Engagement in Community Food Systems: Motivations and Outcomes for Food Systems Advocates

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Gratitude

Alice’s Garden
Farmshed
OCIFS

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Overview

- Overview of research and organizations
- Motivations
- Ways of engagement
- Outcomes
- Recommendations
Introduction/Overview

• Explore the relationship between sense of place and engagement in community food systems
• Big idea: sense of place can be a motivator for civic engagement and that the human community and the land (place) can become a connecting point and shared motivator for civic engagement
Research Questions

• What relationship exists between sense of place and community food systems engagement?

Sub-questions:
• How does sense of place motivate engagement in community food systems?
• How does sense of place develop through engagement in community food systems?
• Does a childhood sense of place serve as a motivator for people to recreate places of connection and comfort?
• Do people identify with the natural or human community in a way that motivates their engagement in community food systems?
Participants

Central Rivers Farmshed

Oneida Community
Integrated Food Systems

Alice’s Garden
Methods

• Focus groups
• Demographic survey
• In-depth semi-structured interviews – 29 participants
  o place
  o organizational and personal practices in food systems
  o engagement in food systems
  o sense of place
• Focus group review of results – utilization
What motivates you to be involved in food systems work?

What outcomes of this work do you see, both for you and your community (and beyond)?
Motivations

• Community relationships and responsibility (23)
• Care for the land (21)
• Justice (20)
• Personal growth and satisfaction (18)
• Personal and community healthy (15)
• Family experience (10)
• Support for family farms (9)
• Desire for fresh food (6)
• Economics (5)
• Support for local businesses (4)
Community

We all have these duties and responsibilities as human beings. As human beings, everything that I've mentioned, they all have duties and responsibilities too to each other. They have specific duties and responsibilities. Water and strawberries. Thunder and maple. ... Women, ocean, some of our plants, moon. Photosynthesis, garden, sun, everything is all intertwined and we're dependent on each other.
Community

I can’t fail for everybody. You know. So I have to just keep going. You know. It’s like so many people were behind us from the start that now I have a responsibility to them because I’ve presented 400,000 times that this is all going to work. It’s gotta work! You know. And it’s my friends, and it’s the people I care about, you know, it’s just, it is this community that has rallied.
Community

I grew up middle class and so that community, I have a giving spirit and I want to continue to give back. So that’s where I am at, still learning but also wanting to give back what I know and help the community build pathways to a better lifestyle, better quality of life.
I also began to understand what stewardship of the land meant. You don’t get anymore, this is it, this is it. So you have to take care of it; and through scouting, it further fostered that and ah, so conservation is something that’s very, very important to me. The ground water is important to me. I do have a healthy appreciation for the land and what it’ll do, what it can do, and what it does. That’s just ah, I guess that’s just the way I’m wired...some of those skills that I learned as a scout I apply today and ah, it’s all good. The old saying is at a campsite, leave it better for having been there.
Care for the Land

I think a willingness to work with this land, and to heal this land so that we could work directly in the soil. I think that was an act to heal this land instead of saying we’re going to pour a bunch of soil on top. And I know how she’s talked about how people actually working in the earth and not a box on top of the earth and pretending we’re working in the earth.
Care for the Land

So I guess that my vision would be how to explore how we could be more sustainable and be better caretakers of the earth, so yeah, so I guess one of my roles is how to move that conversation forward.

Making the land and everything else better than when we started working with it. Not harming it or destroying it or making it less productive or desirable I think in a broad sense.
I think our decolonization is a big part of our recovery. Why do we think the way we think? ... I think our concept of creation, genesis is a big part of our what it will look like, our success at de colonizing is a part of it, and then our recapturing our foundation is a big part too just because you're clean the board doesn't mean-- It's not a level playing field I think that analogy is made many times talking to Indian people in development. Well we need to level the playing field with the Indians. Oh, really, how do you get a level playing field when this isn't your field first of all? Then secondarily, all the rules are your rules, so how do we get a level playing field? I think there's some discussion that we haven't had fully over understanding the dynamics of the reality we're facing today.
Justice

And, it’s dismantling the corporate structure back to kind of being a humanistic structure. So, I, how that looks is, it is supporting small grocery, it is supporting small restaurants, and getting people to remember why it’s important...And that’s not even going into the economic piece of, it’s not just what the farmers are making, but what we’re paying fast food workers, it’s what we’re paying immigrant labor and how that’s totally subsidized. The labor that’s in the slaughter houses, I mean all that stuff.
Justice

I’m motivated by a sense of justice, and compassion, and vengeance, and victimization. Yeah, those things. So, like justice. I want the family farm to exist. I want people to be able to have access to the land to produce something and to make a living off of that. If you want to access the land to provide for yourself to sustain yourself to provide food for yourself, it’s sort of a condition of justice to be able to feed yourself and your community. So there’s that. That’s kind of a maybe overly dramatic to say, but in that sense, yeah, justice.
Justice

