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Where is the 'Policy' in Dutch Food Policy Councils?

How Dutch FPCs shape local food policy.

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Abstract

In recent years, Food Policy Councils (FPCs) have gained prominence in the Dutch food governance arena by addressing the pressing challenges of the Dutch food system. If Dutch FPCs are positioned to effectively shape local food policy, they can play a prominent role in driving sustainable food system transformations. Although there has been a surge in FPC literature in recent years, there has not been research yet into the mechanisms that determine the effectiveness of FPC influence on local food policy. This thesis uses process tracing to address that gap by investigating how and to what extent Dutch Food Policy Councils influence local food policy. The focus is on two prominent councils: the Food Council MRA (FC MRA) in Amsterdam and the FPC EetbaarEde in Ede. Policy Advisory Systems Theory helped identify the key mechanisms through which FPCs exert influence, while shifting the focus from the traditional view in FPC literature of policymakers as passive entities to a more dynamic view where advisory actors engage with policymakers in a system of interactions. Detailed analysis of interviews with FPC members and local policymakers, FPC (internal) documents, observations of FPC events, and municipal food policy strategies reveal that Dutch FPCs primarily exert influence by building personal relationships with policymakers and leveraging their trust and credibility to raise awareness on food system issues. Dutch FPCs are most likely to affect local food policy when food issues are politically salient. Despite that Dutch FPCs have only started to emerge in the last ten years, they have started to make important contributions to local food policy. If local governments recognise the need for food system change, Dutch FPCs can play a key role in transforming the food system by providing a platform for citizen initiatives to shape local food policy through the development of strong personal relationship with local food policymakers.

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1 Introduction

In recent years, Food Policy Councils (FPCs) have gained prominence in the Dutch food governance arena by addressing the pressing challenges of the Dutch food system. The first Dutch FPC was established in 2014 in Rotterdam, followed shortly thereafter by Amsterdam, Ede, The Hague, Haarlem and Dordrecht. Additionally, there are several cities, including Arnhem, Leiden and Utrecht, where the feasibility of an FPC is being explored. An FPC is a formalised local or regional network that brings together a diverse set of food system stakeholders to promote the environmental, social, and economic health of the local food system (Gupta et al., 2018). These councils typically hold regular meetings to discuss strategies for supporting local food initiatives and communities, as well as identifying pathways to improve the local food system. Ideally, these efforts lead to constructive contributions to local food policy through partnerships with the local government. Dutch FPCs have emerged in response to a deep-felt lack of agency among local food stakeholders – such as citizens and unconventional farmers – over the local food system. By fostering cooperation, these councils seek to address persistent issues within the Dutch food system.

1.1 Societal relevance

Such issues are widely prevalent in the Dutch food system. Environmentally, the Dutch agricultural system is responsible for 60% of nitrogen compound emissions (CLO, 2023), causing a major threat to Dutch nature areas. After a court ruling in 2019, ordering the reduction of nitrogen depositions in Nature 2000 areas, huge farmers protests erupted, revealing not only the tension between nature and farming but also the deep-felt power disbalances in the Dutch food system. This resulted in years of discussion about who was to blame and who had what responsibilities. Despite major efforts from the national government, six years later, still nothing much has happened and pressure on nature in the Netherlands is still too high (Marra et al., 2023). The Dutch food system also demonstrates deficiencies in health and social dimensions. Over 50% of the Dutch adults were overweight in 2022 (CBS, 2022) and this number is expected to increase to 64% in 2050 (RIVM, 2024). Additionally, food aid in the Netherlands is only increasing (Eshuis, 2022; Rode Kruis, 2023), while already 14% of the Dutch experiences a form of food distress (Ipsos, 2024). Meanwhile, the people that are most affected by the food system, the consumers and producers, have the least power over the food system. Dominant agribusinesses shape Dutch policies and practices, thereby sidelining farmers and citizens (Aarts & Leeuwis, 2023); which will only be amplified due to corporate accumulation of power, profits and land at a shrinking number of corporations and farms (CBS, 2017; Clapp, 2021). On top of this, the COVID-19 pandemic painfully exposed the reliance of the Dutch food system on labour exploitation, especially that of migrant workers (Siegmann et al., 2022). While the national government has taken action to improve conditions for these labourers, the effectiveness of such measures is yet to become visible (Siegmann et al., 2022).

1.2 Need for a sustainability transition

These examples show that there is an immediate need for a sustainability transition in the current Dutch food system. A sustainability transition involves profound changes in structures, behaviors, and systems to align human activities with ecological limits and social well-being (Salomaa & Juhola, 2020). However, the Dutch national government appears incapable of leading such a transition. As a neoliberal government, it avoids transformative change through large-scale interventions (Haque, 1999). Instead, this approach emphasizes reducing government involvement and fostering market-driven solutions, under the belief that individuals and businesses operating within competitive markets are better positioned to drive innovation and economic progress (Vallier, 2022). This global neoliberal framework is evident in the Dutch context, where reliance on market mechanisms to address sustainability issues in agriculture and food systems often sidelines systemic interventions. Sustainability transformations are expected to emerge from entrepreneurship, competition, and minimal government interference (Olsson, 2020). However, as highlighted earlier, this approach has proven largely ineffective, as market-

driven solutions have failed to address systemic issues such as nitrogen emissions, social inequalities, and labour exploitation.

Dutch FPCs have emerged as a response to growing health, social, and sustainability challenges in the food system, alongside the Dutch government's limited ability to drive the necessary transformations. By taking matters into their own hands, they give civil society the possibility to gain more control over the (local) food system. This is coherent with the academic literature that has highlighted civil society and the local scale – especially cities – as the main driver for sustainability transformations, which is able, under the right circumstances, to initiate and support a sustainable food system transformation (Sonnino & Beynon, 2015; Anderson, 2019; Polman & Bazzan, 2023). Specifically for FPCs, there are three focal ways for contributing to a sustainability transformation within the local food system: (1) they can focus on activities of and cooperation between its members; (2) they can connect with other networks and platforms with the same overarching goal; and (3) they can try to translate its recommendations into actual policy goals by influencing policy makers and local government institutions (Den Boer et al., 2023).

1.3 Research aim and questions

FPCs have a tendency to mainly engage in programmatic work – corresponding to point one and two – while their policy work – point three – often gets neglected (Schiff, 2008; Schiff et al., 2022). Specifically for the Netherlands, Den Boer et al. (2023) determined the same struggle for Dutch FPCs to meaningfully engage in policy work. Recent years have seen a surge in academic articles that identify themes that can hinder an FPCs effectiveness in influencing local food policy. Key challenges of FPCs for influencing local food policy are ensuring a diverse representation, poor internal organisation, resource limitations, lack of political support, government sluggishness, political turnover, limited visibility, unclear objectives and the general complexity of the food system (De Marco et al., 2017; McCartan & Palermo, 2017; Koski et al., 2018; Porter & Ashcraft, 2020; Schiff et al., 2022). This thesis will contribute to this growing body of research by analysing whether these challenges are experienced in the Dutch context too. The aim of this research is to uncover the mechanisms of influence that determine to what extent Dutch FPCs influence local food policy. Mechanisms of influence refer to the pathways and interactions through which FPCs engage with policymakers and other stakeholders to shape decision-making and policy outcomes. This will be done by formulating an answer to the central research question: "*How and to what extent do Dutch Food Policy Councils influence local food policy?*"

The following sub questions will help to formulate and answer to the research question:

- How does policy advisory systems theory help explain the mechanisms of policy influence for Dutch FPCs?
- To what extent are the two selected Dutch FPCs able to influence local food policy?
- What barriers prevent Dutch FPCs from effectively influencing local food policy at each conceptual step of influence?

1.4 Academic relevance

This thesis contributes to the academic literature on FPC influence in several ways. First, scoping reviews by Schiff et al. (2022) and Nunes and Lamine (2025) determined that most FPC research was conducted in North America and only few articles were written on FPCs in (Western) Europe. By focussing this study on the Duch context it contributes to restoring this geographical imbalance of FPC literature. There is one other article – that of Den Boer et al. (2023) – that also focusses on the Dutch context. However, this article specifically focusses on the role of FPCs in transforming the food system, rather than the mechanisms involved in influencing local food policy. Second, although several articles analyse how specific FPC characteristics – such as representativeness (Koski et al., 2018), stakeholder engagement (Porter & Ashcraft, 2020) and government relationships (Gupta et al., 2018) – affect their ability to influence local food policy, or identify barriers experienced by FPCs to be effective overall (De Marco et al., 2017; McCartan & Palermo, 2017; Schiff et al., 2022), no study has structurally

investigated how these barriers are related to the mechanisms of FPC influence in local food policy. To address this gap, this thesis adopts process tracing to systematically examine the interactions between Dutch FPCs and local governments, uncovering the mechanisms that shape their policy influence. Lastly, the existing FPC literature predominantly focuses on the perspective of FPCs to explain the lack of policy uptake of their advice. This approach implicitly frames the issue as one exclusively caused by the FPC, portraying policymakers as passive recipients awaiting guidance from the most strategically positioned actor. This thesis will start addressing this gap by analysing how Dutch FPCs and Dutch local governments interact with, think about, and make use of one another, and how this then affects the policy uptake of recommendations from Dutch FPCs. To this extent, Policy Advisory Systems Theory (PAST) is adopted, which shifts the focus to the system of interactions between policymakers and advisory actors, allowing for an active role for policymakers too.

1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis is structured as follows. First, the complex nature of FPCs and how they operate in the Dutch context is discussed. Afterwards, a conceptual framework that uncovers the mechanisms of FPC influence is developed through PAST. This framework considers that policy makers are surrounded by advisory actors from whom they, at times, actively seek advice and at other times get unrequested recommendations. Since PAST provides tools and concepts as to why some advisory actors are successful in steering policy and others are not, it is well-suited to analyse the interactions between local governments and FPCs. After justifying and discussing the two selected Dutch FPC cases, process tracing is adopted as a research method to systematically search for evidence for every conceptual step. The core idea of process tracing is that by proving that every step in the framework exists in the real world, it becomes irrefutable that an FPC has had influence on local food policy. The discovered evidence is then outlined in the results section. Finally, I argue that personal relationships between FPC members and local food policymakers and the salience of food as a theme in the municipality are the key mechanisms through which an FPC can influence local food policy.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I provide the theoretical foundation for my research. First, I examine the defining characteristics of Food Policy Councils (FPCs) and focus on two key organizational dimensions: membership and relationships with local government, which are expected to have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of FPCs in influencing local food policy (Bassarab, Clark, et al., 2019). Second, I contextualize local governments and local food policies within the Dutch setting to establish a clearer understanding of their roles in this research. Third, I define how influence is conceptualized in this study and how it differs from the approach taken by Den Boer et al. (2023). Lastly, I introduce Policy Advisory Systems Theory as the framework used to identify the mechanisms through which FPCs exert influence on local food policy. I provide an overview of the theory, explain its core concepts, and describe its compatibility with process tracing (the research method employed in this study). Finally, I demonstrate how the interrelated concepts within Policy Advisory Systems Theory explain the causal mechanisms underlying FPC influence on local food policy.

2.1 Food Policy Councils

A Food Policy Council (FPC) is a formalized local or regional network that unites diverse food system stakeholders to promote the environmental, social, and economic health of the local food system (Gupta et al., 2018). Originating in North America during the 1980s, FPCs have since evolved into varied forms worldwide, reflecting their adaptability to political, social, and economic contexts. FPCs typically operate outside formal government institutions, instead emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaborations by establishing platforms for building connections, sharing knowledge, and engaging in deliberative dialogues (Schiff, 2008; Harper et al., 2009). These platforms provide opportunities to align differing interests, goals, and preferences among food system actors, functioning both as forums for knowledge co-production and as coordination hubs for local actions (Harper et al., 2009). However, their structure, scope, and goals vary greatly depending on geographic focus, organizational design, relationships with government, and membership composition, all of which are shaped by the local context (Bassarab, Clark, et al., 2019). For instance, while some FPCs focus heavily on influencing local food policies, others emphasize grassroots activism or community engagement. Furthermore, FPCs often aim to challenge corporate hegemony, referring to the dominance of large multinational corporations in the food system. Rather, they prioritise empowering communities on the local-level where such influence is less pervasive (Hassanein, 2003; Sonnino, 2013). Lastly, a central goal of FPCs is to address gaps left by government action, such as promoting equitable access to healthy food or advancing sustainability goals (Berglund et al., 2021; Michel et al., 2022b). Yet, their influence on policy can vary greatly. Some FPCs engage directly in policy advocacy, while others act as advisory bodies or forums for public deliberation (Schiff et al., 2022). Importantly, not all FPCs explicitly include "policy" in their names; they may also be referred to as food advisory councils, community food councils, or urban food councils, reflecting variations in scale or focus (Harper et al., 2009). In the Netherlands, for instance, they are commonly referred to as "food councils" (voedselraden).

2.1.1 Membership composition

Membership composition is an important factor in determining the effectiveness of FPCs in influencing local food policy (Schiff et al., 2022). In this context, 'membership' refers to individuals formally involved in FPC decision-making processes, representing a diverse range of stakeholders within the food system, including food producers; citizens and consumers; anti-hunger, food justice, and health advocates; educators and scientists; chefs; people working in food processing and distribution; government officials; and employees from non-profit organisations involved in the food system. FPC literature highlight the importance of diversity (McCartan & Palermo, 2017; Sieveking, 2019), inclusivity (Farnsworth, 2017; Koski et al., 2018), and equity (Koski et al., 2018; Kessler, 2019) among FPCs. FPC members ideally represent different sectors of the food system (e.g., production, distribution, science, nutrition); governance roles (e.g., public, private, civic); and social roles (e.g., race, class, gender) (Gupta et al.,

2018; Schiff et al., 2022). This diversity allows FPCs to address the multifaceted challenges of local food systems comprehensively, ensuring that their policy recommendations reflect the needs of various sectors and communities (Schiff & Brunger, 2013; Bassarab, Clark, et al., 2019). However, achieving diversity, inclusivity, and equity in membership remains a significant challenge. Especially social diversity seems hard to realise, since many FPCs in Europe and North America are mostly composed of white, middle-class professionals from similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds (Sands et al., 2016), leaving out those most affected by systemic inequities in the food system (Bassarab, Clark, et al., 2019).

Despite these challenges, diverse membership plays a critical role in shaping an FPC's ability to influence policy. Mooney (2022) identifies membership composition as a critical factor in shaping an FPC's policy priorities, alongside its relationships with other organisations and its leadership. Notably, these last two aspects are themselves partially shaped by membership composition (Schiff & Brunger, 2013; Sands et al., 2016). Moreover, membership composition influences the FPC's capacity to build and leverage strategic relationships with policymakers and other influential actors. Members with established networks or political connections can facilitate access to decision-makers and advocate effectively for the council's priorities (Harper et al., 2009; Bassarab et al., 2022). Additionally, diversity within membership enhances the council's capacity to build trust among stakeholders, bridge community needs with policy objectives, and produce well-founded recommendations that resonate with policymakers (Schiff et al., 2022). Thus, membership composition not only shapes an FPC's policy priorities but also contributes to determining its external influence on local food policy.

Despite membership composition being an important theme, criteria for FPC membership are often ill-defined in the extant academic literature. For example, Bassarab, Clark, et al. (2019), who investigate how membership influences policy priorities and subsequent actions of an FPC, do not give any definition of what membership exactly entails. It is unclear, for example, if one can just sign up for an FPC and then can be regarded as a member, such as is the case with political parties, or that membership only refers to the representatives formally taking a seat in the FPC, which would make everyone else connected with the FPC either 'participants' or 'partners'. It is often even unclear how members of FPCs are chosen. Who decides who is allowed in the council and who is not? Is there some form of internal democracy? One of the few references in this regard is from Michel et al. (2022a), who mention that "membership in FPCs is most often open to anyone with an interest in sustainable food system issues and willing to abide by democratic principles". Apart from there being no source to this claim, it is uncertain whether it means that anyone can sign up or that anyone can potentially become a member. A possible reason for the lack of clarity in membership status of FPCs could be that they differ greatly in organisational structure and membership composition (Feenstra et al., 2021). It can thus differ per FPC what membership exactly means and what process must be undertaken to become member.

2.1.2 Relationship with local governments

Engaging with local governments enables FPCs to empower citizens by building political capital, raising policymakers' awareness of public interests, and enhancing the legitimacy of the local food movement through transparent and inclusive platforms for policy advice (Schiff, 2008; Bornemann & Weiland, 2019). However, these relationships are not without challenges. Political turnover due to electoral cycles often results in fluctuating support for FPCs and a constant need to educate new policymakers (Blay-Palmer, 2009; De Marco et al., 2017; Schiff et al., 2022). Additionally, formal associations with government can create difficulties, such as reducing responsiveness to community concerns (Walsh et al., 2015) or delaying decision-making processes due to bureaucratic approval requirements (Siddiki et al., 2015). Thus, there seems to be a trade-off between autonomy and policy influence. Stronger ties to government can increase an FPC's legitimacy, access to resources, and ability to shape policy through formal channels. However, this can also constrain their flexibility and responsiveness to

grassroots concerns, as they may need to navigate bureaucratic processes and align with government priorities, potentially weakening their focus on community-driven initiatives.

Still, an FPC's governmental integration, referring to the degree to which an FPC in integrated into the local government, is an important factor in determining an FPC's effectiveness in influencing local food policy. There are various ways in which an FPC can relate to the local government. For instance, they may include government employees or elected officials among their members, operate as official boards or commissions, receive government funding, or even be established through legislation (Bassarab, Santo, et al., 2019). Legislative creation grants FPCs legal status, but it does not necessarily confer formal decision-making power or ensure that their recommendations will be considered by policymakers (Gupta et al., 2018). Generally, FPCs with stronger ties to government focus more on policy-related work, whereas more independent FPCs prioritize programmatic activities (Schiff, 2008; Siddiki et al., 2015). Gupta et al. (2018) further argue that FPCs with government officials among their members are often more effective in influencing local food policy.

2.1.3 Activities

One of the main activities in which FPCs engage, as the term already reveals, is policy work (Schiff et al., 2022). The degree in which different FPCs are successful in influencing local food policy varies widely; but the FPCs that are successfully steering policy do this in several ways, such as drafting resolution, reports, and proposals for and with governments; lobbying; working to amend zoning laws; and advocating for policy change to support urban agriculture (Schiff et al., 2022). Some examples of policy sectors, as identified by Bassarab, Clark, et al. (2019), that FPCs in the United States try to influence are: healthy food access, anti-hunger, food production, land use planning, transportation, and, increasingly, food waste and food labour laws. Although the policy priorities of European FPCs are less well researched, findings suggest that European FPCs focus more on climate and environmental related policy, and less on the social dimensions (Prové et al., 2019). Furthermore, European FPCs are known for exploring non-conventional models of FPC organisation and action and often adopt a more systematic approach to food issues (Nunes & Lamine, 2025).

Besides policy work, FPCs also pursue a range of non-policy activities. They are often involved in implementing food (system) programs; creating and facilitating a network for food system organisations; and facilitating program implementation for food systems organizations (Schiff et al., 2022). Some more specific examples of what FPCs can do in general are organising meetings with members and guest speakers; doing explorative studies for what is needed to promote urban agriculture; and setting up a community kitchen where local residents can come together to cook and share dinner (Bassarab, Santo, et al., 2019). Another important goal for FPCs is supporting urban agriculture (Schiff et al., 2022). This they do by creating more opportunities for local producers to sell their food; leading the implementation of urban agriculture projects such as rooftop gardens; and demonstrating the importance of urban agriculture for the city council (Prové et al., 2019). A last activity in which FPCs are often involved, is education on sustainable food systems (Schiff et al., 2022), for example by supporting school food programs (farm to school programs) to foster public awareness of local food issues and to improve to the quality of food served in local schools (Sands et al., 2016).

2.2 Local governments and local food policy in the Netherlands

Depending on the context, the term 'local' can greatly differ in meaning. In big countries 'local' can refer to areas with over ten million inhabitants, while in small countries such areas would be referred to as 'national'. Thus, in this section I will further elaborate on the meaning of the terms 'local governments' and 'local food policy' in the Dutch context. There are three levels of government in the Netherlands: the state, the provinces, and the municipalities. Besides these three levels of government there are some other bodies that are organised according to their function, such as the water boards, that are responsible for clean and sufficient water and water safety (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-d). In this study, the local level is closest related to the municipal level. Sometimes a province can be part of the local

level too, but since it does not have any direct legislative competences in the food system besides environmental regulation (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-a) the local level shall mostly be understood as municipalities. One of the most important competences of the municipalities is that they make 'land use plans' (Dutch: *Bestemmingsplan or Omgevingsvisie*). In the land use plans the municipality puts down what land uses are allowed in which areas, such as housing, nature, companies, or agriculture and what extra rules apply for those areas (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-c). This means that when a neighbourhood wants to turn a parking lot into a community garden, the municipal land use plan will have to be changed first, which can take a lot of time and effort. The municipality is also in charge of licensing and subsidies, which can be effective tools to support or discourage certain activities or initiatives. Especially subsidies are a tool that municipalities appreciate, since they reward rather than prohibit, do not require complex legislative procedures, and almost never revoke resistance (KCBR, 2023). For example, local governments can subsidise school meals so that every child has enough energy to get the most out of their education; or the local government can loosen or tighten licensing rules for food trucks.

How to apply land use plans, subsidies and licenses is normally laid down in a policy. There is only one municipal body that has the power to formally adopt a policy and that is the municipal council, composed of elected officials (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-b). In theory, everyone could develop a policy and try to get it formalised by the municipal council. In practice, however, it is the Municipal Executive (College van Burgemeester en Wethouders), assisted by its civil servants, that write a policy proposal (Tollenaar, 2008). The municipal council discusses this proposal, often making several adjustments, before formally approving the policy (Rijksoverheid, n.d.-c). Afterwards, it is the civil service again that is responsible for further filling in and executing the policy (Tollenaar, 2008). An important form of local food policy is the food strategy, although there is no official national Dutch food strategy. However, more and more municipalities are formulating a local food strategy, such as Ede, Amsterdam, and Groningen (Sibbing, 2021). With such documents municipalities clearly show that they want to take back control over the local food system. Even though food strategies are not legally binding, they do set out a pathway to address the food challenges formulated by the municipality, such as food access, sustainability, and health. They also show the tools the municipality proposes to achieve a 'better' local food system. Such local food strategies are particularly useful for an FPC to see what preferences local governments already have adopted and for which issues they still have to influence the local government to take action. Or, if there is not a local food strategy yet, they can try to set the agenda for local governments to develop a food strategy including the FPCs preferences.

