Article

Food Sharing Initiatives and Food Democracy: Practice and Policy in Three European Cities

Anna R. Davies *, Agnese Cretella and Vivien Franck

Geography, School of Natural Sciences, Trinity College Dublin, Dublin 2, Ireland; E-Mails: daviesa@tcd.ie (A.R.D.), cretella@tcd.ie (A.C.), franckv@tcd.ie (V.F.)

* Corresponding author

Abstract

Calls for greater food democracy in Europe have emerged as the limitations of urban food systems dominated by commercial organisations are documented, but little attention has been paid to how policy arrangements affect attempts to transition to more democratic food futures. This article examines food sharing initiatives—increasingly facilitated by the use of information and communication technologies—as a potential means to enhance urban food democracy, and explores the role of policy in shaping those practices in three European capital cities: Berlin, London, and Dublin. We pose two related questions: To what extent are diverse food sharing initiatives exemplars of food democracy, and to what extent do policy arrangements affect food sharing practices and the nature of any food democracy they might embody? Our empirical evidence demonstrates where the goals and impacts of food sharing initiatives align with key dimensions of food democracy. We also consider how food sharing initiatives—and any food democracy dimensions that they support—are affected by the policy environment in which they operate. The food sharing initiatives examined revealed to be agents of pro-democratic change, at least within the boundaries of their spheres of influence, despite policies rarely having their activities and aspirations in mind.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "New Perspectives on Food Democracy" edited by Basil Bornemann (University of Basel, Switzerland) and Sabine Weiland (Université Catholique de Lille, France).

1. Introduction

> The greatest deficit in the food economy is the democratic one. (De Schutter, 2014)

In 2014 the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, specifically urged urban areas to take matters of food democracy into their own hands; where food democracy relates to matters of health, safety, equal rights to culturally-appropriate food, and opportunities to participate in the food system (Hassanein, 2003, 2008; Lang, 1999; Levkoe, 2006; Welsh & MacRae, 1998). While acknowledging the challenges inherent in addressing the concentration of power and control within the

food system, De Schutter and others have argued that there are grounds for optimism, with innovations appearing internationally that reconnect food producers and consumers in new ways (Biewener, 2016). This article explores one such arena of innovation—information and communication technologies (ICT)-mediated urban food sharing initiatives that allow people to grow food, cook, eat and redistribute food together with others (Davies & Legg, 2018, p. 237)—to see if it addresses the democratic deficit that De Schutter identifies. Reflecting on the practices and governance of urban food sharing initiatives in three European capital cities—Berlin, London and Dublin—two interrelated questions are posed: To what extent are current food sharing initiatives exem-

plars of food democracy, and to what extent do policy arrangements affect the achievement of food democracy through food sharing?

2. Interrogating the Nexus of Food Sharing and Food Democracy

The concept of food democracy is a relatively recent arrival in the arena of academic food studies with a landmark publication by Hassanein (Hassanein, 2003) being one of the earliest and most influential papers in the field. Hassanein's article extended the foundational research of Tim Lang that described the importance of eating "adequately, affordably, safely, humanely, and in ways one considers civil and culturally appropriate" (Lang, 1999, p. 218). Although expressed in various ways across the literature, the general view is that people should have enhanced opportunities to *actively* participate in "shaping the food system" (Hassanein, 2003, p. 79). This implies opportunities to participate at a variety of scales and with respect to the formation of policy at every stage of the food system (Levkoe, 2006; Welsh & MacRae, 1998). The driving forces behind these calls for greater participation are multifaceted, from providing opportunities for people to expand their knowledge about food and the food system (Hassanein, 2003) to sharing ideas and opinions about food with others as a pragmatic means to ensure that decisions about food go beyond market forces that emphasise profit over people and planet (Levkoe, 2006). This brings food democracy directly into conversation with the causes and effects of inequities in the food system and to ideas of food poverty, justice, sovereignty and sustainability. Linked to narratives around active participation and the right to food are calls for reorienting control of the food system away from the current agropoly model (EcoNexus, 2013). Sometimes this is articulated in terms of shortening food chains and connecting producers and consumers more directly (Johnston, Biro, & MacKendrick, 2009). In other cases it is about consumers having the capacity and capabilities to exercise their own power to shape the ways food is produced and distributed (Levkoe, 2006; Mann, 2015).

With the core dimensions of food democracy identified—participation, the right to food, sustainability, and reorienting control—it is possible to see whether there is any commonality between these and the goals and practices of urban food sharing initiatives. We selected and examined twelve urban food sharing initiatives from a population of 379 initiatives mapped in Berlin, London and Dublin (Davies et al., 2017) that focus on shared growing, cooking, eating and food redistribution, and use ICT (defined here as websites, social media platforms, digital applications and other online platforms) to mediate their sharing activities, goals and impacts (see Table 1). The information in Table 1 is drawn from content analysis of online information provided by each food sharing initiative, ethnographic fieldwork with each initiative and in-depth interviews with key stake-

holders in each city between 2016 and 2018 (Davies & Weymes, 2018). To preserve anonymity, initiatives are identified by their location (Berlin, London, or Dublin) and their main focus (growing, or cooking and eating, or redistributing) with the title 'multifunctional' used where there is more than one main focus. We use a number to distinguish initiatives with the same focus in the same city (e.g., Growing 1, London; Growing 2, London, and so forth). The three cities—London, Berlin and Dublin—were selected because they are members of the European Union (EU) and are subject to the common policy framework that exists for all member states, but they also have particular socio-economic, environmental, political and cultural histories and characteristics that affect how food is governed (Davies & Weymes, 2017).