And impacting that quality of life is looking at all of those systems, including food, and how, for some folks who are held in bondage because of, whether we’re talking educational system or food system, all these institutions that control so many folks’ lives in an urban context and so what does it mean to break through some of the unhealthiness in the institutional model ... We talk a lot about the color of food, when it comes to food, who’s really getting paid, whose careers are really getting built up, people are talking about the color of food, I don’t know if you’ve seen the documentary; when we talk about the food industry, that’s a whole different conversation. So yeah, food, food, food, food.
You have a lot of obesity, a lot of people suffering from diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, you name it, people are suffering from it, at high rates. And looking at those statistics just blew my mind, in comparison to, and I’m like what a disparity. So then we started doing these demonstrations and also talking about diet and healthy eating habits and so forth and people were all interested in juicing, you know you can juice a vegetable or here’s a better way to prepare a vegetable for our young people.
Personal and Community Health

It was basically mainly bringing healthier foods to the community. And getting them more aware of— that there is healthier foods out there and what they can do with them to include them in their meals.... I guess just having fresh foods available and having people educated in how important it is. Not only for taste but for health and everything else.
One thing that’s been important to me, some members of my family have had health issues, like pre-diabetes, so to get them to consider it even as a way to relieve stress. So now I have my couple sisters and my daughter, they’re actually gardening here so that’s really important. Even it’s just spread to the greater family, to uncles, there’s more discussion around healthy food and that.
We lost a daughter-in-law to cancer, my husband had cancer, I have two very good friends that have some serious cancers right now and I think it’s coming from the sprays and the additives and everything. My daughter in law that passed away her sister also had cancer. And both these cancers showed up after they delivered babies and they were on a huge farm and my husband- my son the husband of our daughter in law that passed away he said some of that has been traced back to the sprays, the herbicides. And they were huge farmers... [I want to] know what I’m eating. We both agreed on that
Activities

- Education (25)
- Gardening (23)
- Food choices (18)
- Policy, planning and programming (18)
- Supporting local sales (13)
- Volunteering (12)
- Food preservation (12)
- Cooking (12)
- Sharing food (11)
- Hunting, gathering and foraging (10)
- Sustainable farm and garden practices (8)
- Cultural regeneration (7)
- Spiritual (5)
- Seed saving (1)
- Donating money (1)
Outcomes

• Sense of place (29)
• Increase in awareness and involvement (27)
• Personal growth and satisfaction (19)
• Community building (17)
• Support for family farms (15)
• Improved personal or community health (9)
• Economic improvement (2)
• Environmental improvement (2)
Sense of Place

- Places have human meaning
- Place and sense of place co-develop
- Sense of place can be held at multiple scales
- Sense of place is motivation for place action
Place: Social-Ecological Physical Place

- Socio-cultural Sense of Place
  - Personal Sense of Place
    - Sense of Place
    - Changes
    - Intervening Factors: internal and external motivations and barriers

Place Meanings
- Identity
- Attachment
- Place Engagement

- Sustenance
- Belonging

Reciprocity

Aesthetic
Ecological
Culture
Education
Family
Peace/Happiness
Health
History
Food
Recreation
Creativity
Action
Love
Inhabitation
Sacred
...
Engagement in Community Food Systems

Sense of Place

Childhood Sense of Place

Social Sense of Place

Ecological Sense of Place
Recommendations

• Diverse opportunities for engagement
  – Opportunities for participants to identify their own “benefit” or motivation
  – Justice, Care for the land, Health, and Responsibility
Recommendations

• Positive feedback
  – building relationships, seeing success (e.g., a productive garden), and verbal acknowledgement from others
Recommendations

• Cultivate a sense of belonging
  – Relationship building, ways for people to identify as group members and group experiences.
  – Identified organizational place
  – Reflection and sharing
Recommendations

• Connect children
  – Gardens are an excellent way to do this
  – Mentors are also important
Recommendations

• The commons
• Actively led and created places
  – invitation of diverse members
  – programming that engages participants in critically examining their sense of place
  – cultivating a sense of ecological and social belonging.
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<tr>
<th>Design Principles for the Commons (Ostrom, 1990)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clear boundaries.</td>
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<td>2. Rules match the ecological and social needs.</td>
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<td>3. Users can make and modify the rules.</td>
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<td>4. Clear system to monitor resource and users.</td>
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<td>5. Graduated sanctions, or punishments</td>
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<td>7. Users have autonomy.</td>
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<td>8. Nested layers of governance and activities.</td>
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Recommendations

• Encourage people’s exploration of their sense of place
Sense of Place Guiding Questions

• Why is this place (or community) important to you?
• What does this place provide for you?
• What does this place mean to you?
• What do you like to do here?
• Who do you interact with here that is important to you?
• How do you connect with the natural (ecological) community here?
• How do you connect with the human community here?
• What things would you like to see improved here?
Questions and Ideas
Summary

• People are engaged for diverse reasons
• Sense of place is an important motivator and outcome
• Co-creating places is integral to building a food systems movement
• The land and community can be the commons that bring people together