2.3 Types of influence

Influence is a complex and often intangible concept, yet it is central to understanding the role FPCs in shaping local food policy. In the context of this research, influence refers specifically to the capacity of FPCs to shape the decisions and actions of policymakers through various mechanisms. Despite policy influence being a popular topic in political science, there often is a lack of clarity for what is meant with 'influence' (Spehar, 2012). Defining influence is inherently challenging due to its multifaceted nature and the diverse pathways through which it can manifest. A general definition is given by Nagel (1972) that states that there is influence when there is a "causal relation between the preferences of an actor regarding an outcome and the outcome itself". Furthermore, influence is often conceptualized as a process of shaping political decisions through persuasion, knowledge sharing, and relationship building (Howlett, 2009; Weible et al., 2009). Importantly, influence is not a binary outcome; it exists along a spectrum of impact and occurs at different stages of the policy process (Dür, 2008). For FPCs, this spectrum can be divided into three levels of influence: raising awareness, agenda setting, and policy impact (Collado et al., 2017; Siar, 2023). These levels highlight the gradual and iterative nature of how FPCs interact with policymakers. Understanding influence as a multi-level process helps to capture the nuanced ways FPCs shape local food policy. While not all FPCs may reach the policy development phase, even raising awareness or setting agendas can result in an important contribution to local food governance.

At the first level, FPCs can raise awareness among policymakers by highlighting critical food system issues—such as sustainability, food security, and equity—that might otherwise go unnoticed. Through activities like public forums, policy briefs, and direct advocacy, FPCs serve as knowledge brokers, bringing insights from the field and concerns from the food communities into policy discussions (Schiff, 2008; Bornemann & Weiland, 2019). For example, an FPC might bring attention to the importance of school gardens for the education on food or advocate for local procurement policies. Although raising awareness does not guarantee immediate policy change, it ensures that important issues are placed on the political radar and serves as a necessary first step to further influence. The second level of influence, agenda setting, occurs when FPCs succeed in shaping the priorities of policymakers. At this stage, the issues raised by FPCs transition from being merely acknowledged to being seriously considered within governmental agendas (Kingdon, 1984). FPCs can achieve this by building trust with policymakers, fostering relationships through regular meetings, showing the legitimacy of their organisation and demonstrating the relevance of their recommendations to broader political goals (Halpin & Fraussen, 2019). This phase marks a significant shift, as policymakers begin to allocate attention and resources to food system concerns advocated by FPCs. The final level of influence is the policy impact phase. Here, advise from FPCs is written down in food policies by local policymakers, or, better yet, FPCs contribute directly to the creation of food policies or strategies, either through formal advisory roles or collaboration with policymakers (Harper et al., 2009). At this stage, the advice and recommendations of FPCs are incorporated into tangible policy documents, programs, or strategies, demonstrating a high degree of influence.

2.4 Policy Advisory Systems Theory

The aim of this research is to uncover the mechanisms of influence that determine to what extent Dutch FPCs influence local food policy. The focus is thus on the mechanism that explain how a local food policy maker will make use of FPC advise, and how this then translates into actual policy. Thus, a theory is needed that conceptualises how policy makers make use of external advisory bodies, and, in turn, how external advisory bodies try to shape policy through advice to policymakers. Policy Advisory Systems Theory (PAST) does exactly this (Hustedt & Veit, 2017). The idea behind PAST is based on the organisation and institutionalisation of policy guidance tailored to a specific context, such as a country or a sector. Contemporary governance has become fuzzy, and it is not always clear where policy advice came from and how it was utilised. PAST is an invaluable tool to help to comprehend and organise "policy advice's intricate and constantly changing nature" (Hussain et al., 2023). Although formal decision-making power lies with the government, policymakers do not do so on a stand-alone basis. Rather, they find themselves in a system of advisory actors, all of which have different views and representing different societal groups. Thus, central to PAST are not policy makers (although they do hold an important position), policies, or advisory bodies, but rather the policy advisory system (PAS) itself. A PAS is "an interlocking set of actors, with a unique configuration in each sector and jurisdiction, who provides information, knowledge and recommendations for action to policy-makers" (Halligan, 1995). Every policy making institution has its own policy advisory system, composed of different actors, such as, but not limited to, ministerial policy units, councils, commissions, research institutions and private consulting organisations (Hustedt & Veit, 2017). PAST considers the interactions and relationships between these actors and how they contribute to policy development (Hussain et al., 2023). It thus allows an FPC to be part of a policy advisory system, even though it is a platform for interaction rather than an actor in its own sense. Conventional perspectives on policy advice, such as Principle-Agent theory or the Advocacy Coalition Framework, would have a harder time dealing with this because platforms do not speak with one voice, but exist to achieve dialogue and knowledge sharing. Moreover, PAST regards the relationship between policy makers and advisors as multilateral rather than a one-way street, making it better equipped for contemporary governance (Hustedt & Veit, 2017).

2.4.1 Policy advisory system theory and Dutch FPCs

FPCs can be analysed through PAST because they function as intermediaries between policymakers and stakeholders, providing expert advice, stakeholder input, and evidence-based recommendations to shape policy decisions. The theory's focus on understanding how advisory systems influence policy through their structure, composition, and processes aligns with the role of FPCs in coordinating diverse actors and contributing to policy development. This analytical lens enables a systematic examination of how FPCs exert influence, navigate relationships with governments, and impact local food policy outcomes. As PAS puts an emphasis on the development of policy through advice to policy makers, FPCs can only steer policy by somehow convincing policy makers of their preferences. But FPCs are hardly the only actors that try to influence (local) policy makers. There are many others that try to do the same thing, all with different varieties of success. So, what is the process behind how a Dutch FPC can have influence on local food policy in a PAS? And what concepts play a role in this process?

When introducing the concept of PAS, Halligan (1995) distinguished advisory actors by their location in the advisory system – internal or external to the government – and their exposure to government control – high or low. Halligan (1995) adopted a narrow definition of policy advice, focussing on the generation of knowledge of potential consequences of different policy alternatives and assuming a high level of government control over the advisory actors (Craft & Wilder, 2015; Veit et al., 2017). However, when adopting a systems view, just analysing the individual actors in a system paints an incomplete picture of the realities of policy advise. Besides, policy advice does not only contain a technical dimension but a political one too, since advisory actors have an own agenda and policy makers anticipate consequences for political support and public reactions (Craft & Howlett, 2013). Therefore, there was a call for a 'second wave' of policy advisory systems research that broadens the view on policy advice to include "non-formulation policy work" so that it is "an activity that applies to a range of policy work" (Craft & Wilder, 2015). This second wave has resulted in the identification of several important concepts that help explain the process of how FPCs can influence local food policy. The concepts used by Halligan (1995) (location and exposure to government control) have been replaced by access and governmental integration. Furthermore, in line with the call for a second wave, Veit et al. (2017) analysed when a potential policy advisory actor can be successful in steering policy, thereby identifying three essential concepts: political salience, credibility, and legitimacy. These five concepts will be discussed below.

2.4.1.1 Access to policymakers

Advisory actors in a PAS try to influence policy makers to adopt their preferences. In doing so, advisory actors that are close to policy makers have a great advantage over those that do not. Halligan (1995) therefore distinguished between 'internal' and 'external' policy advisors. However, since his publication governance has become increasingly more complex and such concepts are not easily distinguishable anymore (Otjes & Voerman, 2022). Rather than looking at the location of an advisory actor, 'access' is a concept that is better adapted to the contemporary governance system (Beyers & Braun, 2014), especially since access is considered as a crucial step in having influence (Binderkrantz et al., 2017; Albareda & Braun, 2019). Access is most commonly defined as "the ability to derive benefits from things" (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). But specifically applied in the context of interest group access to policy makers, access is defined as "instances where a group has entered a political arena passing a threshold controlled by relevant gatekeepers" (Binderkrantz et al., 2017). Relevant gatekeepers, in the context of this research, refer to local food policymakers. This definition allows for a broad understanding of access rather than treating it as a dichotomous concept (i.e., a group either does or does not have access) (Beyers & Braun, 2014; Binderkrantz et al., 2017). A more nuanced conceptualisation of access allows, for example, to differentiate between instances where a local food policy maker is a member of an FPC; an FPC member has a longstanding relationship with a local food policy maker; or the FPC serves as a formalised advisory committee to the local government.

2.4.1.2 Governmental integration

Within a PAS, a government can have different degrees of "control" over advisory actors. For example, when advice is sought from civil servants working directly for policy makers, they can precisely control what kind of advice they get and which problems it should target. On the other hand, when a lobbyist wants to change a policy, a policy maker is more passive in the advising process and can hardly control on what policy they are getting advice or what this advice should look like. Policy makers are often more inclined to listen to advisory actors experiencing a higher degree of government control, which can give an FPC more policy influence (Halligan, 1995). In exchange however, the degree to which an FPC is exposed to government control can greatly influence when and what type of advice they can give (Marciano & Craft, 2023), thus making them less reactive to and connected with community issues (Walsh et al., 2015). Governmental integration is an important factor in determining the access of an FPC to policymakers. Thus, as with access, here too there is no influence from an FPC yet.

2.4.1.3 Political salience

Policy advice is not given nor received in a vacuum but always occurs within a certain political context. Sometimes chosen representatives are not satisfied with a policy anymore and ask advice on how it can be improved. Other times, societal groups are not satisfied with a policy and actively try to influence policy makers to change it according to their wishes. Whatever the reason, there always is a political dissatisfaction with the current situation, and policy change should help fix this problem. Therefore, policy advice is always received according to its political salience. Political salience "denotes the relevance and timeliness of advisory knowledge for policy-makers" (Veit et al., 2017). This means that when policy advice is provided on a political salient issue, it comes at a moment that local government officials are already thinking about this issue and feel more inclined to changing relevant policy. On the other hand, if an FPC gives recommendations on an issue that is not salient, there is a greater likelihood that policymakers will disregard them (Kingdon, 1984). Besides an issue being salient, the type of advice can have salience too. For example, even though food security can be political salient, it does not necessarily mean that FPC advice on this topic will fall on fertile ground. The local government might prefer to turn to large agri-businesses to help solve this problem.

Political salience is important among all stages of policy influence. When raising awareness among policymakers, it helps greatly if policymakers already are familiar with an issue. However, when an issue is not yet salient, FPCs can choose to focus more on public awareness raising by building support for a specific issue. In the agenda setting phase, the political salience of an issue is crucial. Food policy will not be developed or adjusted when food is not a salient topic. Even though some policymakers may be convinced of the importance of developing or changing food policies, it is unlikely the local government will allocate resources if it is not perceived as an issue that needs to be addressed. Thus, the policy impact phase will only be reached if a topic has been salient for some time. However, if issue salience fades away during this phase, policy impact may come to a halt.

2.4.1.4 Credibility

When policy makers get policy advice, they will first judge the credibility of the source (Veit et al., 2017). Credibility refers to the way advice is produced, also called the epistemological standards, and refers to someone's judgement of the believability of the source of information rather than the information itself (Berdahl et al., 2016). Most of the time, credibility of sources is not judged by objective standards but by the image people have of them. Thus, policymakers do not use a set of objective indicators to establish the credibility of policy advice, but rather asses credibility by how they personally perceive its source (Doberstein, 2017). Therefore, when credibility is used in this research, it is *perceived* credibility that is referred to. Scientifically sound knowledge often has a high credibility, while cultural knowledge and lay-knowledge has a lower credibility (Doberstein, 2017). Credibility is part of the raising awareness phase of policy influence by FPCs. In this phase, policymakers need to decide whether they think advice is important enough to start acting upon and therefore they will critically assess its source before taking this step (Bali & Halpin, 2021)

2.4.1.5 Legitimacy

Legitimacy in the context of this research is the belief that the advice an FPC gives is justified and proper (Fraussen & Halpin, 2018). Local food policy makers thus consider whether the FPC has the right to give advice on matters regarding the local food system (de Fine Licht, 2011). Legitimacy, like credibility, is a value that an audience (the local food policy makers) attach to a source (the FPC). There are three dimensions of legitimacy (Schmidt, 2013; Haesevoets et al., 2023). First, *input* legitimacy refers to representativeness and is about the equal inclusion of all relevant interests when producing advise. FPCs aim to establish a council that is representative for the food system. However, they also seem to struggle to realise social diversity amongst their members (Sands et al., 2016). The extent to which local food policymakers view the FPC as representative of the food system can greatly influence the value they place on FPC advice. Second, *throughput* legitimacy refers to proper processes and procedural fairness in decision making. Third, *output* legitimacy centres around the question whether an entity (an FPC) delivers good, effective, and efficient outcomes (policy advice). As with credibility, legitimacy is part of the awareness raising phase since policymakers will critically assess the source of advice before deciding advice is convincing enough to act upon.

2.4.2 Causal mechanism of FPC influence

The concepts discussed so far – access, political salience, governmental integration, credibility, and legitimacy – do not operate on a standalone basis but are related to one another and to FPCs and local policy makers. These relations are partially already discussed above and are visualised in figure 1. This conceptual model is developed in such a way that it is compatible with process tracing. As mentioned in the introduction, process tracing is the method used in this research to identify all the steps of the causal mechanism behind how FPCs can influence local food policy. For this method it is important that every step follows logically from the step before and that every step is necessary for the whole mechanism to function (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). Furthermore, every step needs to consist of entities that engage in an activity.

The starting point of the causal mechanism in this study is the formulation of preferences by FPC members. Such preferences are established by discussions and knowledge sharing among the members. Through a gradual and iterative process of influence, FPCs can shape policies to align them better with their priorities. From the starting point (step 0) there are four steps that FPCs need to take to achieve all phases of influence (see figure 1). In the first step, FPC representatives try to gain access to local policy makers, either through official channels or through personal relations. Access of FPCs to policymakers is expected to increase when an FPCs governmental integration increases. After gaining access, FPCs start raising awareness among policymakers (step 2) on a certain issue and what action should be taken. Policymakers assess the received advice based on the perceived credibility and legitimacy of the FPC. This is the first stage of policy influence, where issues get on the (political) radar of policymakers, although they might not yet act on it. In step 3 food policymakers start to align their priorities and actions in accordance with FPC advice depending primarily on the political salience the issue. This is the second stage of influence, where FPCs will have to convince policymakers that their advice is essential for tackling a problem. The final goal, ultimately, is to impact food policy to align it better with FPC preferences (step 4). This can occur either through policymakers acting of FPC advice or by actively contributing to developing a policy or strategy document. Step 4 is the last phase of influence, that of policy impact, where FPC advice is adopted in policy or strategy documents that are formally approved by the municipal council.

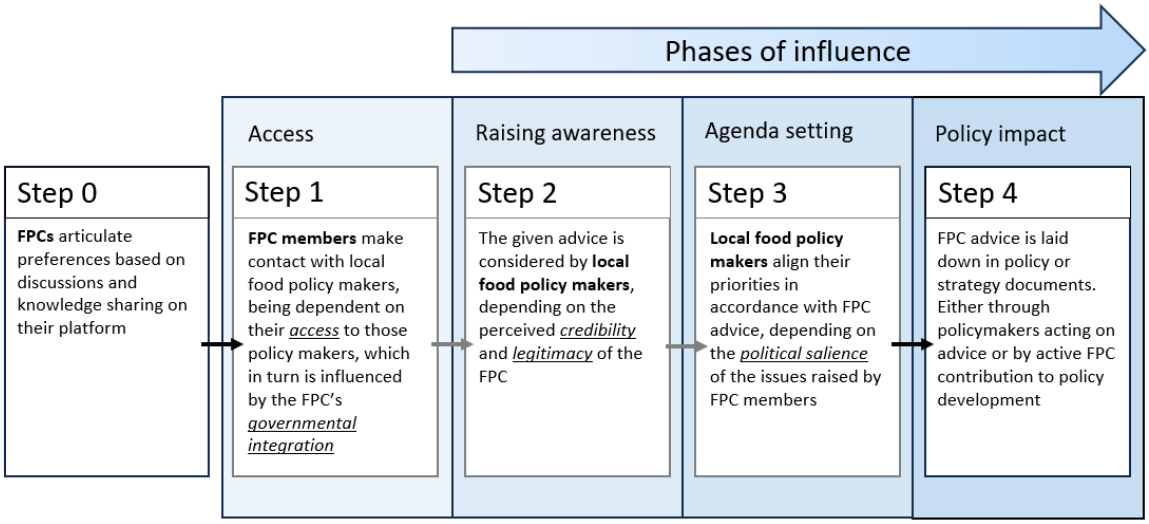

Figure 1: Conceptual model of how Dutch FPCs can influence policy through the lens of PAST and suitable for process tracing

3 Methodology

In order to reveal the sequential mechanisms through which Dutch FPCs can influence local food policy, thesis follows a comparative process tracing design. The selected cases are two Dutch municipalities that house an FPC. Case studies are particularly good for gaining contextual and in-depth knowledge about a contemporary phenomenon that is, as of yet, rather unknown (Boblin et al., 2013; Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). The case study approach is useful when a bounded system is explored – in this research two Dutch local governments with FPCs – through detailed data collection (Ireland et al., 2013). It offers a high level of flexibility and is designed to fit each specific case (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). Case studies are well-suited when (1) the research question is a "why" or "how" question; (2) the behaviour of research subjects cannot be manipulated; and (3) the phenomenal of interest – FPC influence on local food policy – is highly dependent on the political and social context in which it exists (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2009). These characteristics make a case study ideal for researching how and to what extent Dutch FPCs influence local food policy. In this chapter I first explain why Eetbaar Ede and FC MRA are selected for this research. Then, I discuss how process tracing is used as a method to identify all the steps of the causal mechanism of how FPCs can influence local food policy. I will show for each individual step from the conceptual framework how the theoretical concepts are operationalised and how they will be measured. Afterwards, I explain how I gathered and analysed the data, and I evaluate the methodological choices I made.

3.1 FPCs in the Dutch context

At the time of writing, there are five organisations in the Netherlands that fit the description of an FPC: Drechtstadsboer (Dordrecht), Eetbaar Ede, FC MRA (Amsterdam), Haagse Voedselraad (The Hague), and Haarlem FoodFuture (CoP Voedselraden NL, 2022, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c). Furthermore, there are some municipalities where an FPC is in the process of being established – such as VoedselPraat in Utrecht – or where the feasibility of an FPC is being explored – such as in Arnhem and Leiden. Interestingly, all these FPCs state on their sites that they want to influence local food policy to better incorporate the preferences of their members. However, findings of Den Boer et al. (2023) show that Dutch FPCs are lacking "systemic vertical intermediation" or, in other words, policy work. This signals that there may be a disparity between what Dutch FPCs want to achieve and what they are able to do in practice. There is some evidence that supports this disparity. Dutch FPCs have joined forces in a common initiative called "Voedselraden Nederland, a Community of Practice (CoP)" in which they come together to discuss how they can learn from and help each other and after every meeting they publish a document, summarising what they have discussed. In these meetings Dutch FPCs have noted that there was much uncertainty about how to connect with and relate to the local government (CoP Voedselraden NL, 2022). In line with studies mentioned in the introduction (Siddiki et al., 2015; Walsh et al., 2015), the CoP stated the importance of staying independent as an FPC and warned for being viewed as "contaminated" by your support base when working too closely with the local government. According to one of the FPC members that attended the CoP, a good way to keep your autonomy as an FPC while sending a strong signal to the local government that food system transformation is needed, is publishing a Food Manifest, rather than contributing to the food strategy of the municipality (CoP Voedselraden NL, 2022). This discussion among Dutch FPCs shows that the tension identified in the theory (2.1.2. Relationships with local governments) between an FPCs autonomy and its ability to influence local food policy is experienced by Dutch FPCs too, although Dutch FPCs seem to favour their autonomy and are willing to accept less policy influence to maintain it.

Most Dutch FPCs are housed in a foundation or NGO, meaning that they are a division of a larger organisation (Den Boer et al., 2023). Although some are initiated by or with the help of the local government, none are housed or formally associated with the local government. Furthermore, all Dutch FPCs operate on the local (municipal) level and in urban areas (DuurzaamDoor, 2023), which is in line with expectations from the academic literature (Schiff et al., 2022). According to the websites of Dutch FPCs, they promote sustainability, inclusivity, health, affordability, justice, and urban agriculture in the

local food system. They do this by creating a platform were different projects, actors and initiatives can connect to inspire each other and promote cooperation. Every Dutch FPC has a core team that organises activities and meetings for the members of the FPC, although in the case of FC MRA it is unclear who is part of this team. The members of the core team are almost always entrepreneurs of alternative small-scale agriculture or academics. From the websites it remains unclear what membership entails, which was also an issue raised in the theory (2.1.1. Membership composition). For example, Den Boer et al. (2023) do give numbers on how many coordinators (around three) and members in the "core team" (between four and fourteen) there are in Dutch FPCs, but it is unclear how someone can become a coordinator or member or even what the difference between the two is.

3.2 Case selection

A comparative case study offers significant advantages over a single-case analysis by allowing for the exploration of similarities and differences between cases, providing a more nuanced understanding of how FPCs influence local food policy (Gustafsson, 2017)(Source). While a single-case study provides detailed insights into one context, it limits the ability to generalize findings or identify patterns that may be applicable across different settings (Boblin et al., 2013; Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018). By comparing two cases, this research can better assess the extent to which contextual factors—such as membership composition, organizational structure, and relationships with local governments—affect FPCs' capacity to shape local food policies. This approach enhances the robustness of the study and contributes to a broader theoretical understanding of FPC effectiveness. This research thus focuses on two cases: the FPC in Ede, referred to as FPC EetbaarEde, and the Food Council Metropoolregio Amsterdam, referred to as FC MRA. These cases were selected because they offer important contrasts while sharing key similarities that make them well-suited for comparative analysis.