Table 1 shows how all the initiatives examined articulate goals and undertake activities that connect with dimensions of food democracy. Specific food democracy dimensions are not excluded if the activity is a community café or a community garden, for example. Table 1 also indicates that in each initiative food sharing activities speak to multiple dimensions of food democracy albeit in distinctive ways. Indeed, ten out of the twelve initiatives address all core dimensions of food democracy. However, it is hard to establish the impact of these food sharing activities, as in many cases the initiatives do not have the capacity or resources to identify and track the impacts they create. For instance, while measuring the weight of food diverted from landfill as an indicator of environmental sustainability is technically straightforward, it is notoriously difficult to identify, isolate and measure impacts that relate to the social, health and well-being benefits of coming together around food; an important part of social sustainability (Mackenzie & Davies, 2019).

Similarly, while counting the numbers of people who attend events run by initiatives may be relatively straightforward, it is not always feasible for initiatives to monitor the depth and frequency of participation or what that participation means to people and for the food system. In addition, there are multiple challenges with establishing whether activities improve an individual's right to food or assist in reorienting control within the food system. It is outputs—rather than impacts—that tend to be reported, such as counting the number of cooking or gardening classes offered, or the numbers of participants. Understanding what difference those experiences make to individuals and communities once the class has ended is an entirely different matter. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, establishing the impacts of food sharing at an individual, community, regional and national scale is an important issue which requires further consideration (see Mackenzie & Davies, 2019). The remainder of the article focus on the extent to which food sharing initiatives—now identified agents of food democracy—are supported (or not) by the wider governing arrangements which shape what they do and how they do it.

Table 1. Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
Berlin	Redistribution 1	A not-for-profit food waste initiative that diverts edible food from disposal. Operates in numerous locations in Germany, Austria and Switzerland	"We want to make food unconditionally accessible to all people and thereby promote respect for them." "The goal is to initiate education, rethinking and responsible action on a personal level."	Quantitative impacts reported for entire initiative: 1000 collections per day; 3,827,489 kg of food saved; 55,000+ volunteer 'food savers'	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—providing unconditional accessibility of food to all people *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food
	Redistribution 2	A global not-for-profit mapping and redistribution initiative that connects surplus harvests from fruit trees with those in need and encourages exchange of knowledge and skills for growing	"to connect people with fruit trees." "[to foster] responsibility, respect and common sense…pay attention to the property rights…gently handle trees and nature…share the fruits of your discoveries…engage in the care of fruit trees."	Quantitative impacts reported for entire initiative: 72,885 participants; 153 groups formed; 53,116 locations mapped; 360 actions founded by users; 33 new trees planted	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—increasing the accessibility of healthy food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food; providing support to plant and maintain new trees *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings of fruit trees
	Growing 1	A not-for-profit social enterprise that provides inclusive space for growing together, learning about food growing and eating locally grown food in its café	"An intercultural garden…open to everyone who likes to be a little closer to nature." "the good life for all…access to food and education…social transformation and value beyond money."	No quantitative impacts recorded, but descriptive, visual and qualitative impacts are documented: educational workshops, seed sharing, medicinal herb production, co-design of inclusive educational supports	*Sustainability*—providing low carbon, local food *Right to food*—increasing opportunities to access healthy, local food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer knowledge exchange around growing and cooking food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food growing
	Cooking/Eating 1	A social enterprise providing opportunities for shared cooking and eating experiences with a particular focus on the integration of refugees	"encourage face-to-face encounters between the local community and refugees—we cook, work, reflect and spend time together."	Limited quantitative impacts reported: 3 cookbooks published; 40 volunteers trained and 30 satellite activities developed in three other cities. Descriptive and qualitative impacts reported through testimonials	*Right to food*—unconditional accessibility of food to all people *Participation*—facilitating opportunities for people to eat together with refugees within communities *Reorienting control*—empowering communities to build greater community cohesion and understanding around food

Table 1. (Cont.) Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
London	Redistribution 1	A for-profit food redistribution initiative using a free app to connect people with each other and with local businesses to share surplus food	"[to] create a world in which nothing of value goes to waste, and every single person has enough to eat—without destroying our planet in the process."	Quantitative overall impact of initiative is reported: 971,783 registered users; 32478 volunteers and 1,448,269 portions of food exchanged	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—increase accessibility of food to participants *Participation*—increasing opportunities to participate in sharing surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to connect directly with others to access food
	Redistribution 2	A social enterprise providing a space for redistributing food at reduced cost to low income participants from businesses and support services to build community capacity and confidence	"empowering individuals and building stronger communities, by realising the social potential of surplus food."	Quantitative impacts reported: financial savings to members of £45m in 2018; 97% of members say they have the tools they need to achieve life goals; 96% say their mental well-being has improved; 92% say their physical well-being has improved; 56 million meals	*Sustainability*—reduce food waste by redistributing edible surplus *Right to food*—providing reduced cost food to members *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop life skills around food
	Multifunctional 1	A not-for-profit initiative which provides opportunities to grow food, cook and together by providing events and workshops	"to nurture a close-knit and collaborative community, which cares about its environment—and about the planet as a whole." "to create healthy, integrated and environmentally responsible communities."	Quantitative impacts reported: more than 100 young people achieving qualifications; 10,000+ engagements with local children and young people; 150 graduates from youth leadership scheme	*Sustainability*—provide educational workshops on environmental protection and sustainability *Right to food*—providing educational training to help build skills to access food *Participation*—facilitating peer-to-peer exchanges of surplus food *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop skills and understandings around food
	Cooking/Eating 1	A social enterprise providing free meals and a suite of educational and skills-based programs, courses, and activities	"[to address] inequalities whilst building community cohesion and developing skills." "enriching local life through connecting people through community activities and cultivating respect over a bite."	Quantitative impacts reported: 80% of food used is surplus; 100% of catering costs are reinvested in weekly community meals; 79% of attendees return to socialise with others	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste by using surplus food *Right to food*—providing free food to all participants *Participation*—bringing people together to grow, cook and eat together *Reorienting control*—providing support to participants over communal meals

Table 1. (Cont.) Relation to dimensions of food democracy of food sharing initiatives in Berlin, London and Dublin.

