

Navigating Change: Municipalities at the Wheel of Urban Food Policy

An insight into values and approaches within Dutch municipalities in governing food system transitions



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An insight into values and approaches within Dutch municipalities in
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Abstract

As the final research work of the Bachelor's programme Geography, Planning and Environment, this thesis explored the newly emerging role of municipalities in the Netherlands in cultivating local food system transitions and specifically which underlying values colour the different approaches of municipalities. Over the past decades it has increasingly become clear that our global food system goes hand in hand with many surfacing social, economic and environmental problems. The erosion of soils, the loss of biodiversity for the sake of agriculture, pollution due to harmful chemicals, unaffordability of healthy food and a growing number of citizens coping with obesity or other health issues are all negative consequences currently troubling the realms of both the global and Dutch food system. Recently, cities are becoming a new focal point of attention in playing a promising role in effectively guiding transformations in the food system and paving the way towards a more sustainable and healthy food system. A new body of research therefore concerns itself with the approaches of municipalities in urban food governance by developing urban food policies. However, the ways forwards in achieving an improved food system are contested and consist of conflicting values and views. Consequently, reaching coherence between such different perceptions and other manners of prioritization of policy goals, is a challenge. This thesis therefore aimed to answer the question: 'How do values shape the engagement of Dutch municipalities in food policy?' The results showed that it could on the one hand be said that the engagement of most municipalities in the Netherlands is still in its infancy, and it might therefore be too soon to determine to what extent values within municipalities are actually influencing food policy engagement. On the other hand, certain dynamics of where values are certainly at play could still be distinguished. The most significant in this case seemed to be that the current views on food policy and the food transition within municipalities could be pinpointed as views informed by values that will lead to somewhat reformist or progressive change in the Dutch food system. By dominantly relying on economic solutions such as true-cost pricing, changes of taxes on healthy foods and regulations in retail locations and placing emphasis on consumer responsibility by focusing on education and nudges in the physical environment, change is still expected to result from market dynamics. Food thus remains a private good that is hoped to be made more affordable and thus accesible but is not guaranteed as a public good by the government.

Content

Abstract	3
1. Introduction.....	5
1.2 Research objectives.....	7
1.4 Research questions.....	7
1.5 Relevance	7
1.5.1 Scientific relevance.....	7
1.4.2 Societal relevance.....	8
2. Literature review	10
2.1 Previous research on food system values and food policy	10
2.1 Theoretical framework.....	12
2.1.1 Food governance and urban food policies	12
2.1.2 Value-laden stances towards the future food system	14
3. Methodology	16
3.1 Data collection.....	16
3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews	17
3.1.2 Structured survey	19
3.2 Data analysis.....	21
3.2.1 Interviews and document analysis.....	21
3.2.2 Survey analysis	21
3.3 Limitations.....	22
4. Results	23
4.1. Perceived role in changing the food system within municipalities	23
4.2 How food fits into the responsibilities of the municipality	27
4.3 Prioritization of different challenges around food.....	31
4.4 Expression of public values about food.....	34
5. Discussion	40
6. Conclusion and recommendations.....	44
7. Critical reflection	45
8. References	47

1. Introduction

Over the past decades it has become increasingly clear that the global food system is responsible for significant environmental impacts (Holden et al., 2018). Global food systems are found to be responsible for one third of greenhouse gases worldwide (Crippa et al., 2021) and are thus a sector for concern in contemporary society where sustainability issues have gained more and more attention. Food security and safety in a world with growing population numbers and environmental pressures due to climate change and biodiversity loss, is a pressing issue that requires solutions (Garnett, 2013). Having sufficient and healthy nutrition lies at the core of human existence which makes food security an urgent global problem (Garnett, 2013). A growing recognition among scientists, policy makers and civil society for the need of making changes to the current food system to ensure a sustainable food supply is therefore starting to emerge (Dengerink et al., 2022).

Especially since the start of the recent war between Russia and Ukraine, there has been brought new attention to the sensitivity of our complex global food production network and how availability and access to food within cities is dependent on globally distributed connections and corporate powers (Hassen and El Bilali, 2022; Pahun and Fouilleux, 2022). Global conflict has shed a new light on the dependency of current food supply chains feeding cities on other geographical areas and on how effects of food production and consumption are spread across time and space (Jagtap, 2022). These problems, paired with a growing concern of health problems such as obesity and diabetes among citizens, have led to cities across the globe taking the lead in finding new ways to ensure healthy, sufficient and sustainable diets for citizens.

In this context, cities are receiving increased attention as key entities for shaping sustainable food environments. This is because in contrast to international and national governance levels, local city governments are thought to be better able to recognize the interrelated problems of the food system and may be able to respond more quickly and effectively while including more place-specific actors (Zerbian & de Luis Romero, 2021). With nearly two-third of the world population now living in urban environments, the city is now seen as a main site where the problems of the food chain meet its consumers (Moragues-Faus, 2013). The capacity of city governments to engage with societal actors in proximity and the ability to shape context specific policies, has sparked the idea that the urban can be the vehicle towards food system transformations (Sonnino et al., 2019). This promising role of cities is therefore also being acknowledged in international spheres such as the United Nations where the significance of cities and food is recognized on the New Urban Agenda (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021) and national and international networks among cities for sharing experiences in tackling urban food challenges have started to emerge (Pahun and Fouilleux, 2022). New developments in the field of food governance such as food policy councils and urban food policies have consequently been introduced (Mendes, 2008, Sonnino et al., 2019).

A new body of research explores the roles of municipalities in guiding urban food governance by developing such urban food policies (Mendes, 2008). Accordingly, municipalities around the world have started to cautiously engage in shaping integrated food policy, suggesting a promising role in taking the initiative in paving the way to a future sustainable food system (Sibbing, Candel and Termeer, 2019). However, similar to urban food governance, urban food policy is still defined as a relatively unclear concept among scholars that knows a variety of definitions (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021). Not surprisingly, the lack of consensus on what the concept of food policy looks like, often leads to conflicting interpretations (Candel & Pereira, 2017). Whereas some city governments may give more attention to ensuring equal access to food for all citizens others may be

more concerned with increasing the offer of healthy foods or the reduction of food waste (Baker & de Zeeuw). Accordingly, achieving coherence between such competing perceptions and differences in prioritization of policy goals that logically follows, is a challenge.

Aside from diverging perceptions on the contents and structure of shaping food policy in local governments, another body of literature emphasizes the heated debates in society surrounding the nature and root causes of the problems in the food system. Different actors are for example emphasizing the need to produce sufficiently for a growing population while others may be more concerned with finding new ways to more fairly distribute the current amounts of production, whereas yet another group of people finds itself focusing on the lack of circularity and high amounts of waste in the food system (Dengerink et al, 2022). As Garcia-Gonzalez and Eakin (2019) explain, it is vital to view the journey towards food system sustainability as a value-related concept since it is based on ideas of what the future of the food system should look like and which actions should be taken. Although failure of the food system seems to be clear, a consensus of what the failure actually is, and therefore also what the improvements should be, is lacking (Béné et al., 2019). Therefore, values that food system actors and policy makers hold, play a significant role in which aspects of the food system will be prioritized (Garcia-Gonzales and Eakin (2019).

Also in the Netherlands, city governments have started to gradually take up a role in food governance. Recent research centered around integration of food in municipalities in the Netherlands however argues that Dutch municipalities have only moderately started to include food into their policies, thus focusing on partial food related objectives rather than making holistic changes to the food system (Sibbing, Candel and Termeer, 2019). Taking up a role in food policy development as a municipality means finding new ways to effectively find a place for food into the organizational structures and to integrate the theme in such a way that food is being committed to from the various existing domains that it is related to. To do so, food policy commitments should not only be bundled in an encompassing food strategy or policy, but also, if not more important, be fitted across existing policy domains (Candel and Pareira, 2017). Along these lines, Candel and Pareira (2017) stress that the way food policy development deals with food system challenges and how these are prioritized, is highly dependent on the underlying positionalities of those involved in formulating policy since they hold different perceptions about the importance of the respective challenges. As became clear in the work of Emas and Jones(2022), municipal officials often take a skeptical stance against spending public finances on urban food system issues rather than other societal and economic needs. Similarly, Zerbian et al. (2022) drawing on the case of Preston, England argued that the issue is not whether local governments can boost local food sustainable food systems, but that is a matter of why and how they prioritize food systems.

Consequently, while there seems consensus that local governments do have the potential to actively take a leading role, the values assigned to the importance and urgency of the theme may be seen as key drivers as to whether this potential is realized. As described by Haysom (2015), a prior step in engaging in urban food governance should be identifying the core food system values that inform the approach of actually governing food. Therefore, this research combines the strand of urban food governance literature and the strand of literature exploring diverging food system values. In doing so, this thesis takes a deeper dive into the views and underlying values of Dutch municipalities regarding food challenges and their perceived role and responsibilities in guiding food system changes and engaging in food policy at the city level in the Netherlands. Adding to the work of Sibbing, Candel and Termeer (2019) who already focused on the extent to which food policy has been integrated into various municipalities in the Netherlands, this thesis will instead explore how and according to which underlying values food policy is being integrated into municipalities and how civil servants are

engaging with food as a new emerging policy theme, considering the competing perspectives of the problems and solutions in the food system (Béné et al. 2019; Garcia-gonzalez & Eakin, 2019, Garnett, 2013).

1.2 Research objectives

As the academic literature points out, establishing the role and approach to steering food issues on the urban level is still a search. Moreover, debates exist on what is regarded as good and desirable in future food systems. The question of how municipalities in the Netherlands value and consequently commit to steering food system characteristics is therefore yet unanswered. The objective of this research is therefore to: 1) determine underlying food system values within municipalities in the Netherlands and 2) how municipalities accordingly integrate food policies into their organisation.

By accomplishing this objective, values within Dutch municipalities are made explicit, serving as pillars to build further collaboration upon and it may become more clear what urban food policies look like in the Dutch context. With the insights that this thesis gives, the potential that municipalities hold for playing a role in incentivizing and accelerating the route of change in the Dutch food system, as well as the values and norms of civil servants that form a barrier or opportunity for increasing their role, become more clear. These insights regarding the values and norms of civil servants towards food questions, are valuable for discovering on what grounds civil servants take action and make decisions regarding food in the urban and to what extent food is prioritized on the agenda of municipalities

1.4 Research questions

In order to meet the research objective, the corresponding research that has been formulated, is as follows:

How do values shape the engagement of municipalities in food policy?

The main research question is divided into the following set of sub-questions:

- *How is the municipal role in changing the food system perceived in Dutch municipalities?*
- *How are different challenges around food prioritized in Dutch municipalities?*
- *What are perspectives of Dutch municipalities of how food fits into their responsibilities?*
- *How are public values about the food system expressed in Dutch municipalities?*

1.5 Relevance

1.5.1 Scientific relevance

This research will first of all contribute to gaining a better understanding of how the roles and responsibilities in relation to these concepts are understood and engaged with in municipalities in the Netherlands which may in turn lead to developing a more comprehensive definition of these concepts. Moreover, it will contribute to the academic field in such a way that new insights about food system values among policy makers in local governments will be gained. Furthermore, the comprehension of how food policy is integrated into municipalities in the Netherlands, will add to the scientific field that attempts to determine the ways this is done and which factors are of influence, such as values and different perceptions of problem understanding. Once these findings are established, a foundational understanding and basis can be formed from which better collaboration between municipalities and maybe even civil servants within a municipality, can be accelerated so that the transition towards an improved urban food system can be guided in a clearer

way. Moreover, this thesis is additionally relevant to the scientific context of the research programme 'Transition to a Sustainable Food System' set up by the Dutch Research Agenda (NWA) (NWO, 2022). This research is carried out by group of researchers from various Dutch universities and higher education in collaboration with a set of public and private partners. This broad research tries to find how a food system transition towards sustainability in the Netherlands can be realized (NWO, 2022). It attempts in doing so by combining five different research themes or so called work packages (NWO, 2021). It first carries out a broad analysis of the current food system in the Netherlands. In the second work package, various potential future scenarios of a sustainable food system in the Netherlands will be constructed. Thirdly, existing regional food initiatives will be analyzed in order to underpin their influence and their role in the food system transition and to learn lessons from the manners in which they operate successfully or not. Moreover, in work package five, it will look at suitable governance instruments that can be applied in the Dutch context in order to accelerate the transition pathways. Finally, in package four, it aims to analyze all of the other findings from the other packages and determine the complexities and interrelationships so that ultimately an effective approach to the food system transition can be developed.

During the writing of this thesis, the researcher had the opportunity to follow an internship within package five of this broader research. In light of the research objectives of work package five, one of the key questions integrated into this package, is the question of how can be dealt with different kind of values among food system stakeholders. It explores how values influence decision-making around the food transition but also how these values and norms can be taken advantage of in the transition process. The answers to this question can form a foundation to implement fitting governance instruments that will boost change. Consequently, under the umbrella of the objectives of this work package, a value-assessment research was commissioned by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). This assessment was carried out in the form of a survey, set up by a team of researchers of Radboud University among which the researcher of this thesis, to define overlapping or conflicting values among stakeholders. Within this value-assessment research project, is where this thesis is embedded and is thus deemed relevant. This thesis will take a deeper dive into which shared and conflicting values among municipalities in the Netherlands exist and how these values have an effect on how municipalities view their role in the integration of food policy into local policy making. The insights that this thesis will generate, can be used as a basis to fit governance instruments onto processes surrounding food question in Dutch cities, in order to shape an acceleration agenda as is intended in the NWO research. The relevant insights that come forward from this research, although specific and narrowly focused, will provide certain relevant insights that may be adopted into the overarching research of the Dutch food system transition.

1.4.2 Societal relevance

From a societal point of view, this research that explores the values and approaches within Dutch municipalities in food policy engagement, first of all contributes to the twelfth Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations (2015): responsible consumption and production. These development goals work as a guiding framework for global sustainable transitions and are thus relevant on all geographical scales. The UN also highlights the necessity to '*to work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food*' (United Nations, 2021, par. 1). This thesis will contribute to gaining insights (in particular on the transformation of thinking about food) that can support the acceleration and further development of sustainability transformations of food systems in cities in the Netherlands.

