

# From policy to action: how policies inform actions that city planners can take to support health

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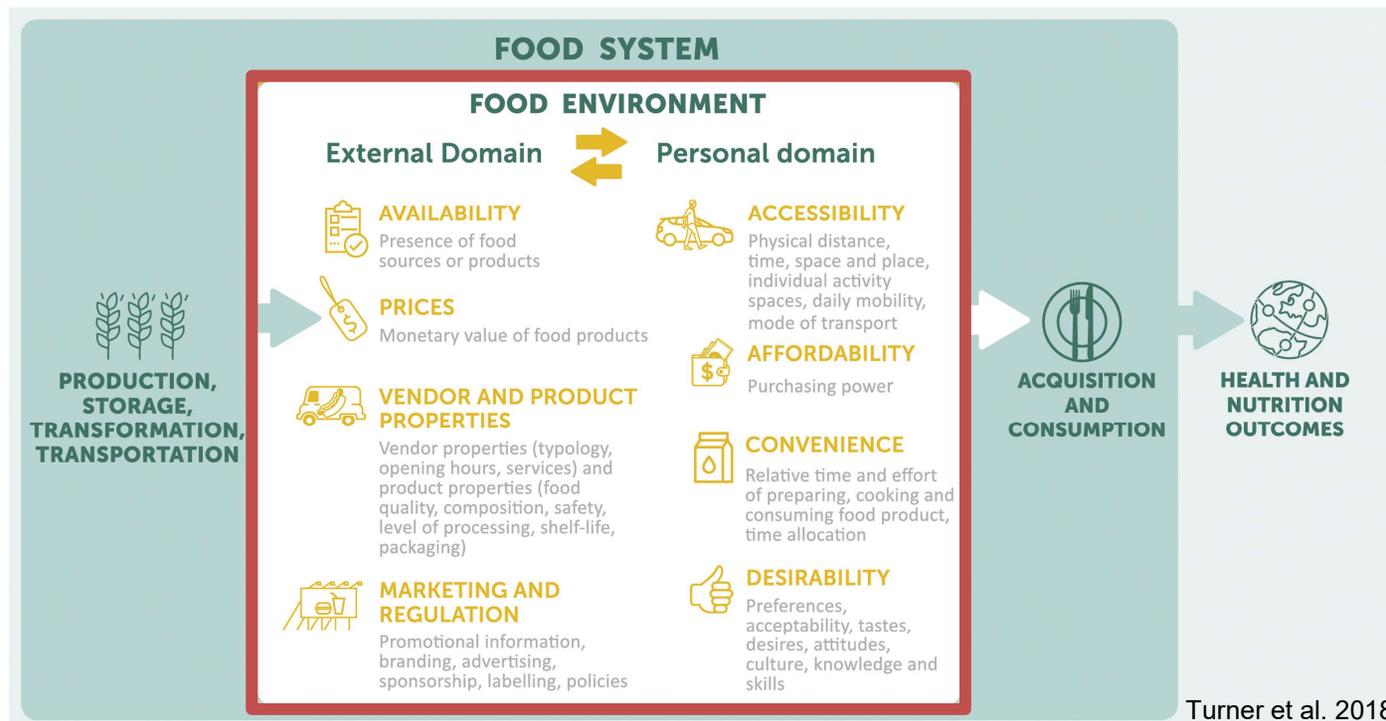


# A systems perspective

The food system is the interconnected system of everything and everybody that influences, and is influenced by, the activities involved in bringing food from farm to fork and beyond



# Navigating the urban food environment



# Examples of policies and initiatives to improve the urban food environment

- Halve the percentage of children who are overweight at the start of primary school and obese at the end of primary school, and to reduce the gap in childhood obesity rates between the richest and poorest areas
- Provide permanent and reliable access to adequate, safe, local diversified, fair, healthy and nutrient-rich food for all citizens.
- Economic development initiative that aims to attract fresh food retailers to urban and rural underserved communities.



Complex issues. Multiple interventions needed!