City	Initiative identifier	Initiative activities	Initiative goals	Impacts*	Relation to dimensions of food democracy
Dublin	Redistribution 1	An informal collective harvesting seasonal gluts of food by volunteers and the redistribution of this surplus food for free to those in need	"getting fresh fruit to local people who otherwise wouldn't have access to it."	No quantitative impacts are reported. Qualitative impacts are recorded via blog posts relating to harvesting events and detailing donors, volunteer harvesters and recipients.	*Sustainability*—reducing food loss from seasonal harvests *Right to food*—providing healthy free food to community groups supporting people in need of food *Participation*—providing opportunities for participation in collection and redistribution
	Redistribution 2	A not-for-profit redistributing surplus food from business to charities and community groups. Operates across Ireland and the UK	"to offer our solution to communities around the world who can benefit and achieve our vision of a world where no good food goes to waste." "Charities have access to a supply of fresh food and businesses can contribute to their community in a meaningful way."	Reports quantitative impacts for the entire initiative: supports 7,500 community groups; 20,000+ tonnes of food redistributed or 45 million meal equivalents and more than 65,000 carbon savings made	*Sustainability*—reducing food waste through redistributing surplus *Right to food*—distributing food to community groups and charities which provide food services *Participation*—supporting businesses and communities to connect in new ways and for volunteers to help redistributed surplus food *Reorienting control*—allows charities and community groups to connect more equitably with retailers around surplus food redistribution
	Growing 1	A not-for-profit garden providing opportunities to grow food together with others	"an organic community garden [which] provides an opportunity for local people living in an urban environment to develop skills and knowledge in horticulture. Volunteers learn about growing fruit and vegetables and can take food home to their families free of charge."	Few quantitative reports recorded. Some numbers relating to volunteers provided in social media. Evidence of physical regeneration of the site and the garden contains raised beds, hand-built shed, supports for biodiversity (bird boxes etc.) through photos on social media	*Sustainability*—providing space for local food production *Right to food*—providing new opportunities to access healthy, locally grown food *Participation*—providing new opportunities for local people to get involved in the food system by growing collectively *Reorienting control*—empowering people to learn how to grow food for themselves
	Growing 2	A for-profit initiative which creates opportunities for hands-on learning about urban agriculture, food sharing, food waste management, and the circular economy	"to cultivate [activities] that together will bring social change to improve the livelihood and liveability of our city." "Through participatory learning and action…inspire people to adopt sustainable practices in their everyday lives."	No quantitative impacts reported. Descriptive impacts of individual projects are summarised online which provide evidence of participation in events, including media coverage of activities	*Sustainability*—raising awareness about sustainable food *Right to food*—empowering people to be able to grow food to help meet their needs *Participation*—providing opportunities to engage with and learn about growing activities *Reorienting control*—empowering participants to develop growing skills

Note: *Impacts reported in 2019.

3. Policy and Food Sharing Practices

Attention to policy that affects food in an urban context has expanded over the last decade as the negative externalities caused by the current food system have become clearer (Harris, Dougill, & Owen, 2015; Morgan, 2009). The need for regulatory instruments to improve access to, and the quality of, sustainable food, as well as the general well-being of urban dwellers, is visible in developments such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Launched in 2015 and endorsed by the United Nations, the Pact brought civic leaders together to discuss how to best tackle food-related issues at the urban level (Deakin, Borrelli, & Diamantini, 2016). Such institutional efforts are attempting to build synergies between the different policy domains which affect the food system (Wiskerke, 2009) and have given greater visibility to more holistic Food Policy Councils and Urban Food Strategies (Deakin et al., 2016; Moragues et al., 2013; Reed, Curry, Keech, Kirwan, & Maye, 2013; Sieveking, 2019). Yet, the ability of these mechanisms to affect change has been questioned because of their predominantly non-statutory status, with further monitoring and evaluation required to establish their impact where they have been formed, and to reflect on why such developments have not been taken up in all urban locations (Cretella, 2019a, 2019b; Hawkes & Halliday, 2017; Sonnino, 2017).

In the absence of any holistic statutory urban food policy, food sharing initiatives remain subject to a fragmented and multiscalar policy landscape which has evolved to govern food as a commercial commodity. However, food sharing initiatives adopt diverse understandings of food which go far beyond seeing it as simply financialised fuel for the body. Instead, food is seen as a social and educational catalyst, and involvement in the means of producing, consuming and redistributing food a barometer of livelihood sustainability (Davies, 2019). Decentring commercial drivers has led food sharing initiatives to adopt diverse organisational structures including co-operatives, charities, networks, clubs, social enterprises (Davies et al., 2017), yet the external governing framework they experience is often the same whether activities are for-profit or not. This article draws on research that explores how the external governing framework affects food sharing initiatives. Ethnographic fieldwork revealed this governance in action, while interviews and documentary analysis identify past experiences and reflect on how policy affects food sharing activities. The qualitative data collected were analysed using N-Vivo. All material relating to a node of 'policy, rules, and regulations' from the twelve initiatives was collated and then re-coded according to the policy areas identified as significant in the data: food risk and safety; land use planning and urban development; health and well-being; food security and waste. This revealed a number of common themes running across initiatives in the cities but also particular issues that relate to the specific focus of initiatives.