Additionally, on a European level, food system transitions have also received renewed attention in the new European Farm-to-Fork Strategy which is a part of the European Green Deal. This strategy is described as a '*new comprehensive approach to how Europeans value food sustainability*' (European

Commission, 2020, p. 4). This states that the creation of improved sustainable and healthy food environments in cities will favour the quality of life for civil society. This thesis will accordingly contribute to gaining insights on how city governments in the Netherlands value certain sustainability aspects in the food system and how this is translated into policy shaping food systems in Dutch cities. This research thus makes such values visible that the strategy tries to change, making it possibly easier to effectively execute the strategy in Dutch cities. Soldi and Cavallini (2020) furthermore address that in a series of case studies conducted throughout Europe, although some aspects of the Farm-to-Fork Strategy were covered, none of the local and regional authorities actively dealt with all of them. This highlights that the active role of municipalities is yet to be developed. This research will indirectly contribute to the development of municipalities in the areas covered by the Farm-to-Fork Strategy by delivering new information about their values and efforts in local food transition governance.

Moreover, several municipalities in the Netherlands have signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, the City Deal Food on the Urban Agenda and the City Deal Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment. These concepts are national and international networks in which the public, civil society and the market work together on food challenges in cities. The Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP) is an international agreement in which the central objective is to empower cities that strive to create more sustainable food systems in their city (MUFPP, 2021). Likewise, the City Deals aim to put food on the political agenda and attempt to do so by working together with authorities from higher levels, knowledge institutes and other stakeholders (Agenda stad, 2021). This research will give insight into which values and policy perspectives on food are shared by municipalities across the Netherlands, or in which values and perspectives they differ. The knowledge that will result from the results of this research, can thus help create an understanding of how municipalities share common thoughts and ideals that can then benefit and support cooperation or help to resolve potential existing conflicts in the cooperation. The results of this research are therefore relevant for understanding the foundational beliefs and values on which decisions about the directions of change in local food systems are made which can help to find leverage points to improve and accelerate existing transition efforts and pathways in cities. Moreover, the results might help civil servants across the Netherlands to learn about the way food is handled in various other municipalities and serve as an inspiration to take up a role in food governance themselves.

Finally, as a significant number of literature highlights, urban problems related to food have increasingly been coming to the fore such as obesity, food waste, overconsumption, biodiversity loss and consumer unawareness of food products. In an age of rapid urbanization where the majority of the world's population now lives in cities, tackling these problems at the city level has become more relevant than ever before. However, as recognized by various authors (Béné et al., 2019) a lack of a common vision of the food transition exists. The results that this thesis will bring forwards will therefore contribute to finding a common ground of food system related values among Dutch municipalities that may help finding a pathway to solve these city problems and creating a more sustainable and healthy living environment for Dutch citizens.

2. Literature review

This research aims to gain a systematic overview of values about food system issues within municipalities in the Netherlands. By drawing from existing relevant literature, an understanding of which food system values exist among food system actors and what the concept of urban food policies entails will be created. Therefore, this paragraph discusses earlier research which will serve as a tool to understand emergent concepts in the collected data later on.

2.1 Previous research on food system values and food policy

As described earlier, the transition journey of the global food system, touches upon rethinking fundamental values surrounding food (Mcgreevy et al., 2022), making room for a vivid debate on the nature of good food, the right to food, policy preferences and views on the relationship of rural life and the urban. The food system transition requires navigating all different pathways in one direction of change which goes hand in hand with political friction and economic resistance. Current debates on dealing with food as a commons or a commodity, quality versus quantity or technological advancement versus localization, are all examples of how the transition is bounded to deal with the deeper values of society. However, it then is essential to question what exactly are underlying food system values or values at all?

Within the literature, a few works are being pointed at when it comes to analysing such values. A key paper that is recognized is the work by Béné et al. (2019). The authors distinguish, four key value-laden narratives about the nature of the food system can be distinguished from the literature: “1) Inability to feed the future world population (food security), 2) inability to deliver healthy diets (nutrition and health security), 3) inability to produce equal benefits (social justice in the food system), 4) unsustainability of the system and detrimental effects on the environment (environmental unsustainability).” (Béné et al., 2019, p. 118). The first believe of the failures in the food system is mainly concerned with the quantities of food needing to be sufficient to feed an increasing world population. Finding ways to enhance the amount of production is therefore highlighted as the key way forward. Complementary to this narrative, the second view’s key concern is the quality of food. From this perspective, sufficiency is already secured, but its nutritional qualities should be enhanced to adequately provide the world population with healthy diets. As Béné et al. (2019,) summarize: instead of how to produce more with less, this frame places its lens on changing nutrition ratio’s and compositions in production of food products. Connected to this discourse, the third interpretation finds itself pointing at unfair power relations and social injustices in the food system as the main problems. Emphasis is hence placed on corporate power and distribution of food being in control of a few powerful players, leading to hunger and malnutrition on some ends and overconsumption and obesity on other ends. Lastly, the fourth viewpoint interprets the food system failures as the adverse effects on the environment and its resources such as the carbon footprint, soil erosion, loss of species and deforestation.

Another body of literature in turn focuses on how exactly to identify such values within food system actors. Belisle-Toler, Hodbod and Wentworth (2021) have applied a mixed methods approach to identifying values of stakeholders in future perspectives of the food system in the city Flint (Southeastern Michigan, USA). The core of their methodology included Q-methodology. The foundation of this method is providing respondents with a set of statements and prepositions and having them rank the different items based on the extent of agreement and/or the extent of importance. In order to develop such statements, dominant and relevant values and beliefs surrounding food systems that emerge from academic literature, can be used to built on. However, the authors of this study found that there exists only a limited amount of literature discussing food system values whereby most literature is also merely focused on production and consumption

related values while also borrowing from environmental value frameworks and social value theory, thus not building on specific food system value theories. Therefore a gap in the literature may be identified that this thesis can partly begin to fill. In their study, Belisle-Toler et al. (2021) made use of a visioning technique prior to the Q-methodological analysis, which included asking questions about the desired state of the food system in the future. In doing so, the authors were inspired by the work of Tadaki, Sinner, and Chan (2017) who distinguished theoretical typologies of values. Here, Belisle-Toler et al. (2021) work from the typology of ‘values as individual priorities’ since this typology is closely connected to the idea of values being fundamental beliefs people hold about a preferable end-state, thus being relevant for the future direction of the food system. Several questions connected to all dimensions of the food system were asked in order to retrieve significant values in the participants. The inductive questions used in the visioning techniques, then resulted in a set of food system related values and according statements were identified that could then be used to be ranked by the respondents (Figure 1).

Values as priorities	Statements
Affordability	Food should be affordable
Comfort and safety	I should feel safe and comfortable in the food system
Common good	The food system should promote public welfare
Convenience	The food system should have convenient food options
Economic justice	The food system should prioritize community outcomes over economic benefit
Economic opportunity	The food system should support local ownership and economic advancement
Education	There should be opportunities to learn food skills (cooking, gardening, nutrition, canning)
Feeling of community	There should be of a feeling of community in the food system
Food diversity	The food system should offer a variety food options
Food waste	The food system should minimize waste
Fresh and natural food	The food system should offer natural food options
Health	The food system should offer healthy food options
Local food	The food system should offer local food options
Proximity	There should be food options close to me
Tradition	There should be respect for tradition in the food system
Urban agriculture	The food system should increase support for urban agriculture

Figure 1 Values used in the Q methodology study by Belisle-Toler et al. (2021, p. 368)

Finally, a final distinction of three clusters in the data that each represented values ranked in a similar way. Each cluster was then perceived as a common view on the desired state of the food system (Belisle-Toler et al., 2021).

Another work by Garcia-Gonzales and Eakin (2019) similarly attempted to pin-point values in various food system stakeholders, among which also public policy makers. Their analysis, which consisted of a combination of interviews and a survey, also showed that the values of the respondents have a significant influence on both their ideal view of a future food system. Their research resulted, similar to Belise-Toler et al. (2021), in a number of core desirable characteristics or values of the future food system. On top of these food system values, this research also focused on what food system actors perceived as the biggest challenges in the food system that need to be tackled in order to reach their desirable food system. Most significant in this study was that besides specific values of the food system, stakeholders also hold different understandings of what the boundaries of the food system are in terms of scale and different endings of the food supply chain (i.e. local, national, international but also production, distribution, consumption) and that there a dividing line between idealized future perspectives and realist perspectives can be drawn.

Relating to the context of municipalities, Mendes (2007) describes how contemporary motives for municipal governments to take up a role in food system challenges mostly exist of two interrelated but also conflicting values: ensuring sustainability and life quality for citizens while also striving for food security and anti-malnutrition. Drawing from observations within Canadian municipalities, the author shows how tensions arise when some approach food policy as building a community-based local food system by putting emphasis on urban agriculture and involvement of local-actors in

production, distribution and decision-making while others approach food policy as striving for food security. From this sustainability perspective, much focus is laid on production aspects of the food system while from the anti-hunger perspective, the concern is improving access for vulnerable citizens, often forgetting about production. Therefore, tensions are observed in finding the right fit of food policy within the administrative structures of the municipality as well as consensus on what the issue is that food policy is centered around.

Adding to this case, another relevant study is the food policy analysis by Baker and de Zeeuw (2015). The authors were able to identify four core objectives forming the underlying basis for municipal policy: 1) Policies targeted at equal access to healthy and safe food for citizens 2) Reduce public health problems such as under or over malnutrition 3) Policies focused on local and or sustainable food production and supply in the city region and 4) improving the environmental sustainability of the city food system. This analysis also pinpointed that almost no urban food policies covered all of these objectives, therefore suggesting that certain food system elements are prioritized more than others. Similar to what Kooijman & Jentoft (2009) confirm: values, norms and principles influence those who are involved in food governance about how society works and thus all governance decisions made. Although values are rarely made visible: 'governance means choosing between them' (Kooijman and Jentoft, 2009, p. 717).

This previous research served as the main basis for the methodological structure of this research which is further explained in Appendix C.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Food governance and urban food policies

Although a precise understanding of governance of food at the urban level is lacking (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021), various work describes its core characteristics. Moragues-Faus (2017, p. 185) define food governance as an umbrella term relating to: *'all modes of governing encompassing activities carried out by different actors to guide, steer, control or manage the pursuance of public goods – such as food security and sustainability'*. Its main characteristics are a change in relationships between the public, private and civil society spheres and the accompanying emergence of food policy councils, which are councils in which different food system actors organize themselves to collectively govern food challenges, and the drafting of food policies (Mendes, 2008; Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021, Oñederra-Aramendi, 2023). The notion of urban food policy in turn generally refers to the processes and contents of policy influencing what types of food and how food is produced, distributed and consumed by which people. The IPBES defines urban food policies as policies: *“seeking to address multiple food system challenges, and typically require multiple local government departments and policy areas to be bridged and novel governance bodies to be established”* (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021, p.5). In this light, Sonnino (2019) has identified a set of core principles that form the basis of urban food policies. First of all, food policies are informed by the principle of system thinking. This principle means that the interconnectedness between different elements of the food system are recognized and that municipalities should connect food to other policy sectors and policy goals. This means working between the different departments and thus taking into account all economic, social and environmental aspects food-related decisions are connected to. Shaping such policy thus means that food is approached in an overarching view, bringing the view of all different departments together. Second of all, the shaping of food policy should include the participation of different non-governmental food system actors. This typically goes hand in hand with the forming of new types of relationships and an active collaboration with civil society. Moreover, food policies should put an emphasis on involving the region to create a effective production and supply of local food. This means making connections with other regional

municipalities, municipal public procurement of local food to enhance this local supply and support of urban agriculture as an alternative to the current global market. Lastly, food policy should be informed by a concept referred to as 'translocalism', meaning that city governments connect themselves in networks with other cities and actors across the urban scale. As the author argues, the key to this principle is the openness of the municipality to share failures and successes and to learn from others within the network in order to continuously improve their practices of urban food governance. The main idea behind these principles is that they inform municipal food policy discourses with the aim to bring both producers and consumers that are now far removed from each other at both end of the food chain, and the different scales of the food system closer together.

In this field of literature, Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) are recognized as among the key authors that first set in motion a recognition for the important role of food in urban environments (Debru & Brand, 2019; Baker & de Zeeuw, 2015) These authors argued that local city governments had until recently not shown an interest in food challenges because the food system first of all was simply not being recognized as something that was leading to problems and it was perceived as a rural issue and not something of concern for cities. However, the latter thought is now increasingly being let go off since, as Moragues-Faus (2013) highlights, over time, cities have taken for granted that sufficient and good food is available for consumption in the urban environment. Moreover, Buchan et al. (2019) add that city planners traditionally held the believe that the food system is driven by market rules and not by public governmental bodies, not equally valuing food as a public good similar to water and the air we breathe. Therefore, Buchan et al. (2019) in this context suggest that local food system aspects were not only not seen, these were merely not values due to neoliberal principles being the bottom pillars of urban planning. As a result, the local food system must first be perceived as a legit municipal government responsibility. Only then, municipalities can start to employ governance tools and shape local food policy (Buchan et al., 2019).

Before diving into the case of food policy in Dutch municipalities, it is important to recognize in this context that the engagement of municipalities with food policy might be difficult to pinpoint since there is a lack of literature describing how to exactly put the instruments to use or in which ways to achieve transformations in the local food system at all (Buchan et al., 2019). To make things even more complex, scholars raise concerns about the fact that the boundaries of the concepts of food governance and food policy are consistently blurring in the scientific literature, where some authors even go so far to saying that the two concepts are nearly being discussed as interchangeable literature (Moragues-Faus & Battersby, 2021). Nevertheless, the distinction is important: whereas governance covers the processes and interactions of steering food issues, food policy comprises the specific food system objectives and through which solutions these can be achieved. The latter concept, is what this thesis will investigate in the Dutch context, specifically focusing on the underlying values that implicitly shape the way food policy in Dutch municipalities is being engaged with. In this thesis it will be explored whether these four principles as described by Sonnino (2019) can be found within the food policy practices of municipalities in the Netherlands. By looking for evidence of system thinking, levels of participation, a focus on food production in the region and trans localism, an insight into the engagement of Dutch municipalities with the principles of urban food policy will be created.

2.1.2 Value-laden stances towards the future food system

A relevant perspective on the relationship between values and approaches to food system change, is the theoretical framework introduced by Giménez and Shattuck (2011). These authors propose a framework in which four political and social value typologies within the food system can be distinguished. Each typology can be assigned different characteristics of dealing with the current regime and has its own approach to food and its own discourse and view on generating change to the dominant 'food regime'. The 'food regime', can be described as the dominant underlying rules and way of thinking of the global food system ('the way things are done') (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). The manners in which key actors are related to food and the attitudes towards these relationships are key to the ways the food system is operating and reproduced.