FPC EetbaarEde is part of the foundation EetbaarEde and was initiated in 2018 by the municipality of Ede. Although it was initiated by the municipality, the actual establishment of the FPC was left to the foundation EetbaarEde and there are no formal ties between FPC EetbaarEde and the local government, preserving its independence. The council has a well-defined organisational structure and is transparent about its membership composition, which represents a diverse range of stakeholders in the local food system. FPC EetbaarEde focuses solely on providing policy advice to the local government on food system issues, while other activities typically associated with FPCs are handled by other parts of the foundation. The council operates on the scale of the municipality of Ede. The FC MRA, on the other hand, is established in 2017 making it the oldest still-existing FPC in the Netherlands. Unlike FPC EetbaarEde, FC MRA has no formal office and, at the time of writing, is not a formal association or foundation. Rather, it functions as a grassroots coalition of food system stakeholders. Its organisational structure and membership composition are unclear, with only the two co-founders being easily identifiable. The goal of FC MRA is to provide a platform for citizen initiatives, entrepreneurs, and governments to collaborate and develop solutions for food system challenges. The council operates at the scale of the metropolitan region, extending beyond the borders of Amsterdam municipality. For both FPCs it is unclear from their sites to what extent they are integrated into the local government. Since it is an important factor in the causal mechanism of FPC influence, this will be part of the data collection.

The differences between these cases align with the theoretical framework of this research, making them particularly interesting to analyse (table 1). FPC EetbaarEde has a clear organisational structure, transparent decision-making and membership, and focusses purely on its advisory role. Even though food has been political salient in Ede in the recent years, all resources, efforts and attention went to the development of a World Food Experience, making it hard for the FPC to address their own issues. This project got shut down at the start of 2024 after eight years of hard labour, resulting in a lot of agitation around food as a topic in the local government. To rekindle the enthusiasm for food, some food policymakers decided to reassess the municipal food vision from 2015, which happened during the spring and summer months of 2024. This suddenly presented a great opportunity for the FPC to

try and influence policy at a very early stage. The FC MRA, on the other hand, has a less formalised organisation, with unclear decision-making and membership composition and a broader goal of fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Food has been political salient for the past eight years since a green party, with food high on the agenda, has been in office for two consecutive government periods, making a priority of publishing a municipal food vision. These distinctions are expected to influence how each FPC interacts with policymakers and impacts local food policy, offering valuable insights into the mechanisms of influence.

FPC	*FPC EetbaarEde*	*Food Council MRA*
Established by	Food foundation (Initiated by local government)	Civil society
Year established	2018	2017
Region	Gemeente Ede, Gelderland	Metropole region Amsterdam, Noord-Holland
Organisational structure	Housed in NGO	Informal grassroots coalition, no formal office
Transparency	Transparent organisation and decision-making	Low overall transparency
Representativity	High sectoral diversity, low social diversity	Unclear due to low transparency
Political salience of food	Low until 2024, then higher due to new food vision	High for last eight years

Table 1: Overview of relevant characteristics of the two selected cases

At the same time, the cases share key similarities that make them suitable for comparative analysis. Both FPCs have published a Food Manifest, outlining their vision for the local food system. These documents serve as a unique resource for this research, allowing for precise identification of the FPCs' preferences, which is the first step of the causal mechanism of influence developed in the theory (2.4.2. Causal mechanism of FPC influence, figure 1). Additionally, both municipalities have dedicated local food policies, a rarity in the Netherlands (Sibbing et al., 2021), providing a clear context for evaluating whether and how FPCs have influenced these policies. Furthermore, as the two oldest FPCs in the country, both councils have had sufficient time to establish relationships with policymakers and develop strategies for influencing local food policy.

While it is beyond the primary scope of this research, the cases also differ in contextual factors that could yield interesting contrasts. Ede is the only Dutch FPC located outside the Randstad, which may result in distinct priorities, such as a stronger focus on sustainable food production compared to the more urbanized focus on food access and waste reduction in Amsterdam. Moreover, Ede's smaller size and less urbanised setting may offer advantages in terms of easier access to policymakers, potentially enhancing the council's influence. Although the geographical differences are clear, their effect on policy influence is purely hypothetical. Nonetheless, it are interesting difference to keep it in mind during this research and reflect on in the discussion.

3.3 Research design and data

How to measure FPC influence on local food policy is a difficult task since there are many types of influence. Influence is often operationalised in the form of "how many goals of actor X can be found in policy Y". However, this testifies to a far too simple comprehension of the policy-making process (Trostle et al., 1999), especially since policymaking is a fuzzy rather than linear process. When the goals of an actor are not directly translated into policy, it does not mean that they did not have an influence. Another actor can have had opposite goals, thereby cancelling each other out, as it were (Dür, 2008). Therefore, process-tracing is used in this study, which is one of the most used approaches for

measuring interest group influence (Dür, 2008). Process-tracing attempts "to establish whether, and how, a potential cause or causes influenced a specified change or set of changes" (Simister & Scholz, 2017). To measure policy influence of FPCs using process-tracing, the researcher should "scrutinize groups' preferences, their influence attempts, their access to decision-makers, decision-makers' responses to the influence attempts, the degree to which groups' preferences are reflected in outcomes, and groups' statements of (dis-)satisfaction with the outcome" (Dür, 2008). These steps have been taken into consideration when developing the conceptual framework (figure 1).

By proving that every step in the framework exists in the real world, it becomes irrefutable that an FPC has had influence on local food policy. To make this point, Beach & Pederson (2019, p.81) compare process tracing with a court trial: a logical chain of events should undeniably link a suspect with the crime (the *theory*); and thereafter, every event has to be proven by some sort of evidence (the *research*). Every court trial is different, and although a step in a theory can be the same (e.g., the suspect stole money to fund a drug habit), evidence to support the theory can differ between cases (e.g., a witness or drugs in the suspects residence). The same is true for process tracing; evidence for proving a step does not have to be the same across cases (Beach & Pederson, 2019 p.74). This focus on the causal mechanism marks the main difference between process tracing and congruence methods (based on the value of X, the outcome that should follow from the theory is congruent with what is found in the case) (Beach & Pederson, 2019 p.4).

This study adopts a case-centric process tracing approach, but one that leans towards theory-testing process tracing. In case-centric process tracing the goal is to seek the causes of specific outcomes of a case (Gerring, 2006); specifically for this research, how FPC EetbaarEde and FC MRA influence local food policy. Thus, the ambition is to identify a minimally sufficient explanation for how and to what extent they influence local food policy (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). Case-centric process tracing involves an abductive iterative strategy, meaning that one can move between theory and empirical data throughout the research (Haig, 2018; Beach & Pedersen, 2019). However, Beach and Pedersen (2019) differentiate between a deductive and an inductive path. In the deductive path, which is adopted in this research, the researcher tests whether a theoretical causal mechanism can account for the outcome. To this extent, a theory is first conceptualised as a causal mechanism. For this research, this was done in the previous chapter where the causal mechanism is based on PAST, visualised in figure 1 (2.4.2. Causal mechanism of FPC influence).

The next step is to operationalise this theorised causal mechanism. To this extent, the theoretical steps in the conceptual framework must be translated into "case-specific predictions of what observable manifestations each of the parts of the mechanism should have if the mechanism is present in the case" (Beach & Pederson, 2019 p. 14). In the next section of this subchapter, this will be done for every individual step. Thereafter, the causal mechanism is empirically tested in the results section. In case-centric process tracing studies the general theory is often not enough to explain a certain outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). Therefore, an extra step is necessary; in the discussion empirical findings are used to add to the theory until there is a sufficient explanation. This approach is visualised in figure 2. First a deductive path is followed, in which the theoretical causal mechanism is developed and tested. If the mechanism is not sufficient, an inductive path is then followed, in which empirical findings are used to add to the theory until it sufficiently explains the outcome.

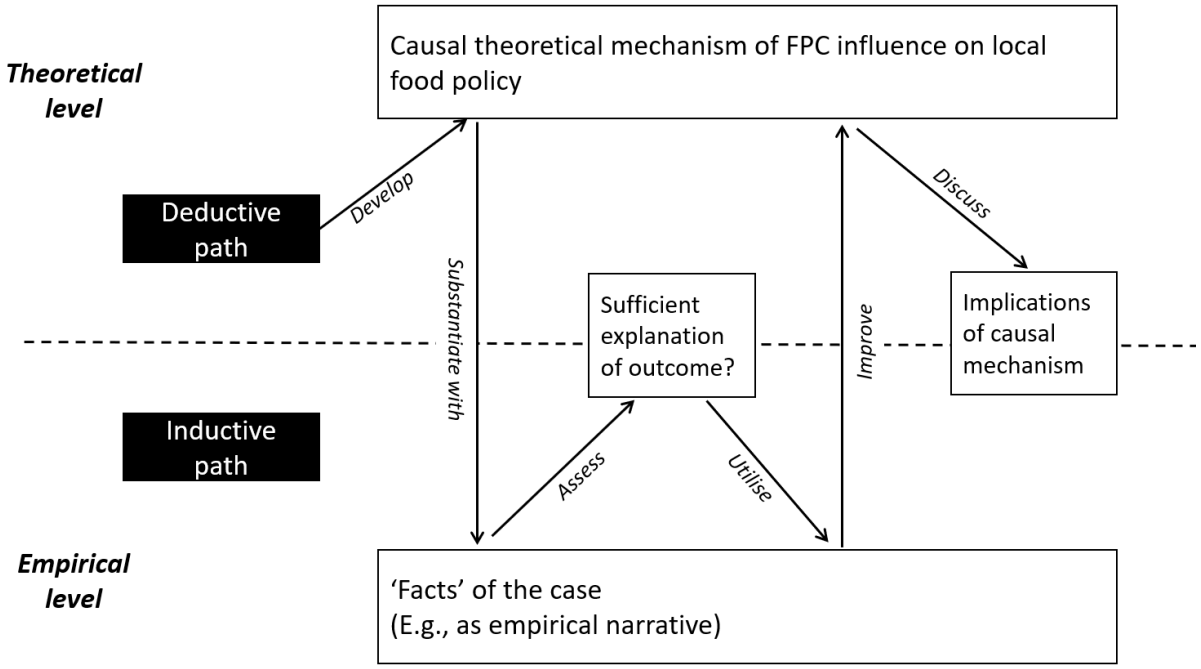

Figure 2: Case-centric process tracing approach, adopted from Beach & Pedersen (2019 p. 20) and specified to this research

Because this research adopts a comparative case study design, the above outlined steps are first taken for both cases. Afterwards, the cases are compared to determine the importance of every part of the causal mechanism and to see whether the original theorised causal mechanism might have overlooked an important systematic causal step. Such cross-case comparisons are tricky in process tracing, since evidence for causal steps is not comparable between cases (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2017). Take, for example, the court trial again. Imagine two suspects being trialled for murder and in both cases the murder weapon is suspected to be a gun. In case A there is a security video showing the suspect firing a gun at the victim, while in case B a gun was found matching the bullet ballistics and with fingerprints from the suspect all over it. In both cases, the conclusion might well be that the suspect indeed used a gun to shoot the victim. However, the evidence used in both cases is not at all similar and can thus not be compared. Only comparisons on a theoretical level are allowed, such as "in both cases a gun was used as a murder weapon". The same is true for process tracing. A researcher is only allowed to make comparisons of causal steps, or make comparisons of the theoretical concepts within a causal step (Bengtsson & Ruonavaara, 2017; Beach & Pedersen, 2019). This is not the same as equifinality (different events result in the same outcome), since the theoretical events such as access, awareness raising and agenda setting should still be present in both cases. Only the activities performed by FPCs to achieve the theoretical step can differ between cases.

As a result, generalisations from the selected cases to the Netherlands as a whole can only be done very carefully. Such careful generalisations are allowed since a theoretical causal mechanism was identified beforehand and should thus be applicable to all cases. Also, since governance practices in Dutch local governments are rather similar, mechanisms that are found in both cases can be assumed with more certainty to be present in other Dutch cases. Unfortunately, this last point also means that these cases are not generalisable to other contexts than the Dutch one. Representation, on the other hand, is not a big issue. A part of the aim of this research is to identify the causal mechanism of how a Dutch FPC can influence local food policy. Thus, within the two selected cases, evidence should confirm whether a causal step is present or not. Consequently, not everyone connected with the FPC or everyone responsible for local food policy needs to be interviewed. Only the central figures that can confirm a causal step are relevant. There are no generalisations made about everyone in the FPC or everyone in the local government.

3.3.1 Operationalisation

In this section I operationalise every individual step of the causal mechanism. For every step I describe how the theoretical concepts are made measurable, what kind of information is needed to measure the concepts, and how this information is gathered. At the end of the section, figure 3 provides an overview of the operationalisations of all the concepts and the method of data gathering.

3.3.1.1 Step 0: Preferences

FPCs articulate preferences based on discussions and knowledge sharing on their platform.

This step is the starting point of the causal mechanism. Before the actual process of influence is analysed, it must be clear what the preferences of EetbaarEde and FC MRA are. If it is unknown what issues FPCs want to see addressed by local food policy makers, it is also impossible to determine how they put these issues on the agenda. Thus, the first step is to identify the preferences of FPCs that they would like to see translated into policy. There are several sources through which FPCs make their preferences known. A very useful first source are the food manifests that both FPCs published. The term food manifest is used to refer to a public document in which an FPC clearly outlines its priorities in the local food system. The FPC EetbaarEde published a list of goals and priorities on its website, which is regarded in this research as its manifest (Eetbaar Ede, 2022). The FC MRA developed and published a regional food manifest in which they – together with some other food system organisations – expressed what should change in the local food system (Food Council MRA, 2018). Furthermore, both FPCs provided an internal document that to some extent revealed their priorities too. The FPC EetbaarEde shared their Strategy and Workplan document in which they described their organisation and some of their priorities. The FC MRA provided their Report on the period 2017 – 2023, which outlined the development of the FPC and the activities they have (helped) organise. A thematic analysis was performed on these documents to identify the preferences of the FPCs. In addition, FPC members were asked in interviews what topics they thought were most important; what they felt that should be changed in the local food system; what policies needed to be revised to support these changes; and which goals they already achieved in the last years.

3.3.1.2 Step 1: Access

FPC members make contact with local food policy makers, being dependent on their access to those policy makers, which in turn is influenced by the FPC's governmental integration.

Step one is where the connection takes place between FPC members and local food policy makers. How well FPC members are able to establish such contact is dependent on their access to local food policy makers. *Access to policy makers* is operationalised as the ability of FPC members to have direct contact with local food policy makers (Dür & Mateo, 2013). This also means that access can only take place when a local food policy maker grants it; that is, a local food policy maker is willing to hear the FPC member and review the merits of their case (Cotton, 2012). In this research, FPC members are asked in interviews how they experience their access to local food policy makers; meaning that access is measured as the self-reported ability of FPC members to have direct contact with local food policy makers. This is a form of qualitative egocentric network analysis, which "provide a personalized view of the network from the perspective of an individual" (Hansen et al., 2011). Since qualitative egocentric network analysis only looks at the direct relations of an FPC member, it allows to qualitatively review these relations by giving FPC members the opportunity to reflect on their relationship with local food policy makers.

Very important for an FPC's access to local food policy makers is the way they are related to the local government. This *governmental integration* is operationalised as the number of different relationship types between an FPC and the local government. Bassarab et al. (2022) gives an overview of all the possible relationships between an FPC and a local government. In total, Bassarab et al. (2022)

define eight ways in which an FPC can be related to the local government, which are listed in table 2. Having more different relationships corresponds with a stronger governmental integration. But simultaneously, some types of relationships are stronger than others, and therefore the found relationships are also critically reviewed. Relationships between the two FPCs in this research and their local governments were identified through interviews with Dutch FPC members and website analysis.

Type of relationship	Definition
FPC is embedded in government.	FPC may be an official board or commission of the local government or an initiative of a local government agency. A local government agency may provide administrative of fiscal support to the FPC.
FPC is created or mandated by legislation.	FPC is established via a city or county resolution or ordinance. FPC does not have to be embedded in government.
Government employees are members of the FPC.	Staff member(s) of a government agency are official members of an FPC, potentially with the authority to vote in FPC decisions.
Government employees participate in FPC meetings.	Staff member(s) of a government agency may serve as a liaison or coordinator for an FPC or may provide administrative support during FPC meetings but lack the authority to vote in FPC decisions.
Elected officials are members of the FPC.	A city councillor, county commissioner, mayor, or other elected official is an official member of the FPC.
Government officials appoint members of the FPC.	An elected official or government staff member appoints FPC members, often to fill pre-designated seats for representatives of different sectors. Member appointments may be made with input from an FPC.
Local government supports the FPC.	Local government may provide in- kind support in the form of meeting space, research or data, or the provision of a letter of support.
Government seeks advice or recommendations from the FPC.	FPC may be an official advisory body to government or may be asked to provide advice on an ad hoc basis.

Table 2: Types of relationships between an FPC and local government among urban FPCs (partial table copied from Bassarab, Santo & Palmer, 2022, p. 188)

3.3.1.3 Step 2: Raising awareness

The given advice is considered by **local food policy makers**, depending on the perceived credibility and legitimacy of the FPC.

The second step in the causal mechanism is where FPC members try to raise awareness by local food policy makers. This is the step where local food policy makers need to be personally convinced that the given advice is worth following up. As explained in the theoretical framework, local food policy makers judge the advice based on the credibility and legitimacy of the source (the FPC). *Credibility and legitimacy* are based on the perception of local food policy makers on an FPC and its members. Thus, these concepts will be measured through interviews with local food policy makers. Credibility has two key dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009; Berdahl et al., 2016). *Perceived expertise* is measured by how local food policy makers evaluate the ability of an FPC to speak authoritatively on matters regarding the local food system. *Perceived trustworthiness* is measured by how local food policy makers evaluate the honesty and integrity of an FPC. Both dimensions were measured through interviews with food policymakers, in where these operationalisations are directly translated into interview questions.

When local food policy makers judge the legitimacy of FPC advice, they consider whether the advice is justified and proper. *Legitimacy* has three dimensions: input, throughput, and output

legitimacy, which are operationalised in line with the framework of Haesevoets et al. (2023). Input legitimacy refers to whether local food policy makers think that the FPC allows all the views and inputs from everyone in the local food system and gives them equal opportunities to be heard. Throughput legitimacy occurs when local food policy makers think that advice from the FPC is generated fairly and transparent. Output legitimacy exists when local food policy makers think that the FPC provides efficient advice that will work. As with credibility, these three dimensions were measured through interviews with food policymakers, where these operationalisations are directly translated into interview questions. Furthermore, for both FPCs an event was attended for which an observation report was written. In these events local food system stakeholders came together to discuss a relevant topic and the role of the FPC. Since local food policymakers attended both events, this partially revealed their perceived legitimacy too (complemented by the perceived legitimacy of other local food system stakeholders).

3.3.1.4 Step 3: Agenda setting

Local food policy makers translate the preferences of FPCs into policy, depending on the political salience of the issues raised by FPC members.

The third step in the causal mechanism is where local food policy makers act on the advice they are given. In the previous step they were convinced on the importance of the advice given by an FPC, but in this step they see an opportunity to translate that advice into policy; thus, the advice gets on the political agenda. Local food policy makers will not pursue fruitless endeavours but consider whether the advice has political salience. *Political salience* of FPC advice exists when local food policy makers feel that the advice comes at a time that the information is relevant to use for adapting or developing local food policy (Veit et al., 2017). Thus, political salience has two key dimensions: relevance and timeliness. Local food policy makers were asked in interviews how important they think the advice form FPCs is and in what way they have used their advice (Beyers et al., 2018). In addition, they were asked why they formerly did or did not adopt FPC advice. If they did not discuss the relevance and timeliness of FPC advice, prompting questions were asked to make them critically reflect on the role of political salience of food in their use of FPC advice. Furthermore, FPC members sometimes indirectly mentioned the role of political salience when they reflected on when policymakers were more willing to listen to their advice. Thus, throughout FPC member interviews an eye was kept out for their experience with political salience.

3.3.1.5 Step 4: Policy impact

Parts of the preferences (advice) of FPCs are laid down in local food policy.

In the last step, the local government has incorporated the advice of an FPC in their policies. There are two ways in which this is measured. The first way is by analysing whether FPC preference identified in step 0 were reflected in policy strategies regarding food in the municipalities of Ede and Amsterdam. Amsterdam has published a food strategy (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023) in which the goals for the local food system are outlined and how the municipality can contribute towards those goals. Ede has published an integrated spatial vision (Dutch: Omgevingsvisie) in which food plays a prominent role (Gemeente Ede, 2022). As in step 0, here too a thematic analysis was performed. However, this analysis was slightly different since the goal is not to identify all the themes in the text, but to identify the themes that correspond with the themes from the FPCs. Thus, the food strategies are analysed using only the codes developed from the food manifests in step 0. However, as explained in the theoretical framework, this does not necessarily mean that the FPCs are the reason that the local government adopted these themes. Therefore, FPC members are asked in interviews whether they have actively pushed for certain themes to appear in the municipal food strategy and local food policy makers are asked in interviews if and how they used advice from the FPC to develop the food strategies. If FPC members say they pushed for a certain theme *and* local food policy makers indicate they used FPC

advice for a certain theme *and* the preferences of the FPC can be found back in the policy document, it is safe to say that this theme is taken up in local food policy through the influence of the FPC.

As noted in the section 3.2 Case selection, the municipality of Ede decided to reassess their food vision during the spring and summer months of 2024. As this food vision was not published yet during the time frame of this research, the food vision could not be analysed. Furthermore, most of the data collection of this research occurred before the summer when it was not certain yet whether the reassessment of the food vision would happen. However, one interview – with the coordinator of FPC EetbaarEde – took place after the summer when the development of the food vision was in an advanced stage already. She reflected on the role and impact of FPC EetbaarEde on the development of the new food vision. Since this process was highly relevant to this research, her reflections were integrated in the results. As she was the only source for getting insights into this process, the information could not be corroborated with other FPC members or food policymakers. This should be kept in mind when reading the results.

