food system utilizing principles of agroecology and the framework of community food security. Lastly, this section explores how FPCs, without representation in national governance, have proliferated and grew to its current influential role in steering local, state and regional policy. I outline their historical arc from the 1980s up until 2018. Though not presented chronologically, this literature review reflects the various stages of my own journey of comprehending the complexities and challenges involved in creating a more equitable food system.

2.1 Black Agrarianism: Counter-narrative to the legacy of colonialism

This section aims to contextualize the present inequality in the food system through a historical interpretation that pertains to both the legacy of oppression and a legacy of resistance of African Americans in the US. It is important to first acknowledge the history of past efforts of oppressed communities to achieve a voice in the food system and correct historical injustices. This legacy of resistance is a reminder of the history that set the table for food and farm justice scholarship, as well as this relatively 'new' wave of Food Policy Councils. It also serves to reflect on the particular obstacles these communities confronted, and the instruments they developed to overcome them.

These injustices began at the onset of colonization of the Americas in the 15th century, where 1.5 billion acres of land were taken from Native Americans through genocide and dispossession in enacted by White European settlers (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Violence ensued as

settlers forcefully populated vast sections of this land with enslaved Africans trafficked for their skill and labor. An estimated 222,505,049 hours of unpaid forced labor between 1619-1865 would result in a debt of trillions of dollars if one were to advocate for fair reparations, which speaks exclusively to labor costs and does not include profit share or compensation for harms done (Munford, 1996).

Throughout this cruel history, resistance and rebellion persisted. Among movements of resistance were Black farmers who fought for equal access to land and resources. This movement illustrates the deep-rooted agrarian connection and wisdom that were exploited to cultivate sugar, cotton, and tobacco (Bandele and Myers, 2017; Penniman and Snipstal, 2017). While enslaved African labor built the plantation model of agriculture (which became the foundation for the contemporary industrial agriculture system (Snipstal, 2015)), enslaved Africans also laid down the foundation for modern sustainable agriculture (Penniman, 2018).

One can tangibly trace the ways in enslaved West and Central Africans brought their knowledge and seeds with them and transformed the ecology of the agroecosystems in the US (Bandele and Myers, 2017). George Washington Carver and Booker T. Whatley, two prominent African American agroecologists, botanists, and scholars, laid down the foundations of much of the technology, practices and principles that guide sustainable agriculture today. Their teachings include crop rotations, the use of legumes to build soil fertility, soil and water testing, community supported agriculture (CSAs), and many more. These roots, however, are unrecognizable to most farmers today, largely due to the hegemonic knowledge production that rendered these contributions invisible within the contemporary food system (Bandele and Myers, 2017; Penniman, 2018).

The persistent structures of oppression sown from the onset of slavery against African Americans (both as food producers and consumers) continued into the 21st century. During the 1960s, a century after emancipation and during the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Black owned farms lost 88% of their land across ten southern states (Davy et al., 2017). From 1940-1974, half a million African American farms went bankrupt nationally as part of a concerted effort to remove the rights to food and land to a specific race and keep the White hegemony in power (Davy et al., 2017). Some factors that caused this loss of land and livelihood for Black farmers are explored in

Pete Daniel's (2013) book *Dispossession: Discrimination against African American farmers in the age of civil rights:*

> institutional discrimination; anti-Black terrorism; domination of the industrial agricultural paradigm; European cultural hegemony; structural dispossession processes and systems (i.e., foreclosures, partition sales, adverse possession, eminent domain, tax sales); lack of access to affordable and trustworthy legal services; and massive rural–to-urban migration. (as cited in Davy et al., 2017, p. 44)

These factors undermine the dominant logic of US ideology and national identity that "all men are created equal." These facts also connect historical US policy to inequality which is built into the structures of the food system, as African Americans experience food insecurity in the United States at a rate 2.5 times that of Whites (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2017).

Given this racial history of the US, and that the United States Department of Agriculture has carried the nickname "the last plantation," many pivotal policy decisions have often been tied to notions of white supremacy. One can find further evidence of in the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 that granted 30,000 acres of federal land to each state (that dispossessed numerous Native American tribes living on that land) to establish colleges that would teach "agriculture and the mechanical arts" (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). The extent to which African Americans were not able to access these colleges had to be remedied through legislation three decades later in the second Morrill Act of 1890, where Historically Black College and Universities received some funding, though parity was still not achieved (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009).

Attempts to deny rights or access to land to communities of color in the 20th century. Through Jim Crow Laws that locally enforced racial segregation after Reconstruction to New Deal government subsidized programs that discriminated against Black farmers such as the Agriculture Adjustment Act of 1933 (Zabawa and Warren, 1998). From 20th century denial of home ownership to African Americans through practices of redlining, blockbusting, and steering to the 21st century of continued discriminatory lending and gentrification. It is impossible to disentangle this relevant history in the current foodscapes throughout the US, including cities with large African American populations such as Baltimore and Oakland (Power, 1983; McClintock, 2008; Whittle et al., 2015). In order to equip oneself with a toolbox and knowledge to address problems across the food system, one must also understand how to dismantle the racist policies that have shaped the system.

2.2 Different frameworks, different solutions

Changing how people understand society and the food system through the telling of its history is fundamental to beginning the conversation towards an equity lens. An important pathway to seek racial equity in the food system and address structures of oppression is through policy work that both includes and extends beyond food and farm related issues.

Giancatarino and Noor (2014) recommended four policy sectors to work on: 1) housing and school policy, 2) land policy and institutional discrimination, 3) farm bill policy and vertical integration in the food industry, and 4) social security and wage policy. Despite the 'farm bill policy and vertical integration in the food system' being the only one that seemingly directly impacts food policy, the other three reflect the various social, political, and economic structures that impact the food chain such as demand, supply, production, labor, education, and housing. This framework views the food system injustices as structural in origin, and thus focuses on confronting power inequities within their institutional foundations.

Given that there are many facets to food system issues, there is often a fragmented nature to engaging with this work. For instance, food policy (e.g., food provisioning, zoning laws, land use planning, transportation, small business regulations, etc.) intersects with many different departments in local, city, state, and federal government. Additionally, well intentioned food system actors (e.g., grassroots and food justice activists, policymakers and legislators, researchers and experts) may be divided on how to address food system problems such as pervasive hunger, which requires both immediate action and long-term thinking.

These differences and debates are activated when engaging with topics such as how to reduce hunger and feed a population that will exceed 9 billion people in the coming decades. Do you incentivize the increase of food production or do you increase food aid to areas where hunger is widespread? Do you advocate for reshaping the global capitalistic system or do you work within a neoliberal economic framework? Do you advocate for a reduction of food insecurity or try to advance, scale out, and empower bioregional food sovereignty? These questions present both challenges and opportunities to achieve one's goals. Some of these tensions are a result of the framing and terminology used. Brief definitions and contexts of these terms are outlined here.

2.2.1 Food Security

There is a spectrum of how one may engage with the food security definition as it has evolved over time. In 1975, the United Nations defined food security as, "the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices" (as cited in Ferranti, Berry, & Jock, 2018). This definition was later recognized as problematic due to its emphasis on the political economy of food rather than on hunger. A new version, that is most widely used today, was created at the 1996 World Food Summit:

> Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (as cited in Barrett, 2010)

While "basic foodstuffs" transitioned into "sufficient, safe and nutritious food," the importance of the role that culture plays in food security is not well understood through such vague language as "meets their dietary needs and food preferences." Elena Alonso, Johan Swinnen, and Lara Cockx (2017) discuss the importance of the role of culture in the "four pillars of food security," which include: availability, access, utilization, stability. Contextualizing the position of food security in policy and practice, they suggest:

> The growing recognition of the importance of culture for food security has already gained culture a more prominent place on the policy agenda. Yet, less progress has been made in terms of integrating and mainstreaming it into food security policies and interventions in practice. (Alonso, Swinnen, & Cockx, 2017, p. 20)

They argue that the lack of progress in implementing of food security policies has been partly caused by the lack of cultural understanding of the policymakers (Alonso, Swinnen, & Cockx, 2017). Additionally, there is a large gap in the implications of meeting the criteria of food security as described in these multiple definitions. This is illustrative of the significance of having a thought-out and agreed upon definition by not just policymakers and food system practitioners, but also by the community itself.

2.2.2 Food Sovereignty

The definition of food sovereignty as put forth by La Via Campesina (LVC) offers a radically different interpretation of one's rights to food. The LVC food sovereignty, coming from the 2007 Nyéléni Declaration, is

> Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. (as cited in Patel, 2009, p. 666)

The right to food is more commonly adopted by food activists and scholars within the alternative food movement (AFM). While the importance of food sovereignty has been acknowledged and incorporated into conversations about the future of the global food system, it is far less discussed in the US.

Critics of food sovereignty point to the difficult ability to scale such solutions, while proponents will point to the widespread success of LVC, an international peasant led movement with over 200 million members. Other critics point to who is leading the food sovereignty initiatives, and suggest they are also culpable of creating hierarchies that exploit farm labor and indigenous peoples' rights. If food sovereignty equates with the farmers right to self-determine their future, which farmers are being privileged with those decisions? These latter questions relate to the topic of food justice.

2.2.3 Food Justice

Food justice explores justice and fairness in production, distribution, and consumption. Gottlieb and Joshi (2013) describe food justice as where the "benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown and produced, transported and distributed, and accessed and eaten are shared fairly" (p. 6). Other definitions are more explicit in recognizing "the food system as a racial project," and calls for an analysis that "problematizes the influence of race and class on the production, distribution and consumption of food" (Alkon and Agyeman, 2011, p. 5). Boden and Hoover's (2018) applied a food justice lens toward food policy councils in the Mid-Atlantic, examining how they operate across six food system sectors: democracy, diversity, labor and production, retail and distribution, cultural appropriateness, and localness.

While this lens is applied across the food supply chain, there is an omission of the how such a process is implemented and evaluated. Therefore, both the policy process and implementation of policy provide fertile grounds to create and oversee a "just" system. This underscores the importance that the community is represented on these evaluative teams.

2.2.4 "Diversity is bodies, inclusion is culture"

The drive for meaningful inclusion and diversification of representation is part of the path to address systematic inequities embedded in the food system (Allen, 2008; Harper and Holt-Giménez, 2016). However, policies aimed at advancing equality, where everyone receives the same regardless of need, fails to confront power structures and historical injustices. There is a distinction between diversifying a FPC, where one is adding faces of color to the organization, rather than creating a culture of meaningful inclusion. Creating a culture of meaningful inclusion consists of listening to stories, voices, and inviting participation through the start to end of the decision-making process (McCullagh and Santo, 2014).

Dafina-Lazarus Stewart (2017) classified diversity and inclusion as part of the "language of appeasement" which she sees as belonging to an effort to "avoid recognizable institutional change." This placating, Stewart argues, would be more effective if replaced with the terms "justice" and "equity" as they ask deeper questions about the policies and practices that perpetuate a system not designed for everyone. While increasing diversity and inclusion in one's organization may be a self-celebratory claim, a counter would be to diminish the practices that lead to disparate impacts (Stewart, 2017). Furthermore, May (2015) argues that adding faces of color into an organization is taking a step backwards rather than forwards, as the same group that created the hegemonic culture is perpetuated rather than challenged.

2.2.5 Transformative Agroecology

Agroecology can be understood as an approach to farming that maximizes ecological processes (e.g., on farm nutrient cycling, diversifying production model). Furthermore, agroecology has concurrently functioned as a science and a social movement (Wezel et al., 2009) and has developed into integrating across the ecology of the whole food system (Francis et al., 2003). In addition to and central to the policy and food movement discussion, agroecology advocates for fostering participation in the design and implementation of socio-ecological food systems, which are often facilitated through horizontal knowledge sharing (Folke, 2004).

Given the interconnectedness of the farm and the food system, and the power dynamics and ecological praxis across each, movements to improve each respective system lose their power and resilience in isolation. Blaine Snipstal, a self-identified Black peasant farmer, food

justice activist and member of *Rural Coalicion* (the LVC branch in the US), learned this important lesson at a Korean Women's Peasant Farmer movement, stating "Food sovereignty is a slogan without agroecology, and agroecology is a technology without food sovereignty. You cannot delink the two. When we do, we run a risk and a fault of furthering this movement" (Snipstal, 2013).

Francis et al. (2003) also calls for utilizing agroecological principles to build equity throughout the food system. Francis discusses an equitable distribution of the benefits and surplus of a food system, with particular attention paid to health outputs, including nutrition and food security. However, this approach does not ensure that one is addressing the historical injustices that shaped the current oppressive structures if they are only forward looking. Therefore, *transformative agroecology* has created a framework to address equity through correcting historical oppression. This school of thought challenges the political economic structures and is mindful of the experiences of communities on the ground. Transformative agroecology actively avoids reproducing "research that is not appropriate to local contexts and which ignores the larger power structures that impact farmer livelihoods and strategies" (Méndez, Bacon, & Cohen, 2018, p. 8).

Another way to achieve an equitable system is to build bonds in the community and strengthen relationships among partner organizations in order to protect these ideas from greenwashing and co-option (Altieri and Holt-Giménez, 2014). Examples of appropriation of grassroots work of innovating structural reforms and solutions to food inequality are unfortunately abundant. One case is reflected in the Free Breakfast for School Children which was created by the Black Panther Party, an Oakland justice group with a deep social mission. At its peak, the program fed meals to almost 50,000 children a day, as it scaled to communities of color across the US (Levine, 2008). The project was dismantled by the government, which perceived the Black Panthers to be a dangerous and radical terrorist organization.