Since the food regime is constantly evolving, it has had different characteristics and related values over time. In order to understand the different stances on the current regime, the past regimes need to be taken into account. In their work, Giménez and Shattuck (2011) sketch an image of the historical developments around the global food regime, highlighting the political and economic landscape of food. The initial global regime can be characterized by cheap food and resources in a time of colonialism and rapid industrialization in Europe (18th and early 19th century). From the mid-19th century onwards, the regime then evolved into a period referred to as the 'Green Revolution' which highlights the diffusion of agricultural technologies across the world and the rise of pesticides, fertilizers and the use of industrial machinery. This first change of the regime, went hand in hand with a weakening role of local farming and an orientation towards the capitalistic world market. At the same time, this trend led to growing inequalities in the system and changing power relations. The third and contemporary regime, came to the fore in the 1980's following economic downfalls, and is characterized by corporate power, trade and restricted rights of governments to regulate food as liberalization of food were to spark new growth of the economy. Since the economic crisis years of 2008-2009, growing attention and efforts for change to the food system have started to emerge but the main focus has not yet fully shifted away from the global market (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). Today's regime is now on the edges of change again, as it is being challenged by food movements that bring forward new perspectives and values on resource depletion, environmental concerns and social inequalities. Figure 2 summarizes the four political and social value typologies as distinguished by Giménez and Shattuck (2011).

The basis for this classification is the perspective that '*food and hunger efforts tend to split ideologically between those that seek to stabilize the corporate food regime, and those that want to change it. This split is further characterized by different tendencies.*' (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 114). On the right side of the framework (Figure 2), 'food movements' are classified. These are political, organizational, technical and entrepreneurial movements that fall among on the ones that want to change the regime. Within these movements that challenge the regime, two typologies 'Progressive' and 'Radical' can be classified. The Progressive trend is mainly concerned making changes *within* the existing economic and political system. Associated values are for example giving attention to sustainable industrial technologies, giving attention to minorities and ignored communities, fair trade and increased quality of food. The Radical typology however, is focused on changing the system *itself*, valuing new market structures, property rights and new ways of dividing resources, land and water. It can be connected to the concept of 'food sovereignty', an ideology in which people have control over their own food. Whereas the progressive movements values local food initiatives, the Radical thought craves reform of the international system.

On the left side of the scheme (Figure 2), the Neoliberal thought can be recognized as keeping the regime as it is. The 'Food Enterprise' narrative within this thought is characterized by values such as

the free-market, efficiency and growth and technological innovation, valuing efficient organizations over local, small businesses and farmers. This narrative is accompanied by the ‘Reformist’ trend which focuses on ‘Food security’, therefore valuing more socially and environmentally friendly alternatives that do fit into the current market structures, economic incentives such as certification or employing the law of supply and demand by influencing consumer choices. The main belief is that eventually, more sustainable market niches will become the new standard, creating changes in the food system through competition. A new problem however, is the divide between higher quality food for a small high-income class and the ‘less quality’ food for the rest of society (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011). The Neoliberal and Reformist thoughts thus represent two different pathways for the future of the food system but each are parallel to the main path of the corporate food regime.

POLITICS	Corporate food regime		Food movements	
	NEOLIBERAL	REFORMIST	PROGRESSIVE	RADICAL
<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Food Enterprise</i>	<i>Food Security</i>	<i>Food Justice</i>	<i>Food Sovereignty</i>
<i>Main Institutions</i>	International Finance Corporation (World Bank); IMF; WTO; USDA; USAID; GAFSP; Green Revolution/CGIAR; Millennium Challenge; Global Harvest; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Cargill; Monsanto; ADM; Tyson; Carrefour; Tesco; Wal-Mart	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank); FAO; HLPF; CFA; CGIAR; IFAP; mainstream Fair Trade; Slow Food; some Food Policy Councils; Worldwatch; OXFAM-AMERICA; CARE; Feeding America and most food banks and food aid programs	CFS; Alternative Fair Trade & many Slow Foods chapters; many organizations in the Community Food Security Movement; CSAs; many Food Policy Councils & youth food and justice movements; Coalition of Immokalee Workers and other Farmworker & labor organizations	Via Campesina and other agrarian-based farmers' movements (ROPPA, EAF, ESAFF); International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty; ATTAC; World March of Women; and many Food Justice and rights-based movements
<i>Orientation</i>	<i>Corporate/Global market</i>	<i>Development/Aid</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>	<i>Entitlement/Redistribution</i>
<i>Model</i>	Overproduction; corporate concentration; unregulated markets and monopolies; monocultures (including organic); GMOs; agrofuels; mass global consumption of industrial food; phasing out of peasant & family agriculture and local retail	Mainstreaming/certification of niche markets (e.g. organic, fair, local, sustainable); maintaining northern agricultural subsidies; 'sustainable' roundtables for agrofuels, soy, forest products, etc; market-led land reform; microcredit	Agroecologically-produced local food; investment in underserved communities; new business models and community benefit packages for production, processing & retail; better wages for ag. workers; solidarity economies; land access; regulated markets & supply	Dismantle corporate agri-foods monopoly power; parity; redistributive land reform; community rights to water & seed; regionally-based food systems; democratization of food system; sustainable livelihoods; protection from dumping/overproduction; revival of agroecologically-managed peasant agriculture to distribute wealth and cool the planet
<i>Approach to the food crisis</i>	Increased industrial production; unregulated corporate monopolies; land grabs; expansion of GMOs; public-private partnerships; liberal markets; microenterprise; international sourced food aid; CAFSPP – The Global Agriculture and Food Security Program	Same as neoliberal but with increased middle peasant production & some locally-sourced food aid; microcredit; more agricultural aid, but tied to GMOs & 'bio-fortified/climate-resistant' crops; <i>Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA)</i>	Right to food; better safety nets; sustainably produced, locally sourced food; agroecologically-based agricultural development; Committee on World Food Security (CFS)	Human right to food; locally sourced, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate, democratically controlled; focus on UN/FAO negotiations
<i>Key documents</i>	World Bank 2008 Development Report	World Bank 2008 Development Report	IAASTD	Declaration of Nyeleni; Peoples' comprehensive framework for action to eradicate hunger; ICAARD; UN Declaration of Peasant Rights; IAASTD

Figure 2 Food system perspectives (Giménez and Shattuck, 2011, p. 117-118).

Adding to the framework of Giménez and Shattuck (2011), another comparable perspective that can be built upon in the theoretical context of this thesis is the analysis of Vivero-Pol, (2017). In his work, the author identifies three political attitudes towards the food system: Gradual reformers, alter-hegemonic transformers and counter-hegemonic transformers. This could be traced back to the theoretical perspective of Giménez and Shattuck (2011), making a distinction between reformists, progressive and radical standpoints (Figure 2) Gradual reformers wish to make mild adjustments while keeping in tact the main characteristics of the regime. The transformers aims to make more drastic changes to the structures and values of the regime. Alter-hegemonic transformers in this case are aware of the faults in the existing regime but recognize the difficulty to change this structure, and thus seek to make incremental changes to the structures (similar to the progressive thought). However, as Vivero-Pol (2017) notes, some researchers have argued that the alter-hegemonic ‘transformers’ may actually not be *that* transformative since it is puts emphasis on consumer responsibility and market competition and thus de-politicizing food by placing the task of transformation on consumers. Consequently, food is valued as a good that consumers can choose instead as a human right that needs to be fulfilled by the state. The ones positioned as counter-hegemonic in the food system however, wish to tackle the fundamental structures from the root and build a new regime based on other values (Vivero-Pol, 2017). These may therefore be considered more transformative.

Vivero-Pol (2017) concludes in his research that the valuation of food as a common or commodity by among others, civil servants, in the food system, is strongly correlated with their political stance regarding the state and future of the food system. Although no causal relationship is determined, the results do indicate that those who view themselves as reformists of the food system, are highly related to viewing food as a commodity whereas those who view themselves as transformers of the

food system, are correlated with valuing food as a commons. The author therefore concludes that even though alter- and counter-hegemonic stances are both seen as transformative, the difference in their approaches may to some extent be explained by their different valuations of food (commons or commodity). Moreover, the results of the analysis by Vivero-Pol (2017), shows how those who view food as a commodity are positively correlated with gradual reformers while this correlation was negative for counter-hegemonic transformers. On the other hand, the opposite applied to the case of valuing food as a common.

Within food regime		New regime	
Neoliberal	Reformist/ gradual reformers	Progressive/ alter- hegemonic	Radical/counter- hegemonic

Figure 3 Comparison of the theoretical perspectives of Giménez and Shattuck (2011) and Vivero-Pol (2017) on political typologies within the food system.

In this thesis, it will be explored whether neoliberal, reformist, progressive or radical tendencies exist that inform the municipal engagement with food policies in Dutch municipalities. In order to so, evidence will be gathered that indicates either neoliberal, reformist, progressive or radical practices and stances within Dutch municipalities, meaning the wish to stick with current market logics, making incremental changes to the structures and relationships or building new structures and rethinking the basic foundations of the food system. By identifying related food system values as described with each stance, such as efficiency and growth, demand driven change, or food sovereignty, a connection between the approaches of Dutch municipalities in urban food policies and these stances will be sought. It will thus be attempted to identify these value-laden stances within the municipalities and search for connections with which principles of urban food policies arise in the food policy practices of Dutch municipalities. By doing so, it can systematically be which values inform Dutch municipalities in food policy engagement and to what kind of transformations in the food system this will lead in Dutch cities.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

This thesis aimed to answer the following research question: *“How do values shape the engagement of municipalities with food policy?”*

In order to so, a combination of methods was used to collect data about the way municipalities view their role in governing food system transitions, how food challenges are handled as a responsibility in Dutch municipalities and how problems and desired characteristics in the food system are valued within Dutch municipalities. To gain both a more broad collection of data and a deeper understanding of the perceptions and ideas embedded in Dutch municipalities, the researched decided to rely on a combination of a structured quantitative survey and ten qualitative semi-structured interviews. Because this allowed the researcher to gain data from various angles, this was considered as an appropriate approach to enhance the validity of the research outcomes.

Since the unit of analysis in this study is the Dutch municipality, the targeted population for the survey was the total number of municipalities in the Netherlands. This more wide-reaching sample,

was contrasted with a case-study for which the population consisted of eight municipalities in the Netherlands that are currently involved in the City Deal ‘Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment’, which will be explained in more detail in the following paragraphs. For these eight municipalities, semi-structured interviews were held with policy makers from the respective municipalities. These eight interviews were supplemented with an expert interviews (an independent food policy advisor), and an interview with the coordinator of the City Deal to provide another perspective on the research question.

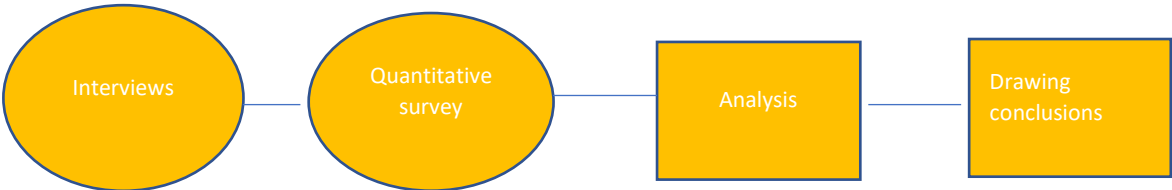


Figure 4 Research process design

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

As explained earlier, for the semi-structured interviews, a case study was selected of the eight municipalities participating in the national City Deal ‘Healthy and Sustainable Food Environments’. These eight municipalities include the following: Haarlem, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Ede, Almere, Wageningen, Utrecht and The Hague. This City Deal was closed in 2021 and will run until 2025 (Agendastad, 2021). Another City Deal named ‘Food on the Urban Agenda’ was commissioned prior to this second deal in 2015, which formed the basis for municipalities to cooperate with and learn from each other and other parties and to identify food related challenges on the urban level. The second deal was formed after the conclusion of this first City Deal that *‘governmental bodies carry the responsibility to provide a healthy food supply that contributes to promotion and protection of public health’* (Agendastad, 2021, p.1). Consequently, the second City Deal formed an interesting starting point as a case study for two reasons:

- 1) the action programs for this deal are still in progress and are thus a topical point of interest and
- 2) participation in this deal is voluntarily and thus indicates a view on food as an important themes on the urban level by the eight involved municipalities.

From the eight municipalities that were interviewed, six (Almere, Amsterdam, The Hague, Ede, Rotterdam and Utrecht) were also involved in the first City Deal Food on the Urban Agenda.

For the eight participating municipalities, interviews with relevant municipal policy advisors/makers were arranged via phone and/or e-mail contact. In doing so, it was asked who in the municipality was responsible for food related issues and/or food policy and the City Deal. Consequently, a range of food policy advisors, public health advisors and circular economy policy advisors were appointed as most suitable for these interviews by the municipalities and have participated in this research (Table 1). Additionally, the expert interview was conducted with a food policy advisor who works for various municipalities, provinces and organizations and who has also conducted various research on food policy in the Netherlands. This respondent was thus considered an expert to the scope of this thesis, given the broad range of food policy related activities and conducted research. The final interview was held with the coordinator and project-leader of the City Deal to get a sense of his experiences in regard to the approaches and views of the participating municipalities (Table 1).

The questions included in the interview guide for the semi-structured interviews with the municipalities were partly based on the value-related literature and partly based on the food governance literature as presented in the previous chapter. The interviews were mostly focused on the governance aspects since the answers to these sub-questions can only be uncovered to a limited extent with the quantitative survey. The semi-structured interview guide included pre-constructed questions and several probing questions so flexibility was allowed for asking context-specific questions. The questions for example related to what kind of policies are established, if a special food council is appointed or being collaborated with, what they perceive as important in the city related to food (e.g urban gardens, short supply chains, access to food, healthy food, supporting small businesses etc.) and on basis of which values they legitimize the decisions that are being made. During the interview process, the interview guide was slightly adapted after reflecting on each interview and experiencing which questions seemed to get the most significant responses. Moreover, due to the flexible nature of the semi-structured guide, it was possible to add questions based on the previous retrieved information in the preceding interviews and ask more specific questions related to the earlier found results. The interview guide can be found in appendix A. The interview guide for the other two interviews were similarly focused on what they valued as important in the food system but were also focused on their beliefs on the views of municipalities in the Netherlands that they work with. This interview guide can also be found in appendix A .

