

5th ISA Forum of Sociology. “Knowing justice in the Anthropocene”, Rabat, 6-11 July 2025

Abstract proposition for RC40 “Sociology of Agriculture and Food”

For the following session:

Governance and Socio-Economic Pathways for Increased Agrobiodiversity:
A Multi-Actor Transition Towards Sustainable Agri-Food Systems

Title:

Food Policy Councils as strategic tools for the co-creation of values-based territorial food networks. Structural analysis and empirical strategies of twelve European cities' Food Policy Councils.

Authors:

Rachel Reckinger, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Despite inertia from the mainstream hegemonic corporate food regime, there is growing consent and evidence of values-based territorial food networks (Reckinger, 2022) that aim for sustainable transformations of food systems. They often come together in participatory Food Policy Councils (FPCs). The urban scale has emerged as a meaningful meso-level to implement such transformative projects with a certain impact at a political scope that is in direct touch with its territorial realities.

Based on eight empirical examples from European cities that collaborated in the H2020-project FUSILLI, we draw on the framework developed by Michel et al. (2022), to start by providing a systematic analysis of the considered FPCs' processual and substantive contributions to food system sustainability. We will in a second step scrutinize the considered FPCs' commitment towards food democracy. Finally, we will consider the considered FPCs' efforts and implementations of good governance. Those three key areas will be exemplified by the considered FPCs' goals, their processes in terms of governance and activities, their outcomes and their outputs.

The diversity of the considered FPCs will in particular allow us to enrich the distinction between 'invited' and 'invented' spaces for transformative action: instead of being distinct they are complementary strategies, and elements of each of those ideal-types can be found in co-created initiatives of FPCs, to be considered as being situated on a spectrum rather than on poles. This will allow us, on one hand, to distill key 'must have' features of efficient FPCs and optional 'nice to have' ones, to be perpetuated in the face of political change and hegemonic resistance. On the other hand, we will gain a clearer structural understanding on not only 'why' but 'how' and 'with which impact' FPCs *can* have realistic means to set up values-based territorial food networks at various levels and with varying partners.

Key words:

Sustainable urban food system transformation

Food Policy Councils

Values-based Territorial Food Networks

Food democracy and good governance