Within 10 years of destroying the program, the USDA authorized their own version of a national school breakfast program. While the expansion of a social justice-oriented project is a positive development, the lack of crediting and historical amnesia about the role and work of the Black Panthers shifts the historical consciousness and reshapes contemporary perceptions. Black

Panthers are more often associated as a radical, violent movement rather than as the founders of the farm to school lunch program that ensure children do not go hungry while in school (Levine, 2008).

2.2.6 Community Food Security

One method of using agroecological principles of building people-centered movements, horizontal knowledge sharing, and coalition building, is the emergence and use of the concept *community food security* (CFS) in the policy realm. CFS reflects a different approach to utilizing policy to reduce hunger in low-income communities. CFS is most often defined as,

> A condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable system that maximizes community self-reliance, social justice and democratic decision-making. (Hamm and Bellows, 2003)

The latter components of this definition distinguish it from the term food security, as they refer to the definition as a "condition" that focuses on the relationship between those experiencing food insecurity and the factors in the food environment such as poverty, politics, and the policy process that reinforce such conditions (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). CFS was formed through a coalition of disciplines including: community nutritionists and educators, sustainable agricultural researchers and activists, and anti-hunger and community development researchers and activists. This exemplifies how a multi-disciplinary analytical lens can work to break down the silos and increase the dialogue between typically disconnected departments that deal with food systems work (Anderson and Cook, 1999).

Activating a systems thinking lens has catalyzed many food system practitioners and policymakers to conduct local and regional system wide assessments (Pothukuchi, 2004). These assessments explored systematic barriers to creating a more equitable system, which often prompted amending or writing new legislation to confront oppressive structures that caused these conditions. Some of the organizations that have conducted these assessments and advocated for or implemented policy changes are Food Policy Councils.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that there are numerous definitions of each of these concepts and they do not fall into neat categories. Some FPCs utilize frames of early definitions of food security, and others seek to create food systems that embrace food sovereignty and

cooperative economics that bypass the capitalistic logic and circulate dollars and resources within one's own economy (Snipstal, 2015; Calvário, 2017). At the same time, there are activists that co-opt the term "food justice" under the umbrella of the alternative food movement (AFM), yet they are not actively creating inclusive spaces. Though lacking a consensus, many food system practitioners agree that policy work is instrumental in achieving an equitable future, recognizing that the barriers are both structural and political in origin (Hoey and Sponseller, 2018).

Section 4.3 unpacks the evolution of FPCs and their ability to find an appropriate niche in the local food ecosystem; leveraging their own privilege and power in the system towards equity. FPCs are uniquely situated to bring a diverse set of stakeholders, engage in deliberative democracy (Blackmar, 2014), and partner with existing grassroots organizations to meet the complex needs of a local, regional, and state food system to achieve systematic policy and institutional change (Clayton, Frattaroli, Palmer, & Pollack, 2015). Their different approaches reflect each FPCs' capacity to confront these structures that shape an inequitable society or inadvertently reinforce them.

2.3 What are Food Policy Councils?

Food Policy Councils appear to be well situated to build a more democratic and equitable food system. This section outlines the history of FPCs, the wide range of councils' different role, and concludes with a discussion of how equity has intersected and evolved in their operations.

2.3.1 Evolution of FPCs in North America

As outlined in the special issue of Journal Agriculture Food Systems and Community Development, there is a need to reimagine and reengage local and regional government and communities work in the food system (Raja, Clark, Freedgood, & Hodgson, 2018). One example of this reengagement at the municipal, county, city, regional, and state level is the development and proliferation of FPCs across North America. This development is in line with a global trend, where the Milan Urban Food Pact and FAO Sustainable Development Goals are emphasizing the important role of policy in food and agriculture issues. The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES) 2016 report on transitioning from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems included, "Develop food planning processes and 'joined-up food policies' at multiple levels" as one its seven key recommendations (IPES, 2016, p. 73).

While FPCs are dynamic and site-specific, there is a prevalence of issues that manifest across different food system sectors. Kenneth Dahlberg (1994) reviewed the first ten years of FPC development and identified six areas that should be covered, or at a minimum discussed, by each council:

> production issues (farmland preservation, farmers markets, household & community gardens), to processing issues (local vs. external), to distribution issues (transportation, warehousing) to access issues (inner-city grocery stores, co-ops, school breakfasts & lunches, food stamps, the WIC program, etc.), to use issues (food safety and handling, restaurants, street vendors), to food recycling (gleaning, food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens) to waste stream issues (composting, garbage fed to pigs, etc.). (p. 1)

Since there is not a prescriptive approach or national organization that convenes regional FPCs, each FPC choses how they operate and creates their own by-laws. Their agenda-setting and decision-making processes are influenced by a range of subjects, including how each council forms, structurally organizes itself, finds and maintains funding, and is represented by a diversity of food system sectors and a diversity of backgrounds (Schiff, 2008).

FPCs have evolved since the first council was formed in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1982. Among the trends found in the evolution of FPCs is that councils formed after 2000 are found to be less situated within local government as compared to the 80s and 90s (Schiff, 2008). This generation of FPCs not only to situated itself as embedded in government, but more commonly through forming grassroots coalitions, non-profits, housed in another non-profit, and working in a university or extension office (Schiff, 2008). This shift also reflects the councils engaging their communities more and not strictly working on policy. Working on policy had the tendency to distance community residents from the conversation, which caused numerous councils to remove 'Policy' from their name and replace it with: alliance, roundtable, taskforce, food council, network, collaborative, initiative, etc. (CLF Survey Data, 2018).

Another aspect observed through the course of FPCs is the transient nature of their existence. There are over 100 councils that have dissolved or are currently inactive (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019). The example of Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council (PMFPC) sheds light on its dissolution. Coplen and Cuneo (2015) document the disbanding of the PMFPC as a result of losing relevance and being unable to main their usefulness. They reflect on the challenge of receiving consistent citizen engagement and participation. They also lacked an evaluative

process towards the council's "usefulness of structures, roles and processes" (Coplen and Cuneo, 2015. To seek greater relevancy in their community, FPCs have sought to include more diverse voices into the decision-making body of the councils. This trend is outlined in the analysis section, though it reflects that there is still a large gap between the composition of FPC members and their community.

2.3.2 Situatedness of Food Policy Councils

I was especially drawn to the topic of FPC's situatedness given the unique position that FPCs are in relation to front lines communities as well as local, state and regional governing bodies. They tiptoe the line of working beside both political power and grassroots activism. A coalition of members representing different sectors of the communities enables these councils to build bridges and capacity in different arenas all at once. Boden and Hoover (2018) describe this as "one of their greatest democratic advantages is the ability to work on multiple policy levels, topics, and programs simultaneously" (p. 41). Of course, the capacity of FPCs largely depends on their membership, organizational and policy, priorities, funding streams (e.g., government budget or grant, corporate or private foundation, individual or in-kind donations, earned income, membership dues, crowdsourcing), geographic focus, and organizational structure (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019).

Besides FPCs residing at numerous intersections of the localized or regional food system context, they also function as conveners, networkers, policymakers, policy advisors and advocates, fundraisers, educators, trainers, and in many other capacities (Harper et al., 2009). These opportunities can be overwhelming, especially if funding, labor, expertise, and motivation is lacking. Additionally, the desire and pressure to accomplish one immediate task may come at the expense of other long-term goals. For example, one might neglect inviting community residents to a policy decision that will affect their community because it will prolong the process and extend beyond the fiscal year when funding can run out.

As previously discussed, there can be different frameworks and competing visions to understanding and addressing a problem. A desire to reduce the numbers of those experiencing food insecurity through advocating for more food banks (which are beneficial in targeting short term needs) as opposed to advancing *community food security* through creating conditions

where all community residents have culturally and nutritious food accessible at all times can create tensions in councils. Building consensus around these decisions can be very challenging, and the agendas are often set by who are sitting at the decision-making table. This is a key insight into why both representation and key community partnerships on these FPCs matter (Clayton et al., 2015; Koski, Siddiki, Sadiq, & Carboni, 2016).

2.3.3 Developing a dedicated equity lens

Greater transparency, increasing participatory processes, and building citizen engagement are key components of democratizing a local food system and giving agency to communities that can feel neglected, overwhelmed, or exploited by the globalized food system (Coulson and Sonnino, 2018). While these tenets are at the core of the Alternative Food Movement in North America, the AFM has often not been reflective of the communities who would benefit most from drastic food system reforms (Coulson and Sonnino, 2018; McCullagh, 2012). The demographic that dominates this movement is both White and affluent, which can cultivate a culture that excludes essential voices in the conversation, such as low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately lacking access to culturally appropriate, nutritious, and affordable food (Alkon and McCullen, 2011). Many of the recruitment processes to these spaces are arrived through "nested circles of contacts," which can cause like-groups to (un)intentionally not branch out to other communities (Boden and Hoover, 2018).

However, community-led and inclusive planning processes are more common in the formation of new Food Policy Groups. Day-Farnsworth (2017) discussed the process of how "Dudley Grows" in Boston, Massachusetts, a community-based neighborhood organization that is racially and ethnically diverse, has organized and received national attention for its work around "vacant land, housing, environmental and food justice and its high levels of resident engagement in neighborhood planning and development" (p. 214). Day-Farnsworth (2017) outlined the Dudley Grows planning process that includes three components:

> 1) Youth-led surveys of residents, community market owners, and gardeners;
> 2) community engagement events ranging from listening sessions to neighborhood celebrations; and
> 3) monthly steering committee meetings to reflect on the findings and discuss the next steps. (p. 215)

This planning process exemplifies the temporal continuity of community participation. McCullagh (2012) stresses the importance of creating a culture of meaningful inclusion from the onset; failing to begin a group this culture and maintain it can be very detrimental to trust building when working with the community. McCullagh's (2012) master's thesis on the "inclusion of diverse community residents into Food Policy Councils" notes that "inclusion is essential when shaping the Council's priority and structure" and,

> that "including people of color and other disenfranchised groups defined in the membership in the strategic planning process helps to diminish" [quote from Harris, 2007] suggests some of the difficulty of managing a diversity of people, perspectives and positions when broad inclusion is sought. Thus, meaningful inclusion of vulnerable groups would require their participation in every stage of the Council's work, from setting priorities and goals… to initiating and then later evaluating the projects. (p. 81-82)

This paragraph emphasizes how activating an equity lens is something that must always be turned on; not only when it is convenient or when being scrutinized.

Besides the planning process and recruitment strategies, FPCs transition towards equity requires structural changes to their own councils, and the different techniques to foster more inclusion and empowerment. McCullagh (2012) has categorized two different methods towards inclusion: "council-based techniques" and "project-based techniques." Council-based techniques consist of meeting time and location. For example, a meeting scheduled during the day in a downtown area may be accessible for food system professionals to attend, but impossible for working parents (living outside of an expensive downtown) whose perspective and input is highly valued in shaping policy that affects his or her everyday life. Other techniques include introducing language about inclusion in the council's mission statement and designating council seats for direct representation as efforts to center community in the council process (McCullagh, 2012). A structured and designed council meeting with dedicated resources towards the effort of increasing inclusivity can also foster more meaningful and substantive representation than an open group meeting without rules (Koski et al., 2016). Some project-based techniques include food system tours, participatory budgeting processes, and food summits; each of which should focus on uplifting community residents. These techniques can help build bridges and trust (depending on the history of these communities) where there are great divides between policymakers and community residents (McCullagh, 2012).

McCullagh (2012) has compiled a list of the challenges that FPCs face when trying to include diverse community residents on councils. Through numerous interviews with council members, she outlines the challenges as a "lack of resources; cultural and language barriers; meeting times and locations; limited number of seats; getting community buy-in; anti-government sentiment; engaging people in 'food policy'; diversity in food system sectors, but not in persona demographics" (p. 68-74). All of these challenges can lead councils towards to try and broadly reduce food insecurity and increase diverse bodies, rather than try to achieve community food security through confronting structural conditions that disproportionately impact low-income communities and communities of color.

One notable example of a FPC that is taking on this work directly is Detroit Food Policy Council (DFPC). DFPC is "an education, advocacy and policy organization led by Detroiters committed to creating a sustainable, local food system that promotes food security, food justice and food sovereignty in the city of Detroit" (DPFC, 2019, para. 1). They work to ensure that "all of its residents are hunger-free, healthy, and benefiting from a robust food system" (DPFC Who We Are, 2019, para. 2). To achieve this, they both work on food policy, community engagement, youth programs, and develop strong community partnerships. DFPC is partnered with Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN), an organization facilitates economic development projects in the community and ensures Black local leadership. DBCFSN runs educational and youth programs, and D-Town Farm, which is a seven-acre production farm that supplies the Detroit People's Food Co-Op, which redistributes food and other services to those within the community. D-Town Farm also provides spaces for garden plots for with community members who do not have the resources to grow their own food and continues the legacy of Black Agrarianism resistance.

DBCFSN is expanding these efforts through a large development project called Detroit Food Commons that aims to maintain the integrity of the cooperative model. The Detroit Food Commons will include an,

> incubator kitchen where culinary artist and food entrepreneurs will be able to prepare foods in a licensed environment for retail and wholesale customers. The Detroit Food Commons will also include a healthy foods cafe and a space for community meetings, lectures, films, performances and other events. (Cooperative Grocer Network, n.d., para. 3)

Malik Yakini, the director of DBCFSN, said in an interview,

> Black people have a long history using co-ops as a way of navigating through an economic system that has been intentionally aimed to disinvest in our communities and prevent any kind of parity. So, this is us latching onto a historical strategy that Black people have used in this country to try to build collective wealth. (Warfield, 2018, para. 3)

At the same time, Yakini (2013) acknowledges that this does not address the expanding racial wealth gap in the country. Nor does it confront the unjust incarceration rate or the projected socioeconomic mobility disparity between Whites and Blacks of equal education backgrounds (Chetty, Hendren & Porter, 2018). This is to say for equity work to be effective, FPCs must also engage in challenging injustice in the institutions that fortify inequality.