Date interview	Municipality	Interviewee description and no.	Role in Dutch Food system
May 12 th	Amsterdam	1. Food Strategy and Urban Agriculture Advisor	Works from department Space and Sustainability and since 10 years for the topic food strategy. Mainly responsible for action line urban agriculture.
May 12 th	n.a	2. Quartermaster and Food Policy Advisor Food Transition	Used to work as Food Policy Advisor in Ede (first food policy advisor in the Netherlands). Now works independently and for consultancy organization. Work includes educating municipalities about the need of food policy and the importance of food as a theme on the urban level and assisting in developing urban food policy.
May 24 th	Wageningen	3. Food policy officer	Responsible for the municipal food agenda and its execution. Works in a specific food team in the municipality and is also involved in other food movements.
May 26 th	The Hague	4.1 Policy Advisor Public health 4.2 Policy Advisor City Management, Environmental team	Responsible for working on a healthy food environment Responsible for urban agriculture and healthy food environment
June 6 th	Utrecht	5.1 Senior Policy Advisor Healthy Living Environment 5.2 Advisor Public Health	Responsible for making of policy of which partly responsible for a healthy food environment. Also responsible for researching how food as a theme can be taken further within the municipality. Responsible for the theme of healthy school lunches and involved in 'proeftuin' City Deal
June 6 th	Almere	6. Project manager Food Strategy *	Managing projects adopted in the municipal food strategy

June 7th	Ede	7. Food Policy Advisor	Responsible for food vision in the municipality in Ede
June 9th	Rotterdam	8. Policy Advisor Public Health	Works for cluster societal development on the theme of prevention of illness and well-being. Responsible for 'proeftuin' healthy food environment in Rotterdam.
June 9th	n.a	9. Coordinator City Deal	Is end responsible for City Deal and makes sure that the deals made with municipalities are going well.
June 14th	Haarlem	10. Advisor Circular Economy	Responsible for program circular economy and involved in food transition.

**Note: interview 6: program manager food strategy was also supposed to be present but due to health reasons could not be present.*

Table 1 Interviewees

3.1.2 Structured survey

This case-study is complemented with a structured survey. This survey was partly constructed under the overarching value-assessment research project commissioned by RVO as described in the scientific relevance. Therefore, the survey items included in the survey consisted of a combination of context specific questions relevant to the scope of this thesis and a set of questions relating to the slightly broader scope of the overarching project. Consequently, the main structure of the survey also consisted of the main building blocks of the overarching research project and the specific questions for this thesis were embedded in the blocks marked in orange (Figure 5) The complete survey can be found in the appendix.

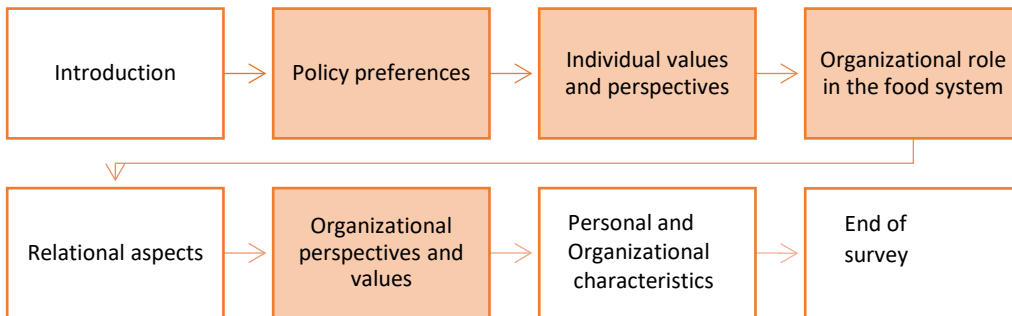


Figure 5 Survey structure

The survey was constructed in Qualtrics and distributed among the municipalities in the Netherlands, based on a list provided by the Dutch government that included contact information of the total number of municipalities (N=342) in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2023). From several (n=17) municipalities, the e-mail addresses were missing. First, a general e-mail containing information about the survey was sent to all these general e-mail addresses asking for a personal e-mail of the relevant person within the municipality to participate. A total of 66 municipalities (including the municipal representatives that participated in the interviews) provided a personal-email addresses. Consequently, the survey was distributed among those addresses. For the remaining municipalities, the survey was sent to the general e-mail addresses. After seven days, a reminder e-mail was sent to ensure a significant response rate. The survey was fielded and left open to be filled in for a two-week period in total due to a limited time frame of the research. This gave respondents 10 working days to complete the survey. Finally, a response rate of 80 municipalities was reached. However, during the analysis it became clear that not all participants completed each question. To include as many relevant views from civil servants as possible, all responses per individual question were kept in the analysis. Therefore, the response rate per question differs in the results but this is clearly indicated in each graph and table included in the results chapter and in the appendix.

During this contacting process for the survey, a variety of responses were received in respect to the survey which strengthened the problem statement that this thesis is focused on. Concerning the 60 municipalities that provided a personal e-mail address, these considered policy makers and advisors from either the sustainability department, economic department, health department or agriculture and nature department to be relevant to participate but no civil servants specifically responsible for food were indicated. Moreover, within most replies it was stated that they were not entirely sure who to appoint this task to or who they viewed as responsible for food. Another set of about 10 municipalities replied that they viewed themselves as not competent enough or developed enough around the theme of food to be able to participate, thus also confirming the problem statement of food lacking as a priority concern in city governments in the Netherlands.

The included question items were roughly based on a selection of the survey items used in the academic literature highlighted in the previous chapter (Belise-toler et al. (2021), Vivero-Pol (2017) and Garcia Gonzalez & Eakin (2019)). The aim of this survey was to identify how municipal representatives prioritize different food system values and to get an insight into a wider range of municipalities aside from the case study. An important note that is often made in literature discussing the role of values in public policy making such as food policy, is that gaps may exist between the values of those representing their organization and their personal values (Pelletier et al., 2000; Firth, 1998). Consequently, it is not only relevant to study values of policy makers within municipalities but also to study the values the municipalities in general express. The methodological focus therefore was placed on finding for evidence of expressed values on both levels. In contrast to this structured survey, the interviews were conducted in a more inductive manner, mostly asking open questions such as 'What are important characteristics of the future food-system in your view?' or 'What do you regard as the biggest challenges in the urban food system?' whereas the structured survey was constructed in a more deductive manner, using likert-scale items, multiple choice questions and picking questions as used in previous studies. The main objective was therefore to uncover personal preferences of desired characteristics of the Dutch food system and underlying values of what Dutch food policy should focus on. The likert-scale items were programmed in such a way, that the individual statements were presented to the respondents in a randomized order. This was done to limit similar statements or contradicting statements being placed close to each other which might influence the train of thought of respondents. By randomizing the statements, they were more likely to be rated independently of each other. The questions included in the survey and the methodological process of the survey construction can be found in appendix C.

Although the work of Belisle-Toler et al. (2021) was dominantly built upon for the methodological foundation of this research, unlike in their work, Q-methodology was decided to not be adopted here. Since it is commonly recommended in Q-methodology for respondents to rank the statements face-to-face (Meehan, Ginart & Ormerod, 2022) and to include post-ranking interviews (Brown, 1993), this method would be too time consuming given the limited timeframe of this thesis and would therefore fall outside the scope of this research. Although, there is a growing body of literature arguing for application of Q-methodology in online surveys, Meehan, Ginart & Ormerod (2022) note that most Q-experts still emphasize the importance of face-to-face data collection for this method. Moreover, although contested, the importance of the researcher to have brief reflective interviews with the respondents about their rationale in rating the statements, so that a deeper understanding can be gained about their train of thought, is often stressed (Brown, 1993). Additionally, due to this method being relatively new, and unfamiliarity with both researcher and supervisors, it was decided to apply another methodological approach. Consequently, in order to still gain a wider reach of respondents, but to also collect more in depth data, it was decided to make use

of both a small number of semi-structured qualitative interviews and a more conventional wide reaching survey that includes likert-scale items.

3.2 Data analysis

3.2.1 Interviews and document analysis

The audios of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed manually in Dutch since this is the language in which the interviews were held. The transcripts of the interviews were then analysed and coded using ATLAS.ti. This analysis took the form of a thematic analysis. This method included identifying themes by coding specific words and language and assigning them to a theme (in this case themes relating to the role of the municipality, responsibilities concerning food and specific values, priorities and perceptions relating to food and the food system transition). The same applied to coding the documents. The analysis held several phases as shown below in the model constructed by Laba et al. (2019, p.5)

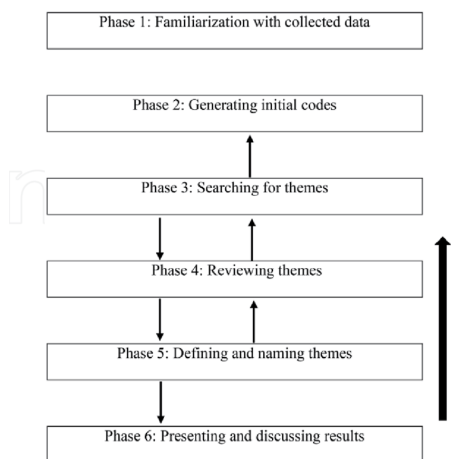


Figure 6 The phases of thematic analysis (Laba et al., 2019, p.5)

As is visible in the figure, the process is not linear but it involved going back and forth between the stages in order to adjust the data and make it fitting to the themes as best as possible. First, initial codes were given to the data. Subsequently, codes were sorted into fitting code groups according to the sub-questions in order to enhance answering the questions in a structured and comprehensive manner. The final code book can be found in appendix B. The advantage of this method is that it gives the space to search for and find themes that emerge from the data. Along this route, new themes that were not thought of beforehand, and possibly not included in the structured quantitative survey, can be discovered and understood. Moreover, the analysis is more rigorous and less superficial than the survey, which will thus result in more insightful answers.

3.2.2 Survey analysis

As described before, the survey was fielded for 14 days. At the end of this time frame, the survey data was imported from Qualtrics into an Excel file. First, the questions that needed to be included in the analysis, were filtered out from the remaining questions that were only relevant for the overarching research project. The selected questions can be found in Appendix D. Secondly, all Likert scale items were quantified by assigning numbers to each answer options from the scale. Multiple choice questions were left the way they were. Subsequently, the frequency of answers was counted for each question and put into tables. Then, the relative frequency was calculated by dividing the frequency of all answers to each Likert-scale item by the number of respondents. Finally, the tables

including the relative frequency were transformed into stack charts to construct a visual presentation of the results and to easily analyze results.

3.3 Limitations

Limitations of the survey is the rigidity of this method. Respondents are forced to rate pre-constructed likert-scale items, leaving no room for expressing their own thoughts. The picture of the value-assessment that therefore results from the survey constructed in this thesis, is thus limited to the values retrieved from selected literature. Respondents may also have a tendency to want to avoid giving extreme answers and therefore center their ratings in the middle of the scale (Taherdoost, 2019). On the other hand, likert-scale items are widely used in different fields of science and can easily generate a reliable scale that is also comprehensible for the respondent (Taherdoost, 2019). Moreover, limits of the interviews is that during the interview process, as gradually a deeper understanding of municipal perspectives was gained by the researcher, the depth and specificity of the questions slightly changed towards the end of the interview process. This, as well as variations in available time of the interviewees, and thus length of the interviews, has to some extent lead to differences in the contents of the interview results and the questions asked. However, the validity of the interviews was maintained by including the same main questions from the interview guide in each interview.

4. Results

This thesis aimed to answer the research question: *‘How do values shape the engagement of municipalities in food policy?’*

The research question was divided into a set of sub-questions that will together lead towards answering this main research question. Consequently, in this chapter the main findings for each sub-question will be presented and described so that the main question can be answered in the final conclusion chapter.

4.1. Perceived role in changing the food system within municipalities

The first sub-question: *‘How is the municipal role in changing the food system perceived in Dutch municipalities?’* aimed to get a grasp on the manner in which Dutch municipal officials view how 1) municipalities can and do currently play a role in governing food and the food transition and 2) how they can play a role themselves within the municipal organization. By taking a deeper dive into how people working within the municipal organizations perceive and value their own role and the role of the municipality, an understanding may be created of how approaches of working towards the future food system may be shaped differently and why. Moreover, differences in roles that are taken by municipal civil servants may be able to say something to what extent food is currently actively being dealt with within the organization.

Before turning to what roles exactly the municipalities are taking in the Dutch food transition, a first observation that emerged from the data was that the engagement of municipalities with food policy differs in terms of what kind of phase the municipality is in. Respondent 7, who works for the municipality of Ede, one of the few municipalities that is most ahead with food policy development, well summarized the different phases of their role in the process towards food policy engagement: *“In the beginning it is very much shaping and lobbying for the theme and presenting it in this way. Then it was going more steady; the execution of the policy. And then it went into the phase of letting the objectives land in the daily tasks of the municipality. So those are actually three specific phases that have taken place over the years”* (Food policy advisor Ede, personal communication June 7th, 2023). Overall, the shaping of food policy in Dutch municipalities is still fairly new and a large share of the interviewees expressed that they are still figuring out how to best work with food as a theme. Consequently, before the municipality will and can actively engage in food policy, respondents explained that individual civil servants first fulfill a lobbying role within the municipal organization in order to get the urgency of the theme to be recognized on a municipal wide level. This lobbying role of civil servants within the municipal organization is well depicted in the following communication by Respondent 1 (food strategy and urban agriculture advisor of Amsterdam, personal communication May 12th, 2023) 1: *‘We have to.. I think, in a very concrete way, make clear what the relevance is and what the importance is of the subject, but also mainly what we can do on the municipal level. Because that is a big challenge I think. (...) the question is always: “what can we do as municipality?”*. This is supported by other interviewees as well, for example respondent 6 (Project manager food strategy Almere, personal communication, June 6th, 2023): *“I think at the moment from the food strategy, because this is the first food strategy we have, it is very important that we primarily still have an agenda-setting role so: ‘pay attention, we have to do something about the food transition’, so that is what we do and we also encourage other departments to do something with food. (...) Because there are also sufficient people within the municipality that think ‘why do we have a food strategy?’”* A first role of municipal servants in food policy engagement is thus a lobbying role within

the municipal organization, therefore working towards change within the organization in order to be able to cultivate change in the food system.

In this context, as was stressed by various interviewees, it is important to keep in mind that food is not a mandatory theme that a municipality has to commit to in Dutch national legislation. Therefore, the municipal engagement in food governance results from the recognition of food problems and intrinsic motivation within a municipality. As respondent 9 (City Deal Coordinator, personal communication June 9th, 2023) and respondent 3 (Policy officer food Wageningen, personal communication, May 24th) both argued, civil servants from various municipalities often approach them to learn more about food policy in other municipalities across the country or to join the City Deal out of own interest. Respondent 9 (City Deal Coordinator, personal communication June 9th, 2023) also stated that there is no active role in the City Deal of recruiting other municipalities to join but that municipalities join out of own motivation. On top of this, it was illustrated in the interviews that there are various routes towards municipalities taking up an active role in food governance. In the various cases, the lobby for food often started from within individual civil servants or an alderman but as respondent 2 (Food policy advisor food transition and quartermaster food, personal communication May 12th, 2023) also explained, sometimes citizens go the council to ask the municipality to step up to the fore when it comes to food or it is a council member has an interest in it. The majority of the respondents also confirmed that the ambitions that arise from civil society are of much influence to what extent there will arise a perception within the municipality that there should be taken a role in food policy. For instance, respondent 1 confirms that: *“Various initiatives in the city that were busy with the topic (food) and therefore were also very happy with the food vision, like ‘well finally the municipality Amsterdam is finally going to do something again’, it was precisely from within those kind of initiatives where the lobby has been very important to get it back on the agenda, besides from us internally calling it out as important ‘let’s do something about it’”*. (Food strategy and urban agriculture advisor Amsterdam, personal communication, May 12th, 2023).