# Examples of interventions

- **Create fast food exclusion zones around schools**
- **Transform abandoned and neglected spaces into commercial food production spaces**
  - Underground parking lots become spaces to grow mushrooms and other darkness-loving crops
  - Identify spaces like rooftops that can be occupied by urban fish farmers
  - Create incentives for local businesses to utilise these healthy foods products
- **Create community spaces**
  - Design common spaces for people to convene and eat together
  - Develop communal cooking spaces (community kitchens)
  - Allocate space for community gardening that is accessible without a car
- **Create spaces where fresh markets can be held**
  - Consider permanent and temporary spaces for fixed and mobile services
- **Encourage entrepreneurship and allow access to space to test out new ideas**

# New kid on the block

- **Digital food environments - *our working definition*:**  
Digital food environments are online settings where flows of services and information influence food and nutrition choices and activities. These include social media, digital health promotion interventions, digital food marketing, **online food retail, food delivery apps and meal delivery services.**

# Understanding online food delivery

- The coronavirus pandemic has influenced online food delivery
- Online food delivery sector in the WHO European Region is still very young
- European online food delivery market
  - in 2020 = €11.56 Billion
  - In 2026 = €16.98 Billion (estimate)
- Why people like food delivery:
  - social occasion
  - working outside regular hours
  - time-constrained
  - a treat or out of convenience



Sources: EITFOOD, 2020;  
researchandmarkets.com

# What's the concern?

- Ultra-processed food and food prepared outside the home tends to be less healthy than meals prepared (e.g. Summerbell, 2009; Bezerra, 2012; Action against Salt, 2020)
  - more energy-dense and nutrient-poor
  - containing higher amounts of salt, trans and saturated fats and free sugars
- Food delivery apps extend the reach of physical food environments (Skovgaard et al, 2021)



# Other concerns

- Safety of the drivers (the delivery people): “I can’t bear the thought of someone dying delivering me a McFlurry.” (Tovey, 2021)
- Some municipalities cannot handle the increase in food packaging waste!
  - European Union, an estimated 2025 million takeaway containers are used annually (Gallego-Schmid et al., 2019)
- London: A meal delivered by car is responsible for approximately 1300 times the distance travelled and 200 times the greenhouse gas emissions of a heavy goods vehicle per tonne delivered (Allan et al., 2021)

# What's the concern? (cont.)

- New phenomenon, very limited pool of evidence
  - **Brazilian study of 362 commercial food establishments** (Horta et al., 2021)
    - Ultra-processed beverages and ultra-processed ready-to-eat meals make up the vast majority of what is on offer in MDAs
  - **Two-city study (Auckland and Sydney) evaluated the characteristics and nutritional quality of popular food outlets on UberEATS®** (Partridge et al., 2020)
    - 85.9% of all popular menu items provided by online food delivery platforms were energy-dense, nutrient-poor discretionary foods

# Our current work on the topic

- Investigating apps that facilitate the delivery of snacks and fast food, using artificial intelligence (AI) to assess nudging as a marketing mechanism
- Assessing the nutrient content of products from supermarkets with an online presence and is developing new tools that use machine learning to monitor interfaces
- Extracting menu and nutrition information from restaurants and food outlets using an intelligent machine-learning technique
- Investigating the present and future impacts of the digital food environment on human health and nutrition





In the spirit of co-creation  
*how do you harvest fresh ideas?*

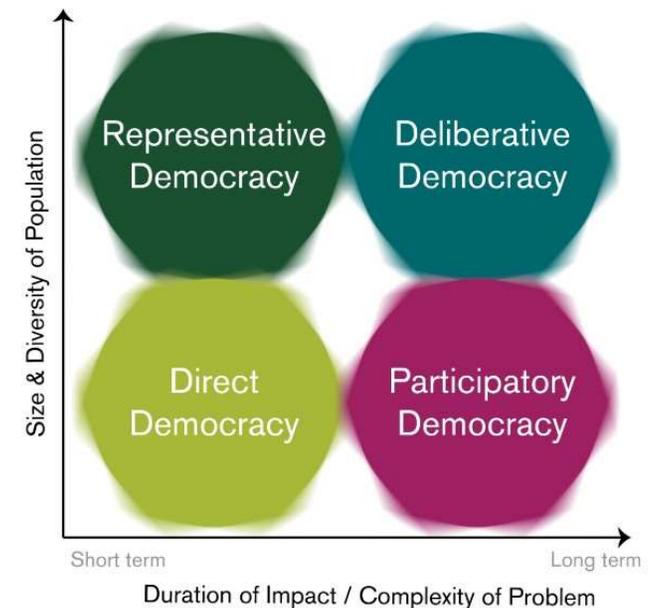
# Food policy councils

- **Food policy councils** bring community members together with local government to promote the social, economic and environmental health of local and regional food systems.
- Involve a variety of stakeholders from different segments of the local food system.
- Councils are created through governmental action or grassroots efforts