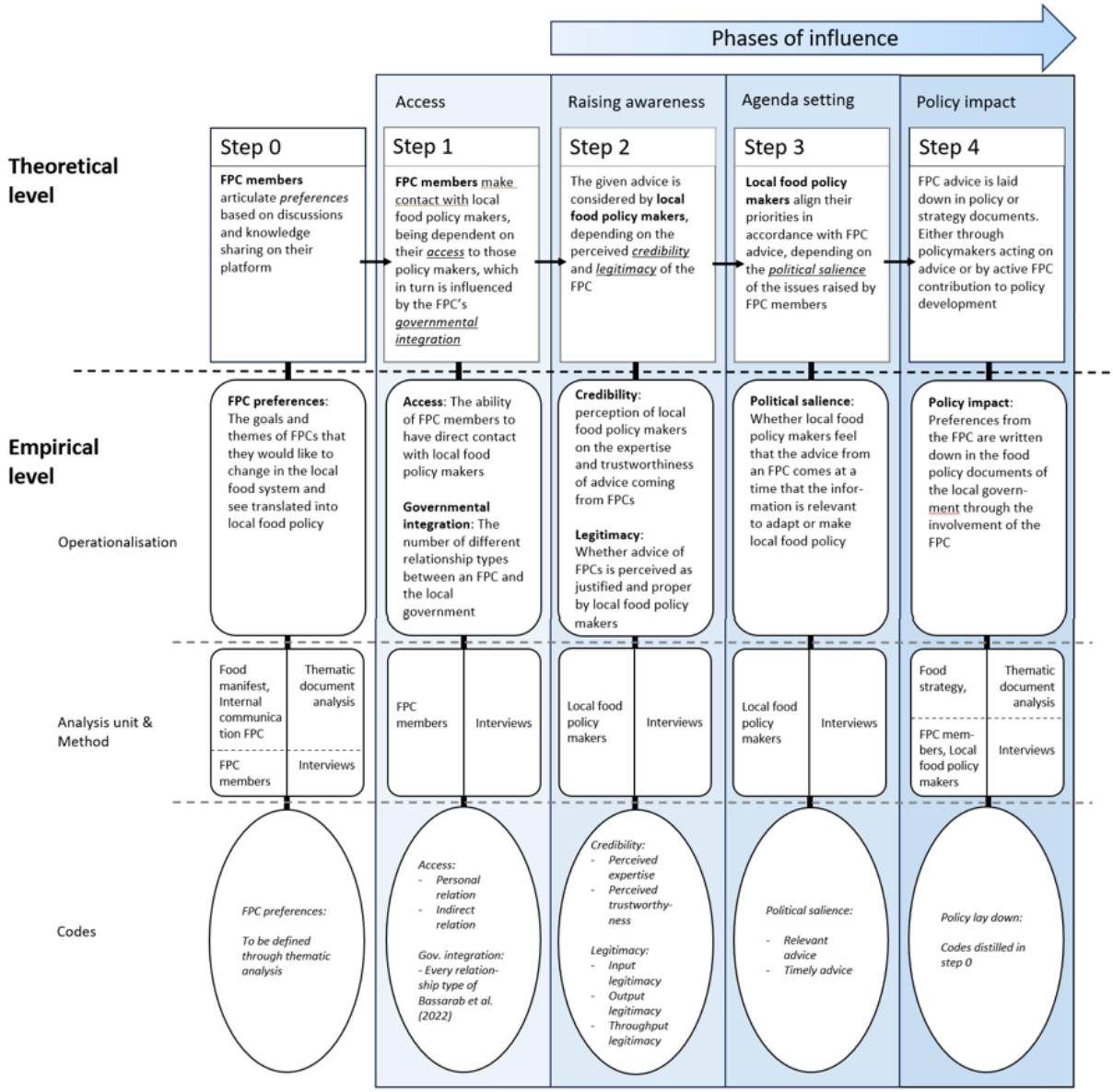

Figure 3: Overview of operationalisation of the theoretical causal framework

3.3.2 Data overview

This research relies on a combination of qualitative data sources to explore the effectiveness of Food Policy Councils (FPCs) in influencing local food policies. The data was gathered from FPC food manifests, internal documents, semi-structured interviews, event observations, and municipal policy documents. Together, these sources provide a comprehensive understanding of the preferences and activities of the FPC EetbaarEde and the FC MRA and their interactions with local policymakers. Table 3 at the end of the section gives a summary of all data and the codes that refer to the specific documents, which are used in the results chapter.

Food Manifests

The primary documents outlining the priorities of the FPCs, referred to as food manifests, were identified through website analysis. These manifests detail the FPCs' visions for changes in their local food systems and were confirmed as important documents during interviews with FPC members. For FPC EetbaarEde, the key document is the 10-point plan (Dutch: 10-puntenplan), in which the FPC identifies sixteen concrete issues (Eetbaar Ede, 2022). Similarly, the FC MRA collaborated with other food system organizations to publish a regional food manifest, articulating the changes needed in the local food system (Food Council MRA, 2018).

Internal FPC Documents

Both FPCs shared additional internal documents that provide further insight into their organisational priorities and activities. FPC EetbaarEde contributed its Strategy and Workplan document, which describes its organisational structure and priorities within the broader foundation of EetbaarEde. This document provides an overview of the foundation's operations and the role of the FPC within it. The FC MRA shared its Report on the period 2017–2023, which outlines its development since its initiation, key activities, and future plans, such as establishing a formal association and foundation.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather insights into the perceptions of FPC members and local food policymakers. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility to explore topics in depth while ensuring all key themes are addressed. Initial outreach to FPCs via email yielded limited responses, leading to snowball sampling to recruit participants. For FPC EetbaarEde, interviews were conducted with four members, including the coordinator and former coordinator, and with two local policymakers: the program managers for food and agriculture. For FC MRA, interviews were conducted with both co-founders and one local policymaker, the advisor on the municipality's food strategy and urban agriculture. The interviews took place primarily in April and May 2024, with one follow-up interview in October 2024. These interviews provided valuable insights into FPC priorities, policymaker interactions, and the dynamics of local food policy development. Examples for the used interview guides for Amsterdam are included in Annex I & II.

Observation reports

To complement the interviews, events organised by the FPCs were attended, offering direct insights into their operations and stakeholder interactions. For FPC EetbaarEde, a "FoodFloor" event focused on land access was observed. This event was attended by approximately 20 stakeholders, including two local policymakers. FoodFloors are regularly organised by the FPC EetbaarEde to discuss pressing issues and are used as input for policy recommendations. For FC MRA, a workshop session during the "Day of the Food Transition", organised by the local government, was observed. This session, attended by 15 participants, including one policymaker, discussed the role of the FC MRA in Amsterdam. Observation reports from these events are included in Annex IV & V.

Municipal Food Policy Documents

Municipal food policy documents were analysed to assess the extent to which FPC priorities were reflected in local policy. For Ede, the Integrated Spatial Vision 2040 (Dierbaar, Duurzaam, Dynamisch, Omgevingsvisie Ede 2040) was analysed. This strategic document outlines the municipality's long-term

plans for sustainability, spatial development, and food systems (Gemeente Ede, 2022). For Amsterdam, the Implementation Agenda for the Food Strategy 2023–2026 was examined. This document details concrete actions for promoting sustainable food systems, improving food access, reducing waste, and supporting local producers (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023).

Ede				
	Interviews			
		Role	**Short reference**	**Code**
		The former coordinator of FPC EetbaarEde. Currently board member of the foundation EetbaarEde. Still involved in the FPC.	Former FPC coordinator	R1.1
		Member of FPC EetbaarEde of over two years	Long-term member	R1.2
		Member of FPC EetbaarEde of almost half a year	Short-term member	R1.3
		The current coordinator of the FPC EetbaarEde	FPC coordinator	R1.4
	Documents			
		Document	**Short reference**	**Code**
		10-point plan of the FPC EetbaarEde	Food manifest FPC EetbaarEde	RVM
		Strategy and Workplan EetbaarEde 2024	Strategy document	RSW
		Observation report of the FoodFloor organised by the FPC EetbaarEde	Observation report	RFF
		Dierbaar, duurzaam, dynamisch: omgevingsvisie Ede 2040	Integrated spatial vision	RVV
Amsterdam				
	Interviews	**Role**	**Short reference**	**Code**
		One of the co-founders of FC MRA with an academic background	Co-founder FC MRA	S1.1
		One of the co-founders of FC MRA with a social entrepreneurial background	Co-founder FC MRA	S1.2
		Advisor on the food strategy and urban agriculture for the Municipality of Amsterdam	Advisor on the food strategy	S2.1
	Documents			
		Document	**Short reference**	**Code**
		REGIONAAL MANIFEST 'Voedsel Verbindt'	Food manifest FC MRA	SVM
		Food Council MRA _ Verslag over de periode 2017 tot 2023	Period report	SPR
		Observation report on the workshop session of FC MRA on the Day of the food transition	Observation report	SOR
		Uitvoeringsagenda Voedselstrategie 2023-2026	Food strategy of Amsterdam	SFS

Table 3: Data overview

The code scheme of this table is as follows. All interviews and documents related to the case of Ede start with the letter ‘R’ and those related to the case of Amsterdam start with the letter 'S’. For the interviews, these letters are followed by either a 1 if the interviewee is an FPC member, or a 2 if the interviewee is a local food policymaker. The number after the point specifies the FPC member or policymaker. For the documents, the first ‘R’ or ‘S’ is followed by two letters that abbreviate the name of the document. For example, in the code SFS, the first S stands for Amsterdam and the following FS stands for Food Strategy.

3.3.3 Thematic analysis

The transcribed interviews and the documents are qualitatively analysed with the use of Atlas.ti. All data is coded according to the labels described in figure 3. The codes are then grouped by their overarching concept, allowing for a structured overview of the gathered data. For step four of the causal mechanism, codes are used that appear during the analysis of the FPC’s preferences. It is important to note that the two cases are analysed separately, and comparisons are only made after the analysis is completed for both cases. This is to ensure that the data of both cases does not get contaminated and that the coding used in one case does not affect the other case. After all data is coded and analysed, an inductive coding analysis is conducted to add any case-specific factors that may influence how the FPC influences local food policy, as discussed in the section Research Design and Data. These codes are then thematically analysed according to the guidelines of Ryan and Bernard (2003); thus looking for repetition in topics, material that may indirectly relate to the theory, and similarities and differences in how interviewees discuss themes.

3.3.4 Informed consent

All the respondents were informed beforehand about the topic of the research and how their data would contribute to the research. They were asked before an interview for permission to record the interview to ensure the accuracy of the study. It was made clear that the decision to participate in the study was voluntary, that they did not have to answer any questions they would rather not answer, and that participation and consent could be withdrawn at any time during the study, without the need to indicate a reason. They could also have their research and personal data deleted up to two weeks after participation. Recordings of interviews were deleted as soon as the interview report was finished, and transcripts were then pseudonymised. The remaining research was only done using the pseudonymised transcripts. After respondents were made aware of all above points, they were asked if they had any further questions about the research and the interview process. Lastly, respondents were asked to sign a consent form in which they indicated that they understood and agreed to all above mentioned points (see Annex III).

4 Results

This chapter presents the findings from the two case studies: the FPC EetbaarEde and the FC MRA. Each case is reviewed individually to provide a detailed analysis of the evidence for each causal step. Besides focusing on evidence for the theoretical mechanisms through which these FPCs interact with local policymakers and shape food policy outcomes, this chapter also highlights findings that may offer different or additional explanations for how an FPC can influence local food policy. The chapter concludes with a summary table that compares the most important findings from both cases, illustrating key similarities and differences in their approaches and effectiveness.

4.1 Ede

The results for the case of Ede are drawn from six interviews and four key documents (see Table 3 in section 3.3.2. Data overview). Four interviews were conducted with members of FPC EetbaarEde, including the current coordinator, the former coordinator, a long-standing member, and a newer member with six months of experience. The other two interviews were with local food policymakers: the program manager for food, responsible for coordinating food policy, and the program manager for agriculture, who played a role in initiating the FPC. The analysed documents include the foo manifest of EetbaarEde, its strategy and workplan document, a report based on observations from a FoodFloor event, and the local government's integrated spatial vision. This combination of interviews and documents provides a comprehensive basis for understanding the FPC's operations and influence.

4.1.1 Step 0: Themes

Based on thematical analysis of the food manifest of Eetbaar Ede (2022) (RVM) and the strategy and workplan document of Eetbaar Ede 2024 (RSW) and supported by findings from the interviews, six themes are developed that categorise the preferences and initiatives of the FPC. These six themes are: increase access to healthy and sustainable food; support local food entrepreneurs; promote food education; address land issues regarding food production; promote the social aspects of food; and reduce food waste. These themes are elaborated below.

Improve access to healthy and sustainable food

Many preferences relate directly or indirectly to this theme. Access, here, captures both the availability and affordability of food, and is often used to address the food insecurity of people with the lowest income in Ede. At one point the FPC even goes a step further in their food manifest by arguing that "food should be a collective basic service for everyone" (RVM). But mostly Eetbaar Ede wants to increase food access through initiatives such as "a people's canteen as a basic facility without profit motive where everyone can buy an affordable and healthy meal. Also, for residents with a small budget." (RVM). However, as this quote shows too, it is never about just increasing access to food but always in combination with either *healthy* or *sustainable* food. Although healthy and sustainable are not further defined by Eetbaar Ede, increasing vegetarian and plant-based options, mostly in restaurants, is an important part of it. This becomes clear by goals in their food manifest such as: "The food council wants to work towards further increasing the share of plant-based choices in restaurants in Ede" (RVM). In addition, all interviewed members of the FPC EetbaarEde referred to improving access to healthy and sustainable food several times. Most clear in their wording was the former FPC coordinator by saying "we try […] to help ensure that the food here in our municipality becomes more local, healthier, more sustainable, and also more affordable" (R1.1). The interviewed members often expressed their worries about increasing overweight issues and casus of diabetes related to an unhealthy food diet and stressed that this was an issue the FPC would like to tackle.

Support local food

For Eetbaar Ede, local food is an important issue. The main way their food manifest relates to this theme is by supporting local food entrepreneurs, which they try to do in every stage of their business.

They see that many local sustainable food initiatives cannot find land to start their initiative and wish to address this (RVM). The FPC makes this connection between local food initiatives and the land issue again in their strategy document, when listing the focus themes for 2024 they mention "local food production / land for food initiatives" (RSW) as one theme. Furthermore, the FPC highlights in its food manifest that there is currently "no affordable facility for selling local/regional products on the local market of Ede" (RVM) and for selling products outside the centre of Ede "there are barriers by legislation" (RVM). This, too, is an issue that Eetbaar Ede likes to address. Lastly, the FPC shows in its food manifest that they want to raise awareness among the people from Ede to buy more locally produced food; for example, by ''increasing the visibility of local and sustainable entrepreneurs [through] yearly promotion campaigns" (RVM). Although local food is an important theme in the documents of the FPC, the interviewed members almost never explicitly mention it. They mostly speak in indirect terms such as when a newer FPC member said: "initiatives have a hard time finding land in this area" (R1.3); or when a long-term FPC member said: "I think local food markets are important" (R1.2).

Promote food education

Eetbaar Ede sees a role for itself in promoting food education among the people of Ede. First, they focus on food education on schools. For example, a long-term member said they support the initiative that all primary schools should maintain their own vegetable garden, called "klassemoestuin" (R1.2). In addition, in their food manifest the FPC indicates they also support the healthy school approach for all primary and secondary education (RVM). Second, Eetbaar Ede wants to promote food education through cooking lessons. For example, a long-term FPC member explained she was involved in this herself: "Well I do try to promote plant-based cuisine, the cooking skills. For example, a little while ago [there was] a cooking class for vegan barbecuing […] I think that is really cool!" (R1.2). Another way they want to improve cooking skills, as mentioned in the food manifest, is by "offering free cooking lessons in community centres to learn how to buy and prepare cheap and healthy meals" (RVM).

Address land issues regarding food production

Just like the rest of the Netherlands, Ede experiences high pressures on land from several sectors such as agriculture, housing, and nature. Thus, the very first goal in the food manifest is to find more suitable land for sustainable agriculture. The former coordinator and a long-term FPC member both took some time explaining that there are several initiatives that want to produce sustainably and locally (e.g., Herenboeren, Commons Ede, De Vrolijke Pastinaak) but are on hold for years already because they cannot find suitable farming land (R1.1 & R1.2). Land issues are also a problem for smaller food production initiatives; the FPC EetbaarEde mentions in its food manifest that they want a social vegetable garden in every neighbourhood but cannot realise this yet due to a lack of available land (RVM). The land issue is so prominent that the FPC recently organised a public meeting around this theme to talk about the problem and collectively look for solutions (RFF). All members of the FPC mentioned land as one of the main current issues that need to be addressed. The former coordinator put it in no unclear terms when she said: "Land is the big issue, this is in the municipality truly a huge problem right now" (R1.1).

Food waste

A key challenge in developing a sustainable food system is the reduction of food waste. Eetbaar Ede addresses this challenge through two initiatives. First, according to their food manifest, they want to create "public food sharing cabinets" (RVM) in every neighbourhood where residents can share food that they will not be using anymore, thereby reducing food waste while giving people that are struggling the opportunity to enjoy a free and healthy meal. Second, Eetbaar Ede wants to convince restaurants to put "leftover snacks on their menu for a friendly price, which are made of products that would otherwise been thrown away" (RVM). Despite being a big theme in their food manifest and to a lesser extent in their strategy document, food waste has not been put forward in interviews by any FPC members as an important theme for the FPC, thereby signalling that this theme is no longer on their agenda.

Promote the social aspects of food

Besides the production of and access to sustainable and healthy food and reducing food waste, the FPC EetbaarEde also pays attention to the social side of food. In the food manifest and the strategy document this theme is mostly embedded within goals that actually addresses one of the other themes. For example, when the FPC calls for more vegetable gardens in the food manifest they explicitly make a connection with the social aspect of these community gardens (RVM). Also, when the FPC announces its intention in the food manifest to create a new purpose for leftovers in public food sharing cabinets, they link it to the opportunity to meet each other in the neighbourhood (RVM). The only intended initiative that is solely dedicated to this theme in the FPC's food manifest is where they create the opportunity for elders to come together to cook and share meals in community centres so that they can collectively enjoy dinner (RVM). The short-term member in particular concerned himself with the social aspect of food and repeatedly mentioned the importance of the social aspect of food. For example, he said: "I find the social aspect so important, and food can play a very connecting role in that. Sharing a meal can do so much" (R1.3).

4.1.1.1 Unfamiliarity of themes

Although the six themes above are clearly reflected in the FPC's food manifest (RVM) and to a lesser extent in their strategy document (RSW), the members themself do not have a clear understanding of the priority themes of the FPC. In the interviews they show a strong affinity for the local food system, and they all voiced personal challenges they saw to improve it. However, there was not a collective set of themes or issues they referred to or were drawing from. A short-term FPC member was a strong promotor for the social aspects of food, while a longer-term member often highlighted the importance of healthy and sustainable food. The FPC coordinator and the former coordinator were both engaged in the strategic challenges of the FPC and mentioned more themes in line with the food manifest, but they too were not sure what the priority themes of the FPC were. Although it is the goal of an FPC to discuss the various matters of the food system and have different members representing different perspectives, communicating clear priorities to policymakers and the outside world would help to understand the positioning of the FPC. This issue was raised by the FPC coordinator too who said:

> "What we are doing now is a bit too wavering. [Thus] we […] decided to narrow down our 10-point plan to a two- or three-point plan next year. Focus even more sharply on specific topics and also be even more determined to keep coming back to them. Both within our own food council and when addressing the municipality." (R1.4)

4.1.2 Step 1: Access

Governmental integration

In the theory it is explained that access of FPCs to local policymakers is based on the governmental integration of the FPC (Halligan, 1995; Walsh et al., 2015). The FPC EetbaarEde is not strongly integrated within the government, but there are still four types of relationships from Bassarab et al. (2022) present. First, the government supports the FPC with a small subsidy every year to pay the hours of the professional coordinator of the FPC, though the former FPC coordinator stressed that this does not come with any demands (R1.1). Second, the FPC is initiated by the government, although it was outsourced to EetbaarEde to realise the project. The FPC does not have a legal mandate and is not an official board of the local government. Third, the government sometimes actively seeks advice from the FPC on issues or communicates what themes they are working on in that moment. However, both the coordinator of FPC EetbaarEde (R1.4) and the program manager food (R2.1) stress that this is about good communication on what is going on in both organisations rather than the government steering the FPC on what themes they should be discussing. The last relationship between the FPC and the government is that sometimes policymakers get invited to participate in FPC meetings, though they are explicitly not members. The coordinator of the FPC EetbaarEde explained:

> "We do invite [policymakers] occasionally, because we ask them to share what they're working on, but no, they're not members. Very explicitly not. And that's intentional—we don't want that". (R1.4)

The FPC deliberately keeps some distance from the government, allowing them to be more critical of the things the government does and be independent in the subjects and themes they pursue, as indicated by the board member of EetbaarEde (R1.1). Thereby they seem to deliberately keep more distance from the local government even though more governmental integration might increase their access.

Access

Although all interviewed members of the FPC EetbaarEde indicated that they have contact with local policymakers, matters of the FPC almost always go through the coordinator and the former coordinator of the FPC who often speak with the program manager food on behalf of the FPC. The program manager food, in turn, is responsible for coordinating everything that has to do with food in the local government. Thus, she is also responsible for transmitting information from the FPC to the right people in the municipality. The coordinator and former coordinator of the FPC and the program manager food have regular meetings, taking place once every two months. During these meetings they discuss what is happening in both organisations so that they can help each other out or focus their efforts on themes that are currently on the agenda. Also, both the coordinator and the program manager food noted that they can always contact each other by phone when they need something (R1.4 & R2.1). However, the coordinator of the FPC did mention that it can be hard to reach the program manager food. Sometimes she does not pick up her phone for several days and she often reschedules meetings (R1.4). Although the coordinator of the FPC did express her understanding for the busy schedule of the program manager food, it is quite inconvenient for the FPC since the program manager food is their only contact point in the local government.

Although streamlining information flows within the local government and between local government and the FPC is important, having only one point of contact creates a rather dependent relationship between the FPC and the program manager food. First, when the program manager food does not answer her phone or cannot make it to a meeting, there is no alternative for the FPC to get in contact with the local government. Leaving the FPC members little other options than to wait until the program manager food does have time. Although this was an often-recurring problem, FPC members were cautious in discussing whether it affected their relationships. Second, when the current program manager food would leave and someone takes over that has a less sympathetic view towards the FPC, they would lose all their connection with the local government. Lastly, the program manager agriculture mentioned her department could probably benefit from more direct collaboration with the FPC. This is not happening right now because they do not know each other since all direct contacts go through the program manager food (R2.2).

Currently, the mutual relationships between the FPC and the program manager food are very good, as indicated by all interviewees. The program manager food also highlighted several times the importance of the FPC for the local government (R2.1). She said for example: "I think it is very valuable and essential for us to have a Food Council in Ede. I believe the local government should take this seriously" (R2.1). These good relationships are, at least partially, due to a change in tactics from the FPC. Up until 2022 they did some research within their networks on a certain theme. Based on what they heard, they wrote a small report which they sent to the local government. After an evaluation in 2022 they discovered that all their reports "ended up in a drawer of the municipality, largely unused" (R1.1), as put by the former FPC coordinator. Since 2022 the FPC focusses more on good contacts and relationships with local policymakers, so that they have a way to stay informed on the things that are happening in the local government and so that they can constantly advocate for certain issues.