Moreover, following from the results that most civil servants still find themselves in an agenda setting role within the municipality due to food policy engagement not being mandatory, is that most civil servants do not perceive the municipality to have a leading role in the food system transition. When turning to the survey, it is also shown that very few respondents mentioned municipalities as an actor that should take on a leading role in cultivating changes in the Dutch food while most respondents pointed to the national government (n=62) and farmers and their associations (n=47) (Figure in appendix D, p.12). Adding to this, was a question in which the participants were asked to assign their personal level of importance again to several statements relating to the role and responsibilities of the municipality in the food system (Figure in appendix D, p.12). In this case, 59% of the respondents that answered the respective question, assigned *‘do not agree at all’* or *‘rather disagree’* to the statement *‘the city level is the most appropriate level to develop solutions for a future proof urban food system’*. However, despite these results, the majority of the respondents (Figure in appendix D, p.12) did express that they do think the municipality has a responsibility in governing food and shaping food policy. This thought was also shared by all interviewed municipal civil servants among whom the main argument was that the municipality has the duty to care for the wellbeing of its citizens and enabling citizens to consume healthy food is important in this respect.

These findings can be supported by the general thought that emerged throughout the interviews that the municipal role is not perceived as significant yet because of a lack of instruments and capacity. For example respondent 1 (Food strategy and urban agriculture advisor Amsterdam) recognized that *‘Yes, it can be that municipalities should play a role in this, but then also (the national*

government) give us the instruments to actually do something because at the moment the possibilities for municipalities are at this level pretty limited. (Personal communication, May 12th, 2023). Consequently, although most civil servants included in the research did perceive the role of the municipality as valuable in the context of food system transformations, it was repeatedly recognized that the national level should first create the right conditions in order for the municipality to fulfill its role in relation to its duty to care for her citizens. Consequently, this view brings us to another key theme that emerged from the interviews: aside from the lobbying role of civil servants within the municipality, another prominent role of municipal servants is taking on a lobbying role towards the national government. In this context, this lobby comprises the need for more legal instruments. This municipal lobby was defined by all interviewees as the main objective and purpose of the City Deal. Due to the recognition of health problems in the city, municipalities are now taking the reins in their own hands to get more legal powers in their zoning plans to be able to determine what type of food retail is placed in which city area. Respondent 10 (Advisor Circular Economy Haarlem, personal communication, June 14th) confirmed that *“ This is actually the main point what food policy at the moment is about: we can not do that much when it comes to food policy. Municipalities have very little instruments to do something with the food chain.”* but that *“The City Deal has been very succesful in this lobby: the fastfood law is now on the way.”* This law will enable municipalities to disallow fast food retailers to settle in a neighborhood nearby schools thus focusing on influencing the developing consumption behavior of children. The perceived role of the municipality with regard to the City Deal, is thus to ensure the right to a healthy food environment and act as a lobbyist to gain the legal instruments needed for this objective.

Arising from this lobby is thus a guiding role in terms of food consumption. By making changes to the food environment, municipalities hope to make it easier for citizens to choose healthy food options. The new legal instruments will allow the municipality more control over what types of food is sold where in the city , thus hope to guide citizens towards making healthier food choices. In this light, for example the municipality of Wageningen and Utrecht also concerned itself with getting rid of marketing for unhealthy food in the city. Another example is the municipality of Almere having the ambition to set an exemplary standard by striving to have 80% of their food offer exist of healthy food options in all public buildings (Respondent 6, project manager food strategy Almere, personal communication, June 6h, 2023). However relevant to this context is the remark made by respondent 6 (Almere): *“I would actually like to know what exactly the healthy food environment is for a city center or a healthy food environment for a neighbourhood because there are so many ways in which you can think about this.”* This again shows that the exact ways in which municipalities can steer food in the city are still relatively unclear.

Complementary to the lobbying role of municipalities in the City Deal, is the recognition that the municipality has an important networking role. The City Deal itself is the first example of such a network which both serves as an alliance in the lobby towards the national government as well as a channel to exchange experiences and knowledge through. Most respondents indicated that they values the City Deal most due to the opportunity to share experiences with other cities and learn from each other. Moreover, the interviewed municipalities were in most cases also involved in regional or international networks which supports collaboration between different regional municipalities and mostly other actors such as businesses, organizations and civil initiatives to find solutions together. Such networks were for example ‘Voedsel verbindt’ the ‘Regio Food Valley’ or the international network of the ‘Milan Urban Food Policy Pact’. As respondent 7 (Food policy advisor Ede, personal communication, June 7th) argued: *‘When you think of the food system, it encompasses soil to fork. But not very municipalities have the possibilities to self produce. Then you immediately go*

beyond municipal boundaries, so I think, but that is my opinion, I think you have to do it together and thus is such a City Deal interesting.' Also respondent 4.2 (Policy advisor city management and environmental team) ascribed importance to 'cross-pollinating' between the different municipalities and different civil initiatives in order to continuously find new ways of solving food problems. The two most prominent roles that became evident throughout the interviews were therefore on the one hand collectively enacting a lobby towards the national government and on the other hand collaborating with other municipalities and actors and organizations to best figure out how to approach food system related problems in the city.

As became clear in the previous paragraphs, civil servants perceived the municipality to carry a key role in steering their citizens towards healthier diets. In relation to this role, is the perception that municipalities should fulfill an important educating and awareness raising role. In the interviews it was illustrated that municipalities already actively commit to this by setting up programs and projects such as school gardens, healthy school lunches or cooking lessons. In these roles, making changes on the long term are pursued by placing attention on the new generation and hoping to reach a change in cultural habits. Respondent 3 (Food policy officer Wageningen) explained how on the one hand the municipality can work with schools to learn children new food routines but that the view is that it is even more important as a municipality to take away the unhealthy temptations in the food environment.

In addition, another main thought was that the municipality has a facilitating role, meaning that they can play a key role in creating the right conditions for other parties and actors to execute the needed changes. It was therefore expressed by the majority of the interviewees that the municipality should strive to fit their work as best as possible to civil initiatives and incentivize and support them. For example in the Hague, respondent 4.2 (Policy advisor City Management, environmental team) explained that they held competitions for initiatives in order to stimulate developments or another example is the implementation of an urban agriculture 'loket' so that initiatives have an easy accessible place to go to further set up their ideas. Overall, to a certain extent, a view could also be distinguished that civil society efforts are expected to take the lead in actually creating the change in the food system that is required and the municipality is there to support this as best as possible in order to spark the efforts of change in their cities. In this light respondent 5.2 (Advisor Public Health Utrecht, personal communication June 6th, 2023) also stated that *"I think that what happens in the city, that that is also just good because people know what works best for their neighborhood or street for example. So who are we to actively interfere with this? If it works for them, then I also find that very important."* Likewise, respondent 10 (Advisor circular economy Haarlem) also argued that the municipality can use the creativity of the people in the city to collectively find solutions and by giving financial or other support to initiatives, a lot of solutions are already happening. Therefore well captured in the following quote by respondent 1 (Food strategy and urban agriculture advisor Amsterdam, personal communication, may 12th): *"At this moment, the possibilities of the municipalities are still relatively limited so it is partly facilitating for the initiatives that are there. On the other hand thus more of a lobbying role towards other governmental bodies."* In addition, respondent 1 argued that: *"We can create conditions, but eventually it needs to be done by entrepreneurs and citizens to keep the whole system going. It is thus more about creating conditions so that entrepreneurs get the space to set the steps in the direction of another food system."*

Finally, the strength of the municipal role was also perceived in the ability to experiment on a small scale. Also in the City Deal, this role is visible since all involved cities get to assign an area that becomes the so called 'proeftuin'. In these areas experiments with different forms of regulation of the food environment are tested such as social restaurants in Rotterdam, where people can eat for a lower price or for example in Utrecht, this was a newly built neighborhood in which the central theme was to try and figure out how to create a good food offer from scratch. Other examples of experiments illustrated in the interviews were among others collaborations with restaurants to experiment with creating healthy and sustainable menus or the current introduction of mandatory urban agriculture in a new neighborhood in the city of Almere in which the idea is to try and develop a neighborhood that can produce and distribute food within the city. In this context, the networking role is again relevant as respondent 6 (Project manager food strategy, personal communication June 6th) explained: *"I think that as a municipality, you can take on a role in trying to test new things and conducting experiments. So things that work for your local context and that you can then share with other cities that can share it again."*

To summarize the different perceptions of roles a municipality can take, respondent 6 well captured the different roles of the municipalities in a nutshell in the following quote: *"(...) So, lobbying, networking and experimenting in respect to different objectives to hopefully set change in motion. These are the roles in the food strategy."*

4.2 How food fits into the responsibilities of the municipality

The second sub-question aimed to create an understanding of how and where food is placed into the responsibilities of the municipality. In order to do so, this sub-question is centered around exploring how food is distributed as a responsibility among different departments and civil servants within the municipality as well as which aspects of food and the food system are taken as a responsibility within the municipality. Therefore, the results are focused on where food is being handled as a theme in municipalities and under which responsibilities it falls. In addition, by finding out to whom and which municipal responsibilities food is assigned to, it can also be implicitly observed how food is valued and prioritized.

Since the findings show that the role of municipalities in respect to food policy is still in its infancy, it is a logical consequence that similarly, multiple interviewees indicated that it is still a difficult task to figure out how food can best fit into the responsibilities of the municipality. Even if the ambition and recognition is sufficiently present within the general narrative of the municipality, food still remains a domain-transcending topic as re-concurringly stressed by the interviewees. Therefore, it is difficult to find a fitting place for a new responsibility such as food within the existing domains and responsibilities. As for example respondent 8 (Policy advisor public health Rotterdam, personal communication, June 9th) also explained: *"Not everyone feels responsible to have an opinion on food or to become owner of the theme. There is also a current dialogue within the municipality about who is actually responsible?"* Therefore reflecting on the distinguished lobbying role of civil servants in the municipal organization, food policy is something that really has to be *wanted* to be handled by individual civil servants and without any legal obligations, different approaches are likely to arise. Consequently, the finding also accordingly show that the different municipalities have approached placing food within the municipal responsibilities in different manners and that individuals within the municipal organization carry the responsibility to find where exactly the municipality can and should take responsibility. Relating to the different phases of food policy engagement as described by respondent 7 (Food policy advisor Ede), some had already found what works best to govern food

within their municipality whereas others were still in the middle of this process. To highlight an example, respondent 5.1 (Senior policy advisor healthy living environment Utrecht, personal communication June 6th, 2023) stated that: *“My task is also to figure out how we want to proceed on this subject (...) So we are as municipal government still searching where our role lies and how far do we want to proceed with this? Not all answers are there yet.”* Also in the case of The Hague, respondent 4.2 (policy advisor city management, May 26th, 2023) explained that the coherency of food with other municipal policy domains, at least among individual civil servants, is becoming much more clear and that a growing group of colleagues is recognizing to commit to food. Therefore the way forward would now be to get these processes formalized. Policy advisor public health of the Hague (respondent 4.1) additionally expressed that: *“It is more about searching for getting a formalized program in which everything comes together: integrality. And that is the lobby now, ‘how are we going to formalize it?’ Is it going to become a program, a team and how are we dealing with finances?”* (personal communication, May 26th, 2023). Important to recognize in these results is that even though the interviewed municipalities belong to the group of municipalities in the Netherlands that are relatively ahead in food policy engagement, there is often still a challenge to figure out how exactly to go ahead with the topic. In this sense, municipal civil servants do not only work towards making changes to the food system as a municipality, but also towards change within the organization.

However, a main narrative that became clear from the interview data is that food mainly touches upon the responsibility of the municipality for public health. Accordingly, this perspective is exactly from which the City Deal ‘Healthy and Sustainable Food Environment’ was created. As respondent 9 (Coordinator City Deal, personal communication, June 9th 2023) argued: *“Contradictory here is that a municipality is obliged to care for a healthy living environment but does not have any governance instruments to ensure this. (...) But the fact is that with the current legal framework and the current political landscape in which the market determines everything, we can’t go further (...) There are many health problems and secondly, people simply can not afford healthy food.”* It is thus this responsibility from which the lobby for more legal instruments to regulate the urban food environment stems from. However, every time it was stressed by the interviewees that municipalities can not carry this responsibility without the national government. Municipalities can do everything in their power to create a healthy food environment but without these healthy choices being made cheaper by the national government, this won’t actually achieve people to change their choices.

When looking at the respective survey questions that covered how food is placed into the organizational structures and thus who is responsible for food matters, is that only 20 respondents were on the agreement side of food being a responsibility in each policy department. In contrast, a higher number of respondents (n=36) placed themselves on the disagreement side for this statement (Figure in appendix D, p.12). However, at the same time, more respondents (n=38) also leaned towards disagreeing with food being a responsibility of one specific food department than the number of respondents either rather agreeing or strongly agreeing to this (n=24). On top of this, the same applied for the statement saying that the responsibility of food can best lay in one department such as economics or health; again more respondents disagreed than agreed to this. However, when looking to which of these three options had the most participants either rather agreeing or strongly agreeing to it, and the least amount of respondents not agreeing to it, this is the statement saying that food can best lay in one department. Although none of these three comparable statements have a substantial majority of respondents agreeing to it, it can be said that this statement about how food should fit into the responsibilities within the municipality, is agreed to the most. More

importantly, it shows that food is not widely perceived as a responsibility that should be integrated into all departments.

This might be supported by the finding that all respondents indicated that they thought the minority of the daily activities of the municipality were related to the Dutch food system (Figure in appendix D, p.12). Although this may also suggest that food is not (yet) integrated into all policy domains, it may also relate to what was well illustrated by among others, respondent 1 (Food strategy advisor and urban agriculture advisor Amsterdam) and respondent 6 (Project manager food strategy Almere): civil servants might unconsciously be dealing with food in their daily tasks but don't explicitly realize this. As an example, respondent 6 described how the work and income department may collaborate with the food bank from a low income perspective, while the food strategy team works from the food perspective with the food bank that also touches upon people's income. Therefore, food may actually already be fitted into the responsibilities of the municipality in an implicit way but actively shaping a food strategy means explicitly naming food as a theme. Also significant in the survey was that a convincing majority (89% of the respondents) either rather or strongly agreed that food is a topic that can be used to achieve other policy goals. Therefore it can be said that the view that food can benefit other policy departments exists among civil servants, which makes it interesting to see as to why more respondents did not agree that food should be a responsibility of all policy departments within the municipality.