3.1. Common Policy Impacts: The Challenges of Over- and Under-Regulation

While all food sharing initiatives recognised the need for safe food, the 'one-size-fits-all' system of risk management (embodied in EU hygiene regulation 178/2002) was frequently mentioned as a challenge, particularly by those who shared surplus food. Redistribution initiatives are seen as engaging in retail, and charities that receive food are considered to be conducting mass-catering activities. This means they have the same obligations as commercial operators irrespective of their organisational structure or the size and scale of sharing taking place (Davies & Weymes, 2018). As one surplus food redistribution initiative in Berlin articulated:

> Although…most people who work do it voluntarily…we are by law run as a food distributor, because we are dealing with food; that means, the same duties and laws apply to us like for all supermarkets and retailers. (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

The same initiative was concerned about the appropriateness and equity of the binary perspective of food risk regulators, calling for more nuanced attention to the spectrum of organisational forms, modes of sharing and diverse economies that inhabit urban food sharing landscapes:

> Existing legislation…only envisages private or commercial [activity] and nothing in between, it just has not been thought out when formulating these regulations….And that is why the framework has to adapt to reality and not reality to the framework. (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

The European Commission 2017 food donation guidelines, driven primarily by a global campaign to raise awareness of and take action to reduce food waste, make it clear that donated food must be traceable and edible (reinforcing the existing food hygiene regulations), but they do not specify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved in ensuring that this happens. Thus, questions remain about who should provide and pay for the new logistics infrastructures required for the expanded volumes of surplus food redistributed, and who should evaluate the qualities of surplus food and its appropriateness for consumption. With no clear answers to these questions there is concern that legislation is currently focused on limiting the liability of donors rather than on resolving the underlying causes of either food poverty or food waste (Davies, 2019). As a result, there is little opportunity to reorient control across the wider food system.

In contrast to the hot policy topic of food waste management and the highly regulated arena of food safety, land use planning and health and well-being were mentioned repeatedly in all three cities as policy areas with regulatory gaps which obstruct sharing initiatives from

shifting urban food system onto more sustainable path-ways. Collective growing activities, for example, have been identified as a tangible means for people to reclaim some power and control over their lives (and diets), cul-tivating not only the land but also a wider ethic of care described by one initiative as attending to "I, we, and the planet" (Multifunctional 1, London). Yet, their activities are seldom protected in development plans or promoted through land use planning strategies. The food sharing initiatives themselves do not hold, as Hasson (2019) also notes in relation to urban agriculture in London, influ-ential leverage on policy formulation. As set out in Sub-Section 3.2, they are commonly seen as useful place-fillers for vacant land until other developments are pro-posed. Policy rarely acknowledges the value created by shared growing initiatives for the environment, for the communities, and for the mental and physical health of the individuals who grow together. Even when such val-ues are identified they tend to be scattered between dis-parate departments in local governments that are rarely in conversation, leaving the aggregate benefits of food sharing invisible and ignored.

The right to food—one other area which is both a common goal for food sharing initiatives and features in dimensions of food democracy—has barely an imprint in legislation across all three cities. Ireland, a signatory to the UN International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, still has one in eight people experi-encing food insecurity, with state interventions around food security criticized as limited, fragmented and un-coordinated. For example, the updated National Action Plan for Social Inclusion developed by the Department of Social Protection has no food remit, while government vi-sions for Irish food futures are dominated by expansion-ary plans for commercial food exports rather than food security (Davies, 2019). This is not an issue for Ireland alone. In 2015 the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food stated that "many countries have failed to develop a judicial culture of recognition in practice or the neces-sary legal frameworks required to ensure that the rights enshrined in the ICESCR are justiciable" (Elver, 2014, p. 2). As one initiative stated, city governments are "open for business" (Cooking & eating 1, London) in relation to for-profit food enterprises, but community kitchens rarely re-ceive similar recognition or support.

3.2. Shared Growing

Areas for shared growing, such as the community gar-dens, tend to be located on vacant public sites. As a result, they often receive temporary leasing agree-ments from local authorities, making their long-term existence precarious and pitting their activities against other important social developments, such as housing (e.g., Dublin) and recreational facilities (e.g., Berlin). Across all three cities, community gardens are not clas-sified as public parks or gardens and are not therefore granted protection under land use planning regulations.

As explained by one community garden in Dublin:

> We secured a license agreement, a formal license agreement from Dublin City Council for using the site, and that's renewable on an annual basis. So, we ef-fectively have temporary use of that site. On the local area development zone for the site it's zoned for de-velopment actually. (Growing 1, Dublin)

In Berlin, shared growing initiatives reported that the privatization of public land has been increasing despite that numerous community gardens were established on many vacant spaces over the last 15 years. According to one shared growing initiative, 3,000 sites were priva-tized between 2002 and 2012 alone. Indeed, one initia-tive was threatened with eviction from their site and was only able to remain when a public campaign led to the Senator of Finance ensured that the garden received a reprieve. One land use planning expert and founder of a food sharing initiative that experienced a similar issue in Berlin stated that such case-by-case campaigning has not led to any systematic policy shifts. He said:

> We didn't solve the overall issue…but we had so much publicity, also national media and local media, that even the Senator for Finance was willing to say "Okay, what I will not do is change my policy. What I can do is to decide we don't have to sell this specific site right now." (Land use planning expert 1, Berlin)

Other community gardens in Berlin and Dublin had sim-ilar experiences, with their sites being put up for sale. While growing initiatives in London also faced precarious access to land, one embraced the spirit of temporality by designing-in mobility, creating garden units in skips, pal-lets and other mobile containers. This ensures that even if sites are subsequently sold, the labour of cultivation (of the soil, plants and people) could be transferred to new locations. The same initiative in London has moved be-yond the use of vacant public land and is working with pri-vate landowners to develop community gardens on their sites. While this approach provides no more guarantee of permanence, they felt that even temporary use of un-derutilised land for gardening is better than no use at all:

> I'm looking at it from the angle saying, well, I'd rather have this land grow food for a couple of years than be rubble and then, you know, being built on. So it's kind of increasing the amount of positive use of the land. And quite a lot of those gardens have started growing…and then the Council saw it was re-ally good, didn't have any other plans [and] kept it. (Multifunctional 1, London)

3.3. Shared Cooking and Eating

In contrast to the concerns noted earlier on the tight control of risk and safety for surplus food redistribu-

tion, shared cooking and eating initiatives were more positive about hygiene regulations, particularly in relation to the skill-shares and cooking classes they provide. However, as such classes are commonly viewed as private groups, they are exempt from EC Food Safety Regulation 852/2004:

> So when we do catering we do [it] outside. We have a rental kitchen. Cooking classes are closed groups, so that's sort of a grey area….But yeah, we don't use this commercially. It's not a commercial kitchen. (Cooking & eating 1, Berlin)

However, there are still barriers with respect to required hygiene training courses, particularly where initiatives explicitly seek to work with vulnerable populations who may face intellectual, linguistic or cultural barriers in undertaking such training:

> If they're going to run these community cooking workshops they need to have at least their Level 2 [hygiene training course] to be able to do that….You can work in a professional kitchen if you have a Level 2. (Cooking & eating 1, London)

Despite the donation guidelines for surplus food developed at the European scale, cooking and eating initiatives working with surplus food commonly mentioned that they still face significant paperwork signing off liability agreements, since many donors fear legal action from recipients:

> That is a big problem generally, as you know…people are terrified of being sued the whole time. So much food gets wasted because people don't want to give it away because they're worried it won't be used properly. (Cooking & eating 1, London)

In Dublin, the landscape of shared cooking and eating is less well-developed than either London or Berlin. This is partly because meeting emergency food needs has typically been provided by the Catholic Church via food banks and drop-in centres. As a result, these initiatives tend to be supported by well-established infrastructures compared to the collective community cooking and eating initiatives found in London and Berlin. However, the specific needs of people seeking asylum are becoming more visible in Dublin as a number of new grassroots initiatives emerge campaigning for people under direct provision to be given the right to cook their own food.

3.4. Surplus Food Redistribution

In the case of surplus food redistribution, the issue flagged by initiatives most often was the burden of food risk policies. However, there are differences in emphasis across the cities: in London the main concern of initiatives was that donors fear liability, and in Berlin it was the

rigid enforcement of legislation by certain local authorities that caused most consternation. In particular, the phenomenon of community fridges has created a flash point for food risk enforcement. At the heart of tensions between sharing initiatives and regulators was a different conception of how risk should be allocated: legislation requires a responsible individual to take the burden of demonstrating adherence to the cold chain as it is being redistributed, while food sharing initiatives often articulated a more commons-based vision of risk and responsibility (Morrow, 2019). As one initiative said:

> [We have] collective ownership and the German law has a real problem with that because…we don't have anyone in charge and this kind of community model where you have eight hundred people who co-own a hairdryer, there's no legal framework for that (Redistribution 1, Berlin)

In another case food redistribution initiatives worked with other environmental and community groups to apply pressure on policy makers to heighten the requirements on waste management for food retailers. In 2019 in Berlin, one initiative working with an environmental organisation launched a petition addressed to the German Minister for Food and Agriculture demanding a legally binding waste ban for supermarkets. In Dublin, one surplus redistribution initiative (Redistribution 2, Dublin) has become a key actor in national and European policy developments focused on reducing food loss and waste, participating in transnational, multi-stakeholder platforms and working groups developing new frameworks for monitoring and managing food waste and actively shaping food policy:

> Ireland doesn't have a Good Samaritan Act which affected retailers willingness to donate food initially, but we worked with them to develop a system that assured all participants (Redistribution 2, Dublin)

In the case of urban foraging, initiatives in Dublin and London mentioned a lack of visible regulations of these practices. This is partly because parks and recreation departments are often poorly equipped and rarely have the resources or capacity to communicate existing regulations better, causing urban food waste. In contrast, one initiative in Berlin lauded the district of Pankow for its commitment to be an 'edible district', which includes encouraging fruit tree planting and loosening laws on urban harvesting.

3.5. Navigating Multiscalar Food Policy Frameworks

Identifying and navigating regulations from across sectors and scales is a challenge for many food sharing initiatives, even where mechanisms to support the governance of urban food more holistically have been developed, as seen in the formation of the London Food Board.

Given the sheer diversity of policy sectors shaping food sharing, as well as the differentiated scalar provenance of policies (i.e., the scale at which policies are formulated) and the different legal status of policies as statutory or non-statutory (Eisenschitz & Gough, 1993), this is unsurprising.

Developed through stakeholder interviews and an analysis of academic and policy literature, Table 2 indicates how policy areas that relate to food sharing can be nested and multiscalar. For example, all three cities have statutory policy documents which regulate land use on the urban scale. However, while planning policy is an entirely urban affair in Berlin, the London Development Plan has to have due regard to national regulation (National Planning Policy Framework) and Dublin's Development Plan is required to respond to guidance formulated at both regional and national scales (Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area and the National Spatial Strategy for Ireland). In the latter two cities food sharing initiatives seeking to influence how they are considered in planning would need to work in a co-ordinated fashion across scales to make a significant impact on policy; a difficult task for any organisation but particularly for those food sharing initiatives which are small-scale and largely operated by volunteers. In contrast to other areas of policy such as statutory food safety legislation, development planning in all three cities has well-established systems for public participation so that food sharing initiatives at least have

clear processes to engage with, providing they can generate the capacity to do so. In addition, there are non-statutory land use strategies and plans in each city which address issues at the urban scale allowing for attention to be given to emerging or context-specific issues of interest to food sharing initiatives. The 2018 London Food Strategy for example, encouraged London Boroughs to:

> Highlight the importance of including food growing spaces in new developments and as meanwhile use on vacant or under-used sites, encourage provision of space for community gardens, and protect existing allotment sites. (Mayor of London, 2018, p. 46)

However, as indicated by the reference to "meanwhile use" the precarity issue is not resolved with this non-statutory strategy.