This new strategy of investing in good contacts with policymakers paid off in the summer of 2024. As explained in the methodology (section 3.2 Case selection), the local government decided to reassess their old food vision. Since there were close contacts between the program manager food and the coordinator of the FPC, the FPC was informed from the very beginning about this reassessment. According to the coordinator of the FPC, in earlier conversations she and the former FPC coordinator urged the program manager food to involve concerned citizens, such as the FPC, at the start of a policy development process. The FPC coordinator highlighted the importance of "giving this kind of signal [to the municipality], like, if you want things, dear municipality, you should also reach out to other contacts" (R1.4). The program manager food seemed to have listened their suggestion since she tried to involve the FPC in a very early stage. In addition, the relationship between the FPC and the local government was good enough to insist on more and earlier involvement of the FPC. Initially, the FPC would get a chance to be involved only at the end stages of the development of the food vision. But after a critical reflection by the FPC of the influence this would provide them, the program manager food decided they would get a session at an earlier stage. Thus, the FPC EetbaarEde seems to have been effective in influencing the local government to first include them in the development process of the new food vision at all, and second to be involved in an early stage rather than at the end.

Summary

This section highlights that while the FPC EetbaarEde is not deeply integrated into the local government, it has established multiple informal relationships that facilitate access to policymakers. These relationships, such as regular meetings and open lines of communication with the program manager food, have enabled the FPC to increase its influence despite limited institutional ties. However, the dependence on a single contact point within the government presents vulnerabilities, such as challenges in communication and the risk of losing access if this individual were to leave. Importantly, the FPC's strategic choice to focus on building strong relationships with local policymakers appears to have been effective. This approach ensured early involvement in the reassessment of the municipality's food vision, showing their ability to use their access to influence local food policymakers to improve their position for impacting local food policy. The FPC EetbaarEde highlights the importance of investing in personal relationships as a means to enhance influence in the absence of formal governmental integration.

4.1.3 Step 2: Raising awareness

According to the theory, awareness raising by policymakers is dependent on their perceived credibility and legitimacy of the FPC (de Fine Licht, 2011; Veit et al., 2017). Credibility has two key dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. Both interviewed policymakers thought the expertise of the FPC to be quite good. The program manager food linked this explicitly to the roles of the members of the FPC in the local food system:

> "I think that all of them have expertise in a certain area within food or the food system. […] Because they are all consumers, some are producers, and some are processors. […] And I also sincerely know that when they provide advice, they further validate it with other experts. So, in terms of content, I often find their advice to be very credible." (R2.1)

Both policymakers also thought the FPC to be trustworthy. The program manager agriculture, for example, said "there are motivated people involved [in the FPC] with sincere intentions to improve the food system" (R2.2). Throughout the interviews, the policymakers strongly showed to perceive the FPC as a credible organisation with an honest motivation and genuine interest to help improve local food policy. However, the program manager agriculture argued that the ability of the FPC to speak with enough expertise and authority on matters of the local food system was negatively affected by its bad representativity, no matter how honest, motivated, sincere and integer they are (R2.2)

This bad representativity is related to input legitimacy and both policymakers highlighted this as a big issue for them. They did see that the FPC tried hard to include all voices equally and actively

tried to include underrepresented actors of the local food system. However, when they look at the members of the FPC and the people that show up at the FoodFloors (the public events by EetbaarEde to discuss matters of the local food system), the policymakers see that the FPC represents a rather homogenous group of people (R2.1 & R2.2). Based on observations during a FoodFloor (RFF) and the members of the FPC, this group consists of mainly higher-educated, middle-aged, white people that are already engaged in the challenges of the local food system. This is challenging for policymakers because they need to know who the FPC can speak for and who is really represented. The program manager food put it well when she said:

> "In principle, I want to see the Food Council as representative of the residents. […] What I find complicated is that there isn't much diversity in ethnic background. Nor is there much diversity in social position. […] So, I find that quite challenging when we talk about affordability and accessibility of healthy food. They find these topics very important. I find them very important from a policy perspective. But what I really miss is this: are we sure that we're focusing on the right levers? […] Are we inviting the right people to the table?" (R2.1)

The program manager agriculture mentioned the same struggles, but also added her own concerns about the FPC not having any farmers among its members and to what extent the rural areas were represented (R2.2). According to the policymakers, these issues regarding representativity result in them being cautious when considering the advice of the FPC. They are not sure whether they are dealing with a new form of governance based on the principles of food democracy, a lobby club that represents the interests of a small group of people, or something in between. The coordinator of the FPC said she recognised this too and is working hard to improve the diversity of the FPC by actively looking for new members with different backgrounds and increasing the number of members overall (R1.4).

Regarding throughput legitimacy, the FPC EetbaarEde scores a lot better. The policymakers feel advice from the FPC is generated fairly because the FPC facilitates an open discussion among the citizens of the municipality of Ede, although it is again pointed out that not everyone is included in this open discussion (R2.1). The policymakers also feel that the FPC is transparent in generating their advice. The FPC is open and clear about who its members are, how they work and which themes they think are important. Furthermore, the FoodFloors produce a sense of transparency since they are open to anyone and there are always members of the FPC present (R2.1). Interestingly, the FoodFloors are not actually organised by the FPC but by a separate branch of EetbaarEde to facilitate discussion among citizens on food related themes. They are thus not explicitly a tool for the FPC to gather information on themes they are working on. Although this distinction is clear for the coordinator and former coordinator of the FPC, it is not for the policymakers and not even for all FPC members. A long-term member said for example, "I actually believe that the value of the Food Council can only truly exist in combination with the FoodFloor" (R1.2). Even though there may be some distance between the FPC and the FoodFloor in practice, it is not perceived as such by many people including policymakers. Thus, the combination of the FPC EetbaarEde with the FoodFloor results in higher perceived transparency.

The food policymakers perceived the throughput legitimacy of the FPC to be less good. According to the program manager agriculture, the FPC does give clear advice with good points (R2.2), but her experience was based on the time the FPC still wrote a report and handed it to the government. As said before, since 2022 they changed tactics to being more focused on good and regular contacts with policymakers. The program manager agriculture also noticed that advice of the FPC is not always feasible, because they often asked things from the local government that was not within their jurisdiction (R2.2). This was also something the program manager food experienced. She explained that "[there is] a clash between what is internally possible and the role we, as a local government, envision for ourselves versus the role the FPC would like to see the local government take on" (2.1). When the coordinator of the FPC reflected on this issue she said she recognised the problem but that it is

improving since they have better contacts with the local government and therefore get a better understanding of the workings and jurisdictions of the policymakers (R1.4).

According to the FPC coordinator trust was the main reason the FPC EetbaarEde was involved in the development of the new food vision. She expressed proudness that the local government, and especially the project manager food, trusted the FPC enough to actively include them in the food vision (R1.4). Throughout the last years they slowly built a relationship that is based on mutual trust, but it still takes a leap of faith for the local government to engage a group of citizens in the development of policy while there is nothing tangible yet. The former FPC coordinator thinks this is due to policymakers being afraid of promising things they cannot make true and politicising a topic before anything has happened yet (R1.1). But thanks to this built trust, the municipality feels safe enough to take this leap of faith with the FPC and involve them in a very early stage. In addition, it can be very valuable for a local government to have a group of engaged citizens willing to give input for new policies. Especially when the group brings a lot of expertise to the table, which, according to the program manager food, the FPC does since they "all have their own expertise within the food system. (R2.1). The perceived credibility of the FPC was reason for the program manager food to include them in the development of a new food vision, according to the coordinator of the FPC (R1.4).

Summary

The findings in this section highlight that the perceived credibility and legitimacy of FPC EetbaarEde play an important role in its ability to raise awareness among local policymakers. Both policymakers interviewed regarded the FPC as a credible organization due to its members' expertise and trustworthiness. However, the issue of representativity, tied to input legitimacy, emerged as a significant challenge. Policymakers expressed concerns about the homogeneity of the FPC's membership and questioned whether it could genuinely represent the broader population of Ede. These representativity issues led policymakers to question the importance of advice provided by the FPC EetbaarEde. Despite these challenges, the FPC's throughput legitimacy was rated more positively. Its transparent and inclusive processes, particularly through the FoodFloors, contributed to policymakers' perception of fairness in generating advice. Trust between the FPC and local government, built through regular contact and collaborative efforts, was identified as a key factor in securing the FPC's involvement in developing the new food vision. This trust, combined with the FPC's expertise, demonstrates how credibility and personal relationships can compensate for representativity challenges to some extent.

4.1.4 Step 3: Agenda setting

The political salience of a theme is an important factor for whether anything will happen with given advice, as was confirmed by the program manager food (R2.1). Especially in the time the FPC still wrote reports on a certain theme it depended on how salient the issue was whether the report would be used in some way or end up in a drawer. For example, the FPC once wrote a report on food for the elderly, containing many issues the program manager food recognised; but since there was no political interest, she was not able to do anything about it. The program manager food formulated the role of political salience explicitly in the next quote:

> "Sometimes there are simply political choices behind it, and [the FPC] can have an opinion about it, and I can have my opinion about. But in the end, that is the situation we have to work with." (R2.1)

Another aspect of political salience is the organisational sluggishness of the local government. The local government is not one entity, but is made up of countless divisions, departments and programs, which in turn are made up of employees with their own interests and motives. Thus, a topic that is high on the agenda in one section, might not at all be on the agenda of another. The program manager food gave the example of the FPC advising to include healthy food in health policy. The program manager food thought the critique to be justified but pointed out that "going through me is not the solution either, so I have to take it further internally" (R1.2). Furthermore, she remarked that in

such a case it may seem like no progress is made, “but behind it lies a massive, complex organisation that has to be dealt with” (R2.1).

FPC members are of course aware of the political salience of themes. The former FPC coordinator was aware of the “massive hangover that was left over from the World Food Experience” (R1.1) in the municipality of Ede, which put the food discussion under a lot of pressure. Also, a long-term member noted that sometimes nothing seems to be done with advice by policymakers, but that it “often has to do with strategy and what is smart in how to approach something within the local government” (R1.2). She added that she trusts the policymakers to make the most of their advice and use it at a time that the right topic is political salient and when using the FPC advice is most likely to have impact (R1.2).

When a theme is not political salient, the FPC does not have to sit around waiting until it does become salient to have influence. They can also do agenda setting work themselves. One important tool they have are the FoodFloors. Everyone who is interested is invited to these events and they also always try to get some people working for the local government to attend. This can give a boost in attention of a topic. Additionally, sometimes it can be helpful for the policymakers working on food policy to get support from citizens to help them get food on the agenda of the whole local government. This happened for example during the development of the integrated spatial vision. The former FPC coordinator talked about how they coordinated efforts with food policy makers to get a prominent role for food in the integrated spatial vision. The program manager food would internally try to get food on the agenda and the FPC would send members to all citizen participation meetings organised by the municipality to bring in the same topics. “Those are the little back-and-forths [with the municipality] that can help you to get things done”, as stated by the former FPC coordinator (R1.1). However, besides these two points, it seems that the FPC EetbaarEde does not put so much work into agenda setting.

Although the FPC EetbaarEde can try to get food to be political salient, it is often a matter of luck. As said, because the World Food Experience ended in failure and citizens and policymakers in Ede were tired with the topic of food. However, due to a twist of fate, it did result in an opportunity for the FPC to become more involved in the food policy of Ede. The last few years, a lot of energy and resources went to the World Food Experience. After the project got shut down, these resources could be spent elsewhere. At the same time the program manager food was looking for a way to get food on the agenda in a positive way again. Combined this resulted in a formal reassessment of the food vision. And as explained before, the FPC got involved in a very early stage. The next step, according to the FPC coordinator, will be to ensure that the municipality follows through on its own promises. The FPC coordinator expressed her strong intention to stay involved in the implementation and execution of the vision. And if need be, the FPC would keep pushing to stay engaged and “not to wait again until the very end” (R1.4).

Summary

The findings in this section underscore the critical role of political salience in determining whether the advice of FPC EetbaarEde is acted upon by local policymakers. While the FPC’s expertise and advice are often recognized, their impact depends heavily on whether the issues they address align with the political priorities of the moment. When themes lack salience, advice may go unused, reflecting both the political dynamics and the complex, fragmented nature of local government organisations. However, the FPC EetbaarEde is not entirely passive in this regard; tools like FoodFloors allow them to actively contribute to agenda-setting by engaging citizens and policymakers in discussions about food system challenges. Despite these efforts, the influence of the FPC is sometimes a matter of timing and external circumstances. The shutdown of the World Food Experience, for example, created an opportunity to reassess the municipal food vision, enabling the FPC to play an early role in reassessing the food vision. Moving forward, the FPC’s ability to maintain its involvement in the implementation of the food vision will be critical for ensuring lasting influence.

4.1.5 Step 4: Policy impact

After careful examination of the integrated spatial vision (RVV), there were only few sections where food played a role, and even fewer sections where the themes overlapped with those of the FPC. There is one section of three sentences where the goal is articulated to have "healthy and sustainable food for everyone" (RVV), which should be achieved by promoting food education. Later, there is a slightly longer section on healthy and local food. The goal is again to get "healthy and sustainable food for everyone" (RVV). Afterwards there are five bullet points on how to achieve that, connected to the themes (1) address land issues for food production; (2) support local food entrepreneurs; and (3) promote food education. Lastly, there is a section on increasing sustainable agriculture, which in combination with raising food awareness should result in more support for local food entrepreneurs (RVV).

When discussing food, the integrated spatial vision focusses mainly on knowledge and innovation. The importance of jobs in the food sector is often highlighted too, but never in combination with promoting local food entrepreneurs. The integrated spatial vision favours big agribusinesses; for example, when it identifies potential new areas for food businesses, it arrives at areas close to the highways so that new initiatives will be well connected with the rest of the country (RVV). This is great for companies and start-ups that produce for a wider area than just Ede, but initiatives producing for the local market may prefer being closer to the city. In general, it seems that the term 'local food entrepreneurs' is applied to a very different group of people in the integrated spatial vision compared to when the FPC uses the term.

Since the former coordinator of the FPC said they were not involved in the spatial vision besides showing up at the participation meetings where they pushed to include food as a theme in general (R1.1), it seems unlikely that the themes in the integrated spatial vision that overlap with the FPC preferences are included due to the FPC. As said before, the FPC EetbaarEde did coordinate their efforts with local food policymakers to stress the importance of food for the integrated spatial vision, which was confirmed by the program manager food too (R2.1). However, besides this coordination, the program manager food did not remember the FPC being involved in the development of the integrated spatial in any other way. Although it may be partially thanks to efforts of the FPC that healthy and sustainable food is mentioned in the integrated spatial vision at all, there seems to have been no impact on the spatial vision by the FPC EetbaarEde.

On the other hand, the FC EetbaarEde does seem to be effective in influencing the new food vision. Unfortunately, the new food vision was not yet published at the time of writing, so there is no way of knowing which themes from the FPC are incorporated in the food vision. Besides, all interviews – accept the one with the FPC coordinator – were held before the process of writing the new vision started. Even though the only information comes from the FPC coordinator, some careful observations can be made. First, the FPC recommended the program manager food to do an official reassessment of the food vision. The program manager indeed decided to do this, but it is unclear whether it was due to the advice of the FPC. Second, the FPC suggested to include agriculture in the food vision and to not treat it as a separate policy area. In a later version of the food vision, agriculture was included. Lastly, the FPC coordinator said they told the municipality that they "were missing a kind of strategy document" (R1.4) in which they would lay down when things would go to the municipal executive (Dutch: B&W) and at what moments the FPC would be engaged. According to the FPC coordinator, the municipality did not act on this advice. Thus, while there seems to have been limited alignment between the themes emphasised in the integrated spatial vision and the priorities of the FPC EetbaarEde, the FPC appears to have had more success influencing the ongoing development of the new food vision. These findings reveal that the FPC has made progress in influencing local food policy, emphasising the success of changing its strategy to one more focussed on access.

4.2 Amsterdam

The results for the case of Amsterdam are based three interviews and four documents. Both the co-founders of the FC MRA and an advisor on the food strategy and urban agriculture at the municipality of Amsterdam were interviewed. The documents exist of the food vision of the FC MRA (SVM), a report by the FC MRA on the period 2017 -2023 (hereinafter called period report (SPR)), the food strategy of the municipality of Amsterdam (SFS), and an observation report on the 'Dag van de Voedseltransitie' (SOR). At the time of data collection, the FPC was not yet an official organisation. It mainly existed of the two co-founders who founded the FPC in 2017. Even though some people new there should be a core team connected to the FPC too, everybody only knew the two co-founders. The advisor on the food strategy said about this: "I think this applies to many people—if you ask what or who the Food Council is, everyone will name [the two co-founders]" (S2.1). It must be said that the FPC was familiar with this problem and were working on establishing an association of which anyone could become a member. These members, in turn, would be responsible for voting who would be represented in the food council. However, during the data collection this had not yet been set up and the perspectives of the people incorporated in this study reflect the situation at that time.

4.2.1 Step 0: Themes

Based on thematic analysis of the regional food manifest of the FC MRA and its period report and supported by the two interviews with both founders of the FPC, four themes are developed that categorise the preferences of the FPC. These four themes are: improve access to good food for all citizens; localise the food system; food democracy; and strengthen the regional food economy. These themes are elaborated below.

<u>Improve access to good food for all citizens</u>
One of the top priorities of the FC MRA is to improve access to good food for all citizens. This theme can be broken down into two parts: access and good food. Access is about availability and affordability. The FPC always uses the term availability prior to specifying the type of food. For example, in their period report they talk about the importance of "the availability of sustainable and healthy food" (SPV). Affordability, on the other hand, is treated on a stand-alone basis and is only mentioned twice in the documents. Therefore, affordability seems to be a less important category.

The FPC has laid out clearly what they understand as 'good food'. According to their food manifest, good food should meet the next conditions:

> "Healthy, affordable, tasty, and cultural fitting supply of food […] that is sustainably produced and where food closeness, food security, fitting rewards for producers, environmental and animal welfare are principles for production." (SVM)

Most of these categories are not further elaborated on. Sustainability, however, is mentioned in many ways. The food manifest, for example, notes the "ecological role [of food]", "environmental and animal welfare", "nature inclusive agriculture", and that "nature and agriculture go hand in hand" (SVM). It seems that of all categories that make food good, sustainability is highest of the priorities. Healthy food is the second priority of the FPC, since it is mentioned at least five times in the two documents. The other criteria do not have a clear hierarchy.

<u>Localise the food system</u>
Throughout the two documents, the FPC refers to "the region" about two dozen times and as mentioned in the previous theme, food closeness is one of their principles for food production. It is evidently an important theme for the FC MRA to localising the food system. This entails several components. First, the FPC notes in its food manifest that it should become easier for citizens to choose for locally produced food (SVM); meaning that locally produced food should become more readily available for the people of the metropole region Amsterdam. This is specifically an important aspect for one of the FPC co-founders who is a strong advocate for street markets (S1.2). Second, the FPC states in its

food manifest that it strives to "tighten the relationship between the countryside and the city, based on mutual interest" (SVM) and that there should be more "involvement of the consumer in the production of food" (SVM). Third, according to the food manifest localising the food system also results in "preservation of the agrarian landscape in the metropole region and improving the quality of green in the cities" (SVM). Finally, a very important condition for the FPC is that this new local food system should be based on food communities and citizen initiatives. In their period report the FPC states that "citizen initiatives oil the wheels of a necessary transformation of the food system" (SPV). In addition, one of the FPC co-founders stated that: "the food community, that is our main focus at the moment" (S2.1). Urban agriculture plays an important role for the FC MRA in achieving all these points (SVM & SPV).

Food democracy

In the period report, the FC MRA states that realising food democracy is their mission (SPV). Besides explicitly mentioning food democracy twice more in the two documents, the FPC often implicitly refers to food democracy by addressing its principles. An important one is justice in the food system. However, it stays vague what the FPC exactly sees as just, which would be helpful since nobody is against a just food system. They do mention in the period report that the food system should work "for all citizens of the region" (SPV) and that "this system should be transparent" (SVM), but it does not become more concrete than that. Furthermore, the FPC also advocates for food sovereignty in its food manifest, which is closely related to food democracy but has a stronger focus on the right of (small) producers to control their production. Lastly, food democracy is not only something to be achieved in the food system but also guides the way the FPC is organised. In its food manifest, it becomes clear that the FC MRA strives to be an inclusive platform for deliberation and accessible for all citizens, which should be achieved through collaborative leadership (SVM).

Strengthen the regional food economy

The FC MRA puts a strong emphasis on the economic aspect of food. When discussing the benefits of a sustainable food system in the food manifest, the FPC states that is can contribute to "a welcoming environment for companies, both for the small and medium-sized businesses and the multinational enterprises" (SVM). The FPC wants to achieve this by adopting circular production principles; "strengthening the regional innovative power" (SVM); and "realising a sustainable regional logistic" (SVM). These rather abstract terms should have very concrete implications. For example, in the food manifest they advocate for "a fitting compensation for producers" (SVM) so that they "get better future prospects" (SVM). A strong regional food economy should also contribute to more local job opportunities in the food sector. In the food manifest, the FPC gives the example of tourism, where "food can be driving force in leisure" (SVM). This theme is closely related to localising the food system since it puts a focus on the *regional* economy. However, where localising the food system is about strengthening urban-rural ties and promoting local food availability through empowering citizen-led initiatives; strengthening the regional food economy is about the economic potential of a sustainable local food system.

4.2.1.1 Ambiguity of themes

These four themes are developed through closely analysing the documents and interviews of the FPC. However, there is no clear overview of the goals the FPC has. Both in their interviews and in the documents, the FPC members mostly speak in broad and abstract terms about what the local food system should look like. For example, they strive for a just, sustainable, healthy, local food system based on the principles of food democracy. It is hard to disagree with these general principles and it is only when they clash that choices must be made. What if sustainable food results in less affordable food? Or when certain cultural food is also unhealthy food? When keeping to the abstract terms, the FPC avoids making such choices. This may very well be on purpose, since it is the goal of the FPC to empower actors in the local food system to make their own choices and define for themselves what a sustainable and just food system looks like.