Important to add to these results is that among the interviewees it was consistently expressed that it is of high importance of working with food in an integral way which means taking all aspects and policy perspectives that food touches upon when taking decisions. Still, even though the recognition exists that food should be approached from all different angles, the approaches to incorporating food within the municipal responsibilities still somewhat differ among municipalities. Amsterdam, Ede and Wageningen and Almere first of all have an alderman responsible for food which was seen as significant for the interviewees because it makes food an explicit political responsibility. Moreover, all these municipalities also have a municipal food strategy/agenda or vision written. This means that overarching commitments are dedicated to food and that food does not merely fall under other fragmented policy frameworks such as economy or health. Furthermore, in these municipalities a specific food team was set up that carries the responsibilities of food and constantly seeks to find the connections with other departments. These food teams existed of specific food policy advisors and officers that work together and involve civil servants from other departments to work on food issues in an integral way. Especially in Ede and Wageningen, this concept has already been well established in the organizational structures. Respondent 7 (Food policy advisor Ede) in this context described it as their responsibility to *'be the spider in the web'* to make sure all food policy objectives land well in the objectives of all departments (Personal communication, June 7th, 2023). Respondent 6 (Project manager food strategy Almere) on the other hand, explained that their responsibilities for the municipal food strategy fall within an 'interim' bureau. In this bureau, all projects and programs are placed that are viewed as domain transcending and remain there temporarily. Therefore, the food strategy is a temporary responsibility and technically the civil servants responsible for this food strategy could be placed on other responsibilities after a certain extent of time. This means that food is a responsibility for which different departments are being brought together by civil servants and is thus fitted into the municipal responsibilities quite well. Yet, the fact that the food strategy is placed within an interim bureau signals that the food strategy has not been made a permanent responsibility within existing departments or a specific food team.

Compared to the municipalities discussed above, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht do not have a specific designated food team or specific overarching place for food within the municipality. As resulted from the interviews, food challenges in the city mainly fall within the health and city sustainability responsibilities of the municipality. Nevertheless, respondent 8 (Public health advisor Rotterdam, personal communication, June 9th) explained that a food strategy is currently being written in which food from all different perspectives will be committed to. However, the person mainly responsible for this strategy also works from the health department and respondent 8 (public health advisor Rotterdam) noted that an active collaboration for food matters between different organizational departments has not been established yet. Moreover, The Hague, already had a targeted food strategy developed in 2012 and ever since, further municipal commitments to food have been made from both the health and sustainability perspective. Yet, having such a strategy does not necessarily mean that food is systematically being recognized within the municipality. Respondent 4.1 (The Hague) argued that only recently the interconnectedness and mutual responsibility for food as a theme became to be recognized by a wider group of civil servants. Therefore, whereas before the health and city management and environment department each carried their own responsibilities for different aspects of food already and were working on food from their own perspective, a shared responsibility and formal collaboration is now on the way to being realized. In the municipality of Utrecht however, food is dominantly and actively designated to the health department. As both interviewees 5.1 (Senior Policy advisor public health) and 5.2 (Advisor public health) confirmed, the civil servants from the health department have been actively taken the lead in shaping food policy and have been initiating this. From other departments there was however no active engagement yet. Therefore, food is mainly being handled within the health responsibilities of the municipality. Similar to Rotterdam, Utrecht also developed a food strategy in 2012 but this strategy was also shaped in the lead of the health department. Since both interviewees of Utrecht were fairly new in the municipality, they were not aware whether other departments were also involved in this process but it was stated that up to date, other departments have only recently started to take up food into their responsibility and also only on a vision-shaping level. When asked if they thought a food team would be a necessity in Utrecht, respondent 5.1 (Senior policy advisor healthy living environment) argued that they absolutely viewed this as necessary but that the willingness is insufficiently there within the municipality and that this could perhaps only be realized once it has first been made a well fitted responsibility within the circular economy and climate departments. This suggests that food is not yet a profound responsibility for other organisational sections and that only the first small steps are being taken on this terrain.

Moving onto the municipality of Haarlem, this municipality had a more unique approach in comparison to the other cases and therefore forms an interesting case to discuss in these results. As observed, food was mostly dominantly placed within the responsibilities of the health department or fitted into the space and sustainability departments for the respective municipalities that did not have a specific food team. Haarlem on the other hand, has predominantly placed food into the circular economy responsibilities and are thus working from the perspective of food being a responsibility of the sustainability and circular economy department. When asked why this was the case in comparison to some of the other municipalities, respondent 10 (Advisor circular economy Haarlem) explained that: *“The food chain is eventually an economic story. It is an economic problem that we have (...) we have to get rid of the economic problems and that explains why our focus is there and although we find the health aspects of the food system very important, these are repercussions of the troubles in the economic story. (...) to approach it from this side, you can really speak about the actual problems that are out there.”* Considering this approach, it was also added that food is predominantly committed to from the circular-economy perspective because it is a topic

that speaks to citizens. In contrast to more 'difficult' themes such as waste and circularity, food is an easy topic of conversation with citizens that can be used to explain to citizens why their responsibility is also important and why the problems in the food chain are so important. In the view of Haarlem, as expressed by respondent 10, food is thus placed into the responsibilities in a way that it can be used to realize the wider transition to a circular economy.

An important note to add to these results is the following explained by respondent 2 (Policy advisor food transition and quartermaster food):

"The ones that very much care for the challenge and have expertise on it, so the enthusiastic policy advisors in municipalities from sustainability, from health, that all want to commit to food; they often find it so important that the municipality should create one team, one budget for this. Meanwhile, if you would set this idea aside and you would say: 'we think it should still be its own objective, but if we mobilize it as a tool to accelerate other transitions', then you can achieve more. (...). Therefore, it doesn't have to be a problem if food is not its own subject. As long as it is well placed into other pieces (...) so you may do the right things for the wrong reasons."

This illustrates that finding different manners of making food a responsibility within the municipal organisation, can work well in each of these different ways. In order to engage well with urban food policy, a specific team that coordinates all aspects of food policy does not have to be necessary. As long as each department has its own relevant aspect of food to work on, food can still be effectively governed. It also highlights that it is necessary to set aside personal values to be able to eventually achieve more.

4.3 Prioritization of different challenges around food

The third sub-question was concerned with the way different challenges surrounding food are prioritized within Dutch municipalities. The focus hereby is not only on which challenges are being prioritized in existing food policy approaches of the municipalities but also by individual civil servants that are involved in policy making for food.

First of all relevant to this sub-question are the results of Q319 in the survey in which participants (N=72) were asked to pick the five biggest challenges in the Dutch food system. The data analysis showed that corporate power was listed most frequently (by 69% of the respondents) and thus perceived as the biggest challenge overall (Figure in appendix 7). Other challenges that were chosen by a substantial amount of respondents were: 1) Environmental degradation (49%) in the Netherlands, 2) Food waste (44%), 3) food-related waste (e.g. packaging) (42%) and 4) inability to ameliorate social inequity (40%). Two contrasts in these results with the interviews however can be observed. First of all, environmental degradation was a concern that did not come to the fore during the interviews as the most significant theme that the civil servants were committed to. Even though environmental concerns did receive attention as a problem, the focus predominantly laid on health concerns. Surprisingly, the challenge 'inability to sufficiently promote a healthy diet' was only chosen by 18% of the respondents (Figure 7). Also worth mentioning is the fact that a lack of education about the food system is picked as a main challenge by a relatively small amount of respondents, while this was mentioned as highly important for most of the interviewees. However, the fact that education is already seen as an important leverage point in changing the food system among municipalities and efforts have already been actively made in this respect, can therefore also explain why the lack therefore is not seen as such a challenge anymore.

Additionally, participants were presented different policy goals relating to the Dutch food system as described in the food policy analysis of Baker and de Zeeuw (2015, p. 29). In the first part of the

survey, respondents were first asked which aspects they thought is *best* capable of governing: “1) to promote local food production and distribution within the city region and enhance urban food security. 2) Realize equitable access for all citizens to safe, healthy, affordable, food. 3) Secure adequate nutrition and public health, especially for people at risk of malnutrition and related health problems. 4) Optimize the contributions of urban food systems to urban environmental sustainability, protecting land and water-and soil quality and promoting environmental friendly urban development.” Notably, more than half of the respondents chose the fourth answer option while each other options was selected by under 15% of the respondents (Figure in appendix D, p.13). Similarly, when asked which aspects they thought their municipality predominantly commits to, less than half of the respondents leaned towards the fourth aspect (40% of the respondents). Contrastingly, 19% of the respondents, as opposed to 11% in the other question, chose ‘secure adequate nutrition and public health’ (Figure in appendix D, p.13). Therefore, the statistics describe that in comparison, municipalities are committing more to health aspects of the food system while relatively less individual civil servants viewed this aspect as something that the municipality can govern best. However, the findings thus suggest a shared perception between respondents of viewing the municipality as most capable in optimizing the contributions of the food system to urban environmental sustainability and municipalities committing to this.

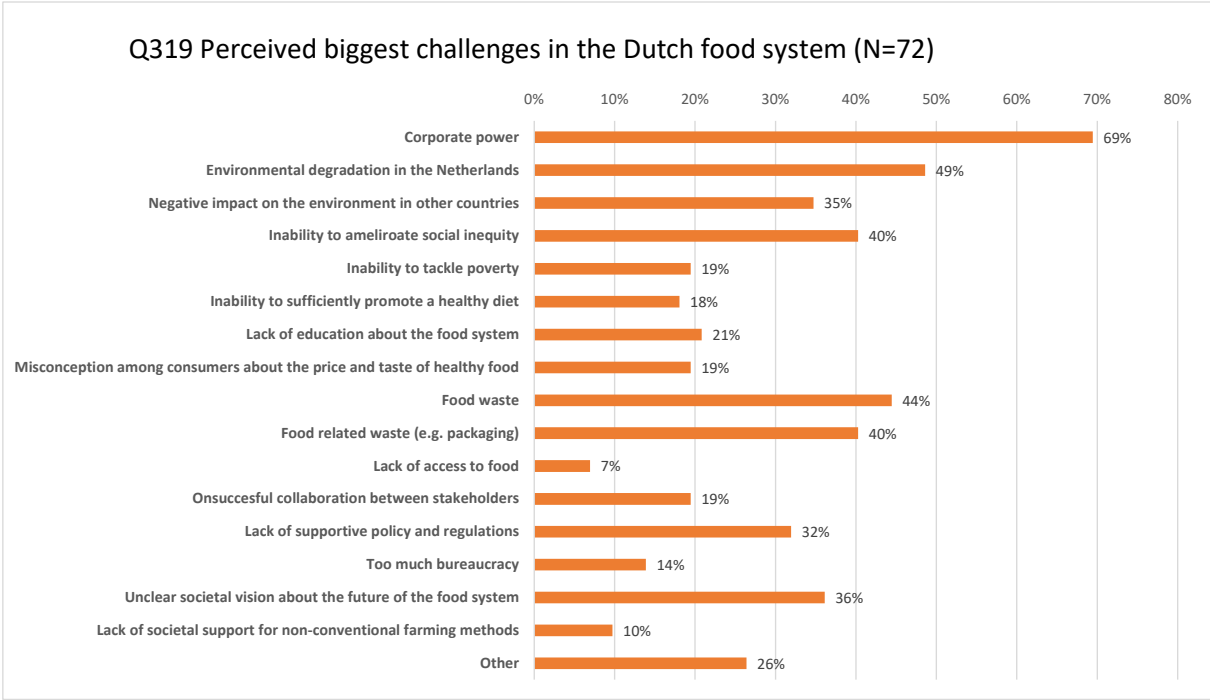


Figure 7 Frequency of perceived biggest challenges in the Dutch food system

Moreover, when turning to which aspects emerged to be the most significant problems in the eyes of the interviewed civil servants, the main themes that emerged were healthy food and especially its affordability, social inequity and poverty and the need to educate people about healthy diets, where there food comes from and reconnecting consumers with producers.

First of all, observable in all results, is the expression of health as an important value in the food system. The importance of health was consistently implicitly visible throughout a large share of the interviews. As already came to the surface in the roles that municipalities take in food policy and how food policy is fitted into the municipal responsibilities, municipalities have the responsibility to

ensure a healthy food environment and create the right conditions for this in their cities. Consequently, health seems to be a dominant lens to view food system aspects through in a large share of Dutch municipalities. Respondent 9 supported this finding in the following description: *“Look, the facts are that the cities that have joined the City Deal have started to realize they need to do something with it. But it is of course an issue that finds itself in the begging phase (...) But mainly the bigger cities first steer towards a healthier food offer (...) The emphasis of most cities indeed lies on health.”* This dominance of health was also shown in a situation illustrated by respondent 4.2 (The Hague) in which a colleague from the municipality of Rotterdam made a comment about the word ‘sustainability’ being mentioned first instead of the word ‘healthy’ in a presentation title about the City Deal. It was argued that for this person it was important that health should be mentioned first. In this respect, respondent 4.2 thought that health and sustainability do sometimes clash because for example meat substitutes that ameliorate environmental pressures, can in turn have a negative influence on health due to added unhealthy taste replicates. Respondent 4.2 also added that they thought since the introduction of the City Deal, health might have even become more of a priority. Whereas before more *“‘sustainable’ people were involved in the City Deal, in the mean time the majority consists of ‘healthy people’.”*

Related to the importance assigned to health by civil servants, is affordability and specifically affordability of healthy food. Relevant to discuss here, are the results of the second part of the survey. As can be seen in the appendix including the survey questions, respondents were asked to indicate what level of importance they would assign to different food system related values. In the final part of the survey, it was additionally asked what level of importance they thought the respective municipality at which they work in general would assign to each value-statement. Similar to what was expressed as important in the interviews, affordability was viewed as important in the survey results by a significant amount of civil servants (Figure in appendix D, p.10). 54 of the respondents indicated this value as highly important on a personal level. Similarly, 42 of the respondents perceived affordability to be a highly important value in the viewpoints of their municipality (Figure 8). Along these lines, respondent 1 argued that: *“I mean, it says a lot that we have this much food in the city and in the Netherlands in general by the way. But that a share of the population simply can not afford it; that is not capable of affording sufficient healthy food and then also sustainable what is an extra wish on top of that. So affordability is a very important challenge.”* Moreover respondent 5.2 explained: *“I think eventually affordability is one of the most important things (...) And then on the consumer side the subsistence poverty and on the supply side the price of fruit and vegetables, I think that is where the biggest problem lies.”*

Aligning with this view, is the observation that emerged from the interviews of needing to tackle structural economic and social problems before the food system can be improved. Multiple respondents described that ‘bad’ consumption choices of citizens are often a cause of stress, lack of money, lack of time and lack of access. It was therefore argued that thinking about their food practices and consumption often comes last in the row of problems that citizens have due to structural inequalities. Therefore it was seen as little useful to commit to food education or improving the food environment as long as citizens have more structural living problems to worry about. Therefore, it was valued as important to first commit to solving deeper structural economic problems related to the food system than specifically targeting food in the city itself. On the other hand, making changes to the food system was also recognized as a means to improve other social and economic challenges. In this sense, food was valued as a mobilizer for other policy goals. For example, stimulating community gardens or cooking classes can enhance social cohesion or access to food. For example committing to recycling food waste was framed as a means to make more fruits

and vegetables available to those that can not afford it by respondent 8 (Policy advisor public health Rotterdam).” Respondent 1 (Food strategy and urban agriculture advisor Amsterdam) also illustrated that although the focus on affordability itself is important, focusing on the creation of space as a municipality for food initiatives that engage with food aid is also very important because that way you can contribute to improving affordability. In this light, respondent 3 (Food policy officer Wageningen) expressed that: *“We really try to work on a system change also because we see food as a means to ameliorate the inequity in society.”* Therefore, although such structural problems are seen as priorities, the approach in their food policy is to not prioritize poverty itself but to focus on food and then look further how food can be used to improve poverty problems.