It is largely within non-statutory policy documents that themes resonating with food democracy are found—sustainability, right to food, participation, and reorienting control. Non-statutory policy documents focusing specifically on the topic of food security are developed at the national level in Germany and the UK, with strategic guidelines for German development policies produced in 2013 and the UK Food Security Assessment conducted 2009. At the urban scale there are no specific documents focusing solely on food security, but the topic is mentioned, to varying degrees, within municipal documents taking a more holistic approach to food (such as

Table 2. Provenance and legal status of policies affecting food sharing.

Scale of plan/ policy formation — Policy areas / Status of plan/policy	Urban Statutory	Urban Non-Statutory	Regional Statutory	Regional Non-Statutory	National Statutory	National Non-Statutory	Supra-national Statutory	Supra-national Non-Statutory
Food safety					Dublin Berlin London		Dublin Berlin London	Dublin Berlin London
Land use planning & urban development	Dublin Berlin London	London Dublin	Dublin		Dublin London	Dublin		
Health & well-being		Berlin London			Dublin Berlin London	Dublin Berlin		
Food security		Dublin London				Berlin London		
Waste	Berlin	Berlin	Dublin		Dublin Berlin London	Dublin Berlin London		
Food system		Dublin London						

the 2018 London Food Strategy and the 2011 discussion document Food and the City produced by the Dublin City Council). However, the Berlin Food Policy Council, founded in 2015 by a group of citizens seeking greater sustainability and justice in the food system and organized explicitly around the motto "food democracy now", is currently discussing the development of an urban food strategy (Ernährungsrat Berlin, 2019). In Berlin, the Food Policy Council has been working towards recognising and uniting diverse food initiatives, including urban food sharing initiatives; acting as a bridging point between local activities and global movements around food democracy. Its leaders are looking to ensure different perspectives are incorporated within the Council as a means to widen the knowledge base and aid integration. They are also building alliances with other cities in Germany and within Europe, as well as with farmers and food processors in the areas surrounding Berlin. However, as noted by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2018), while the mobilization and continued efforts to enact ideals of representation around food by the founding members of the Food Policy Council have been exceptional, any transformations around food will be restricted without engagement with established multiscalar legislative frameworks. Indeed, despite the increased visibility non-statutory developments can give to emerging or cross-cutting food issues, food sharing initiatives focused entirely on statutory policy during interviews about rules and regulations shaping their activities. Certainly, it was the perspective of food sharing initiatives in all three cities that the statutory policies currently in place are not designed to facilitate their practices. Consequently, policies are failing to support food sharing initiatives achieving their goals and are therefore limiting contributions towards greater food democracy.

4. Discussion

This article posed two related questions: it asked whether the goals of food sharing initiatives are promoting food democracy in diverse urban contexts and then explored the extent to which external governing arrangements affect how these initiatives achieve their goals. It is clear from the evidence presented that the urban food sharing initiatives involved in this research all articulated goals that resonate with multiple dimensions of food democracy. However, the initiatives also documented how policies—particularly the heavily regulated sector of food safety—presented challenges for achieving those goals. In both food safety and waste policy arenas the frameworks of legislation have been predominantly designed for large-scale commercial operators and it is hard for grassroots initiatives to meet the increasingly stringent requirements of policy in these areas. The negative impacts of such scalar fixes relating to waste management policies are well-known (Boyle, 2002; Davies, 2008), but it seems that there are similar patterns of scalecraft across food risk policies that

demand further interrogation. It is also the case that the drive to reduce food waste has highlighted the tensions between food safety and food waste management policies. While all initiatives were committed to producing, cooking or redistributing food safely, they took issue with the characterisations of risk and responsibility that legislation articulated. In particular, the framing of their actions as 'business' and the requirement to identify 'responsible' individuals to take the burden of liability in relation to food risk for the initiatives' activities caused concern. In some cases these concerns are ideological and based on the view that food should not be commodified (Vivero-Pol, 2017), in others it is a pragmatic response to the often limited capacities and capabilities within grassroots initiatives to take on the onerous task of accepting responsibility for food risk management. Certainly, the stringent regulations hamper wider participation in surplus food redistribution networks and raise concerns for community kitchens in areas, such as Dublin, without a strong framework to support citizen-driven food provision. Yet, innovative responses are possible, as illustrated by food sharing initiatives in this study that use different forms of ICT alongside face-to-face interactions to facilitate rapid and traceable connections between large numbers of people and between organisations. Adopting such socio-technical innovation reduces the time it takes to get edible food to those who need it and leaves digital traces that can respond to existing food safety demands for transparent information around the movements of food. More detailed research is still needed, however, to fully understand the nature of participation that ICT is supporting and to explore the extent to which these new ways of engaging serve to reorient control within the food system to facilitate both sustainability and the right to food.