In light of not confronting these problems, 93% of the Michigan food leaders (a mix of activists, scholars, university and government officials) interviewed by Hoey and Sponseller (2018) responded that written policy (at both the federal and local level) that has aimed to alleviate these issues has in fact made the situation worse. FPCs can serve an essential function in bringing radical and reformist camps together (Holt-Giménez & Wang, 2011; Packer, 2014), and with diverse representation, intention and focus on dismantling structures of oppression, FPCs can overcome these internal contradictions within the AFM. The primary research conducted for this thesis explores both council-based and project-based techniques to shift the food systems towards equitable outcomes in Baltimore and Oakland.

3. Methods

This research relies on mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative analysis, which balances the strength of each type of analysis, through integrating and valuing different ways of producing and evaluating knowledge. While quantitative data can appear more valid due to its reliance on statistics, an implicit bias can be built into the way that questions are asked or in the way data is collected. Furthermore, rigorous conclusions can be drawn based on misrepresentative conditions and populations. Therefore, quantitative data can be bolstered or challenged when analyzed alongside qualitative analysis, which has the potential to be more effective at gauging the pulse or tone of an environment through triangulating a range of data collected from participant observation and numerous interviews with varied stakeholders. Qualitative data collection and analysis is also prone to limitations, such as a lack of determining causality, especially when dealing with complex systems. Therefore, these mixed-methods are employed, not to ascertain conclusive and indisputable results, but to strive towards presenting both valid and reliable data (Bryman, 2016).

3.1 Literature Review

The previous background chapter was a literature review of legacies of structural racism and Black agrarian resistance, food system discourses, and FPCs. This section primarily referenced peer-reviewed literature that was gleaned from a collection of sources including, "State of the research: An annotated bibliography on existing, emerging, and needed research on food policy groups" (Santo, Bassarab, & Palmer, 2017). I personally participated in updating this annotated bibliography for the 2nd edition (soon-to-be-published in 2019). Additional articles and book chapters were found through specific journals such as the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. Supplementary publications were found through *Scopus*, an aggregate database of peer-reviewed literature. A listserv on *food equity* hosted by Michigan State University and convenes community stakeholders and professionals from the *Racial Equity in the Food System Workgroup.* The listserv was formed in January 2019 with over 700 members to date, which also brought my attention to various webinars and discussions on related topics.

3.2 Survey Data Analysis from Center for a Livable Future

For the quantitative part of my data collection and analysis, I reviewed and synthesized survey data from John Hopkins University Center for a Livable Future (CLF). CLF is a food systems research center whose "work is driven by the concept that public health, diet, food production and the environment are deeply interrelated and that understanding these relationships is crucial in pursuing a livable future" (JHU CLF, 2019, para. 1). I worked as a research assistant in the summer of 2018 on the Food Policy Network team and continued to work as an Independent Contractor after the assistantship concluded. My primary task was to organize and analyze the 2018 Annual Survey Data sent out to 309 Food Policy Councils across North America, 280 of which responded as either "active" or "in-transition." The data analysis helped inform the "Food Policy Council Report 2018" (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019). While some of the analysis section of this thesis directly references the report, additional unpublished data and analysis of the survey pertaining to "diversity and inclusion" are included in this thesis with the permission of CLF with the in-text citation of "(CLF Survey Data, 2018)".

The 2018 survey was a follow-up of a 2016 survey (Sussman & Bassarab, 2016), with a more ambitious and comprehensive set of questions to set up a baseline to track survey data moving forward. The objectives of the survey were to collect basic census information tracking FPCs across North America, to understand FPCs through learning about membership diversity, recruitment processes, financial resources, funding sources, and to track outcomes such as current FPC policy priorities, enacted policies, and methods of measuring impact. The 24-question survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and required participants to select top three relevant choices, rate priorities on a scale, check boxes if applicable, and fill in short answers.

3.3 Primary research for case studies

To supplement the quantitative analysis and complete a mixed-methods methodology, I also conducted primary research of two FPCs through participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

3.3.1 Criteria for selecting Food Policy Councils in North America

The selection criteria began with an analysis of the 2018 FPC survey data collection. E-mails were sent to councils that listed "diversity and inclusion" as an organizational priority, were over three years old, and whose geographic focus was either at the county or city/municipality level (excluding state conveners). Additionally, councils were included if they referred to the terms "equity," "diversity," or "inclusion" in their short answer responses to the question, "Describe your FPCs greatest achievement (and challenge) in the last 12 months." This list of twenty-seven FPCs was narrowed to eight through additional research on the council's recent activity. This was gleaned from their public-facing presence (e.g., website updates; social media posts), activity on the *food equity* listserv, and group forums that reflected their centering of equity in their work.

The goal of this research was to look at some of the "leaders" of the FPCs who appeared *on paper* to be activating a dedicated equity lens in their work. Strong communication links were formed early on and followed through with FPCs located in Oakland, California and Baltimore, Maryland. Some of the other cities deeply engaged in this work and not examined through primary research include Detroit (Michigan), Minneapolis (Minnesota), Los Angeles (California), Madison (Wisconsin), and the entire state of North Carolina.

It's also important to note that my academic institution was situated in another country thousands of miles away from my research topic. Though I spent a semester based in Washington DC, physical distance, alongside a limited budget, brought me to prioritize responsiveness to accommodate my limited availability to engage. This resulted in examining two FPCs, which was short of my initial goal to research four FPCs. Further research is recommended prior to generalizing the findings of this thesis.

3.3.2 Participant Observation at FPC Meetings

It was essential to attend at least one FPC meeting with each council. The FPC leaders sent me a schedule of their Fall 2018 meetings and their thematic goals for each meeting. I attended Baltimore's Food Policy Advisory Committee (BFPAC) bi-monthly meeting in September and Oakland Food Policy Council's (OFPC) monthly meeting in October 2018. Acting as a participant observer, I simultaneously recorded and took notes on the meeting structure, demographics of

the participants, and the tone of the meeting, as well as participated in the working group break-out sessions (which occurred in both).

While one may question the validity of me as an objective researcher, this degree of engagement with the communities I was researching provided greater insight into not only the output of the meetings, but also the process (Bryman, 2016). These insights are especially valuable when investigating the level of inclusivity, a difficult metric to effectively quantify.

3.3.3 Semi-structured and open-ended interviews

I conducted semi-structured and open-ended interviews with council staff, council members, and several members of the community in which each council operated. Topics covered include: establishment of the FPC; evolution of the FPC; relationship to funding sources; community engagement strategies; current policies priorities; biggest challenges; council representation; community partnerships; defining equity; FPCs commitment to equity; and desired future of the regional food system. I transcribed these interviews and then inductively coded the interviews thematically. All interviews were conducted with informed consent and were transcribed and digitally stored with respect to their privacy and anonymity.

Developing these relationships enabled me to ask follow-up on questions that arose during the FPC meetings that were intriguing but not well elaborated. I had additional questions prepared to ask each council member and/or staff, to determine if their answers were consistent or contradictory. I also used this time to explore the nuance of how FPCs' internal operations function, the complexity of working within or without municipal governance, and I opened space for interviewees to communicate their desired visions of a just and equitable food system and any other details they wished to share with me.

3.4 Additional research methods

In addition to a literature review and the case studies, I engaged with several other research methods. To further corroborate the academic literature and fill in more details regarding the cities' food system histories and context of the FPCs' work, I relied on webinars, conferences, workshops, and unstructured interviews with long-time residents of Oakland and Baltimore.

Included in the less conventional methods of attaining relevant information was posting on message boards and *listservs* that are dedicated to food system researchers and practitioners, and community leaders. One such example was a thread I initiated in a Loomio Post in July 2018 seen by over 200 people. This post, which generated a handful of responses, began:

> Many, including the Food Policy Networks project staff and advisors, believe that engaging communities of color, people living in poverty, indigenous groups, rural communities, (im)migrants, and youth in shaping food policy will advance a more fair and just food system. This thread is intended for both researchers and food policy councils (FPCs) to reflect on the processes involved in fostering meaningful diversity and inclusion in their councils. It is meant to function as a space to populate with existing research, as well as to connect researchers to FPCs that are succeeding and/or encountering challenges at representing the racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and age diversity of the community in which they are embedded. Related topics may include examining the value of convening a group of stakeholders with diverse interests; understanding strategies for working with diverse stakeholders; and reflecting on how power, privilege, and bias shape and influence the food system. (Kessler, 2018)

This degree of outreach aided in connecting me to enthusiastic and active key informants who could speak in a nuanced way on seeking pathways to achieving equity in the food system.

The results section begins with presenting the CLF survey data focusing on how FPCs have historically and currently refer to diversity, inclusion, and equity in their work. This is followed by the case studies of FPCs in Oakland and Baltimore.

4. Results

4.1 Center for a Livable Future 2018 Survey Data

4.1.1 Diverse representation on the council

According to 2018 CLF survey data, 19 of 273 councils FPCs responded that their council members reflect the racial, economic, and gender diversity of the community "to a great extent." 25% of all councils replied either "to a great extent" or "a lot" to the same question, and 33% of councils responded that the community's diversity was either "a little" or "not at all" represented (Figure 1).

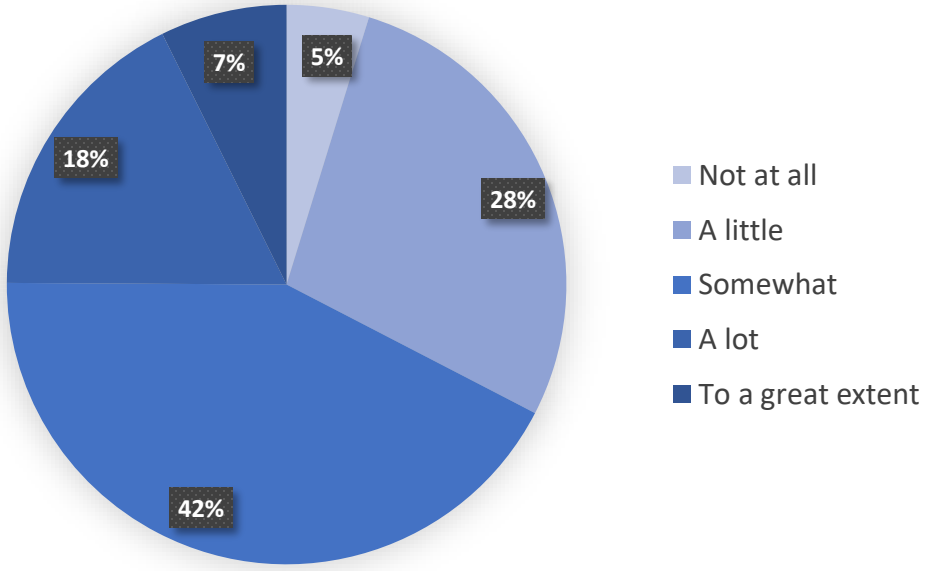


Figure 1: Percent of FPCs whose members reflect the racial, economic, and gender diversity of the community (n=273)

The most common community engagement activities for councils whose membership reflected their diverse communities were "support partner organizations through cross promotion" and "develop strategic plan for community engagement," followed by "hosted series of educational events" and "hosted community forum to receive feedback" (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2018). However, these results track with the rest of the other FPC responses and therefore this pattern is not exclusive to more representatively diverse FPCs. While developing a strategic plan for community engagement has proliferated across FPCs over time, the extent to which FPCs are engaging that strategy with an equity lens is not differentiated.

4.1.2 "Diversity and Inclusion" as an organizational priority

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) is listed as an organizational priority for 11% of the FPCs surveyed. In total, 31 of 277 recorded D&I as a top 3 priority, and the 41 Canadian FPCs surveyed, only 2 selected D&I (CLF Survey Data, 2018). Though that number is exceptionally low, there is more nuance to analyze when a cross-tabulation is run by the age of the council, organizational structure, and the geographic focus.

FPCs aged 6 to 10 years and 10+ years select D&I as a priority 15% and 19% of the time respectively, while all the councils aged 5 years and under chose D&I as a priority under 5% of the time (CLF Survey Data, 2018). Another finding in the organizational structure by D&I cross tabulation was that only five percent of 'grassroots coalition' chose D&I as a priority contrasted with 14 percent of FPCs 'embedded in government.' Most strikingly was in the category of geographic focus where 28 percent of FPCs working at the city/municipality chose D&I as a top priority, whereas no other geographic focus (e.g., both city/municipality and county, county, region, state) exceeded 10 percent (CLF Survey Data, 2018). While cities are more diverse than rural areas, the mission to incorporate an area's racial, gender, and economic diversity is no less important. Unpacking the differences in FPCs' responses to these questions helps nuance how priorities differ among age, organizational structure, and geographic level.

Several newer and older FPCs offered explanations for why their council did include D&I as a priority when it was formed. Some stated they were unaware of how structural racism affected their food system until they received an organization wide Anti-Racist training. A few councils stated that the process of creating their by-laws is "boring" and they first needed "to establish their FPC" before reaching out to the community. However, this exclusionary logic also reveals that these councils did not include community residents in the creation of the mission and vision statements. Nor did they involve them in the strategic planning that shapes the culture of an organization. More directed research is needed on the topic of when and how councils came to center equity in their organizations, as there are several councils who formed in the last two years with equity as the focal point of their mission.