4.4 Expression of public values about food

This final sub-question aimed to explore which food system related values could be observed within Dutch municipalities and which values are important to civil servants when it comes to food policy. Moreover, the analysis looks at how such values come to the surface within the municipal organization and how the importance ascribed to certain values relates to the way food policy is currently approached in the municipality.

First of all relevant in this context, is that the interview analysis pointed out that most civil servants tended to both view food as a commodity and as a common. On the one hand, food was consistently valued as a product that should be paid for because as respondent 6 (Project manager food strategy Almere) stated: *“nothing is for free in the end.”* Consequently, economic interventions were mentioned as solutions repeatedly. There was a general consensus that the tax on fruits and vegetables in the Netherlands should be taken away in order to make the healthy choice easier. Moreover, the majority of interviewees also assigned value to the use of true cost pricing (i.e. including all environmental and social effects in the price and thus making food products with negative effects more expensive and the other way around). Therefore, food in this view is treated as an economic product. However, there was also a consensus among the interviewees that one of the main issues in the food system is corporate power and the private market having control over food supply. The main idea that could therefore be identified is that there should be worked towards a food system that is more in balance. Most interviewees agreed that it is very unlikely to work towards a food system in which big market players do not have a role in the food system anymore or where international food is not traded anymore. However, by incrementally introducing concepts such as community supported agriculture, establishing new relationships between stakeholders, finding combinations between short supply chains and international trade etc., the food system can be brought into a new balance where food is controlled as a common by communities in some places but where current forms of food retail are still in place.

When turning to the survey results of the part that focused on the distinction between civil servants valuing food as a common or as commodity (Figure 8), a variety of both is also shown. What was most clear in the levels of agreement assigned to these statements was that almost all respondents either rather agreed or strongly agreed with food and nutrition security being a global public good (65 respondents). On the other hand, although still the majority of the respondents, a smaller share of the respondents either rather agreed or strongly agreed that ‘the government has an important role in producing, distributing and guaranteeing food for all citizens’ (44 respondents). Another notable distinction, was that a significant amount of the respondents agreed ‘food is a life sustaining commodity that can not be treated as other commodities’. Namely 63 respondents indicated to rather or strongly agree with this statement. The same can be noted for ‘the government has the

right to guarantee the right to every citizen’. 58 respondents indicated to rather or strongly agree with this statement. Lastly, almost no respondents agreed that current market rules will enable us to reach a food secure system. Only four of the participants that rated this statement rather agreed to this and none highly agreed to this statement. Yet, interestingly enough, the majority of the respondents (40 respondents) rather or strongly agreed that ‘food can at the same time be a private good and an essential resource to survive’. Moreover, although almost none of the respondents agreed that market rules will enable us to secure a food secure system, less than the majority of the respondents (33 respondents) tended to disagree with the fact that food, as a scarce resource, should be distributed according to market rules. However, only 11 respondents either rather agreed or strongly agreed and the majority of the other half (27 respondents) thus neither agreed or disagreed on this. The descriptive statistics derived from these statements thus show that the majority of the participated municipal civil servants believe that food is a public good that everyone should have the right to. However, at the same time a belief is shared that food *can* be a private good although it should not be treated as other private goods and under the current market rules, the world will not be food secure. Yet, there is not a clear consensus about whether the responsibility of distributing food should be left to the market or to the government. This could therefore be connected to the views described in the interviews that the way forward would be to

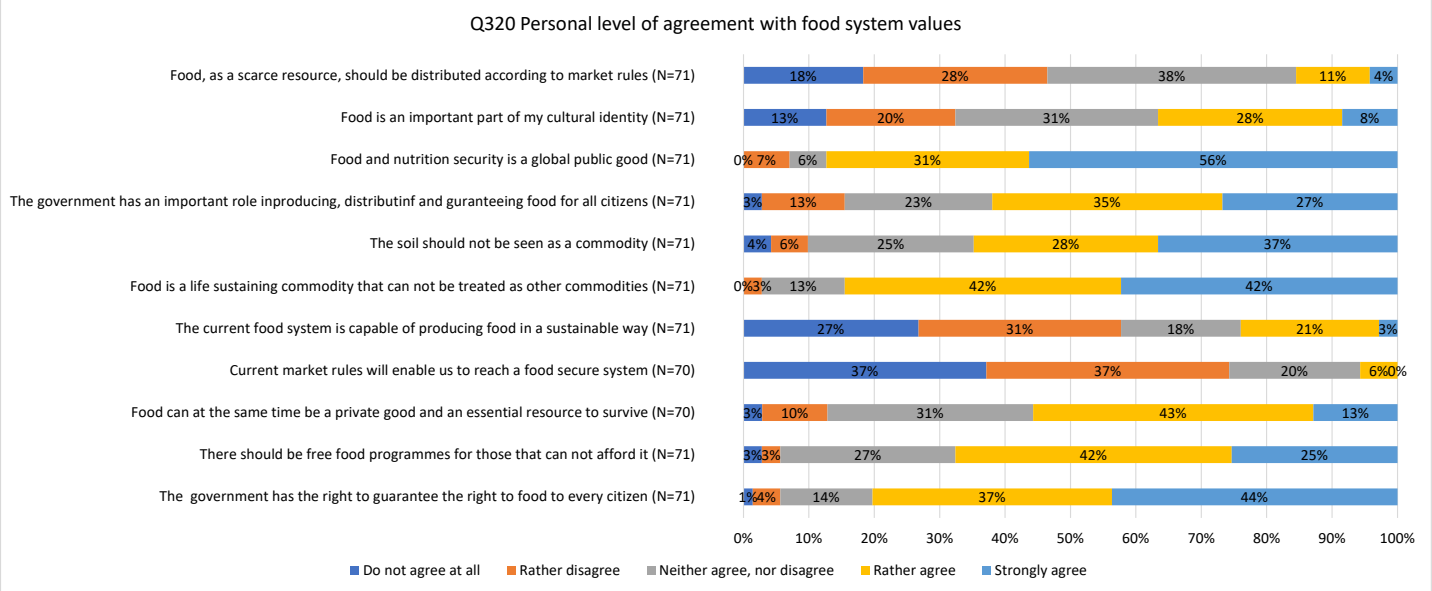


Figure 8 Valuing food as a common or commodity (based on Vivero-Pol (2017))

Another theme that submerged from the interviews, was the influence of values on the role civil servants are able to take on in committing to food. The findings show how values that are held by individuals in the municipal organization will either enable or constrain the emergence of food policy engagement. In this light, the majority of the respondents also expressed that the role they are able to take is dependent on the values and willingness of the higher governing levels in the municipality. Respondent 1 (Food strategy advisor Amsterdam, may 12th, 2023) for example well illustrated this phenomenon: ‘(...) this is not the first time that we are dealing with the subject food within the municipality of Amsterdam. Actually, it has been the same story each time: why food is important on the municipal agenda. The thing was, each time, there was a council, there was an alderman that

found it (food) important and subsequently a new council came and the subject fell of the agenda again. (...) Each time, we (his team), and I myself the last time, have been busy to get the subject food back on the municipal agenda. (...) and when it (food) came close to being pushed of the agenda completely, it was a tough job getting it back on. (...).'

While the same phenomenon was heard in other interviews, different perspectives were observed on the significance of food having a formal place on the agenda and in policy notes for being able to actively commit to food. Whereas interviewee 5.1 (senior policy advisor healthy living environment Utrecht) responded that they thought food had not necessarily become less important when it did not receive its own place in the policy note anymore, respondent 4.1 expressed the significant difference it makes that food finally got its own formal place on the policy note, even though it was only in one sentence.

The importance of having an alderman who views food as an important issue for the municipality was also mentioned several times within the interviews. The interviewees that mentioned this, collectively expressed that having an alderman that gives priority to food is highly significant for food to remain on the urban agenda and also for the extent to which the policy makers are able to take up a role in shaping food transitions in the city because it will explicitly become a theme and receive both human and economic capital. This also highlights the importance of personal values within policy processes in the municipality: if those in power value food as an important theme, it will be given priority. This is supported by respondent 4.1 (Policy advisor public health The Hague) who stated that *'Our ambition is to get a program food within the municipality, but it is thus dependent on the governors, how they view it'*.

Moreover, it was shown that the involvement of other food system actors and collaboration were found to be important to civil servants. All interviewees shared that in order to reach a transition, it is all about collaboration and re-storing the balances in the relationship between actors. Therefore, the involvement of civil society actors was valued as important as a starting point to collectively work towards change. As made clear by respondent 10 (Advisor circular economy Haarlem) when asked if they actively work together with food initiatives in the city: *"Yes that is our strength actually (working together with civil initiatives), because if you don't have the instruments from legislation, well then you need to find other ways."* In this sense, by building stronger connections with your citizens as a municipality, you might be able to discuss fitting solutions together and achieve changes rather than relying on instruments to determine the course of action alone. However, different levels of involvement of civil society actors were observed in the interviews. For example in Ede there were tight connections visible and the local food policy council actively give input about the execution of the municipality's food policy objectives and whether their actions are feasible. Similarly, in Wageningen, citizens were actively involved in shaping the food vision of the municipality. On the other hand, for example in Utrecht, it was expressed that food initiatives in the city were only involved in shaping the municipal food vision but there was no further active contact between these parties while executing this vision.

Also an important observation is that no combination of values that were found to be not important at all in the eyes of the majority of the participants, could be distinguished from the survey data. As has also become clear, the food system is a complex entity in which all challenges and aspects are interconnected, therefore making it difficult to distinguish between what should be most important and what should get assigned less importance to. The interviewees therefore also recurrently stressed the importance of working in an integral way so that in every policy decision all aspects are considered. Only when critically looking at the data, with one quarter of the respondents assigning not important at all to the value of 'the food system strengthening its orientation towards global

markets', it can be said that this statement got assigned the 'not important at all' level quite frequently in relation to the other statements. In line with what came to the surface in the interviews, most interviewees expressed that we should strive to consume more locally produced products and turn our backs to food retrieved from countries of great distance from the Netherlands. In this context local was perceived as produced in the Netherlands since the country has such a small size. Moreover, when looking at the statement 'the food system should strive for agriculture free of captive animals', also a relatively large share of the civil servants viewed this as not important at all. Likewise, the topic 'animals in the food system' was very little to not discussed at all in the interviews overall. This thus suggests an anthropocentric view on the food system among municipal civil servants.

Furthermore, something that stood out in the results was the contrast in importance of respect for tradition in the food system between the personal perspectives and perceived organizational perspectives. Again, in the case of the personal perspective, with 17% of the respondents assigning 'not important at all', this is a relatively high amount compared to the other statements in Q318 (Figure in appendix D, p.11). In contrast, this statement was not once marked as not important at all in the perceived municipal perspectives. Additionally, this is also contrasted by 25% of the respondents personally assigning rather important to this value and 40% of the respondents viewing this as rather important in the general perspective in their municipality (Q718, figure in appendix D, p. 11). It is thus observed that from the view of civil servants, municipalities in general tend to assign more importance to tradition in the food system than civil servants do themselves. This relates to the necessity of the lobby from individual civil servants within the municipality to take a role in making changes to the food system. Another observation that can be made is the level of importance to respondents for 'the food system should use all land that can be farmed productively'. Exactly half of the participants personally viewed this as not important at all or rather unimportant whereas a little more than half of the respondents assigned 'neither important/ nor unimportant' or 'rather important' to this value-statement when considering the general view of their municipality. The participated civil servants thus thought their municipality tends to find this slightly more important than they find this themselves. A worth taking difference in organizational and personal values is also visible when considering the need for circularity in the food system. Contrastingly, 74% of the respondents assigned highly important to the food system including increased circularity, while only 25% of the civil servants that answered this question assigned highly important when thinking about their municipal viewpoint (Figure in appendix D, p.11).

Finally, what also stood out in these survey results is that the need for support for urban agriculture in the food system was marked by none of the respondents as highly important in the perceived organizational viewpoints of the represented municipalities (Figure in appendix D, p.11). Meanwhile eleven of the respondents that rated the respective statement from their personal view, assigned highly important to it. Additionally, one quarter of the respondents assigned rather important to this statement when considering their municipality's viewpoint (Figure in appendix D, p.11) while this was the case for slightly less than half of the respondents' personal stances (43%). Logically, supporting these results, the majority of the respondents tended to disagree to the statement that the food system should be geared towards local production from both perspectives (Figure in appendix D, p.10). Within the interviews it was also argued that although local food production such as urban agriculture is important, it is not seen as realistic that Dutch cities can completely feed themselves and thus a combination with technological advancement is seen as necessary rather than putting complete emphasis on food production within cities. This shared perception was among others well visible in the following by respondent 10 (Advisor circular economy Haarlem): *"local production of food is difficult. Just assuming that by local, we explain local in different ways. The Netherlands is a*

small country, so when I talk about local food, for me it can also come from the Flevopolder or from Groningen. So also fine, as long as it's not like not coming from Australia." Moreover others also argued that they believed that the food we consume should be one the one hand more compatible with the seasons and on the other hand also be grown in our own country which is also still local, but this food is thus not produced within cities per se. Respondent 3 (food policy officer Wageningen) in this respect stated that:

"I think we would very much like to move towards a system where first of all, people eat much more with the seasons, so that really learn to eat what is growing in the Netherlands now and so we can also support our farmers much more with that (...) but there will always be products that we can't grow here, like bananas, coffee and chocolate and so on. But I wouldn't find it strange if those became more expensive, for example, and that it became a little less common to always have bananas at home."