4.2.2 Step 1: Connection

Governmental integration

Since establishing the FC MRA in 2017, the founders have made an effort to keep the FPC independent from the local government and other organisations (S2.2). Therefore, most relationships described in Bassarab et al. (2022) are not present between the FPC and the local government. The most meaningful connection is that the local government asks advice and recommendations from the FPC on an ad hoc basis. This was confirmed by both co-founders (S1.1 & S1.2) and the advisor on the food strategy (S2.1). Furthermore, the FPC occasionally gets small subsidies from the local government for certain events, but there is no structural support from the local government for the FPC. Even though this gave the FPC very little resources from the start, one of the FPC co-founders explained they wanted to stay independent:

> "We decided not to make use of resources we could obtain from the province, Rabobank, or the municipality for the simple reason that we believed the food council should be able to operate independently." (S1.1)

The FPC maintains this independence at almost all costs, on behalf of protecting its credibility. They experienced that in return for resources and support, organisations often expect the FPC to enhance their image or to work legitimising for their own practises. One of the co-founders explained that there "are many subtle mechanisms that make you suddenly acting as masters voice" (S1.1). By making use of subsidies from the national government at first and later from subsidies from a European project, the FPC tries to maintain its independence as best as it can while still being able to run a functioning organisation.

Staying independent also helps with preventing the local government from taking over initiatives. One of the FPC co-founders is especially wary of this, since he experienced this several times. For example, when the FC MRA was being established, the local government saw the potential of such an organisation and established their own FPC, called the Amsterdamse Voedselraad. Also, when the street food movement came to Amsterdam, the local government took too much control, according to the FPC co-founder (S1.2), over which food trucks were allowed to park where. And now he feels that it is happening again with local markets for which the FPC co-founder has made his case for years.

Access

Contacts between the FC MRA and the local government are almost exclusively informal. Because both FPC co-founders have been involved in the food movement for a long time and they are often present at food events in the city, they have both established a large network in the food scene of Amsterdam. Both FPC co-founders stressed that good personal relations are crucial for the functioning of a food policy network. Therefore, they put effort in getting to know most of the food policymakers personally. If a food policymaker keeps the same position for a longer period of time, these personal relationships establish a foundation of trust. One the FPC co-founders described it as follows:

> "With those Amsterdam civil servants I mentioned, trust is built, and trust, that is something I have learned over the past few years, […] is the cement, so to speak, from which you can make concrete, upon which a structure appears that is resilient enough." (S1.1)

This is also the reason the FPC co-founders prefer contacts with policymakers rather than with the alderman food. At the start of the FPC they put some effort into getting access to the alderman food, but after a short while he had to leave, and they could start all over again (S1.1). This experience let the FC MRA co-founders to believe it better to put effort in good contacts with policymakers. As a result, their relations with food policymakers, such as the advisor on the food strategy, are very good. They have each other's phone numbers, and all three interviewees stated that they can always call or send a text message if they need each other. The access of the FC MRA greatly increased when the newly appointed coordinator of the food strategy was a good friend of one of the FPC co-founders.

She eased the involvement of the FPC in the development of the food strategy (S1.2). When reflecting on the benefits of having a friend working at this position, the FPC co-founder said it "of course worked very well, [having] someone out my own orbit that works there internally" (S1.2). However, he also stressed that:

> "You must realise that there are twenty thousand civil servants working in Amsterdam, it is really a jungle of contacts. […] Thus, having contacts with the municipality does not necessarily mean that you are in contact with the municipality, because for that it is too big an apparatus." (S1.2)

Lastly, one of the FPC co-founders stressed that personal character highly influences one's ability to gain and maintain access. He noted that he himself was not cut out for the role of lobbyist since he quickly "turns away from the system" (S1.2) when he feels that nothing is done with the advice he gives. According to him, the other co-founder is much better equipped to play this political game and think strategically about influencing the local government in such a way that it benefits the local food system. He said about himself that he mainly focusses on "idea generation, strategy, and implementation. I find those kinds of things very intriguing, enjoyable, and important. That's also how we divided the tasks." (S1.2).

Summary

The findings in this section reveal that the FC MRA prioritises independence from the local government and other organisations. This choice is based on the belief that maintaining their autonomy enhances their credibility and prevents it from becoming a tool for external agendas. While this independence limits structural support and resources from the local government, the FPC been able to get subsidies from national and European sources to remain operational. This approach also prevents the local government from steering or taking over food system initiatives, which the FC MRA co-founders shared had happened in the past. Access to local policymakers is largely informal and relies heavily on the extensive personal networks and trust-building efforts of the FPC co-founders. These relationships are critical for gaining influence, as demonstrated by their close connections with key food policymakers, which have facilitated their involvement in developing the local food strategy. However, the sheer size and complexity of the municipal apparatus present challenges, showing the importance of persistence, strategic engagement, and personal characteristics in maintaining and getting access to the right policymakers.

4.2.3 Step 2: Raising awareness

As stated in the methodology, credibility has two key dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness (Berdahl et al., 2016). The FPC scores rather well on both dimensions according to the advisor on the food strategy (S2.1). About expertise he said that even though they are only with the two of them, "they are very much capable of bringing those other expertise" (S2.1). Later in the interview he also added that when talking to them it is always clear that they bring a lot of expertise with them. However, the fact that they are only with the two of them does affect their ability to speak authoritatively on matters of the food system. Although this is theoretically a part of the assessment of the input legitimacy, the advisor on the food strategy explicitly links it with their expertise.

When the advisor on the food strategy was asked about how he judges the trustworthiness of the FPC, his first answer was: "Oh yes, how do you score that? 100%! […] No doubt whatsoever about their sincerity in acting and their genuine commitment to the good cause." (S2.1). However, when pressed further he expressed the same concerns about how representativeness affects their trustworthiness. It was not so much that he doubted their good intentions, but rather that he sometimes thought it hard to trust their advice when he did not know who they were speaking for. Furthermore, he expressed he occasionally had trouble with identifying in what capacity the co-founders were speaking, which in turn affects their integrity. He did stress several times it was not about their integrity personally, but rather:

> "Sometimes it is a bit difficult to assess whether this is about the interests of the FC MRA and thus, in turn, the public interest in the food transition; or whether it is a project driven by entrepreneurship, where the project's interests take priority. There is occasionally a conflict there for the people involved." (S2.1)

As stressed a few times, the input legitimacy – or representativeness – of the FPC is limited. In practice the FPC consists of the two co-founders who gather information through their extensive networks. This is one of the main concerns of the advisor on the food strategy; he asked the question out loud: "For whom do they speak, what form of legitimation is there?" (S2.1). This issue was raised too by the local food movement in the workshop at the 'Dag van de Voedseltransitie' (SOR). Some participants argued that a platform such as the FC MRA should be a bottom-up organisation and established by people from the food movement. Although the FPC co-founders explained that this was exactly what the FPC entailed, it clearly indicated that even for the local food movement it was unclear who the FPC represented (SOR). However, even though it is unclear who the FPC represents, the advisor on the food strategy still thought it to be a good spokesperson for local food initiatives since he felt that the FPC "is visible, very approachable and has a strong presence in the network" (S2.1)

The throughput legitimacy of the FPC was the second big concern of the advisor on the food strategy. He mentioned several times that there is no formal organisation behind the FPC and therefore there is no way to know how advice is generated. He often made a comparison with the sports council, even though the analogy is not completely fair since the sports council already exists for decennia. Advice that is generated by the sports council is fully transparent and it is clear who contributed, which makes it easier for policymakers to judge its advice. For the FPC it is the opposite. There are no standardised ways of generating advice and it is not transparent how the FPC co-founders came to their conclusions. This lack of transparency was also raised as an issue by the coordinator of the food strategy at the workshop on the 'Dag van de voedseltransitie' (SOR). Although limited throughput legitimacy is regarded as an obstacle for the advisor on the food strategy, he did not blame the FPC co-founders. He recognised that the FPC only has scarce resources and has to choose between establishing a stable organisation and lobbying to get food on the agenda. The advisor on the food strategy thinks that this resulted in that "they have lobbied harder for getting food as a subject on the agenda than for the food council itself" (S2.1).

Since the FPC MRA does not generate written advice, for example in the form of reports, output legitimacy is hard to measure. Advice is normally given on an ad hoc basis when FPC members speak with policymakers coincidently at events. Still, the advisor on the food strategy mentioned two challenges regarding output legitimacy. First, advice given by the FPC often lacks concreteness, although that is not just a problem for the FPC but for everyone that works on the systemic approach of food. The advisor on the food strategy would like to have the FPC help them answer the question: "How can you have both that vision on the horizon, the systems approach, and still take concrete steps?" (S2.1). Second, the FPC MRA works and generates advice on a regional level, while the local government has jurisdiction and responsibility over the municipal level. Thus, the focus of the two does not always overlap (S2.1). This was also the reason, according to the advisor on the food strategy, that the municipality decided to establish their own FPC, the Amsterdamse Voedselraad, so that they had a similar structure that could generate advice specifically for the municipality of Amsterdam (S2.1). Thus, the FC MRA seems to have had unintentional influence on the governance practices of the local government by showing the benefits of a food council; even though they probably envisioned a more prominent role for the FC MRA rather than the municipality establishing their own food council. Fortunately for them, the municipal Amsterdamse Voedselraad did not last due to a lack of willingness and resources from the local government (S2.1).

<u>Summary</u>

The findings in this section reveal that the FC MRA demonstrates strong credibility, with both expertise and trustworthiness being acknowledged by the advisor on the food strategy. However, the lack of

representativeness undermines their input legitimacy, raising concerns about who the FPC represents and how its advice reflects the broader food movement. The advisor on the food strategy explicitly linked limited FPC representativity with challenges regarding its trustworthiness and expertise. Similarly, limited throughput legitimacy, due to an absence of a formal organisational structure and transparent processes for generating advice, creates challenges for policymakers in evaluating the FPC's recommendations. Output legitimacy is difficult to assess, as the FPC rarely provides written advice and typically operates on an ad hoc basis. However, misalignments in scale on which the FC MRA and the local government have constrained its ability to deliver concrete and actionable advice. These findings suggest that while the FC MRA is a visible and approachable advocate for food system issues, its ability to raise awareness among local food policymakers is limited by organisational and representational challenges.

4.2.4 Step 3: Agenda setting

Food as a theme had been political salient in Amsterdam for several years. For an important part this is because the green party has been in office for two consecutive governance periods and of its priorities is developing a sustainable local food system. In addition, as mentioned before, the municipality decided to establish their own food council, called Voedselraad Amsterdam. One of the FC MRA co-founders argued that even though the Amsterdamse Voedselraad only briefly existed, it did have as unexpected consequence that internally the municipality started to think about food as a policy area and came to the decision to work on a municipal food strategy (S1.2). To write this strategy a woman was hired as coordinator, who happened to be a good friend of one of the FC MRA co-founders (S1.2).

Due to the strong bottom-up focus of the FC MRA, its extensive network of citizen and food initiatives, and good connections between the FC MRA and local food policymakers, the FC MRA was asked to be actively involved in the development of the food strategy (S2.1). The first draft of the food strategy by the local government was based on the previous strategy, which meant that the outline with three pillars and six action lines stayed. This draft was then sent to several parties, including the FC MRA to give any input they thought necessary. One of the FPC co-founders said they did not mind the restriction of the three pillars and six action lines since they could tie all their key points to these themes in one way or the other. The most important for them was that with the food strategy also came budget to get things done and that the "core would stay that the municipality has as intention to make work of formulating new policy that creates a new food system" (S1.2). According to the advisor on the food strategy, the FPC was particular important in keeping the justice pillar on the agenda. He said:

> "Look, when it comes to stories about health and sustainability, there are many other people with expertise in those areas, and there's a lot of discussion as well. But especially for that third pillar—the fairness narrative—and what ownership, control, and all those things mean, their role is incredibly important." (S2.1)

The FPC co-founders see this role for themselves too since they state in their period report that this is the mission of the FPC (SPR). Input from the FC MRA often implicitly starts with the question: what is in it for the people of Amsterdam? This is also something the advisor on the food strategy experiences in conversations with the FPC co-founders (S2.1). However, the FPC co-founders also see another role for themselves; they do not only want to be a party that gives critique but also provide a course of action. One of the FPC co-founders explained:

> "We shouldn't be the ones wagging a finger and saying, "You're doing it wrong." Instead, we should act as guides, helping each other figure out what's possible. Let's focus on what can be done, and most importantly, let's do it together." (S1.2)

An important way in providing such a course of action is the project Voedselpark Amsterdam. Here a group of engaged citizens tries to show that keeping agricultural ground for urban agriculture has more benefits for Amsterdam than turning it into a distribution area. One of the FPC co-founders is strongly involved in the Voedselpark Amsterdam and sees it as the realisation of his vision and what the FPC, in his view, stands for.

Summary

The findings in this section show that food has been a politically salient theme in Amsterdam for several years, largely due to the Green Party's governance period and its prioritisation of a sustainable local food system. The establishment of the short-lived Voedselraad Amsterdam indirectly contributed to institutionalising food as a policy area, paving the way for the development of the municipal food strategy. The FC MRA played actively contributed to the development of this strategy, particularly in advocating for the justice pillar, which focuses on fairness, ownership, and control in the food system. Beyond providing critical input, the FC MRA also wants to offer actionable alternatives to improve the local food system, such as shown in the case of Voedselpark Amsterdam. This dual role of critique and collaboration reveals the strategy of the FC MRA to influence local food policy.

4.2.5 Step 4: Policy impact

There is much overlap between the preferences of the FPC and the food strategy of the municipality. The food strategy exists of three pillars – sustainability, health, justice – that are the foundation for the whole text. Furthermore, the document exists of six action lines, namely healthy food environment; food fair and social; food waste and organic residual flows; urban agriculture/short supply chain/distribution; entrepreneurship and AmsterDoen; and more plant based. The three pillars are clearly reflected in the objectives of the FPC too, but since they are so abstract it does not say so much. More interesting is how the four themes – or preferences – of the FPC are reflected throughout the six pillars in the food strategy.

The first theme, improving access to good food for all citizens, is echoed in the objective of the action line 'food fair and social', which is: "affordability of healthy, fair, and sustainable food for all citizens of Amsterdam" (SFS). In the rest of this section the food strategy also covers cultural fitting foods and food security, especially for the poorest citizens of Amsterdam (SFS). These are also criteria for good food of the FPC. The only criteria this section does not cover are 'tasty food' and the 'availability' of these foods. However, both these criteria are part of the objective of the action line 'healthy food environment' (SFS). Interestingly, the food strategy dedicates a whole action line to plant-based food, since it has obvious sustainable and health benefits (SFS). The FPC, however, does not mention plant-based food even ones in their documents, while one might expect this to be a priority for an FPC.

The theme 'localising the food system' is largely reflected in the action line urban agriculture/short supply lines/distribution. Urban agriculture is especially an important theme in the food strategy, which they also relate to reconnecting urban citizens with food production (SFS). Both are also important themes for the FPC. Food communities play a special role for the FPC, since these should form the foundation of a local food system. Even though the term is not explicitly used in the food strategy, it does mention "city makers" several times; especially in the AmsterDoen section (SFS). These city makers seem to have the same meaning as food communities for the FPC.

Food democracy is not a theme that has its own action line in the food strategy. However, it is closely linked to the justice question of the food system, which is one of the pillars of the food strategy. Also, food democracy is reflected in the concrete actions that are established at the end of every action line. These often focus on establishing and boosting cooperation between food system actors and the participation of citizens (SFS). However, since the FPC has not defined what food democracy entails for them, it is hard to see whether and how it is reflected in the food strategy.

The last theme, strengthening the regional food economy, is mostly reflected in the section on entrepreneurship in the food strategy. Here the food strategy discusses “food innovations”, “improving (international) position of Amsterdam as a food hub”, and “encouraging ecosystem innovative food entrepreneurship” (SFS). All of these are also mentioned by the FPC in their documents, though in slightly different terms. The only criterium that is lacking in this section is a fair price for producers. However, the food strategy covers this in its introduction and in the concrete actions in the action line food fair and social, where it proposes to develop a scheme “to support a fair price for healthy and sustainable food” (SFS).

Although it is evident that there is much overlap between the priority themes of the FPC and the food strategy of the municipality, the question remains whether this can be attributed to agenda setting work of the FPC. Since the FC MRA is explicitly named as one of the partners that contributed to the food strategy in its introduction (SFS), and all interviewees stated the FPC actively contributed to the food strategy, it is safe to say the FPC had a strong influence on the content of the food strategy. One of the FPC co-founders even goes so far as to say: “Well, [our] food manifest is almost entirely incorporated in that food strategy” (S1.1). However, when pressed for examples of what had been included in the strategy through their actions, both FPC co-founders could not remember specific issues. The same was true for the advisor on the food strategy, though he did note that the FPC was especially important for bringing in the perspective of the citizens. According to him, the FPC pressed to “make sure that city dwellers also have a say in this and that it doesn’t just come from the top down, but also from the bottom up” (S2.1). Although this does not mean they had no influence on the other themes, it does highlight that the FPC is especially well equipped for getting food communities and the bottom-up perspective on the agenda.

These findings suggest that the FC MRA had a meaningful influence on the development of the food strategy of Amsterdam, with high overlap between the preferences of FC MRA and the strategy’s three pillars and six action lines. While it is difficult to pinpoint specific instances where the FPC directly shaped the strategy, the FPC’s role in advocating for citizen participation and bottom-up perspectives is evident. Both the FPC co-founders and the advisor on the food strategy highlighted the FPC’s importance in ensuring that the voices of food communities and local citizens were incorporated into the policy. Additionally, the FPC’s emphasis on improving access to good food, localising the food system, food democracy, and strengthening the regional food economy aligns closely with key components of the strategy, suggesting that their agenda-setting efforts contributed to these elements. This highlights the FPC’s ability to use their credibility and good relationships with local food policymakers at a time when food is political salient to play a key role in shaping new local food policy.

4.3 Table with comparison of results

		Ede	*Amsterdam*
Step 0: Themes		Improve access healthy and sustainable food; support local food; food education; address land issues; food waste; social aspects of food	Increase access to good food for all citizens; localise the food system; food democracy; strengthen the regional food economy
Step 1: Access	**Governmental integration**	Initiated by government, policy makers sometimes participate in meetings, local government supports FPC with subsidy, local government seeks advice or recommendations from FPC.	Local government seeks advice or recommendations from the FPC on an ad hoc basis. (Sometimes little subsidies for events from local government.) The FPC keeps strategic independence to local government on purpose.
	Access	Only direct contact with program manager food, who in turn is responsible for coordinating food related topics in the municipality. In the FPC almost all contact goes through the coordinator and former coordinator. There are fixed appointments every two months between these three people.	Local food policymakers and the two FPC co-founders know each other well. They often see each other at events. They can call or text message each other if needed. No formalised regular appointments.
Step 2: Raising Awareness	**Credibility**	Members possess expertise across various areas of the food system and have an honest motivation and genuine interest in improving the food system. Policymakers noted that credibility is.	Although the FC MRA only consists of the two co-founders, they are highly capable of bringing in additional expertise through their extensive networks. Also, they have sincere intentions and are genuine in their efforts to improve the food system, although sometimes it can be hard to know in what capacity the FC MRA co-founders speak. Credibility was perceived to be negatively influenced by bad representativity.
	Legitimacy	Policy makers do not know for who the FPC EetbaarEde speaks. The sectoral representativity is decent, but social representativity is lacking. Also, the FPC EetbaarEde does not always generate advice that is in the jurisdiction of the local government. However, the FPC EetbaarEde does facilitate open discussion, and advice is generated fair and transparent.	It is unclear for whom the FPC MRA speaks. It only exists of the two people, but it seems as if they are in good contact with initiatives. It is also unclear how advice is generated since there is no transparency or formal organisation. Besides, advice lacks concreteness and is provided on a regional level rather than the municipal level.

Step 3: Agenda setting		The findings highlight that political salience plays a decisive role in whether FPC EetbaarEde's advice is acted upon by local policymakers. While the FPC's expertise is acknowledged, its influence depends heavily on aligning its priorities with those of the municipality. The FPC has tools like FoodFloors to engage citizens and policymakers in agenda-setting, but its impact often hinges on timing and external circumstances. For instance, the failure of the World Food Experience created an opportunity for the FPC to influence the reassessment of the municipal food vision. Ensuring continued involvement in its implementation will be key to sustaining influence.	Food has remained a politically salient theme in Amsterdam, supported by the Green Party's focus on sustainable local food systems. The establishment of the short-lived Voedselraad Amsterdam helped institutionalise food as a policy area, leading to the development of the municipal food strategy. The FC MRA played an active role in shaping this strategy, particularly by advocating for the justice pillar, which addresses fairness, ownership, and control in the food system. Additionally, the FC MRA complements its role with actionable initiatives, such as the Voedselpark Amsterdam, hoping that its dual approach of critique and collaboration helps increasing its effectiveness in influencing local food policy effectively.
Step 4: Policy impact		Until recently policy impact was lacking. The FPC EetbaarEde had minimal influence in the municipal integrated spatial vision. They did go to all information rounds organised by the municipality and coordinated efforts with local policymakers to highlight importance of food from two sides. However, the FPC EetbaarEde seems to be more effective in influencing the development of the new food vision, emphasising the success of changing its strategy to one more focussed on access.	The FC MRA had a strong influence on Amsterdam's food strategy, with substantial overlap between its priorities and the strategy's six action lines. While specific instances of direct influence are hard to identify, the FPC played a crucial role in advocating for citizen participation and bottom-up perspectives, ensuring food communities and local citizens were not forgotten. That FPC's preferences are reflected in the strategy, highlights it is effective in using its agenda-setting efforts, credibility, and strong relationships with policymakers to shape local food policy.

Table 4: Overview of most important findings per case

5 Discussion

By meticulously identifying the tactics of two Dutch FPCs for influencing local food policy, this study went beyond the observation that Dutch FPCs – and FPCs in general too – have a lack of focus on policy work even though this is often one of their main objectives (Schiff, 2008; Den Boer et al., 2023). Political advisory systems theory was used to develop a framework that identified the sequential steps needed for an FPC to influence local food policy. Subsequently, process tracing as a research method was adopted to gather evidence for every step to determine where in the chain of influence FPC encounter obstacles. This chapter discusses the key findings and how they relate to the theory and existing literature.