# Deliberative democracy

- Public authorities from all levels of government increasingly turn to Citizens' Assemblies, Juries, Panels and other representative deliberative processes to tackle complex policy problems
- Deliberative processes can lead to better policy outcomes, enable policy makers to make hard choices and enhance **trust** between citizens and government
- Deliberative processes aim to be representative
- Proposed solutions are often longer-lasting as they are more desirable to the public

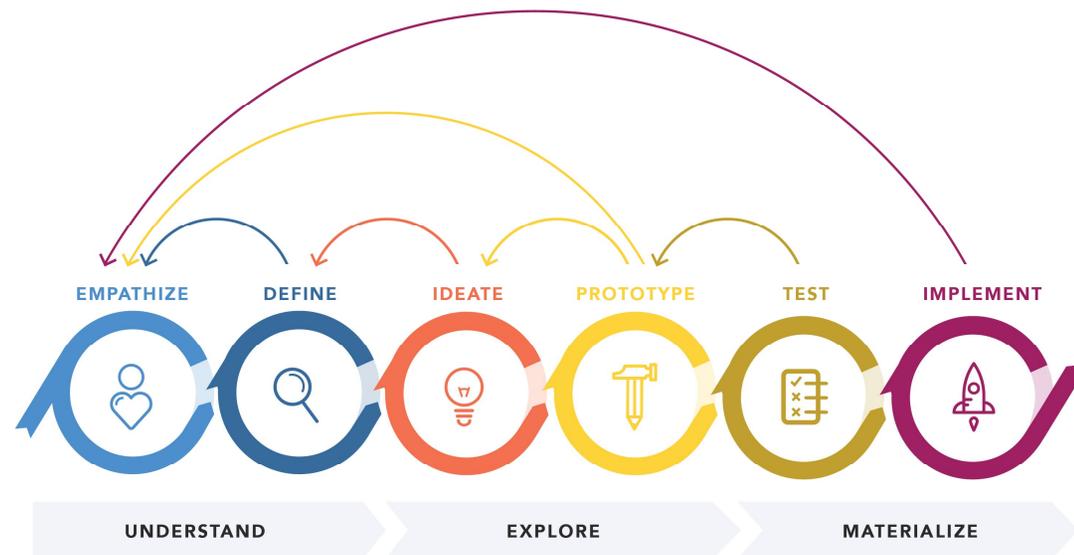


OECD, 2020

RSA, 2018

# Hackathons

- Formulate the challenge
- Announce and promote the challenge
- Teams formed
- Set time provided to address the challenge
- Ideas are pitched
- Best ideas can be implemented



Semplo, 2017

# Who is involved?

*The collective challenges that we face require us to collaborate  
Every city is different. You'll need to map the most relevant stakeholders. Here are a few examples:*

## **Public agencies**

- Relevant municipal/city departments (urban development, public health, culture and recreation, economic development, etc.)
- Relevant ministries
- Mayor's office

## **Social organizations**

- Community-based organisations
- Consumer organisations
- Health promotion groups
- Citizens councils

## **Private sector**

- Local businesses (retailers, restaurants, etc)
- Entrepreneurs
- Innovation hubs
- Food producers
- Developers

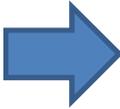
## **Public institutions**

- Hospitals
- Daycares
- Schools

## **Research institutions/universities, media**



## Potential barriers and how to overcome them

- Awareness of issues and responsibilities
  - Political will
  - Time and financial constraints
  - Conflict with other priorities
  - Policy vacuum
  - Sphere of influence of one single actor
- 
- Facilitate collaboration across city agencies and departments
  - Enhance stakeholder participation
  - Identify, map and evaluate local initiatives
  - Develop or revise urban food policies and plans
  - Develop or improve multisectoral information systems for policy development and accountability

# Get in touch



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