4.1.3 General data on the trends of FPCs

The total number of FPCs have continued to increase over time. Figure 2 shows the total number of active FPCs from 2000-2017 and the continuous growth of councils in the United States. This includes the formation of 25 new councils in 2017 (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2018).

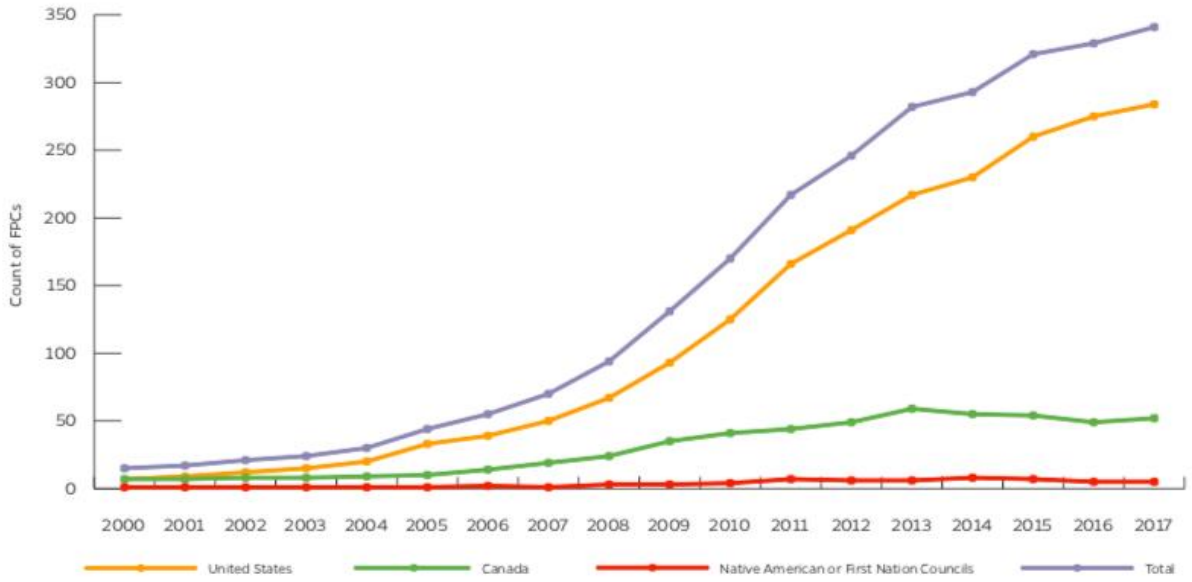


Figure 2: Number of FPCs active at the end of each year from 2000-2017 (n = 444)

Note: This figure does not reflect the 120 FPCs that have dissolved or entered hiatus since CLF began tracking this data

Other notable statistics include 71% of councils operate at the local level (e.g., city/municipality, county, or both) (CLF Survey Data, 2018). There are no dominant organizational structures, funding streams, advocacy activities, or specific sectors representing the membership of the council. This heterogeneity among councils reflects the high level of diversity of both the functions and structures of FPCs across North America.

In the CLF 2018 survey, councils were asked what are their organizational priorities and chose their top three from 13 different options. The top responses revealed that sixty percent of the councils selected community engagement and 40% of the councils reported "advocacy and policy capacity building" (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2018). The authors of the CLF 2018 survey reflect on how FPCs' priorities change as councils age:

> The longer an FPC was in existence, the more likely it was to prioritize advocacy and policy capacity building, networking, and fundraising and the less likely it was to prioritize membership recruitment and retention. Older FPCs, ages 6 and over, also showed more

interest in diversity and inclusion. (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2018, p. 4)

This survey also found that of the 'sectors' that are represented in council membership, "public health," "health care," "college," and the "community" are most common among councils that greatly represent their community's diversity (CLF Survey Data, 2018).

This is an interesting correlation as those who work in the health care sector are more likely to be engaged with topics of how the food system impacts public health, and how systematic inequities (i.e., social determinants of health) are inherent to both fields. Similarly, the top 3 FPC policy priorities of over one-third of the councils are healthy food access, economic development, and anti-hunger. This was followed by food production, food procurement, and land use planning. For a wider and deeper analysis of the relationships of FPC's organization priorities, funding streams, tactics for engaging with systems thinking, and connections with local governance, see the full 2018 Food Policy Council Report (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2018).

4.2 Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

4.2.1 A systematic marginalization from housing to food

Baltimore, the biggest city in Maryland, is located in the mid-Atlantic coast with a population of approximately 620,000, of which 63% are Black or African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Though 22.1% of Baltimore's population live below the federal poverty line, when broken down by race, 70.5% are Black and 17.3% are White (Data USA, 2017). The city has the highest food security rate in Maryland, and 30% receive of its residents receive food stamps that come in the form of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Misiaszek, Buzogany, & Freishtat 2018). 31.5% of African Americans compared to only 8.9% of Whites are living in a food desert of Health Food Priority Area (Misiaszek, Buzogany, & Freishtat 2018). In order to understand why food is so difficult to access in predominantly African American neighborhoods, one must first comprehend a history of racist housing discrimination, which is discussed in depth in Antero Pietila's (2010) *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*.

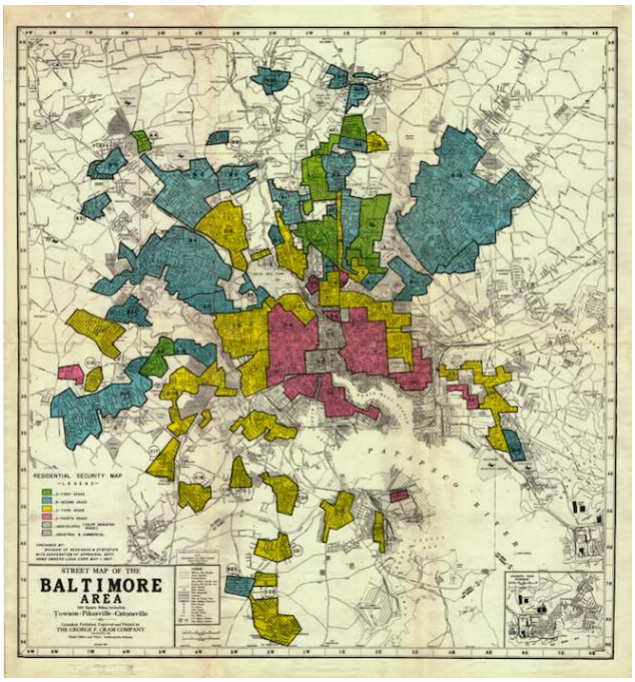
Pietila (2010) outlines how the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) practiced a policy of "redlining" in the 1930s that legalized and institutionalized racial discrimination. 'Hazardous' areas that were of high risk investment were marked in red (graded D), and 'definitely declining'

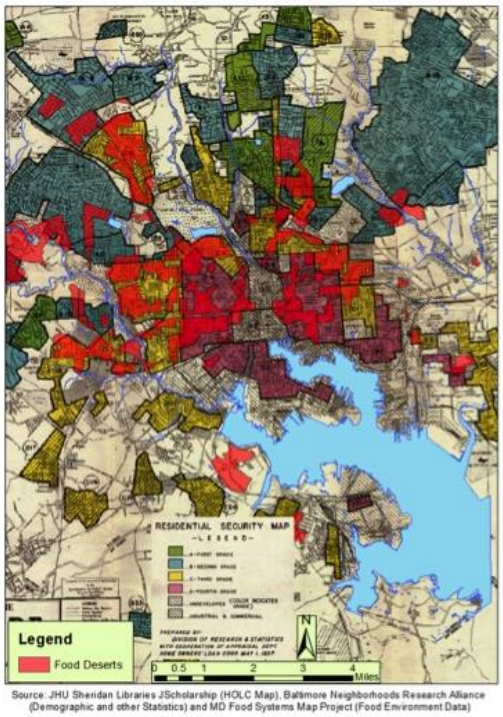
neighborhoods were marked in 'yellow' (graded C). The Federal Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and FHA's designed these policies along racial lines, as reflected in the language they used when coding these maps:

> The fourth grade or D areas represent those neighborhoods in which *the things that are now taking place* [emphasis added] in the C neighborhoods, *have already happened* [emphasis added]. They are characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, *undesirable population or an infiltration of it* [emphasis added]. Low percentage of home ownership, very poor maintenance and often vandalism prevail. Unstable incomes of the people and difficult collections are usually prevalent. (as cited in Madrigal, 2014, para. 19)

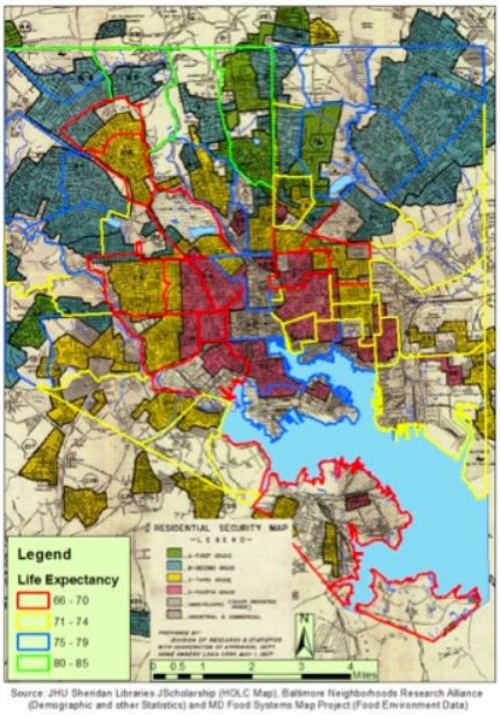
This policy created a segregated landscape where the city made superior resources available such as better housing, schools, and infrastructure available exclusively to White families. The remainder of the city's demographics (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, Jews) were unable to access real estate in these areas of Baltimore due to outright loan assistance denial, refused legal assistance, unfair price hikes, and other tactics (Pietila, 2010). This concentration of resources exacerbated the racial wealth gap and was followed by several decades of White flight and "supermarket flight." Altogether these factors have shaped Baltimore's food landscape asymmetrically along racial lines as can be seen in the maps on the next page.

Bilal (2016) produced two overlaid maps on top of the 1937 map of redlined neighborhoods (Figure 3, top). One is a map of food deserts that are found throughout the city (Figure 3, left), and the other depicts the life expectancy of the residents living in different neighborhoods (Figure 3, right). This study found that the legacy of redlining in areas graded C or D are evident in the contemporary landscape, as those same neighborhoods correspond to the densest concentration of food deserts and the shortest life expectancy. This context is imperative to working in food policy in these neighbors that one must confront a legacy of structural racism. It's also worth noting that this policy's legacy lives on not only in Baltimore, but also in Chicago, Denver, Oakland, Philadelphia, Detroit, Little Rock, Tacoma, and many more cities across the US. Modern day redlining also persists today through denying mortgage loans at far higher rates to People of Color than Whites (Glantz and Martinez, 2018).





Source: JHU Sheridan Libraries JScholarship (HOLC Map), Baltimore Neighborhoods Research Alliance (Demographic and other Statistics) and MD Food Systems Map Project (Food Environment Data)



Source: JHU Sheridan Libraries JScholarship (HOLC Map), Baltimore Neighborhoods Research Alliance (Demographic and other Statistics) and MD Food Systems Map Project (Food Environment Data)

Figure 3: Baltimore map from 1937 depicting "redlined" neighborhoods (top)
1937 map overlaid with Baltimore's "Food Deserts" (right)
1937 map overlaid with Baltimore resident's life expectancy (left)

4.2.2 BFPI and cross-sector collaboration

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) facilitates Baltimore Food Policy Advisory Committee (BFPAC), and is nested in the Department of Planning of the Baltimore City Government. BFPI is staffed by three full-time employees (all of whom are women) to integrate smart food policy into economic and neighborhood development, health and human services, public safety and schools, and in labor commissions and throughout the Baltimore food system. The three staffed positions are officially titled Food Policy Director, Food Access Planner, and Food Resilience Planner. This sub department developed out of taskforce that delivered 10 food policy recommendations, which led the mayor to hire the current Food Policy Director of BFPI in 2010.

BFPI aims to increase food access in the city at a systems-wide level. To accomplish this, their stated goals are to identify and inform the city of "food policy barriers in order to collectively address the policy issues from an organizational, city, state, or federal level… inform members on city, state, and federal policy implications that impact the food environment of Baltimore City… and collaborate to increase knowledge and to break down silos in order to be more effective in addressing food access and local food systems" (Baltimore Food Policy Action Coalition, 2019, para. 1). In the 2018 Food Environment Brief (2018), BFPI is described as:

> a collaboration between the Department of Planning, Office of Sustainability, Baltimore City Health Department and Baltimore Development Corporation that draws on the expertise of each to use food as a lens to examine and address the systems that perpetuate food environment disparities. (para. 1)

Due to their cross-sector collaborations and position of being embedded in the city government and through utilizing the framework of community food security, BFPI engages in a wide-range of policies and programs, as on the page in Figure 4.