5.1.1 FPC members must push for themes

An unexpected finding while developing the themes for both FPCs was that the FPC members often did not know what their priority themes were. They were very capable in formulating issues and themes they personally thought were important at that moment, but both FPCs had not strategically thought about their agenda setting priorities for the coming period. Both FPCs have published documents which did outline the themes they thought were most important at that time, but it seems that, in time, they have forgotten about these and shifted towards other priorities. This is an obstacle when influencing food policy since the FPC members are the ones that must lobby for their preferences. If there is no strategic idea behind the agenda-setting work, it becomes difficult to effectively influence local food policy. Additionally, the findings showed that not everybody is cut out for lobby work, which is essentially what an FPC does when trying to influence local food policy. One of the co-founders of the FC MRA explained that he did not have the right characteristics to be a good lobbyist, since he was not persistent enough to tell the same story time and again to policymakers when he did not feel like they were doing anything with the information. A similar feeling was expressed by a member of the FPC EetbaarEde, who doubted that policymakers would or even should listen to her since she was just the one person. This impacts FPC effectiveness in influencing local food policy, for it are the members who do the agenda setting work. If they lack persuasiveness or confidence, policymakers will be less inclined to follow up on their advice (McGrath, 2006). Personal characteristics of FPC members were not a part of the causal mechanism developed in this research; but they could play a key role in the FPCs ability to gain access through personal relations and how policymakers assess FPC advice. Further research would need to point out how important personal characteristics of FPC members are for FPC effectiveness in influencing local food policy.

Interestingly, the themes of FPC EetbaarEde are far more specific than those of the FC MRA. The FPC EetbaarEde has some clear goals such as getting more plant-based foods on menu cards of restaurants and establishing a vegetable garden for every school. The themes for the FC MRA, on the other hand, are less concrete and are more about broader societal directions. This was also reflected in the interviews, where the FC MRA co-founders spoke more in abstract terms about a systems approach for food. Meanwhile the FPC EetbaarEde interviewees spoke more about specific initiatives, workshops and events. This lack of concreteness of advice provided by the FC MRA was negatively impacted its perceived output legitimacy by the advisor on the food strategy. This is in line with expectations from the theory and findings from Haesevoets et al. (2023). Although reduced legitimacy results in less policy impact according to the theory, this was not directly observed in this research. This point will be discussed further in the next section.

5.1.2 Legitimacy is not crucial for effectiveness

Both FPCs clearly struggle with forming a group of members that is representative for the local food system. The two FPCs were greatly lacking in social diversity among their members – although FPC EetbaarEde did quite well on sectoral diversity. This is in line with findings from Sands et al. (2016) that showed that many FPCs in Europe and North America are mostly composed of white, middle-class

professionals from similar socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, which pretty much describes the members of the two FPCs in this research. Interestingly, policymakers in both cases said that lack of representativity affected the FPC credibility of the FPC. This study treated credibility and legitimacy as two separate, individual concepts, while there are indeed interconnections between them that had not been explored in the theory. In policy contexts, perceived legitimacy signals to policymakers that the organisation's recommendations are reflective of broader community interests and not just a subset of stakeholders. Research by Koski et al. (2018) highlights that FPCs with limited representativeness may struggle to gain credibility, as policymakers may question the validity of their expertise if it is not rooted in a broad base of legitimacy. Furthermore, legitimacy, especially regarding representativity, serves as a foundation for trust among policymakers, which is a dimension of credibility (McCartan & Palermo, 2017). This was also brought up by the advisor on the food strategy in Amsterdam who argued that he trusts the FC MRA co-founders to be integer but that he found it hard to trust that their advice reflected the need of the food community.

On the other hand, while both FPC did not score well on legitimacy overall, this did not withhold policymakers in both cases to actively involve the FPCs in developing a food vision or food strategy. Apparently, the legitimacy of an FPC is not crucial for the consideration of policymakers to follow up on their advice. According to the coordinator of the FPC EetbaarEde and one of the co-founders of the FC MRA, mutual trust between FPC members and policymakers is the most important thing for influencing food policy; and trust, in turn, can only slowly be built over time. The conceptual framework of FPC influence could thus be improved by replacing legitimacy with trustworthiness. However, it was just pointed out that trustworthiness is also based on good representativity of the local food system. Therefore, legitimacy may serve as a basis for trust, which in turn is one of the more important mechanisms that determines an FPC's effectiveness in influencing local food policy.

5.1.3 Trade-off between autonomy and influence

Both the FPC EetbaarEde and the FC MRA struggled with their level of governmental integration. As shown in the results, the FC MRA choose to keep as much distance as possible from the local government to maintain their autonomy and to stay reactive and connected with community issues. The FPC EetbaarEde had the same consideration, but due to their embeddedness in the foundation EetbaarEde they could afford to be more associated with the local government. This struggle between autonomy and connectedness with the local government was described in the theory too and is in line with the findings of Schiff (2008); Siddiki et al. (2015); Walsh et al. (2015); Schiff et al. (2022). According to Gupta et al. (2018) FPCs with stronger relationships tend to be more effective in influencing local food policy since they have better access to policymakers. However, this was not the case in this research; while FC MRA was less integrated into the local government, they were more effective in influencing the development of the municipal food strategy. Only recently did the FPC EetbaarEde seize the opportunity to play a more prominent role in the development of local food policy. This demonstrates that the types of relationships present in the two cases do not directly result in better access, although it does not necessarily contradict the findings of Gupta et al. (2018). As explained in the theory (section relationships with local governments), some types of relationships are more important than others for FPC influence. The types of relationships that are present in the two cases – e.g., the local government supporting the FPC with subsidy, the local government seeking advice from the FPC and policymakers sometimes participating in meetings – allow for only superficial governmental integration. Stronger types of relationships – e.g., the FPC is an official board of the local government or civil servants are members of the FPC – could still result in increased access and influence of FPCs in local food policy.

The level of integration in the local government of the FPC has resulted in formalised access to the program manager food. Every two months there is a meeting between the FPC and the program manager. The FC MRA does not have such an arrangement and relies on its networking skills. This too would suggest that the FPC EetbaarEde would be more effective in influencing food policy. However, the connections between the co-founders of the FC MRA and the policymakers in Amsterdam are much

better than between the members of FPC EetbaarEde and the policymakers in Ede. In addition, the FC MRA has access to several policymakers, each of which they sustain a good personal relation with. Thus, while having formalised access is very helpful and the level of governmental integration can result in better access, it seems to be more important to have good and multiple personal relations with policymakers. The FC MRA shows that the trade-off explained above can be evaded or compensated by building strong personal relationships with policymakers.

The conceptual model of FPC influence in local food policy developed in the theory identified three steps in which influence can take place: during awareness raising, agenda setting, and the policy impact phase. However, the results of the case of the FPC EetbaarEde showed that influence can take place during the access phase too. A few years ago, the FPC changed its strategy from writing a report on a local food issue and send this to local food policymakers to one that was more focused on access to and better relationships with local food policymakers. This new strategy resulted in the program manager food pressing for an active role for the FPC EetbaarEde in the development of the new food vision. Furthermore, when the program manager food and the FPC coordinator discussed the role of the FPC EetbaarEde in the development of the new food vision, the FPC coordinator argued that they should be involved in the early stages of the food vision if the local government truly valued their input. Consequently, the FPC EetbaarEde was offered the opportunity to give input at the start of the development of the new food vision. Both these examples show that the FPC EetbaarEde was able to utilise its access to the program manager food to be involved in key moments of the development of new food policy. Thus, the moments of influence identified in the causal model should be expanded to include access.

5.1.4 Political salience as key factor for FPC influence

This research deliberately focused on two cases where the local government already had some form of food policy to allow for a clear unit of analysis on which an FPC can have influence. Still, the FPC EetbaarEde did not have a good opportunity for a long time to influence local food policy since the topic was not political salient. All attention went to the World Food Experience in which the FPC was not involved. It was only when the local government decided to reassess the food vision that the FPC EetbaarEde got the opportunity to really be involved in developing food policy. In the case of the FC MRA, it was the opposite. Food as a policy area had been on the agenda for several years and there had already been a food strategy for the period up to 2023. When the green party got reelected, the local government decided to develop a new food strategy for the period 2023 – 2026. Thus, the FC MRA has had good opportunities to influence the local food policy since food has been on the political agenda for several years. Thus, political salience of food emerged as a key requirement for the FPCs to be effective in influencing local food policy.

Unfortunately for FPCs, it is quite hard to create political salience when there is none. As mentioned before, the FPC EetbaarEde experienced this struggle many years since all resources went to the development of the World Food Experience. According to the coordinator of the FPC EetbaarEde, they strongly encouraged the program manager food to formally reassess the old food vision after the World Food Experience got cancelled. Thereby, they helped create a situation in which food became salient in the local government, opening an opportunity for the FPC EetbaarEde to influence the development of the municipal food vision. In the CoP voedselraden, where Dutch FPCs come together to join forces (see section FPCs in the Dutch context), encouraging the local government to develop a food vision or strategy was seen as an important way to create an opportunity food policy influence. However, the municipality of Ede already has an alderman for food and a municipal food program with the corresponding policymakers. The FPC EetbaarEde thus had a clear point of contact to encourage the development of a food vision. This also reveals that the political salience of food in Ede in past years had been high enough to allow for an alderman food and food policymakers to exist. In municipalities where these are not (yet) present, it will be harder to encourage the development of a food

vision or strategy. Further research must show how FPC influence can work in municipalities where food is not political salient.

5.1.5 Governance style should be considered

Everything from the theory would suggest that FPC EetbaarEde should be more effective in influencing food policy than the FC MRA. They are better integrated, have structural access to the most important local food policymaker, and are viewed as more credible and legitimate by the respective policymakers. However, the FC MRA has had a stronger influence on the municipal food strategy. Only two aspects of the conceptual framework seem to be in favour of the FC MRA. First, even though they do not have structural access to policymakers, they do know them very well and one was even an old friend of one of the FPC co-founders before she became coordinator of the food strategy. Second, food has been more political salient in the municipality of Amsterdam than in the municipality of Ede. A green party has been in office two consecutive periods of government and the latest food strategy was already developed in 2023. There is one more aspect that is in favour of the FC MRA which was not discussed in the theory. It seems that the municipality of Amsterdam practices a type of governance that encourages participation from citizens; while this is still very new for the municipality of Ede, where the FPC EetbaarEde is one of the first citizen initiatives that got the opportunity to actively contribute to a food vision. Thus, besides the political salience of food and strong personal relations with food policy makers, the type of governance practiced by the local government determines the effectiveness of an FPC to influence local food polity too. As with political salience, FPCs have no or only very little say in the type of governance practiced by their local government, and it would be a matter of luck in which system they find themselves. It would be an interesting topic for future research to see if and to what extent type of governance determines the effectiveness of an FPC.

5.1.6 Assessment of the causal model

Although large parts of the causal mechanism of FPC influence on local food policy developed in the theory (section Causal mechanism of FPC influence) is supported by the findings of this research, some new insights were revealed in this study that require a slight adjustment of the causal mechanism. This is the last step of a case-centric process tracing approach (see section Research design and data). First, a deductive research strategy was adopted in which the theoretical causal mechanism was developed and tested. Second, an inductive research strategy allows to critically reflect on and improve the causal mechanism based on the findings of this research. The key mechanisms for FPC effectiveness in influencing local food policy that are discussed above were used to improve the causal mechanism of FPC influence (figure 4). One of the most important mechanisms is political salience; without it, policymakers are unlikely to prioritise the themes raised by FPCs. Both cases showed that political salience creates opportunities for FPCs to actively shape policy, as seen with the reassessment of the food vision in Ede and the food strategy in Amsterdam. However, generating political salience of food when it is absent is a significant challenge for FPCs, requiring strategies to encourage local governments to develop food visions or strategies. Another critical mechanism is personal relationships with local policymakers. Strong, trust-based connections proved to be more impactful than formalised access alone. For example, in Amsterdam, good personal relations between the FC MRA co-founders and food policymakers facilitated active FPC involvement in the food strategy. Furthermore, the level of governmental integration in the cases of FPC EetbaarEde and FC MRA did not result in better access. Trustworthiness and credibility emerged as essential factors for raising awareness. While the lack of legitimacy did not appear to have an insurmountable impact on the FPC's effectiveness, it was perceived as the foundation for credibility and trustworthiness. Thus, increased legitimacy, especially regarding representativity, could result in increased FPC's effectiveness to raise awareness among policymakers. Finally, the governance style adopted by the local government decides whether citizen initiatives can play a prominent role in food policy development.

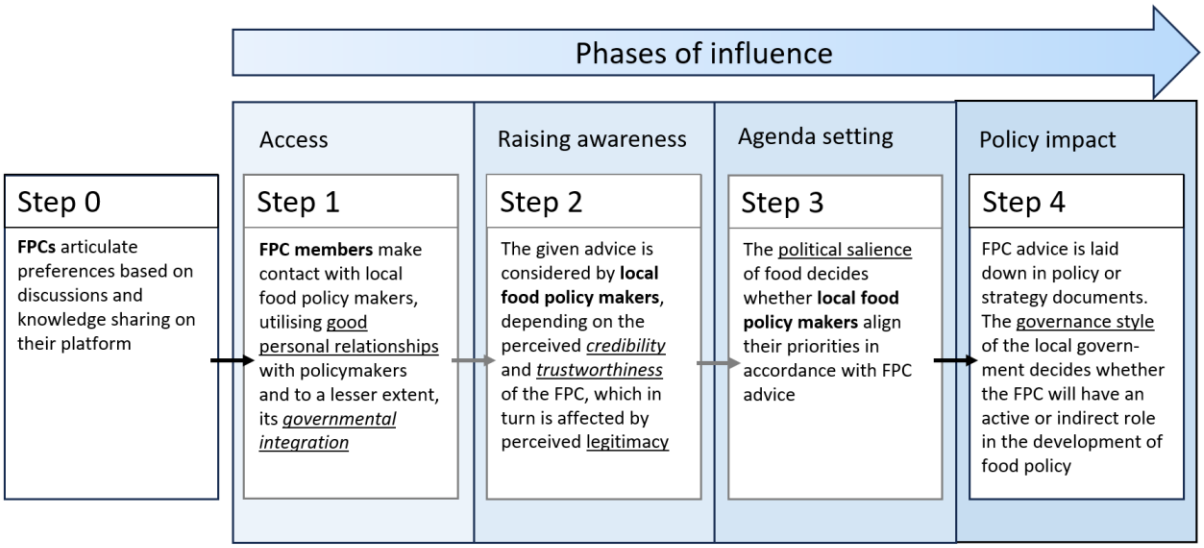

Figure 4: Reassessed causal mechanism of FPC influence

5.1.7 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the mechanisms of FPC influence on local food policy in the Netherlands, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research findings are not directly generalisable beyond the Dutch context. However, the conceptual framework developed for this study, based on Political Advisory Systems Theory, is not tailored specifically to the Netherlands. This theoretical mechanism of influence can reasonably be expected to apply in other countries with similar governance structures, particularly in European contexts. Future research could test the applicability of this framework in different national contexts to enhance its generalisability. Second, the cases examined in this study are situated in municipalities that already have developed food policies. This focus allowed for a rich exploration of FPC influence in policy development processes but leaves open the question of how influence might manifest in municipalities without existing food policies. For example, if no food strategy documents are being developed, it can be hard for an FPC to find opportunities to exert influence; thus, presenting a valuable avenue for future research. Third, while the inclusion of local food policymakers was a significant strength of this study, particularly in providing a more holistic perspective on FPC influence, limitations in data collection arose. In Amsterdam, only one policymaker was interviewed due to a lack of responsiveness from others. Although this interview offered critical insights, including perspectives from additional policymakers would likely have enriched the findings and provided a more nuanced understanding of policymaker attitudes toward FPCs. Fourth, in the case of Ede, the municipality began developing a new food vision shortly after data collection was completed. While this study captures the early stages of FPC influence on the process, repeating the research at the conclusion of the food vision development would provide a more complete picture of the FPC's role. Conducting follow-up research could reveal how the influence documented here evolves over time and what mechanisms contribute to sustained or increased influence. Finally, as with any case study research, the findings are deeply contextual and shaped by the unique dynamics of the municipalities examined. While this specificity is valuable for depth and insight, it underscores the importance of further studies across diverse contexts to refine and expand the understanding of FPC influence mechanisms.

6 Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate how Dutch Food Policy Councils (FPCs) influence local food policy, focusing on the interplay between FPCs and local governments. By applying Policy Advisory Systems Theory (PAST) and using a comparative case study design, the mechanisms were traced through which two Dutch FPCs, Eetbaar Ede and FC MRA, were able to steer food policies in their municipalities. This analysis has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of influence in local food governance and revealed important factors that affect the policy uptake of FPC recommendations.

6.1 How and to what extent do Dutch FPCs influence local food policy?

Dutch FPCs influence local food policy primarily through building good personal relationships with local food policymakers and utilise their trustworthiness and credibility to raise awareness among policymakers about food system issues. The degree of influence depends largely on the political salience of food-related topics in the local government. If food is not political salient, FPC influence will not go beyond awareness raising among policymakers. Furthermore, the governance style of the local government decides whether the FPC can actively contribute to the development of policy or if they can only impact policy through advice to policymakers. In Amsterdam, strong personal ties with local food policymakers and the long-term political salience of food allowed the FC MRA to actively shape local food policy. In Ede, on the other hand, the FPC EetbaarEde was only able to exert influence on the development of the new food vision after food policy became political salient and they changed their strategy to one focussed on personal ties with the local food policymakers.

6.2 How does policy advisory systems theory help explain the mechanisms of policy influence for Dutch FPCs?

PAST provided a valuable framework for understanding the influence of Dutch FPCs on local food policy by focusing on the interactions between advisory bodies and policymakers. PAST shifts the focus from the traditional view in FPC literature of policymakers as passive entities to a more dynamic view where advisory actors engage with policymakers in a system of interactions. In the context of Dutch FPCs, PAST explains how the councils gain access to policymakers, raise awareness, shape agendas, and impact policy. The theory underscores the importance of political salience, credibility, and legitimacy in the process of policy influence, although legitimacy proved to be of lesser importance in this study. For Dutch FPCs, these elements were crucial in determining whether their advice would be taken seriously and incorporated into policy or strategy documents. This study showed the added value of personal relationships with local food policymakers and governance style of the local government for the effectiveness of Dutch FPC to influence local food policy, while giving a more prominent role to political salience and the trustworthiness of Dutch FPCs. Access to decision-makers, political salience of food issues, FPCs' credibility and trustworthiness, and governance style were all central to understanding how and to what extent Dutch FPCs were able to influence local food policy.

6.3 To what extent are the two selected Dutch FPCs able to influence local food policy?

The FC MRA was able to exert influence through all steps of the causal mechanism of FPC influence on local food policy. Access to local policymakers through long-standing personal relationships, their credibility, and their trustworthiness were utilised for awareness raising. Although the advisor on the food strategy of Amsterdam perceived the FPC to have limited legitimacy, this did not raise an obstacle for the FC MRA's ability to influence local food policy. Food had been political salient for many years and the municipality of Amsterdam adopted a governance style that allowed citizen initiatives to be involved in policy development, allowing the FC MRA to not only get their preferences on the political agenda, but to actively contribute to the development of the municipal food strategy too. Their effectiveness was substantiated in the municipal food strategy reflecting almost all their preferences.

The FPC EetbaarEde had been struggling to exert meaningful influence on local food policy in the last years. Their strategy to influence local food policy had been for a long time to write a report

on an important issue and send it to the local government. However, they experienced that this did not lead to any results in the form of actual policy change. An opportunity presented itself when the local government developed its integrated spatial vision, but their influence was minimal. After they changed their strategy to one more focussed on access to and good relationships with local food policymakers, they were able to demonstrate the credibility and trustworthiness of their organisation. Although some local food policymakers acknowledged the importance of the FPC, the FPC EetbaarEde was not able to reach the agenda setting phase of policy influence. It was only when food policy became political salient in the form of the reassessment of the municipal food vision that the FPC was able to get their preferences on the political agenda and even contribute to the development of the food vision. Although its role in the development of food policy was less prominent than that of the FC MRA, the FPC EetbaarEde was still able to exert influence through all steps of the causal mechanism of FPC influence in local food policy.

6.4 What barriers prevent Dutch FPCs from effectively influencing local food policy at each conceptual step of influence?

Several barriers hindered the effectiveness of Dutch FPCs at each step of the influence process. In step 0 – formulating themes – the main challenge was a lack of concreteness in FPC preferences. In the access step, the primary barrier was the trade-off between policy influence and FPC autonomy. However, the FC MRA showed that this could be evaded or compensated by building strong personal relationships with policymakers. At the awareness-raising stage, the FPCs struggled with establishing a legitimate organisation, particularly when their recommendations were perceived as not representative for the local food movement. In the agenda-setting phase, political salience was potentially a major barrier; when food issues were not a priority for local governments, FPCs found it difficult to secure the attention of policymakers, which was evident in the case of the FPC EetbaarEde. However, when food is political salient, it also has the potential to be the driving force behind FPC effectiveness in all phases of policy influence. Finally, at the policy impact stage, the governance style hampered the ability of the FPC EetbaarEde to directly influence the drafting of the local food vision; while in Amsterdam it allowed the FC MRA to directly help draft the food strategy.

6.5 Academic contributions

This research contributes to the academic literature on food policy governance and the role of advisory bodies by applying PAST to the specific case of Dutch FPCs. Most FPC literature looks from the FPC perspective, assuming policymakers passively receive advice. This research addresses this gap by analysing how both Dutch FPCs and local governments interact, how they view each other, and how these dynamics affect the uptake of FPC recommendations. It also addresses the geographical imbalance in FPC research by focusing on the Dutch context, as previous studies mainly concentrated on North America, with limited attention given to Western Europe. Although one other study examines Dutch FPCs (Den Boer et al., 2023), it focuses on their role in transforming the food system, rather than exploring how FPCs influence local food policy. Furthermore, while existing research highlights specific FPC characteristics—such as representativeness, stakeholder engagement, and government relationships—there has been no systematic study of how these factors impact the mechanisms of FPC influence. This thesis uses process tracing to fill that gap by examining the interactions between Dutch FPCs and local governments to uncover the mechanisms shaping policy influence.

6.6 Societal relevance

On a societal level, this research underscores the crucial role of FPCs in advocating for sustainable, just, and community-centred food systems. The findings highlight how FPCs can play an important role in the local food community by providing a platform for diverse food system actors—such as small-scale farmers, citizens, and food justice organisations—to influence local food policy. By focusing on the Dutch context, this research also sheds light on the opportunities for FPCs in a country facing significant environmental, health, and social issues within its food system. Where the Dutch government has

proven unable in recent years to drive transformative sustainability change to solve these persistent food system issues, FPCs may offer a new form of governance rooted in citizen initiatives and the local scale. Provided that FPCs are effective in influencing local food policies, they can contribute to a broader food system transformation by emphasising the need for a more inclusive, just, sustainable and healthy food system.