The complexity and diversity of specific contexts makes drawing general conclusions around the sharing-democracy-policy nexus difficult and raises questions about the appropriateness of the current 'one-size-fits-all' policy approach. Community gardens and all their social, economic and environmental benefits not being considered as worthy of protection in development plans, for example, limits the possibilities for communities to collectively reorient control of their urban food systems. Even when there is the political willingness to include food growing in local plans, the scalar differentiation in policy formulation discussed in this article can hamper its actualization. Local authorities are becoming more cognizant of this, as clearly stated by the Mayor of London (2018, p.46) Sadiq Khan in the London Food Strategy: "Not everything that can be done to improve good food growing is within the Mayor's powers." Nonetheless, there are ways to respond to this situation, as illustrated by the shared growing initiative 596 Acres in New York, which has been supporting community gardens to seek reclassification of their gardens as green spaces protected through planning regulations. While this service is currently suspended due to resource and

capacity constraints, and because of a lack of progress in securing the founders' vision of diverse participation in the endeavour (Davies, 2019), the concept has demonstrated the potential benefits of collective action by food sharing initiatives to increase visibility and take on the complexities of urban planning processes. Research has shown that having such champions for food sharing initiatives alongside a web of supports from other community organisations can help to create a more resilient ecosystem of sharing (Edwards & Davies, 2018) to assist initiatives in achieving their goals.

Despite the focus of food sharing initiatives on the constraints of statutory policy in relation to their activities, research underpinning this article found that cities with a better developed infrastructure of non-statutory policy (including holistic plans, policy statements or deliberative for a) also tend to have a denser and more diverse landscape of urban food sharing initiatives. Where such supports are lacking, as in Dublin, initiatives tend to be sparser and more fragile. Certainly, non-statutory documents are more likely to embrace the themes that lie at heart of food democracy, marking an initial discursive shift in the way food is approached by public authorities, even if the ripples from this shift have yet to reach statutory policy landscapes.

5. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how there are clear intersections between food sharing initiatives and food democracy. However, it also flagged the concerns of food sharing initiatives that statutory policies do not support them to achieve their food democracy goals. While the research also found that non-statutory food policies were more likely to include statements of support for food sharing activities (and their dimensions of food democracy), their lack of legal status meant that they were not seen as powerful tools by food sharing initiatives. This is particularly the case in relation to well-being and the right to food where there is a paucity of statutory policy to operationalise. Further research is needed to help discern how and where such non-statutory policies exert influence and whether there are any trends towards formalising these non-statutory supports.

Beyond the consideration of formal policies and plans, we need creative ways of thinking about how urban food governance should evolve to support food democracy, through food sharing and otherwise. This will require multi-stakeholder engagement and not just with mainstream incumbents in urban food systems (which clearly influence the shape of the current policy landscape), but also including grassroots food initiatives, start-up food entrepreneurs and the multitude of often invisible community initiatives that fly under the radar of policy or which are so severely disciplined by policy demands that their presence and impacts are much diminished. Specifically, we need to think about a means to create influential spaces to consider food policy in the round

at the urban scale and the implications of this for institutional arrangements within urban authorities. Tweaking existing structures, or inserting food matters under the remit of existing policy departments, may not be sufficient and likely requires a more radical departure from established policy areas at the urban scale.

It is also important to recognise that food sharing initiatives often have their own detailed codes of conduct shaping their practices and decisions even in the absence of statutory and non-statutory policy frameworks. We need further interrogation of the complementarities and tensions between these internal and external governance arrangements. Nonetheless, this article demonstrates the potential for ICT-mediated food sharing to further democratise urban food systems. This is significant, but the influence of food sharing needs to be recognised by policy. Following De Schutter (2014), it is only through harnessing people's knowledge and skills, and ensuring their needs and preferences are designed into ambitious and holistic food policies across all scales that we will arrive at food systems that are built to endure.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

References

Biewener, C. (2016). Paid work, unpaid work, and economic viability in alternative food initiatives: Reflections from three Boston urban agriculture endeavors. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, Community Development*, *6*(2), 35–53.

Boyle, M. (2002). Cleaning up after the Celtic Tiger: Scalar 'fixes' in the political ecology of Tiger economies. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *27*(2), 172–194.

Cretella, A. (2019a). Alternative food and the urban institutional agenda: Challenges and insights from Pisa. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *69*, 117–129.

Cretella, A. (2019b). *Between promise and practice: Exploring the politics of urban food strategies in European cities.* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam.

Davies, A. R. (2008). *Geographies of garbage governance: Interventions, interactions and outcomes*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Davies, A. R. (2019). *Urban food sharing: Rules, tools and networks*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Davies, A. R., Edwards, F., Marovelli, B., Morrow, O., Rut, M., & Weymes, M. (2017). Making visible: Interrogating the performance of food sharing across 100 urban areas. *Geoforum*, *86*, 136–149.

Davies, A. R., & Legg, R. (2018). Fare sharing: Interrogating the nexus of ICT, urban food sharing, and sustainability. *Food, Culture & Society*, *21*(2), 233–254.

Davies, A. R., & Weymes, M. (2017). *SHARECITY Briefing Note 2: SHARECITY Profiles*. Dublin: SHARECITY. Retrieved from http://sharecity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Briefing-Note-2-City-profiles.pdf

Davies, A. R., & Weymes, M. (2018). *SHARECITY Briefing Note 3: Communicating goals and impacts of food sharing in online spaces*. Dublin: SHARECITY. Retrieved from https://sharecity.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SHARECITY-Briefing-Note-3-Goals-and-Impacts.pdf

De Schutter, O. (2014). Democracy and diversity can mend broken food systems. Final diagnosis from UN right to food expert. *UN Special Rapporteur 2008–2014*. Retrieved from http://www.srfood.org/en/democracy-and-diversity-can-mend-broken-food-systems-final-diagnosis-from-un-right-to-food-expert

Deakin, M., Borrelli, N., & Diamantini, D. (2016). *Milan's urban food policies as smart city governance developments*. Milan: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli.