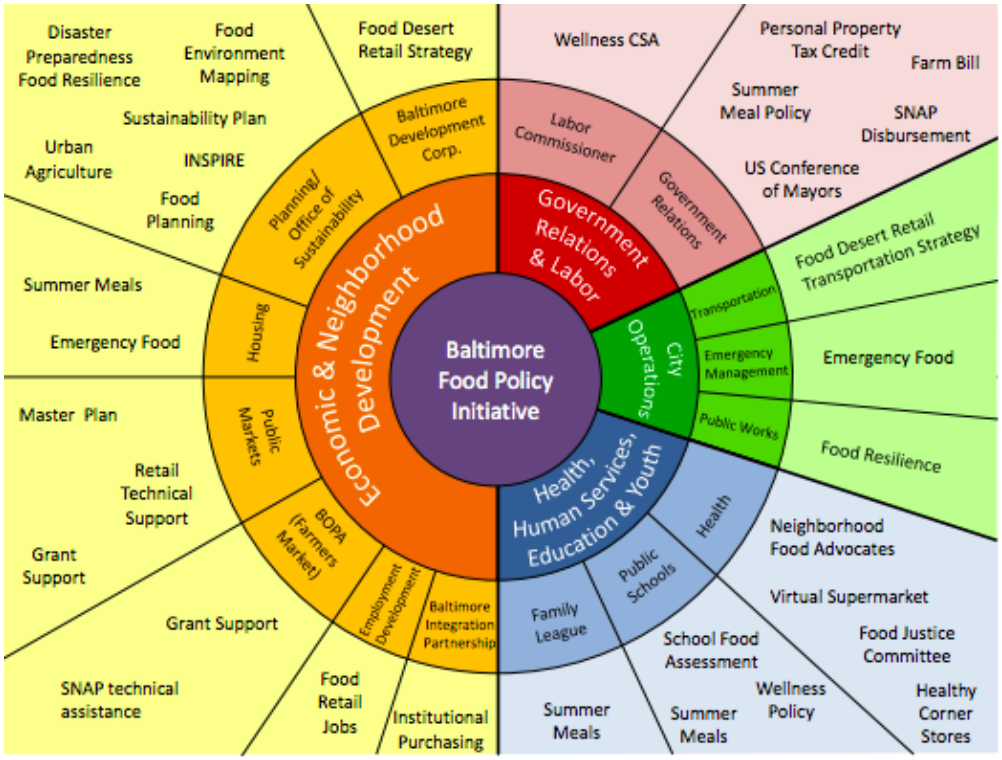


Figure 4: Baltimore Food Policy Initiative cross-sectoral engagement strategy

4.2.3 Who attends the meetings and who finds value?

The first years of holding monthly (or bi-monthly meetings) brought together community organizations and leaders, government employees, and professionals. According to a staff member, there are "no official members [and] anyone working on food issues in the city are welcome" (Interview A, 2018). Numerous people had met each other for the first time at these meetings while working for many years on the same issues. This reflects the extent to which Baltimore food activists and professionals had been working in silos and highlights the historical disconnected nature of food system work (Interview B, 2018).

This strength in utilizing these meetings as a space for networking has carried through to the present, and informs the current meeting structure. Each meeting begins with an organizational update of new programs and policies, then a specific topic is presented to the group by an FPC staff member or other food system leader, and is followed by a facilitated workshop where the room breaks out into smaller groups. The groups are meant for connecting people and organizations who are working on similar food system issues to both network and

dialogue in depth with each other. The council staff recognizes that the time of those who attend these meetings is valuable. Many may not be able to attend due to lacking affordable child care, lacking reliable transportation, balancing multiple jobs, or a combination. Therefore, BFPI constantly reevaluates its structure and requests feedback to make their meetings both meaningful and useful.

The council has consistently evolved throughout the years due to the composition of who shows up to the meetings. BFPI has been in a process of restructuring what is the best time and date to schedule the meetings to both convene key stakeholders and represent community's diversity. The meetings tend to be populated with food system professionals, government employees, small food business entrepreneurs, and community organizers who are working on topics of food security and food sovereignty. One staff member of BFPI stated one of the key questions they grapple with is "how do we keep our professionals at the table while increasing the community presence?" This member further elaborated:

> Previously we had our meetings scheduled during the work day from 10am-12pm or 3pm-5pm. Some in the morning, some in the afternoon, so different people can show up. We had different professionals coming to the table. If we are really thinking about equity and how to get more residents and community members involved, we should change the time to make it more accessible. So recently we moved our meetings from 4pm-6pm. Maybe this is the right medium. We don't want to exclude professionals, but we don't want to exclude community members either. How do we find a time and a space that can include both? (Interview A, 2018)

While this indicates an awareness about diversity and inclusion, the council is also concerned about equity. The same member reflected on their process, stating they "are trying to diversify in not only who can attend, but *who can find value* [emphasis added] in these types of meetings?" (Interview A, 2018). As of the end of 2018, meetings were held from 4pm to 6pm rather than the previous meeting time in the afternoon. The meetings are located in a downtown government offices, which is much more accessible to professionals than to community residents.

4.2.4 Centering equity and making structural changes to BFPI

Food equity has become more visible in the national conversation through a variety of reasons. One method that it has proliferated is through small groups or individuals in localized food systems raising the issue and demanding it to be a part of the discussion. A common trajectory includes the topic of food equity being requested or demanded by a minority of

members in an organization or staff, followed by the topic entering rooms with influential stakeholders in key positions of power, then sparking a department or organization-wide conversation, and lastly becoming an imperative.

The story of BFPI's transition towards equity follows a similar trajectory. A small handful of younger employees and interns in city government Department of Planning, who were aware of the systematic inequities pervasive in Baltimore, had requested that the staff in their department receive an anti-racist training. As discussed prior, structural racism cannot be undone by ignoring it, but rather by intentionally acknowledging and dismantling structures that (in)directly perpetuate an inequitable system. Therefore, training a staff to comprehend how their implicit biases affect their everyday decisions and framing the present landscape in a historical context is an essential step towards building a foundation of a more equitable food system.

After the Food and Race training, several changes occurred, which go deeper than paying lip service to disenfranchised communities. An Equity in Planning Committee that focused on structural equity, procedural equity, distributional equity, and transgenerational equity. Another indicator of the effectiveness of the program was suggested by an African American woman from the community who had participated in the program. She remarked on the difference between those who had attended the training, and connected that to the creation of the Resident Food Equity Advisor program:

> Their staff went to an undoing racism training. And just talking to the folks involved, you can tell their lens is different. They are not just aware of the issues, but they are working consciously to have more representation and more inclusion, and so on. That is how the Resident Food Equity Advisors came about, because they realize they can't, even though they are considered the food policy experts in the city – they realize that they need more resident voices, residents from all walks of life contributing to this conversation about food policy. You can't just sit around offices and decide the solutions for everyone. (Interview C, 2018)

Numerous organizational shifts occurred after the training, including different terminology and frames used in food system work and the innovation of new programs.

4.2.5 Food desert to "Healthy Food Priority Area"

One such example of changing institutional frameworks is through shifting the language and terms used in discussions around food security. After the anti-racist training, and part of the

recommendations of the Resident Food Equity Advisor (RFEA) 2017 cohort, Baltimore city began to use the term “Healthy Food Priority Areas” instead of “food deserts.” A food desert refers to neighborhoods that lack access to healthy food sources and are usually measured by a distance to grocery stores, while accounting for income level and vehicle access (USDA ERS, 2018). For decades, the USDA and food professionals sought to decrease food insecurity by specifically addressing this problem of food deserts. However, the USDA in 2016 reversed their decision, stating that the number of grocery stores in an area actually "has a limited impact on food choices" and “household and neighborhood resources, education, cultural preferences, and price may be more important determinants of food choice than store proximity” (Ploeg and Rahkovsky, 2016, p. 1).

Food justice activist Karen Washington also points out that the language of “food desert” inaccurately describes these communities that are given this label. First, food is present in these neighborhoods, although the options are not affordable, healthy, and nutritious. Second, the term ‘desert’ evokes imagery of lifelessness and comments on the community’s lack of vibrancy without a potential to improve. Washington prefers the term “food apartheid,” stating it reaches the,

> root cause of some of the problems around the food system. It brings in hunger and poverty. It brings us to the more important question: What are some of the social inequalities that you see, and what are you doing to erase some of the injustices? …’Food desert’ sugarcoats what the problem is. If you bring a supermarket in, it’s not going to change the problem. When we say “food apartheid”, the real conversation can begin. (as cited in Brones, 2018, pp. 10)

In light of this reflection, Baltimore has renamed these communities suffering from higher rates of food insecurity as Healthy Food Priority Areas. This language summons policymakers and citizens to shift their conditioned responses of shifting the blame onto these communities for living in ‘deserts’ towards reallocating resources to these communities to make amends for previous unjust policy. Describing to policymakers and the community of Baltimore that 28% of children (37,833 kids) live in Healthy Food Priority Areas urges the city towards a proactive and systematic response.

4.2.6 Recruitment strategies and "Resident Food Equity Advisor" Program

As for their recruitment strategies to attend the FPC meetings, BFPI had historically relied on word of mouth and spreading information through "nested contacts." Since advancing an equity lens, they have been more intentional about involving community voices through posting on social media community message boards and reaching out to encourage participation (Interview A, 2018). With the intention of bringing key stakeholders that are representative of the communities from Healthy Food Priority Areas "who will also find values in these meetings," BFPI established the Resident Food Equity Advisor (RFEA) program (Interview A, 2018).

In 2017 BFPI launched the RFEA program to convene community residents engaged in food issues in their districts across the city. The goal of the program is to inform food policy-making to promote healthy and equitable outcomes through participatory democracy. Sixteen advisors were recruited through an application and interview process to represent each of Baltimore's city council districts. In the "RFEA: 2017 Process and Highlights" report, the recruitment strategy was described to build a:

> Cohort [that] was intentionally selected to reflect the demographics of Baltimore City while being inclusive of all backgrounds and age groups. At meetings, RFEAs used their new knowledge, lived experiences, and voices to inform, advise and update the City's Food Retail, Sustainability, and Food Resilience Plans and policies. (Freishtat and Huang, 2017, para. 1)

Through a yearlong process of learning and sharing experiences related to different aspects of the food environment, the group convened monthly on a range of topics and provided "tangible action steps" at the conclusion of each meeting. Through a holistic and systems thinking lens, BFPI and the advisors discussed topics such as "food access, food justice, nutrition assistance programs, equity in the food environment and food environment research" (RFEA Process and Highlights, 2017, para. 3). They also debated how they could be accountable to each other, and reevaluated their structure for the next cohort. For the second cohort in 2018, the RFEA arrived at engaging with small food retail and corner store culture as a way to leverage their impact to create systematic change towards increasing healthy food access.

4.2.7 Corner stores and accountability

The RFEA sought to investigate and change policy for corner stores and other small food retailers. There are over 500 corner stores in Baltimore, which are clustered in neighborhoods

populated by low-income communities and in communities of color. Corner stores are much more prevalent than grocery stores in these areas and are stocked primarily with pre-packed highly processed food (McClintock, 2008). The RFEA coordinated with policy experts, as well as existing regulations and ordinances to equip advisors with different programmatic and policy tools to understand, engage, and change the existing supportive structures.

The RFEA analyzed and made recommendations on zoning policy, stock requirements, tools to increase food literacy, and conditional use permitting to engage residents in the process of consultation when a new Corner Store is planned to arrive in their community. They examined how many of these stores accept SNAP, which food products were available, at what cost, the potential for public-private partnerships, the interior organization of such stores, and the ethnicity and culture of the store owners as well as the residents who shop there regularly. They concluded their session with a meeting where they briefed the Mayor of Baltimore and introduced four goals. RFEA's goals, each of which was further elaborated with strategies and action steps, were:

> 1) Improve the physical environment of stores to provide a clean, safe, and accessible shopping experience;
> 2) increase quality, accessibility, and availability of food to improve community health;
> 3) build mutually beneficial relationships between stores and communities to strengthen and reinforce neighborhood values, needs, and desires; and
> 4) support stores to ensure that they have the resources they need to be economically viable businesses that serve their communities. (Resident Food Equity Advisors, 2018)

The next cohort in 2019 will oversee the implementation of these recommendations including "drafting legislation, engagement, advocacy, and action" (2018 Small food retail recommendations to the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, 2018).

4.2.8 Persistent challenges to equity in food systems work

While the systems approach to focus on healthy food access through tackling the culture of the small food retail store is commendable, there are many challenges that RFEA and BFPI face in their work. As one member from the RFEA cohort points out, there are structural and socio-political barriers to working on a transdisciplinary issue,

> I do believe focusing on just one issue. You have to be an expert in the field. I think that makes sense. However, you have to focus on equity, and food access and security is a part of that. But then at the root of food insecurity is poverty. So unless you're trying to eliminate poverty,

> you're going to find it very hard to eliminate all the outcomes of poverty. But poverty is too big of an issue to work on. (Interviewee D, 2018)

This equity advisor also acknowledges that poverty is not as "sexy" a topic to work on as food security. She notes,

> I think there is going to be challenges in breaking those silos when you're working in a setting that perpetuates – that is built on those constructs of being an expert; being focused narrowly on one particular aspect or perpetuating a cultural norm that appeals more to mainstream white middle class culture. (Interviewee D, 2018)

This framework is often spoken about in the food justice circles. The ability to show up and volunteer in a community garden in a low-income neighborhood and then return to the comfort of one's home and a fully stocked kitchen in a gentrified neighborhood illustrates the disconnect of the lived experience. This emphasizes the importance of including strong community voices in the policy-making table where oppressed communities have historically been excluded.