6.7 Avenues for further research

This study offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of FPC influence on local food policy in the Netherlands, but several limitations must be considered. First, the findings are not directly generalisable beyond the Dutch context, although the conceptual framework based on Political Advisory Systems Theory can be applied to other countries with similar governance structures, particularly in Europe. Future research could test the framework's applicability in different national contexts. Second, the study focused on municipalities with established food policies, leaving questions about FPC influence in areas without such policies. Exploring how FPCs exert influence in these settings could be a valuable direction for future research. Third, while the inclusion of local food policymakers strengthened the study, data collection was limited, particularly in Amsterdam, where only one policymaker was interviewed. More interviews could provide a more nuanced understanding of policymakers' views. Lastly, the municipality of Ede began developing a new food vision shortly after the data collection, so follow-up research would offer a more comprehensive understanding of FPC influence in the later stages.

6.8 Concluding insights and key findings

In conclusion, this research reveals that Dutch FPCs primarily exert influence by building personal relationships with policymakers and leveraging their trust and credibility to raise awareness on food system issues. Dutch FPCs are most likely to affect local food policy when food issues are politically salient. The application of PAST helped identify the key mechanisms through which FPCs exert influence, while also highlighting the challenges they face at each step of the policy influence process. Despite that Dutch FPCs have only started to emerge in the last ten years, they have started to make important contributions to local food policy. If local governments recognise the need for food system change, Dutch FPCs can play a key role in transforming the food system by providing a platform for citizen initiatives to shape local food policy through the development of strong personal relationship with local food policymakers.

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8 Annex 1: Interview Guide FPC members

Interview guide voedselraad

Ik ben Stijn van den Oever, master student Governance of Sustainability Transformations aan de Wageningen Universiteit. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om meer te weten te komen over hoe u, als lid van een voedselraad, tegen voedselbeleid aan kijkt en hoe u dit beleid al dan niet probeert te beïnvloeden.

Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren en ik zal vragen stellen over uw ervaring met het lokale voedselbeleid. Het gaat hierbij voornamelijk over het voedselbeleid van de gemeente Ede.

Alle informatie die u deelt is vertrouwelijk en zal niet direct tot u terug te herleiden zijn. Uw antwoorden worden gepseudonimiseerd en zal alleen voor het doel van dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Houd er rekening mee dat de resultaten van dit onderzoek worden online gezet, en aangezien er maar enkele voedselraden in Nederland zijn, zal het niet onmogelijk zijn om te achterhalen om welke voedselraden het gaat.

- Heeft u de het consentformulier voor dit interview gelezen en begrepen?
- Heeft u hier nog vragen over?
- Vind u het goed dat ik dit interview opneem zodat de informatie accuraat gebruikt kan woerden? Zodra ik het interview heb getranscribeerd zal de opname verwijderd worden.
- Verder wil ik u er nog op wijzen dat je geen vragen hoeft te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden en dat je op elk moment mag stoppen met dit interview.

Introductie

1. Om te beginnen, zou u me kort wat over uzelf en uw achtergrond kunnen vertellen?
    a. Komt u oorspronkelijk uit Amsterdam?
    b. Wat is uw beroep?
    c. Waar komt uw interesse in voedsel vandaan?
2. Kunt u mij wat meer vertellen over de Food Council MRA?
    a. Wat was uw motivatie om de Food Council MRA op te richten?
    b. Wat is het doel van de Food Council MRA?

i. Kan je me vertellen wat jullie als voedselraad precies doen?
ii. Wat voor activiteiten organiseren jullie?

c. Hoe ziet de Food Council MRA er organisatorisch uit?
i. Hoeveel leden heeft het?
ii. Hoe wordt je lid van de Food Council MRA?
iii. Wat doen de leden?
iv. Is de Food Council MRA een ngo/vereniging?
v. Hoe werken jullie? Heeft elk lid bijvoorbeeld een eigen thema? Of zijn er verschillende werkgroepen waarin jullie onderverdeeld zijn?
vi. Op wat voor manier verhoudt De Food Council MRA zich tot de gemeente?
1. Krijgen jullie subsidie?
2. Heeft de gemeente inspraak in de voedselraad?
3. Zitten er mensen van de gemeente bij de voedselraad? Wat is hun status?
4. Is de voedselraad een officiële commissie van de gemeente?
5. Krijgen jullie weleens vragen vanuit de gemeente over het voedselsysteem?

3. Kunt u me wat meer vertellen over uw eigen rol binnen de voedselraad?
a. Zijn er specifieke activiteiten waarmee u zich de afgelopen tijd bezig heeft gehouden?
b. Hoeveel tijd bent u ongeveer kwijt per week of maand met uw werkzaamheden bij De Food Council MRA?

Voorkeuren

4. Zijn er specifieke thema's binnen het voedselsysteem waar jullie extra aandacht aan besteden? Welke?
a. Waarom deze?
b. Hoe proberen jullie deze thema's onder de aandacht te brengen?
c. Welk thema heeft wat jullie betreft prioriteit?
d. Wat vindt u zelf belangrijk dat er verandert in het lokale voedselsysteem?

5. In 2018 hebben jullie een regionaal voedselmanifest gepubliceerd over wat er verbeterd kan worden in het voedselsysteem. Is dit document nog steeds een leidraad voor welke activiteiten jullie ondernemen?
    a. Hierin lijken 6 thema's steeds terug te komen. Zou u van elk thema kunnen zeggen of dat inderdaad iets is wat jullie nastreven?
        i. Het verbeteren van de toegang tot gezond en duurzaam voedsel
        ii. Lokale voedsel ondernemers ondersteunen
        iii. Voedsel educatie verbeteren
        iv. Verbeteren van de toegang tot voor duurzame voedselproductie
        v. Voedselverspilling tegengaan
        vi. De sociale aspecten van voedsel promoten
6. Weet u of er nog andere documenten zijn die de positie van De Food Council MRA bespreken? Bijvoorbeeld een voedselmanifest.

Invloed

7. Is er beleid vanuit de overheid dat in de weg zit om verbeteringen in het voedselsysteem door te voeren? Welk?
    a. Bent u actief bezig dit beleid te veranderen? Of zijn er anderen die daarmee bezig zijn?
    b. Op welke manier probeert u dit te bereiken?

8. De Food Council MRA bestaat nu al een aantal jaar, zijn er bepaalde veranderingen in het voedselsysteem waar jullie medeverantwoordelijk voor zijn geweest?
    a. Hoe hebben jullie dit voor elkaar gekregen?
    b. Was er bepaald beleid vanuit de gemeente dat hiervoor veranderd moest worden?
    c. Hoe hebben jullie ervoor gezorgd dat dit beleid veranderde? Of hoe hebben jullie dit geprobeerd?
9. Zijn er thema's waarvan u het gevoel heeft dat de gemeente er actief jullie advies voor zoekt? Welke?
    a. Op welke manier wordt er dan contact gezocht?

b. In 2023 heeft de gemeenteraad de Uitvoeringsagenda Voedselstrategie 2023-2026 vastgesteld. Heeft De Food Council MRA hier op een manier aan bijgedragen?
    i. Op welke manier? / Waarom niet?
    ii. Hebben jullie zelf contact gezocht?

10. U heeft al een aantal keer aangestipt dat u regelmatig contact hebt met beleidsmakers in de gemeente:
    a. Hoe ervaart u over het algemeen het contact met de gemeente?
    b. Heeft u het gevoel dat er echt naar u geluisterd wordt?
    c. Zijn er mensen van de gemeente die u goed genoeg kent om zomaar op te kunnen bellen als u ze nodig heeft?
11. Na al deze vragen hoe zou u de rol van De Food Council MRA in het lokale voedselbeleid omschrijven?
12. Zijn er naast Jeffrey Spang en u nog anderen die zich bezig houden met het beïnvloeden van lokaal voedselbeleid?
13. Tot slot, zou ik in de toekomst contact met u op mogen nemen mochten bepaalde antwoorden verduidelijking nodig hebben?

Hartelijk dank voor dit interview.
Als u nog vragen hebt kunt u me altijd bereiken op mijn email adres.

9 Annex II: Interview guide policymakers

Interview guide gemeente Amsterdam

Ik ben Stijn van den Oever, master student Governance of Sustainability Transformations aan de Wageningen Universiteit. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om meer te weten te komen over hoe u, als beleidsmaker in de gemeente Amsterdam, gebruik maakt van de kennis en expertise van de Food Council MRA bij het maken van voedselbeleid.

Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren en ik zal vragen stellen over uw ervaring met het maken van lokaal voedselbeleid en uw ervaringen met de Food Council MRA.

Alle informatie die u deelt is vertrouwelijk en zal niet direct tot u terug te herleiden zijn. Uw antwoorden worden gepseudonimiseerd en zal alleen voor het doel van dit onderzoek gebruikt worden. Houd er rekening mee dat de resultaten van dit onderzoek worden online gezet, en aangezien er maar enkele voedselraden in Nederland zijn, zal het niet onmogelijk zijn om te achterhalen om welke voedselraden het gaat.

- Heeft u de het consentformulier voor dit interview gelezen en begrepen?
- Heeft u hier nog vragen over?
- Vind u het goed dat ik dit interview opneem zodat de informatie accuraat gebruikt kan woerden? Zodra ik het interview heb getranscribeerd zal de opname verwijderd worden.
- Verder wil ik u er nog op wijzen dat je geen vragen hoeft te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden en dat je op elk moment mag stoppen met dit interview.

Introductie

14. Om te beginnen, zou u me kort wat over uzelf en uw achtergrond kunnen vertellen?
    a. Komt u oorspronkelijk uit Amsterdam?
    b. Wat doet u precies voor de gemeente Amsterdam?
    c. Waar komt uw interesse in voedsel vandaan?
15. Kunt u mij wat meer vertellen over de Uitvoeringsagenda Voedselstrategie 2023-2026?
    a. Waarom wilde Amsterdam een voedselstrategie?
    b. Wat is het doel van de voedselstrategie?
    c. Hoe is de voedselstrategie tot stand gekomen?
    d. Wat was voor jullie belangrijk dat de voedselstrategie zou bevatten?

16. Kunt u mij wat meer vertellen over uw ervaringen met de Food Council MRA?
    a. Wanneer hoorde u voor het eerst van ze?
    b. Geloofwaardigheid:
        i. Vindt u dat de voedselraad genoeg expertise heeft om advies te geven over lokaal voedselbeleid?
        ii. Hoe beoordeelt u het vermogen van de voedselraad om met autoriteit te spreken over kwesties in het lokale voedselsysteem?

iii. Vindt u de voedselraad een oprechte en eerlijke organisatie?
iv. Vindt u dat de Food Council MRA een integere organisatie is? Waarom?
v. Hoe beoordeelt u de geloofwaardigheid van de voedselraad als ze problemen aankaarten of advies geven?

c. Legitimiteit:
i. Hebt u het idee dat alle spelers in het lokale voedselsysteem een eerlijke en gelijke inbreng hebben in de voedselraad?
ii. En denk je dat iedereen ook dezelfde kansen heeft om gehoord te worden?
iii. Vindt u dat het advies van de voedselraad op een eerlijke en duidelijke manier tot stand komt?
iv. Hebt u het idee dat de voedselraad goed en efficiënt advies geeft dat waarschijnlijk zal werken?
v. Hoe beoordeelt u over het algemeen de legitimiteit van de voedselraad?

17. Hoe belangrijk vindt u het advies dat de voedselraad geeft?
a. Op welke manier heeft u vroeger gebruik gemaakt van het advies van de voedselraad?
b. Zijn er specifieke thema's waar u/jullie vaker advies vragen van de voedselraad?
c. Kunt u wat meer vertellen over de rol van de Food Council MRA in de voedselstrategie?
d. Waarom hebben jullie toen advies gevraagd aan de voedselraad?
e. Zijn er specifieke thema's die de voedselraad erg belangrijk vond?
i. Hebben jullie deze thema's toen overgenomen? Waarom wel/niet?
f. Hoe ervaarde u de samenwerking met de voedselraad bij het opstellen van de voedselstrategie?
g. Op welke manier wordt er contact gemaakt met de voedselraad als jullie ze nodig hebben?
h. Worden jullie ook weleens benaderd door de voedselraad? Hoe dan?

18. Hoe zou u over het algemeen de rol van de voedselraad in het Amsterdamse voedselbeleid omschrijven?
19. Daarmee zijn we aan het eind gekomen van dit interview. Zijn er nog dingen die u graag toe zou willen voegen?

20. Zijn er nog andere mensen in de gemeente die contact hebben met de voedselraad en hun advies gebruiken?
21. Tot slot, zou ik in de toekomst contact met u op mogen nemen mochten bepaalde antwoorden verduidelijking nodig hebben?

Hartelijk dank voor dit interview.

Als u nog vragen hebt kunt u me altijd bereiken op mijn email adres.

10 Annex III: Informed consent

Informatie & consent formulier

Inleiding
U bent uitgenodigd om mee te doen aan een interview voor de Master thesis van Stijn van den Oever van de Wageningen Universiteit. Voordat u beslist of u wilt meedoen aan dit onderzoek, krijgt u uitleg over wat het onderzoek inhoudt. Lees deze informatie rustig door.

Waarover gaat de thesis?
In dit onderzoek kijk ik naar of en op hoe Nederlandse voedselraden invloed hebben op het lokale voedselbeleid. Ik probeer daarbij stapsgewijs (d.m.v. Process Tracing) te achterhalen hoe leden van een voedselraad proberen lokale voedselbeleidsmakers te beïnvloeden en op welke manier deze beleidsmakers daar vervolgens gebruik van maken. Hiervoor spreek ik met zowel leden van Nederlandse voedselraden als met lokale voedselbeleidsmakers.

Wat wordt er van u verwacht?
In dit onderzoek wordt u geïnterviewd door Stijn van den Oever. Als u toestemming geeft, worden er een geluidsopname en aantekeningen van deze interviews gemaakt om de nauwkeurigheid van het onderzoek te waarborgen. De opname en aantekeningen worden gebruikt als onderzoeksdata. Een interview duurt ongeveer een uur. In het interview zal ik u vragen stellen over uw ervaringen met de voedselraad in uw gemeente en hoe u gebruik maakt van het advies dat zij al dan niet geven.

Vrijwilligheid
U beslist zelf of u deelneemt aan dit onderzoek. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u mag altijd nee zeggen. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden waar u liever geen antwoord op geeft, en u kunt op elk moment

tijdens het onderzoek uw deelname stopzetten en uw toestemming intrekken. U hoeft daarbij niet aan te geven waarom u stopt.

Wat gebeurt er met mijn gegevens?
Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is vertrouwelijk. Uw naam wordt niet kenbaar gemaakt. Met uw toestemming wordt het interview opgenomen en getranscribeerd. Opnames worden gewist zodra het gespreksverslag klaar is. De aantekeningen van het interview worden gepseudonimiseerd, wat betekent dat het nagenoeg onmogelijk is om de data naar u terug te herleiden. Wij doen dit door alle informatie die naar u als persoon leidt te verwijderen uit de onderzoeksdata (zoals uw naam, contactgegevens of enige vermelding van andere personen) en te vervangen door een pseudoniem. Een kopie van het transcript zal naar u opgestuurd worden, waarbij u eventueel verandering kunt aanbrengen (bv. als u een bepaalde uitspraak terug wilt nemen).

Getranscribeerde stukken tekst kunnen gebruikt worden in het onderzoek dat online zal komen te staan. Alle onderzoeksdata worden bewaard op de beveiligde servers van de Wageningen Universiteit, volgens het protocol van de universiteit. Dit protocol is in lijn met de Algemene Verordening Persoonsgegevens (AVG).

Toestemmingsverklaring
Als u aan dit onderzoek wilt meedoen, vragen we u een toestemmingsverklaring te ondertekenen. Door uw schriftelijke toestemming geeft u aan dat u de informatie heeft begrepen en instemt met deelname aan het onderzoek.

Heeft u vragen over het onderzoek?
Als u meer vragen over het onderzoek of het bewaren van onderzoeksgegevens, kunt u deze voor het interview aan mij stellen. Als u op een later moment meer vragen heeft, kunt u contact opnemen met de uitvoerend onderzoeker.

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Toestemming
Ik heb uitleg gekregen over het doel van het onderzoek.
Ik heb vragen mogen stellen over het onderzoek.
Ik neem vrijwillig aan het onderzoek deel.
Ik begrijp dat ik op elk moment tijdens het onderzoek mag stoppen als ik dat wil.
Ik begrijp hoe de gegevens van het onderzoek bewaard zullen worden en waarvoor ze gebruikt zullen worden.
Ik stem in met deelname aan het onderzoek zoals beschreven in het informatiedocument.

Daarnaast geef ik toestemming voor (s.v.p. aankruisen wat van toepassing is):

Ja	Nee	
☐	☐	maken van audio opnamen
☐	☐	het transcriberen van het interview met Microsoft Teams

☐ ☐ gebruik van citaten uit het interview in de resultaten van dit onderzoek

Naam deelnemer:

Datum:

Handtekening:

Naam onderzoeker:

Datum:

Handtekening:

11 Annex IV: Observation report FoodFloor Ede

FoodFloor Ede
20-06-2024

On a Thursday evening, the 20th of June, Eetbaar Ede organised a FoodFloor about the struggle for land that new food initiatives experience. Some twenty people came together to discuss this issue. Some were people looking for land, some were people that just started a new initiative, some were part of Eetbaar Ede, and there were even two policymakers from the municipality. First, there were three talks on how access to land is organised in the municipality and potential pathways for people to get this access. Afterwards, there was an open panel discussion with the speakers in front reflecting on questions from the audience.

The FloodFloor is a regular event organised by Eetbaar Ede to create a space where people from the local food system can talk and connect with each other. Every FoodFloor has a specific topic on which the attendants can reflect and discuss with each other. Normally there are some speakers with experience on the topic that share their knowledge through a presentation. Everybody can attend for free, and drinks and snacks are provided. It is held deliberately in the evening so that most people have the chance to be present. However, the people that showed up were rather homogeneous: high-educated, white, and mostly over forty. This is a group that generally has more means to take such risks, since they have some financial space and a social safety net to fall back on. Furthermore, they have the education and cultural capital to find the right people to help them find land for their initiatives. This is reflected in one of the main 'findings' of the evening: people should just walk up to farmers with suitable land for their initiative and ask whether there would be some way for them to use that land. This is, of course, only possible for people with a certain set of social skills and enough knowledge of the language to ask such a thing in a respectable and convincing way.

Notable is also that there were no conventional farmers present. Besides having a lot of land at their disposal (which they not always all use), they can also bring another perspective and share how other farmers in their network get access to new land. This was not due to a lack of trying from Eetbaar Ede. The chairwoman told me she did actively invite some farmers and that she had expected that at least some of them would show up.

Thus, although Eetbaar Ede did do their best to organise an open and inclusive event, only people of a certain social group attended in the end. This touches FPC's in general reporting that they have difficulty reaching all social groups and being truly inclusive. It also reflected in what Arnold, Daan (?) and Anja said (yes sectoral inclusivity, no social inclusivity). It also does not go unnoticed by local policy makers since they often ask the question: who do these FPCs represent? And do they have the authority to speak for all people in the food system?

People who showed up were genuinely interested in the topic and were often looking for land themselves. After the presentations some of them actively sought each other out to collectively come up with a good plan to find land. The first tip, as said, was looking for suitable (and unused) land for your project and ask the owner whether you can use the land. Another way is to go to a website where farmers offer plots of land for people to use for their initiatives. Also, there is supposed to be a lot of land released by farmers who are considered 'piek-belasters' of nitrogen. The municipality does not have a lot land in their possession anymore and already has a hard time finding land for their project themselves.

12 Annex V: Observation report workshop FC MRA

Dag van de voedseltransitie
Amsterdam
June 21, 2024

On the 21st of June, the municipality of Amsterdam organised the 'Day for the Food Transition'. It took place in the NoordOogst, which is an urban agriculture project in Amsterdam where many different initiatives are located. The goal was to bring together all types of people from the local food system so that they can get to know and learn from one another and their initiatives. The day started with a plenary session to welcome everyone and highlight the views of some people with different roles in the local food system. Afterwards there were three workshop sessions after each other, for which you could sign up for specific workshops. In between there was a lovely lunch provided by a local entrepreneur. After the last round of workshops there was a food market with around ten stalls where local food entrepreneurs could tell you more about what they did and where a small band was playing. This only strengthened the festive atmosphere that the whole day already had. People were on the one hand relaxed and happy, but on the other hand also passionate and intense when discussing food topics close to their heart.

There was one workshop in particular that I was interested in for my thesis; that was the one about the Food Council MRA. Arnold, Jeffrey and Leon organised this workshop and the central question was about the role the Food Council should have in Amsterdam. After a small introduction by Arnold van der Valk, the first reaction was about whether such a "top-down" organisation was what the local food initiatives needed. This directly questions the legitimacy of the food council, since this person clearly thought that such a platform should come from the bottom-up. It also clearly shows that people do not really know what a food council is and who it represents. Arnold and Jeffrey explained that they see themselves as a spokesperson for local food initiatives in the metropole region of Amsterdam. They feel that they created a platform through their connections in the region and thus are a 'bottom-up' organisation. However, this person, together with some others in the room, saw them as a structure created by something else than the local food movement. This show that not only food policy makers have a hard time knowing who the FPC actually represents, but that many local food entrepreneurs also do not really know for who the FPC speaks.

There was one local food policy maker in the room too. This person worked a lot with the Food Council MRA but voiced the same issues. As long as there is no transparent structure through which

the FPC can show who they are representing, it is very hard for the municipality to judge their advice. Especially since the FPC claims to be the voice of marginalised actors, but the representatives in the room were three men of which two were above 60 and two were white. Not the most marginalised people in of the municipality so to say.

Then there was also the issue of the position of the FPC. People mentioned many other platforms and networks in the region that fulfilled similar roles. Although the discussion did not develop further in this direction, I was wondering what the ideal positioning would be. Should they be a 'network of networks', that combines the knowledge and experience of other networks? Or should they be firmly grounded in food initiatives themselves, and thus speak from first hand experience? This last form would be harder to realise when there are already many alternative networks of which people are part. They would rightly question the added value of another network doing basically the same as others.