EcoNexus. (2013). *Agropoly. A Handful of corporations control world food production*. Retrieved from https://www.econexus.info/sites/econexus/files/Agropoly_Econexus_BerneDeclaration.pdf

Edwards, F., & Davies, A. R. (2018). Connective consumptions: Mapping Melbourne's food sharing ecosystem. *Urban Policy and Research*, *36*(4), 476–495.

Eisenschitz, A., & Gough, J. (1993). *The politics of local economic policy: The problems and possibilities of local initiative*. London: Macmillan.

Elver, H. (2014). *Access to justice and the right to food: The way forward. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Agenda item 3*. Retrieved from https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Documents/A_HRC_28_65_en.doc

Ernährungsrat Berlin. (2019). Ernährungsstrategie: Update durch die Senatsverwaltung [Berlin's food stategy: An update by the Senate of Berlin]. Retrieved from http://ernaehrungsrat-berlin.de/2019/02/16/ernaehrungsstrategie-update-durch-die-senatsverwaltung/

Harris, J., Dougill, A., & Owen, A. (2015). *Feeding a city: What do academic researchers think should be on the urban food system's plate.* Paper presented at the International Sustainable Ecological Engineering De-sign for Society (SEEDS) Conference 2015.

Hassanein, N. (2003). Practicing food democracy: A pragmatic politics of transformation. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *19*(1), 77–86.

Hassanein, N. (2008). Locating food democracy: Theoretical and practical ingredients. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition*, *3*(2/3), 286–308.

Hasson, A. (2019). Building London's food democracy: Using a political space framework to assess the contributions of urban agriculture to local food decision-making. *Politics and Governance*, *7*(4), 154–164.

Hawkes, C., & Halliday, J. (2017). *What makes urban food policy happen? Insights from five case studies*. Retrieved from http://www.ipes-food.org/images/Reports/Cities_full.pdf

Johnston, J., Biro, A., & MacKendrick, N. (2009). Lost in the supermarket: the corporate-organic foodscape and the struggle for food democracy. *Antipode*, *41*(3), 509–532.

Lang, T. (1999). Food policy for the 21st century: Can it be both radical and reasonable. In *For hunger-proof cities: Sustainable urban food systems* (pp. 216–224). Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Levkoe, C. (2006). Learning democracy through food justice movements. *Agriculture and Human Values*, *23*(1), 89–98.

Mackenzie, S. G., & Davies, A. R. (2019). SHARE IT: Co-designing a sustainability impact assessment framework for urban food sharing initiatives. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, *79*, 106300. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eiar.2019.106300

Mann, A. (2015). Food democracy: Why eating is unavoidably political. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/food-democracy-why-eating-is-unavoidably-political-43474

Mayor of London. (2018). *The London Food Strategy: Healthy and sustainable food for London*. Retrieved from https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/final_london_food_strategy.pdf

Moragues, A., Morgan, K., Moschitz, H., Neimane, I., Nilsson, H., Pinto, M., . . . Halliday, J. (2013). *Urban food strategies. The rough guide to sustainable food systems*. Retrieved from https://agri-madre.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Urban_food_strategies.pdf

Morgan, K. (2009). Feeding the city: The challenge of urban food planning. *International Planning Studies*, *14*(4), 341–348.

Morrow, O. (2019). Sharing food and risk in Berlin's urban food commons. *Geoforum*, *99*, 202–212.

Reed, M., Curry, N., Keech, D., Kirwan, J., & Maye, D. (2013). *City-region report synthesis (SUPURBFOOD)*. Gloucester: Countryside and Community Research Institute.

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. (2018). Berlin is hungry for food sovereignty. *Food Democracy Now… How?* Retrieved from https://www.fooddemocracyhow.net/blog/2018/11/5/berlin-is-hungry-for-food-

sovereignty

Sieveking, A. (2019). Food policy councils as loci for prac-
tising food democracy? Insights from the case of
Oldenburg, Germany. *Politics and Governance*, *7*(4),
48–58.

Sonnino, R. (2017). The cultural dynamics of urban food
governance. *City, Culture and Society*(In Press, Cor-
rected Proof).

Vivero-Pol, J. (2017). Food as commons or commodity?
Exploring the links between normative valuations
and agency in food transition. *Sustainability*, *9*(3),

442.

Welsh, J., & MacRae, R. (1998). Food citizenship and
community food security: Lessons from Toronto,
Canada. *Canadian Journal of Development Stud-
ies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*,
19(4), 237–255.

Wiskerke, J. S. (2009). On places lost and places re-
gained: Reflections on the alternative food geogra-
phy and sustainable regional development. *Interna-
tional Planning Studies*, *14*(4), 369–387.

About the Authors

Anna R. Davies is Professor and Chair of Geography, Environment and Society at Trinity College Dublin,
Ireland, where she directs the Environmental Governance Research Group. A Member of the Royal
Irish Academy, Anna is widely published in the fields of environmental policy, sustainability and con-
sumption. She regularly advises governments on matters of environmental governance and is currently
(2015-2021) a member of Ireland's National Climate Change Committee and the International Science
Council (2018-2021). She is Principal Investigator of the ERC funded SHARECITY project.

Agnese Cretella is a Social Scientist whose research examines the intersection of food and urban stud-
ies. She holds a PhD from the University of Amsterdam and was previously a Marie Curie Fellow at
Wageningen University. Her current academic work focuses on urban food governance—including
food strategies, policies, ventures, social and cultural movements. She joined SHARECITY in 2019 as a
Post-Doctoral Researcher to examine the governance of urban food sharing.

Vivien Franck is an Urban Ecologist with an interest in urban agricultural research and science com-
munication. She has previously worked on various interdisciplinary projects in urban food and water
research, including the ROOF WATER-FARM project in Berlin. Vivien holds an MSc in Urban Ecosystem
Sciences and a BSc in Biology. She is a Researcher with SHARECITY.