Another persistent challenge is that if these structures are not consistently confronted, the status quo will continue to create disparate outcomes. Staff at BFPI are aware of the challenge of engaging stable community buy-in. One staff member notes,

> Can Food PAC be a means for them to remain active, involved and connected? As we continue with RFEA and people keep coming with an interest, how can we reshape Food PAC for them to find value and have dialogue and work on projects together. That intentionality. How do you identify people [referring to community residents] who are interested in working around food and giving them the space to do that? (Interview A, 2018)

Not only community buy-in, but also citywide buy-in is a key aspect to scaling more equitable policies. One equity advisor also used the term "intentionality" and juxtaposed it to adding the term "equity" to the list of buzz-words. This advisor called out a flaw in the city-wide implementation process:

> What they are lacking is probably an interagency buy-in. Across the city, equity is something that people are very aware of and are committed. It also becomes a buzz-word. No one wants to say they are against equity. Everyone is for it. When we talk about holding ourselves accountable for it, that becomes a bit harder to commit to. The main thing that is lacking is central oversight of what meeting our equity mandates for the city really means, and how we're being intentional about that. (Interview D, 2018)

This same advisor has a vision of alleviating food insecurity by "eliminating poverty." The creation of employment opportunities is a radically different approach than helping SNAP recipients. She reflects on the politics of the situation, stating, "I would love to hear an appointed or elected official run on a platform of eliminating poverty. That would be a dream" (Interview D, 2018).

4.2.9 Lingering questions

There is a frustration of working in a field whose outcomes have not shifted after years or even decades of work. This is reflected by a Baltimore food system professional who said,

> Our goal of a more equitable sustainable food system is to improve lives and hopefully move the needle on health outcomes. We haven't seen any data that shows us that. We know that takes decades. But we haven't seen it. (Interview B, 2018)

Still, this professional acknowledges that the process of "shifting the needle" involves creating inclusive spaces, increasing participatory democracy, and ultimately, changing the existing culture of agencies across the whole of city government. One of the advisors from the RFEA program, who began the process skeptically, reflected on the experience:

> It was filled with very interactive and rich and thoughtful conversations. And we really had a representative group in terms of certain districts. Like Highland town is predominantly Latino and we had that representation at the table. There were even one or two store owners on the council. Again, we're talking about how can we use these stores that are there as a resource. Even talking about how to help them build better connections between the general communities they serve and the workers there. Sometimes there are language barriers or cultural misunderstandings and so it was really, really rich and they really did a good job in selecting a strong group that was honest and real about their owned lived experiences. Everyone in the group was held accountable. (Interview D, 2018)

Accountability and honesty are bedrock to building trust in areas where communities have been skeptical of policymakers and local government's previous actions.

The staff members at BFPI, however, recognize their privilege and leverage that towards involving community voices in the policy-making process, rather than having a strict top-down approach. One of the staff members reflected on this dynamic,

> There is an idea of needing to help people in terms of giving them resources, donating, and giving people free food. In some ways, that is important and needed, and there a lot of people doing anti-hunger work. But at the same, we are also looking at how do we strengthen these communities and what does it look like to strengthen it. Who is really getting the funding? When people talk about growing locally, or farmer's market, there is a narrative that these are issues that are for more privileged groups. We are trying to figure out how to change that narrative and support the groups or the people starting these groups who don't come from privileged communities. So we are figuring out how do strengthen communities and the work being done *in community and not on community* [emphasis added]. (Interview A, 2018)

Not all FPCs are fortunate enough to have collaborations with government, universities, and research centers, nor are they typically as well funded with multiple full-time staff positions (as evident in Oakland). Still, the centering of equity in their work has created programs such as the Resident Food Equity Advisors, which is one way of systematically shifting the power dynamic

and placing community residents and policymakers on a level playing field. Baltimore is not the only city that has made such intentional shifts in their city's food system, which is illustrated in section 4.3 on Oakland.

4.3 Oakland Food Policy Council

4.3.1 From redlining to green gentrification

The city of Oakland is the largest city in the eastern region of the San Francisco Bay Area. According to the 2000 Bay Area census, the population of Oakland was 35.7% Black or African American and 31.3% White, and in the 2010 census, 28% Black or African American and 34.5% White. This change in demographics is one result of the increased rate of gentrification in the East Bay. There corresponds with an increase in young, wealthy people moving into the city, an increase rent prices, and an increase in homelessness. The UC Berkeley Urban Displacement Projects (UDP) (2019) define gentrification as:

> a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood — by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in — as well as demographic change — not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents. (UDP Gentrification Explained, para. 1)

Similar to Baltimore, these processes can also be traced back to the racist policies of redlining and the systematic disinvestment in communities of color. Gentrification has accelerated in recent decades due to San Francisco's tech boom and the rippling impacts of both rapid economic growth and concentrated wealth that has not been evenly distributed into the surrounding economy and landscape. According to UDP, "93 percent of low-income neighborhoods in Oakland are at risk of or are already undergoing gentrification, while in Berkeley, 75 percent of low-income neighborhoods are threatened" (as cited in Richards, 2018). There are highly contested debates as to the pros and cons of gentrification to a region, though the impact on increasing income inequality and how resources are unevenly distributed is not disputed.

Gentrification also directly affects the availability and accessibility of healthy and nutritious food in Oakland. Brahm Amadi, co-founder of The People's Grocery, a community grocery store that promotes food sovereignty, confronts a chilling reality,

> Today, in many urban communities of color it is easier to purchase a gun than it is to buy a fresh tomato. Because of the lack of access to healthy foods, as well as a lack of knowledge

> about healthier food choices, the diets of many people of color are typically higher in sugar, salt, fat and refined carbohydrates. (as cited in Harper, 2009, p. 12)

This is corroborated by the fact that the rate of diabetes in West Oakland is four times the national average (Harper et al., 2009). In a food environment that is dominated by market forces, the issue of food security can not only be addressed through the growing of and building "support for small organic farms through the establishment of local distribution networks" (Alkon and Cadji, p. 1-2). These alternatives can cause further gentrification as they "are too often available only to affluent Whites, both because the cost of the produce tends to be high and because they are often economically feasible only in upscale neighborhoods" (Alkon and Cadji, p. 2). This process is described as green gentrification and also ties directly to increasing rates of food insecurity (Alkon and Cadji, 2018).

4.3.2 Establishing OFPC

The Oakland Food Policy Council (OFPC) started as an adhoc committee commissioned by the mayor's office of sustainability to assemble a research group focused on the topic of food deserts. Similar to the national trend, food deserts in Oakland followed the pattern of disproportionately affecting communities of color (Beaulac, Kristjansson, & Cummins, 2009). These neighborhoods classified as food deserts also correlated to a prevalence of corner stores. These stores are generally stocked with foods high in sugars and saturated fats and lack fresh and nutritious produce (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002). As part of this research group, other food issues surfaced in the sectors of health, economy, education, and public safety, which would later be quantified with a low or high equity score in the 2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report. These topics were all acknowledged, but were not being addressed systematically as related food system issues.

To address how the city of "Oakland struggles with high rates of obesity, poverty, food insecurity, and even hunger," the OFPC was formed as a,

> 21-seat council created to analyze the Oakland food system from production through consumption and waste management, and recommend changes to make the system more equitable and sustainable. The council coordinates between food system sectors; bringing underserved populations to the food policy table and recommending policies for a healthier, more prosperous city. (Oakland Food Policy Council, 2010, p. 5)

This research group evolved in its first year through the fiscal sponsorship of Food First, a food and development policy institute based out of Oakland. Food First worked with the council's membership "with representatives from the business, labor, governance, health, and education communities; concerned citizens; representatives of every food system sector; and comprised of members of different ages, genders, and ethnicities" to develop reports that would guide the future of food system work in Oakland (Oakland Food Policy Council, 2010, p. 5).

The first year involved conducting interviews and surveying councils across North America to guide its own formation. It also consisted of community listening and dialogue sessions, identifying the associated policies that are supporting or hindering their goals as a council, and reaching out to and involving professionals, researchers, and consultants with relevant and specific issue-area expertise. However, when OFPC initially formed, the membership was not representative of the community, as "it was composed predominately of white individuals from academic and professional backgrounds who were not from communities affected by food insecurity," which was later amended and improved through guaranteeing "representation of racially diverse populations, with two seats of a 21-seat council reserved for youth members and two reserved for community members" (Haynes-Maslow and Stillerman, 2016, p. 5).

OFPC began their organization with a primary focus on urban agriculture and food production. One of the initiatives was providing legal and financial support for a community focused farm, whose mission involved "growing food in that neighborhood and also selling the food to that neighborhood and using the income to start savings account for young people" (Interview F, 2018). This initiative reflects an awareness of green gentrification's adverse impacts. While maintaining these collaborations with these urban farm partners, OFPC has changed direction as an organization several years ago, primarily through the re-centering of their core statement towards equity. Similar to ensuring community representation on their membership, they also recognized that their policies on paper did not fully reflect their actions.

4.3.2 Centering community

An interview with the OFPC executive director revealed a small, but key difference to their work of their previous two and a half years compared to its inception:

> Before OFPC was 'to create an equitable and sustainable food system in Oakland,' and now OFPC 'advances equity and justice in Oakland's food system by *centering the needs and voices of people of color and low-income communities*' [emphasis added]. It's the same thing except now we're calling out the equity piece in it. (Interview E, 2018)

This position was altered for numerous reasons, namely their mixed success in continuing to "bringing underserved populations to the food policy table" and engaging community participation to implement change. As a result of a new group of FPC members and shifting dynamics in communities, the goal of developing long-lasting, trust-building relationships with the community lost its priority.

Through a change in FPC leadership, when OFPC hired a young African American woman as executive director, the council made a concerted effort to "tap back into the meetings with communities that were already happening and collaborate with organizations that already have that relationship and trust with the community members to engage them in the work that they are doing" (Interview E, 2018). Another restructuring was recognizing there is less political capital for specific food justice issues compare to the ongoing housing crisis in Oakland. This context provides incentives to break down the silos within social justice work and allow for greater coalition building (Interview E, 2018). OFPC also scrutinized its four working groups: economic security and development, food access, procurement policy, and urban agriculture. Recognizing that they do not have the capacity to concurrently tackle such an ambitious agenda, they scaled back to center their groups around specific topics to impact meaningful change.

One group is now dedicated to working on the "Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax," more commonly known as the Soda Tax. OFPC has teamed up with the Soda Tax Advisory Board on:

> 1) making recommendations to the City Council on creating and/or funding programs that prevent or reduce the health consequences of consuming sugar-sweetened beverages, and 2) reporting on the implementation of the measure. Oakland City Council, however, has the final say on allocation and implementation of the tax revenue. (Oakland Food Policy Council, n.d., para. 5)

OFPC has received a lot of pushback from the American Beverage Association (ABA), including many targeted advertisements to the Black and Latino communities in Oakland. In an interview about the importance of working on the soda tax, OFPC's executive director noted, "We know that among Black and Latino youth, one in two will develop Type 2 diabetes because of how much sugar people are consuming. The ads and placement are very strategic" (Salniker, 2016).

In light of centering the communities with whom they are working, OFPC also grew wary of drawing from research that treated communities as research subjects rather than co-participants. The executive director at OFPC challenges the need for this type of research at all, problematizing

> this middle-class approach to social justice work. They always want to do research. Over and over and over. And nothing comes after that. It's extractive. We know who is poor. We know who is worse off. We have known it for quite some time. (Interview E, 2018)

Another aspect of research that the executive director criticizes is how the alternative food movement tends to focus on both farmers markets and CSAs, which are overwhelmingly white spaces. Both of these examples largely concentrate on healthy food distribution that are primarily, though not exclusively, dedicated to White and privileged consumers.

This conception of "if they only knew where their food came from" may encourage the consumption of local and organic products, but it can also disregard numerous other food and farm injustices (Guthman, 2012). Topics such as the exploitation of farm labor, land access for farmers, and efforts to increase food access, all disproportionately affect People of Color and low-income communities (Allen, 2008). Promoting more farmers market as a way to increase access to healthy food without accepting EBT, SNAP, or WIC at the market is an example of "color blindness" in the alternative food movement. This is not to suggest that all research is extractive. Research has the potential to be foundational, meaningful, action-oriented, participatory, and relationship building, as promoted in transformative agroecology (Méndez, Bacon, & Cohen, 2013). However, in order to do that, as one OFPC staff member stated earlier, it has to be intentional and explicitly "call out the equity piece" (Interview E, 2018).

One example of this research was the "2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report." An OFPC staff member, who was not from the area, reflected on the startling results in the report:

> There are thoughts that [Oakland] is such a progressive space and people come here because it is the dream place to live. Then you get the actual outcomes, specifically for people of color and in this case, specifically black people displaced from the area for decades now. And you look at the outcomes that are found within housing and public safety and food and health care. And you go through and rate each one. It's really something. The city has started their process to become equitable. But they are in the, "What does equity even mean?" stage. (Interview E, 2018)

While it is an important step to take - confronting histories of oppression and deliberating this definition - it can also be frustrating for activists and community residents who have been

engaged in this work and calling out these problems for a long time. However, they are welcoming the capacity for institutional change, though they "just wish it would come faster" (Interview F, 2018).

While Oakland has involved community residents in the planning process from the beginning, it has struggled to achieve consistent and engaged diverse community representation and participation in its meetings. The meetings, similar to BFPI, are held in a downtown office. While these spaces are convenient for working professionals and for building relationships with the public, they can be counterproductive to centering community. As Coplen and Cuneo (2015) warned, finding creative ways to engage public citizenship is one way to complete the essential task of maintaining relevancy. OFPC recognizes both the importance of including these voices and intentionally bringing them into conversations (even when they are not present during the meetings). One such method is tapping into the city's long history of activism and building strong connections with key community leaders and organizations. Developing a positive reputation with the community is imperative not only for developing policy and programs that are relevant and beneficial to the community, but also for keeping policymakers accountable throughout include the implementation stages.

One of the biggest challenges in this work is building the bridge between the policy process and the communities that the policies affect. FPC's relationship to both the policy process and implementation is dependent upon how the organization is structured, and as well as its relation to the community and the city or municipal government.

4.3.3 Working within and without the city

Unlike BFPI, who sits within the city's department of planning, OFPC is not housed in any city department. There are downsides of not have any city funding, especially given the reality that it is more difficult to find sponsors to finance policy initiatives than those that have more immediate results. Another pitfall that the OFPC executive director reflects on is the absence of specific city-wide food governance and accountability,

> which is problematic, because Oakland doesn't have any food focused departments or actual institutions within the city to focus on food. They have environmental services and public works and things like that, but it's more about land use and not as much food specific. And so

> OFPC has been operating as this resource for the city, but we have not been funded through the city at this point. (Interview E, 2018)

While working outside of city governance, OFPC lacks jurisdiction and enforcement capability of policies that they would prefer to change.

OFPC has been in a multi-year process of attempting to ease regulations on small food vendors who currently have to purchase four different permits from both the county and city to operate. These permitting fees are required at the same rate to small and large vendors, "regardless if you earn $1,500 or $200,000 a year" (Interview G, 2018). OFPC has advocated for city residents to grow and sell food in their "right to grow" campaign. They have demanded that the city reevaluate its incentives for enforcing such offenses, which have targeted push carts and mobile food operators run by People of Color, Spanish-speaking businesses, and undocumented operators (Interview E, 2018; Interview F, 2018; Interview G, 2018).

Using an economic equity lens, OFPC has advocated for specific reforms to address this topic. These include revising specific language in legislation and offering permit-waivers for mobile push cart operators and small food businesses who promote and distribute healthier and nutritious foods. This is based on the principle to "not criminalize those who are contributing to the community" (Interview G, 2018). Focusing on this specific issue rather than championing the broad increase of healthy food access is a way to address specific equity issues and not approach systematic change with "color blindness." OFPC has built an institutional coalition around this topic and has gradually pressured policymakers to amend legislation.

Another theme that came up in numerous interviews was to "stay away from restricted funding." This point was further elaborated, by an OFPC member, who responded to my question about the hypothetical of what would be different about working within a city department,

> It would be a lot more restrictive, and what we would be able to do within the work would completely change because of the bureaucracy of it all… I know places like LAFPC is in the mayor's office there and it's great because there is more infrastructure and sustainability and they are still operating within the system. The same system that we are trying to change. (Interview G, 2018)

This tension, of changing systems from within or from the outside, through demanding external pressure or losing the faith in the system entirely, recalls the debate around food sovereignty versus food security. It also surfaced in numerous comments in the CLF survey, conversations

with food system practitioners, and community activists, many of which took very strong stances on one side or the other.

For OFPC, this trade-off of working outside of the city's bureaucracy seems to be a conscious choice. Working and operating from within the city suggests a higher probability of isolating community residents from participating in their council's meetings and programs, which is their highest priority now given their updated mission statement. One of the community residents from East Oakland expressed a deep distrust of Alameda county government serving their communities, suggesting they cater and favor "recent transplants in the tech industry with lots of money" over their own long-term residents (Interview F, 2018). Therefore, the council has appropriately adapted a direct communication strategy to the community. One example is the distribution of local "Hustle guides" (Figure 5), which offers step by step instructions to starting an Oakland-based food business including legal advice, budgeting, and connecting small farmers with food businesses.

Another way OFPC works to advocate policy outside of the city is through joining a coalition of farm and food justice organizations in California in hosting a food forum for district candidates in the month prior to an election. Assembly District 15 is located in the East Bay and consists of Oakland, Berkeley and the adjacent rural communities. "Food in the 15th" brought together two candidates to speak specifically to food issues in the district they hoped to represent. The event drew a full auditorium with not enough seats for all the attendees. The candidates were questioned on topics such as how to address widespread hunger in their communities, their stance on the Soda Tax, Immigration and Custom Enforcements (ICE) raids on farms that hire undocumented workers, their records on advancing or prohibiting SNAP, and more. Given that both candidates supported many of the same positions, a nuanced understanding and perspective of these issues was required to stand out (Interview G, 2018). Both the size of the audience and its engagement in the event impresses upon the candidates the importance of food issues in their community.

Figure 5: Cover of Oak Food Policy Council 2014 "Hustle Guide"

4.3.4 Challenges

Though there are many challenges to OFPC's work, the one that fundamentally drives their capacity as an organization is funding. OFPC has enough funds for only one full-time staff member and the rest of council is powered by volunteers. While OFPC is grateful for each of its funders, most of the funding sources have to be renewed every year and are offered in inconsistent amounts. In addition, sometimes the funders carry unrealistic expectations about the changes they hope to see in a short time frame. With the exception of one policy that OFPC advocated for, each policy has endured a four to five-year process to pass. These policies then have to be implemented and evaluated, which often present a new set of expenses.

Results that do not take a physical or material form such as a constructed community garden plot can be difficult to measure. These can come in the form of metrics or feeling a change in one's lived experience, which is likely to not occur overnight. Funders without a nuanced understanding of how policy in the food system operates can grow frustrated at the slow pace of this process. This may cause them to channel their funds towards other causes that may yield quick results but are not addressing structural problems.

Another challenge is that despite the existence of over 30 FPCs in California, less than 20% of councils represent their communities' diversity on their membership. Though it is higher than the national average, under 30% of California councils selected Diversity and Inclusion as a top three organizational priority (CLF Survey Data, 2018). Despite many organizations prioritizing healthy food access, economic development and anti-hunger, without confronting the equity component, councils are prone to reinforce inequitable structures. Therefore, it is difficult to create a statewide consensus on the need to engage with food equity work.

In working on food equity in their own community, OFPC must navigate to what extent it is possible to engage community members with an "anti-government" sentiment in the policy process. Several grassroots community organizers in Oakland harbor this feeling due to the government's historical treatment of low-income communities and communities of color. Here lies a key tension in confronting structural racism and centering community. On one hand, it is essential to do cross-sector work to create systematic and institutional change (Koski et al., 2016). Therefore, fostering community participation and engaging collaboration across the public and private sector are essential (Calancie et al., 2017). On the other, for this to be successful, all actors have to arrive in good faith and work towards compatible goals. If one looks back honestly at the history of those relationships, this can cause tension and illuminate bigger differences.

Among those differences is the fact that these three sectors (public, private, community) may have different visions of the future and operate with completely different budgets. FPCs have to dedicate much of their time and resources strictly towards volunteer management. Members are vulnerable to burnout as many of them are contributing their efforts outside of their normal routine (Interview G, 2018). Volunteers also come with different backgrounds and many require both anti-racist training and education to understand the complexity of the food system to arrive at a space where they contribute more than their labor - which is also important - to the conversation. Another issue is their capacity to overtly call out institutional racism in different spaces; the private and public sector are more inclined to "talk around the issue, rather than just call out racism" (Interview E, 2018). This hesitation is less evident within OFPC, as I observed in a meeting I attended in September 2018.

4.3.5 Observing a systems-thinking equity lens in action

I gained a sense of the structure and flow of the OFPC meetings as well as how the group activates an equity lens. The meeting began with introductions to make the new faces such as myself feel welcome and included into the space. The group was composed of council members and non-members, mostly younger food system professionals in their 20s and 30s and several older attendees. It was not apparent to me that any community members or organizers were present at this particular meeting, though several food system professionals who attended had grown up in the area.

The group's familiarity with the council ranged from people who were either members or committed volunteers that had been attending these meetings for years to a few of them who had who only just began joining the meetings this year. The introductions were proceeded by a short video of African American food activist Karen Washington speaking at a conference about how race operates in the food system, and how she, as a woman of color, often feels her community is underrepresented in food and farming conference spaces. Following the video was a group reflection and discussion on the same topic and was proceeded by organizational updates from the different working groups.

The rest of the time was dedicated to an issue that a community member brought up to the executive director earlier in the week. A new permanent supportive housing structure was being completed in the next month with the purpose of providing units to shelter some of Oakland's homeless population. This community member had asked OFPC's executive director if they had any ideas about how they could sustainably provide food or meals to the new residents, as the housing structure had the capacity to only provide two warm meals a week. The director debriefed the group on the problem and prompted us to think about this scenario through the lens of three different categories: meeting immediate short-term needs, long-term solutions across multi-year to multi-decade time spans, and systematic and structural problems in Alameda county that have led to the current housing crisis. We were then divided into 5 sub-groups and spent the remainder of the meeting brainstorming solutions and then sharing those ideas in a plenary session afterwards.

Every group responded to each of these categories in useful and nuanced ways. Depending on the life and work experience of the participants in this exercise, the group collectively provided a pooling of practical resources and community assets for the housing structure to build connections. These included various food banks, non-profits working on this topic in other parts of the city, proximate restaurants that distribute their "extra" food, and other ideas. Groups who had backgrounds in policy advising and consulting responded to the longer-term vision through reflecting on specific city and county policies that proliferate rather than alleviate the housing crisis. Others spoke about the wider trends in the city that provide incentives for expansion of infrastructure for industry and tech companies over affordable housing. Some spoke about tapping into funds or resources connected to private firms who have a mission of corporate social responsibility. Some members who are not from Oakland reflected on how these policies and various proposed solutions operate in their home cities. This led to a spirited discussion of how different communities of color have or have not recovered from racist redlining policies of the 1930s across the entire US.

The extent to which OFPC's leadership and members have activated an equity lens was evident in this problem-solving break out session. The council aggregated decades of brainpower and experience to produce highly nuanced, relevant, and useful output in under two hours. This also demonstrated the trust that the community placed to OFPC to approach them with this problem. This reflects the years of community investment and growing the reputation that OFPC is a "food resource" aimed at building bridges between the city government and the community.

5. Discussion

The Baltimore and Oakland case studies illustrate the complexity of the different actors and their motivations to work within and change their respective food systems. This discussion section will reflect on their similarities and differences in transitioning one's council towards an equity lens and framework. In addition, it will broaden the discussion to include the work of other FPCs, and recommend key questions for a FPC to ask itself as it makes a commitment to equity.

5.1 Relationships to government, institutions, and entrepreneurs

Baltimore and Oakland FPCs both present site-specific and adaptive strategies on how to achieve equity in their respective food systems. Each city has directly attempted to confront structural racism through understanding their respective regional, cultural, and historical contexts. Equity looks and operates differently in different contexts, which is to say that this research is not seeking prescriptive solutions. However, most FPCs can learn several lessons from the way that Oakland and Baltimore have navigated building relationships between communities and their local city, municipal, county, or state government.

Baltimore's Food Policy Initiative has been intentional in acting as a bridge between community residents and the city's Department of Planning. Through the Resident Food Equity Advisor (RFEA) program, Baltimore government employees utilize their position of power and privilege to deliberately uplift historically underserved and disinvested neighborhoods throughout the city and engage them in the policy making process. BFPI has dedicated stipends to support the equity advisors time and energy, and beyond policy, they have designed and planned accountability measures and implementation into the process. This includes the application of their equity analysis tool "to evaluate potential actions, policies and programs for their potential to disrupt or uphold systems of power and privilege" (Resident Food Equity Advisor, 2018).

Oakland Food Policy Council has built the reputation as a reliable and trustworthy resource for both the city and the community. OFPC aims to steer conversation towards equity and set agendas that seek to confront racist policies in all spaces. OFPC members have also interrupted the policy process if it is heading in an unjust direction, as evident in their work

around the issue of small food retail. While OFPC aims to build consensus around topics that can be difficult, the council maintains its first priority as listening to and uplifting community voices and centering community needs in all of its decisions. As relationships between the city's government and constituents build, there are more opportunities for seeking common ground and working towards compatible goals.

Both Oakland and Baltimore FPC members credit the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC) for making a change from within city governance and institutions. LAFPC has a food-focused department within the mayor's office, a budget greater than $100,000 a year, and a fully staffed and competent team to implement systematic change. It is worth noting that these resources are incredibly rare among FPCs, one-third of whom operate with a $0 budget and are exclusively run by volunteer efforts (Bassarab, Santo, & Palmer, 2019). LAFPC has scaled its "Good Food Purchasing Program" (GFPP) into a nationalized program that is "designed to do to the food system what LEED certification did for energy efficiency in buildings" (Center for Good Food Purchasing, 2019, para. 1). The GFPP aims to transform:

> 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. The Center for Good Food Purchasing provides a comprehensive set of tools, technical support, and verification system to assist institutions in meeting their Program goals and commitments. (Center for Good Food Purchasing, 2019, para. 1)

This is perhaps the most successful and widely scaled example of a program to arise out of a FPC. GFPP has nationally changed the conversation around regional food provisioning. Oakland Unified School district was the second institution to adopt the GFPP. Other examples of their work from the west to east coast reflect their willingness to adopt a racial equity framework to guide their priorities (Farnsworth, Delwiche, & McKinney, 2019).

However, there are persistent barriers to equitably adopting and institutionalizing new policies. Failing to recognize and account for how structural injustices may affect communities of color differently may have the tendency to perpetuate or exacerbate these problems. Following this logic can lead policies to advancing equality, where everyone receives the same regardless of need, as opposed to finding equitable solutions, that address specific and differentiated needs. Clark (2017) argues that those that often design participation opportunities lack the education, readiness, and capacity to address deep structural, racial, and economic inequities. Therefore, in

order to advance equity, Clark (2017) suggests "elected officials and [public] managers should consider training on cultural humility with community members, followed by codesign of public participation" (p. 362).

Another way to avoid this trap is to create a culture of meaningful inclusion and to uplift community voices. Brahm Amadi, the People's Grocery cofounder in Oakland declares:

> The food movement won't be able to build the social, economic and political will to transform our inequitable and unsustainable food system without the strong participation from the majority. In turn, this participation hinges on strong leadership coming from communities of color. Prioritizing the participation and leadership of people of color in the food movement is not simply a humanistic exercise—it is a prerequisite for the democratization of the food system. (as cited in Harper, 2009, p. 12)

OFPC and BFPI do not stop at calling out structural racism and fostering a culture of community participation. These councils also center agency and entrepreneurship through supporting community businesses led by People of Color. Baltimore's RFEA focused on reimagining the role of corner stores as a resource rather than as a drain on the communities. Similarly, OFPC has been working for years on policy that supports small food retailers and mobile push carts. These initiatives intersect with healthy food access, food provisioning, food procurement, and economic development. FPCs can advance and support these goals through finding the appropriate context such as working on policy, advocacy, community engagement, land use planning, or any combination of those to impact meaningful and equitable change in their community.

A handful of FPCs (out of the 300+ in North America) and other food policy groups across US have already begun adopting a deliberate equity framework. Several examples are described in section 5.2 including new and old councils committing to equity and creating effective partnerships with other organizations.

5.2 Food policy groups across the United States engaging in equity

Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council has worked with Native American environmental activist Winona LaDuke, the Institute and Agriculture Trade Policy (IATP), and the city government and county government and public health department to call out institutional racism. State elected officials, including Congressman Keith Ellison, joined the conversation in advocating for decolonizing the racist language that was built into their historical institutions and

legislation (LaDuke et al. 2010; IATP, 2012). Through a solidarity with Indigenous Peoples and People of Color, the Twin Cities has centered conversations around "questions of reparations, or at least repair of trauma, and relationally-accountable, community-led action," adding:

> The twin cities is proud of its history of adopting one of the first food policy councils in the nation in 1986 and its active network of rent stabilization and affordable housing efforts working to address strong racial disparities in access to housing, healthy food, and other supportive infrastructure. (Cadieux et al., 2018, p. 9)

This direct and intentional language can also be found in Detroit Food Policy Council. Similar to Oakland's work towards centering community, Detroit has:

> made addressing the underlying racial and economic disparities in food access, retail ownership, food sector jobs and control over food- producing resources a cornerstone of their policy platform – explicitly attacking structural racism inherent in the food system and creating space for greater economic democracy and food justice. (as cited in Harper et al., 2009, p. 6)

Though these examples reflect the success of long established FPCs, newer councils are starting off with a clear vision of a just and equitable system to work towards.

Washington DC's Food Policy Council (DCPFC) initiated their organization with "Food Access and Equity" as their number one priority. DCFPC has a dedicated subgroup that focuses on economic development and launched an investment fund that "matches private investments in locally-owned, community-driven grocery stores in underserved areas" (DC Food Policy Council, 2019, para. 3). Pioneer Valley Grows in Massachusetts recently transitioned their council towards a dedicated equity lens and now supports a racial equity working group that hosted a series of conversations between its members and the community to together address systematic barriers in their work.

A recurring theme reflects that these structural inequalities transcend the food system. FPCs might also partner with other city organizations and community partners to institutionalize equity across a region. Dane County's Racial Equity and Social Justice Team, in partnership with Center for Social Inclusion (CSI) and the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), conducted a racial equity analysis of their city and put forth five recommendations to be implemented across a multi-year process. The county put forward a three-step approach of "normalize, operationalize and organize" for each recommendation. The report's thoroughness and holistic lens is evident in the following recommendations:

> 1) Develop infrastructure and tools to increase Dane County employees' and residents' understanding of and ability to advance racial equity.
> 2) Implement strategies to ensure Dane County is an effective and inclusive government that engages community and is responsive to its needs.
> 3) Ensure that Dane County's communities of color share in the County's economic prosperity.
> 4) Ensure that all neighborhoods and people are safe and racial disproportionalities in the criminal justice system are eliminated.
> 5) Ensure all people have healthy life outcomes. (GARE, 2015)

The report found "racial equity is possible if the leadership, reach, and scope of government are leveraged toward that end" and "is taking the steps necessary to end racial inequity and is positioned to continue on this path to ensure all residents have the opportunity to live full, healthy lives" (GARE, 2015, p. 9)

Given the nature of food system work as cross-sectoral, centering food issues in the community serve as both a relevant and apt point of departure for coalition building. Successful FPCs have occupied this space as a convener and others have dedicated council resources (e.g., funds, staff, community expertise) towards an equity officer or equity working group. Some FPCs have created food justice curriculums, and educated council and community members through hiring an external anti-racist training organization. A number of FPCs have also confronted discriminatory language built into their former mission statements and legislation. Each of these examples are preliminary steps to achieving equity across all communities, and a step in that direction simultaneous both grows the awareness and reinforces the importance of this work.

5.3 Recommendations

Rachel Slocum (2006) calls for using an anti-racist lens that recognizes institutionalized racism, inequality, and privilege that exist within the food system and alternative food movement organizations (such as FPCs). Adding to this, Patricia Allen (2008) reminds food system practitioners, scholars, and activists that these structural inequalities are embedded with the origin of the US food system (e.g., plantation economy, land dispossession, etc.) and it's important not to regress to an imaginary time when addressing these issues:

> collaborative federal public policy efforts of the alternative agrifood movements [move] away from taking on tough equity issues, and are now using a discourse of 'restoring balance,'' as if there were ever a time in American history in which there was a balance.

Another issue that is important to consider is the misguided assumption that low participation equates to low interest. McCullagh and Santo (2014) outline what this looks like in the context of Food Councils:

> Applied to FPCs, "meaningful inclusion" of diverse community residents is not simply an invitation to participate, but a practice that ensures that all participants feel comfortable and supported in making contributions and that their opinions are listened to and respected… While FPCs may hold meetings that are open to the public, they should be careful not to confuse lack of participation of community members with disinterest. (p. 28)

This is evident in another important aspect of distinguishing between diversity, inclusion, equity and justice: how does power and privilege play out in decision-making processes and the spaces in which they are held?

Engaging a dedicated equity lens requires constant reflection and reevaluation. It involves consistently confronting historical inequities built into laws, regulations, and institutions, and being explicit and transparent throughout one's process. A commitment to equity requires a FPC to recognize its position and "to intentionally support communities most affected by food and farm system inequities" and "listen to, stand with and amplify the voices of those facing inequity as leaders to change our food systems" (FPN Commitment to Equity, 2018).

Given that there is no clear formula to advancing equity, rather a set of principles to follow, I have developed a list of key questions for FPCs to ask themselves as they begin to undertake and commit to an equity lens. These themes and questions described in Figure 6 are based on the literature review, the case studies, and Ilana Shapiro's "Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A guide to selected programs" (Shapiro, 2002). This framework of question asking is primarily meant to generate conversation rather than be prescriptive. Even if the FPC has begun engaging an equity lens, this work is an ongoing and reflective process that requires an organization's thoughtfulness about one's composition and relation to the community. Each of these questions are important to engage with, not as a place to check off a box, but to reflect on how to create a flourishing food environment for all. Given the intersecting nature of these themes, some of the affiliated questions overlap.

1) Representation	2) Council Structure
Is the council reflective of the community? In what ways has the council invited the community to participate? What are the cultural and logistical barriers of preventing greater participation? How does representation on the council affect the agenda-setting process and priorities?	*How is the council structured?* Who are the individuals or groups involved in decision-making in the organization? What is the culture of the organization? What types of education about racism and systematic oppression is provided? Who has control and influence over the financial resources?
3) Accountability	**4) Funding**
What is the role/privilege in the local/regional food system? What is the councils' relation to organizations engaged in community food work? How is the council leveraging its privilege and power to elevate underserved communities? Are external partner organizations or a review process in place to hold the council accountable? Does the council have an equity officer or an equity working group?	*How is the council funded and who is it for?* Does the source of funding support long-term work; are immediate results required? Does the council receive any restrictive funds that is counter-productive to an equity lens? Is philanthropy furthering equitable outcomes or is it colorblind in its giving? How is the council supporting its volunteer members?
5) Intentionality	**6) Institutional change**
How is the council fully committed to equity? Has the council had a meaningful anti-racist training? Has the council drafted or dedicated an organizational equity statement? Are there any working groups or committees dedicated to equity?	*How is the council committed to institutional change?* Is the council prioritizing programs/events that advocate for policy and institutional change? Does the language being written into policy directly confront existing power structures? Given that systems change is cross-sectoral, is the council working with partners in public, private, and non-profit work?

Figure 6: Key themes and affiliated questions for FPCs committing to an equity lens

Another recommendation would be to measure the FPCs commitment to equity development and track its progress 2019 using the report on "Measuring Racial Equity in the Food System: Established and Suggested Metrics" (Rodman-Alvarez and Colasanti, 2019). The report is divided into four themes: food access, food and farm business, food chain labor, and food movement. These 86 metrics are available to guide and hold policymakers, legislators and food system practitioners accountable at the local, state, and national level. Another recently published guide is the 2018 "Racial Equity Implementation Guide for Food Hubs." Food hubs are a similarly intersectional and integral component of strengthening local food economies through building resilient, geographically focused supply chains (Jones et al., 2018).

Inclusion is important for both meeting the community where they are, ensuring the policy is consistent with the community's values, and growing the resident's capacity and power to change their food system (McCullagh and Santo, 2014). This is integral to sustaining a cultural and institutional change rather than a single year of inviting more diversity to the council and moving on, as evidenced in numerous FPCs (CLF Survey Data, 2018). Additionally, overcoming the transient nature of FPCs and their emphasis on programming over policy work is key to tackling systematic issues (Harper et al., 2009). Shifting towards a culture of meaningful inclusion, engaging the community, and tackling policy initiatives are essential to sustaining impacts that can translate over time into an equitable and just food system.

5.4 Limitations

This thesis has been confronted with numerous limitations. To begin with, I am a White-male from a middle-class, educated family who has not experienced serious hunger and has benefited from the privilege of this position. Given my lived experience, my positionality as a researcher is limited. Being conscious of this has led me to conduct thorough and thoughtful research. Nonetheless, I recognize the persisting limitations associated with my background and am lacking knowledge important for this research.

Furthermore, I am not deeply rooted in the communities of where I conducted my research. Therefore, I am prone to missing important local context such as the misunderstanding of jargon, local politics, and the histories of these respective food systems. I attempted to

overcome these limitations with an extensive literature review and multiple interviews with the community, the council membership, and the council staff.

Additionally, I did not confront the numerous justice and equity issues across the entire food and farm system. Urban and rural dichotomies, land access to beginning farmers, exploitation of farm and food labor, and many other issues each require important nuance when elevating community voices to shape policy towards a more equitable and just food system.

Lastly, as previously mentioned, a finite amount of time and resources caused most of this research to be done remotely. Lacking numerous, meaningful relationships with the community has brought me to a surface-level understanding of the Oakland and Baltimore food systems. Therefore, the recommendations in Section 5.3 are gained more from general, rather than highly localized insights.

6. Conclusion

As reflected in the national survey data, only a small percentage of FPCs list diversity and inclusion as a top priority, and they rarely reflect the racial, gender, and socio-economic diversity of the communities they operate in. This key statistic underscores the national trend. Though food equity as a concept is blossoming with the usage of the term increasing in both scholarship and activist circles, this small and mighty network, which includes some food system practitioners and policymakers, is still a significant minority. Importantly, more people are drawing a connection to the impacts of historical structural racism to the contemporary food system. However, without institutional support, legitimacy and backing from the community, inter-agency buy-in, and mechanisms of accountability, policy language replete with buzzwords will face persistent barriers to translate into both structural reform and on the ground implementation.

Baltimore and Oakland have both demonstrated ways to simultaneously increase diversity in decision making processes and create a culture of inclusion. In recognizing their privilege, available resources, and role in government to further this conversation, Baltimore has been able to embrace and perpetuate an equity lens through innovative programs such as the Resident Food Equity Advisor with the long-term goal of bringing about institutional change. Oakland has been able to advance this conversation through uplifting and building trust with community leaders and residents as central to their mission from the beginning. Both organizations have been successful in advocating for equity through small food retail, which intersects with food production, distribution, and consumption.

Further research is recommended to explore the relationship for FPCs with food hubs who have adopted an equity lens, as they also occupy a power and intersectional space in regional food economies. More research is needed to document examples of how FPCs are committing to equity, confronting structural racism, centering community, and elevating businesses run by People of Color. I also recommend following up on the progress and continuity of recently implemented programs such as the Resident Food Equity Advisors in Baltimore.

As the 21st century brings about innovation and cooperation to address big, complex challenges, not viewing the world through an equity lens will only exacerbate the disparate

outcomes related to these problems. A demographic shift across US communities predicts that People of Color will be a majority around the year 2045 (Frey, 2018). FPCs offer hope, though not proven evidence, towards democratizing food systems to assure equitable outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color. Baltimore and Oakland's efforts are joined by cities and organizations across the United States in being more intentional about listening to, standing with, and amplifying communities to decide how they desire to access their own flourishing food system.

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Interviews

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Interview B, September 2018. Baltimore food system professional. Attended FPC meetings 5+ years.

Interview C, October 2018. Baltimore community resident. Attended FPC meetings 2017-2018.

Interview D, December 2018. Baltimore community resident. Resident Food Equity Advisor.

Interview E, September 2018. Oakland Food Policy Council staff. 2016-2018.

Interview F, October 2018. 2018 Oakland community resident.

Interview G, September 2018. Food Policy Council member. Attended FPC meetings 2017-2018.

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