Another prominent value related to the municipal journey of food governance is consumer freedom. A shift of values can be observed among individual civil servants in the survey results and the interviews when it comes to these values. A key finding from the data was that Dutch politics in general and also municipalities are hesitant in implementing regulations in the consumption environment because consumers should be given the freedom of choice over their food. Intervening in the food environment is therefore often viewed as patronizing because it would take this freedom of choice away. Respondent 6 (Almere) also highlighted *'I wonder if as a municipality you should have influence to that level; determining what exactly is on the menu of restaurants in the city.'* Yet a consensus among the interviewees emerged that from a health perspective, it is justified to want to regulate this food environment because the food environment has too many influences leading people towards making unhealthy consumption choices. Respondent 5.1 (Senior policy advisor public health) confirmed that: *"it is absolutely justified to want to steer more on this (...) because the contributions to illnesses are just significant."* However, another view among the civil servants with regard to this topic, is that the current state the food environment is in, citizens might not have a choice now as well. Respondent 7 (Food policy advisor Ede) well described that if there is not sufficient healthy food available, the choice is not there anyway. Especially because healthy food options are not more expensive than other food products, thus limiting the ability to make that choice for a large share of citizens. Moreover respondent 2 (Food policy advisor food transition) illustrated that without realizing, our food choices might actually be pretty regulated already: *"But especially with sensitive subjects such as food, people are very hesitant about it. That is why this idea is a shared image, but that is also changing: you should not want to stand next to the fridge, we are not going to intervene. Especially on the right side, the liberal side see it that way. Anyway, I always invalidate that from that is really a sham contradiction whether or not you should stand next to the fridge, because there are already a lot of policies that influence our food chain. So common agricultural policy, competition policy, food law, etc. (...) So it is felt like 'no that is not something for us as a municipality; we don't have to nor should do something with it and should not want to either', but that is a misunderstanding."* Therefore from these perspectives, municipalities now use this narrative to justify having more legal power to regulate the food environment in their cities.

To add to these results, respondents were also asked about their personal and perceived organizational preferences of placing emphasis on mandatory or voluntary measures. Corresponding with the emerged theme in the interviews of the value of freedom in the Dutch food system, the statistics from this question also show the importance ascribed to this value. This supports what respondent 2 also stated: *"the Netherlands have very much a voluntary governance culture... and intervening is perceived as something we should not want (...)"* . However, a difference is observed

between the perceived general views of municipalities and the personal views of the participants. Nearly one third of the respondents (29%) that answered the question from the viewpoint of their municipality, indicated a preference for either exclusively or mainly voluntary measures whereas for the participants personally, this percentage was much smaller (12% of the respondents). This may indicate that on an individual level, values are already shifting because the need for change in the food system is seen as pressing, while institutional change within the municipality has not yet set through. Similar to what respondent 9 said (City Deal coordinator) *'On the governing level it is often difficult because for example in Rotterdam, where there is a council that doesn't really find itself concerned with sustainability, they just say we are not going to intervene in this as government.'* However, for both perspectives, the majority of the respondents preferred a mixture of both mandatory and voluntary measures and an insignificant amount placed emphasis on mandatory measures (Figures in appendix D, p. 12).

What is last of all interesting in the survey results as well, is that the City Deal pleads for getting more legal instruments to intervene in the urban environment in regulating the food offer. However, the survey results show that only a little more than one third of the respondents (n=29) rather or strongly agreed on this matter while 30 respondents tended to disagree with the following statement: 'The municipality should have the legal instruments to regulate the type and quantity of food choices in the urban environment'. This also differs in respect to the interviews, where all respondents expressed this to be necessary instruments for the municipality in order to fulfill its role in providing a healthy living environment for its citizens. Interestingly enough, more than half of the respondents (n=41) were leaning towards disagreement with the statement 'the offer of the type and quantity of food in the city should be left to the market.' On top of this, there seems to be a divide in views on leaving the responsibility of consumption to consumers, 27 respondents leaned towards agreeing to this while 29 respondents tended to disagree. This was also supported in the interviews where the majority of the civil servants shared that although in the end it is the consumer who decides what to eat, this decision should be able to be made. The train of thought in this case was therefore that the offer of food should be changed by intervening in the market and that efforts should be made to support lower incomes and to put emphasis on education with the end goal to support consumers in making the healthy and sustainable choices. Eventually this means that the consumer choice is what will actually create the changes. Therefore a value of balance between taking a regulating role as a municipality and giving the market and the citizens the freedom over their food choices is observed.

5. Discussion

This theses aimed to find an answer to the research question: *'How do values shape the engagement of municipalities in food policy?'* Building on the value-laden stances towards the future direction of the food system as proposed by Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) and Vivero-Pol (2017), this research explored how such hidden values within Dutch municipalities could be identified and how municipalities in turn engage with principles of food policy as described by Sonnino (2019). The results consequently described how the municipal role in cultivating changes in the Dutch food system is perceived within Dutch municipalities, how food fits into the municipal responsibilities, how different food system challenges are prioritized and how different food system related values are being expressed within Dutch municipalities.

First of all, it has become clear that the role of municipalities in food policy is still in the early stages and that a more active role has yet to be taken in most municipalities. The results show that municipalities are still figuring out how to handle the concept of food policy or that food policy is not considered as a necessary responsibility at all. However, considering that food policy is not a legal requirement for municipalities, the fact that a small group of municipalities is attempting to take up a role at all, signals that the recognition for the need for change in the food system is present. Yet, the internal lobbying role of civil servants indicates that within most of these municipalities engagement with food policy on an institutional wide level is still lacking and that mainly among groups of individual civil servants the first major steps are taken to get this engagement realized. This shows that in a sense, municipal civil servants also work towards a change of values and beliefs within their own organization in order to set the first steps towards collective action for change. Therefore, the values within individuals are shown to be of much significance in order for municipalities to engage with food policy.

To what extent current efforts will actually lead to transformative food policy is still questionable. In these early stages it might be too soon to tell which pathways of change will eventually be emphasized or to what extent current engagement with food policy will lead to actual change in the food system. The complexity of the system and the uncertainty on where exactly to take on a role as a municipality also leads to no strong expression of values when it comes to importance of certain food system changes or characteristics. As the survey results showed, there were no food-system related values that were seen as important by almost none to no civil servants at all and no values stood out as significantly more important than others. However, an important observation from the interviews is that the recognition of the interconnectedness of all related food policy goals is clearly present within individual civil servants as well as the need to approach problems from an integral perspective (i.e constantly viewing them in relation to other factors). It was accordingly also agreed upon in both the case study and survey that food policy can be viewed as a vehicle towards achieving other policy goals. This consequently shows evidence of civil servants engaging with the principle of system thinking as described by Sonnino (2019). In this sense, it is a good thing that the relatedness is recognized and certain aspects of the food system are not strongly valued less or more than others and it shows an initial step towards integral food policy.

However, when considering how food is handled as a responsibility by municipalities, diverging ways among municipalities were observed of how food fits into the organization. Therefore, even though this principle is ascribed importance to, it is not always applied yet in the actual policy approaches. Mainly Ede and Wageningen could be considered among the very few municipalities that are engaging with food policy in the most advanced way in relation to this principle of system thinking. Food has become a prominent theme on the municipal agendas and an overarching food team is actively ensuring that food is consistently considered in each policy domain. In other cases food was

either perceived as well fitted in specific existing policy domains or there was not sufficient support from within the governing levels in the municipality to consider food a responsibility for all its related domains. The latter is well shown to be the case for most municipalities in the Netherlands since the survey showed that the dominant belief was that food should not be fitted into the responsibilities of all conventional policy departments. The recognition of having a specific food policy or civil servant in charge of covering all the different aspects of food thus needs to reach all organizational layers before food policy can be shaped in the most effective way. Consequently, the ability to align values with those in power within the organization is important in the process towards food policy engagement.

Despite the fact that most municipalities are still figuring out how to most effectively engage with food policy, certain leading views and values that color the manners in which municipalities envision future practices in the food system and that might influence how will further be engaged with food policy, could be distinguished. What seems to be most clear is that even though the current economic structures and corporate power in the food system were perceived as the biggest challenge and issue in the current food system, municipal civil servants did not view the future system to be radically different. In this regard, it was observed that it is felt that the municipality has little influence in a system where corporate power is such a dominant problem and where the municipality has little legal instruments. Therefore even though municipal civil servants would *ideally* see a different system in which food is accessible for all citizens, it is believed that municipal abilities are constrained to cultivate such significant change. In this view, much responsibility is placed on other food system actors, among which mainly the national government and businesses and local efforts are not valued as very significant as long as more influential actors do not support this change. Consequently, tendency towards market-based solutions was observed rather than seeing much value in rebuilding non-market-based structures with respect to how food is provided and consumed such as food becoming a public good provided by the government or only relying on community managed gardening. Therefore, although such more radical changes were valued as important, it was not seen as *realistic* to have a food system without such big corporate players and without having foreign traded products available.

Also when turning to the perceived educating role and emphasis on temptations and incentives in the physical food environment, it can be observed that in general emphasis was put on the consumer choices. This means that the responsibility of actually achieving transformations in the food system is still for the majority placed on the consumer. Additionally, when considering the facilitating role, the actual transformative capacity is placed upon civil society and the market where the municipality supports from the sideline but not actively paves the way towards changes. Adding to the emphasis placed on the market, a main concern of the food system in the eyes of civil servants was affordability and improving this rather than stating food should not have a price at all. In this view, will likely remain something that is paid for on the market than working towards a system of local ownership. The observed value ascribed to solutions such as true-cost pricing also suggests that improvements in the food system will result from current dynamics. These perceptions could be described as more of a neo-liberal tendency when relating to Gimenez and Shattuck (2021) since the solutions are sought within current market structures. Interesting to refer to here however, is that the survey showed that a significant amount of civil servants did not believe food should be distributed according to market rules. This again points at an unclear vision of what food policy should include.

Considering the fact that the lead of change is for a large part placed into the hands of civil initiatives, it could also be said that municipalities ascribe much value to the views and practices of their citizens. As the results show, civil servants partly start to recognize the need to commit to food policy by listening to the needs of the people in their city and consequently wish to empower them as best as possible. Therefore, whereas on the one hand municipalities feel constrained in taking a more leading role within the current economic and power structures, on the other hand municipalities value society initiative as a promising way forward and as concepts that work well to achieve change in the local context. Still, although all municipalities were mainly concerned with facilitating citizen initiatives, not all municipalities actively involved societal actors and citizens in decision-making processes of food policy. A lack of high levels of participation, as is believed to be one of the building blocks of food policy (Sonnino, 2019), can therefore be determined. Consequently, it is questionable to what extent food policy is inclusive and whether the needs of all different societal layers in the city are actively and evenly valued.

Although these current practices of food policy do not suggest a very transformative stance towards the direction of the future food system, the views within municipalities of what is desired, do actually align with a somewhat progressive or alter-hegemonic position within the food system transition. Corresponding to what was sketched by Vivero-Pol (2017): the wish to make more radical changes to the structures of the system (e.g. getting rid of large scale production and trade routes with a large environmental footprint) is there, but incremental changes are chosen as the way forward because this task is deemed too difficult. To a certain extent, a gap thus exists between what is valued as desired and what is seen as realistic and thus what believes are acted on. This was also observed by Garcia-Gonzalez & Eakin (2019) who distinguished between realistic and idealized views on the food system: although municipal representatives ideally view food as a common for all, it is not perceived realistic in the current system, thus not leading to measures for such change.

Moreover, on the other hand, when looking at the lobby of municipalities to legitimize regulation of the food environment for the sake of health, a tendency to shift away from neoliberal values of current market rules that emphasize consumer freedom is visible. Working towards intervention in order to achieve a healthier food system is a significant step towards further change. In this sense, municipalities can be marked as having a somewhat reformist approach because it shows making small changes to the economic food environment while the main structures remain the same: food is still sold by private retailers and consumers still choose what is consumed, however by regulating where and what types of food are sold, the consumers choice is now guided into a desired direction.

Moreover, what can also be seen as more reformist or progressive is that municipalities try to overcome the structures that constrain them by organizing themselves in different types of networks. This networking role of the municipality can also be linked to the principle of trans-localism (Sonnino, 2019). Although this applies only to a small number of municipalities in the Netherlands, the results show that municipalities actively try to learn from both each other and also other actors in the system in order to achieve more. The engagement in such networks to enhance sustainable food production and distribution in the region also shows evidence of the principle of urban food governance which is about bringing producers and consumers in the region closer. In this sense, the approach could be viewed as more progressive when turning to Gimenez and Shattuck (2011) since municipalities seek to pave their way around the possibilities at hand within the current legal and economic structures. By building new networks with businesses and civil society actors, new ways of food provision in the city are sought and tried at the local context in order to learn what could work on wider scales and what not.

Furthermore, municipalities collectively organizing themselves in the City Deal to form a lobby towards the national government to gain instruments, shows how the edges of current power structures are challenged and how local governments take the reins in their own hand rather than waiting on the actions of higher governance levels. A critical note on this deal however, refers to the fact that municipal market intervention is based upon the objectives of the City Deal 'Healthy' and 'Sustainable' food environment. Question marks could be placed next to the feasibility of finding congruence between these two goals. The findings showed how both these objectives can in some ways be conflicting and how also among civil servants the one is prioritized more than the other, therefore making it unclear what this aim will turn out to look like in the nearby future of Dutch cities. Based on these findings, a tendency towards the first part of this dual objective could be observed where municipalities steer towards the improvement of health and along the way hope to simultaneously tick the boxes of sustainability objectives. For example, by steering on a healthy consumption, consumers are hoped to change their diet to more vegetables and fruits and less processed foods and in this view, this increased demand for vegetables and fruits could then be produced locally and thus more sustainably. Whereas fast foods are mass produced and thus more environmentally harmful, these are expected to disappear due to this change in demand. Yet, these processes are not so straightforward and healthy does not necessarily mean sustainable.

Also worth noting in these results is that even though food is recognized as a means to achieve other policy goals, this might lead to rather reformist like changes than progressive or radical improvements to the food system. For instance, mobilizing communal gardens to improve access to food might help to some extent but it is questionable whether the groups that need it most will actually be reached with such solutions because as also mentioned in the interviews, people are likely coping with bigger problems in order to have time and skills to engage in such possibilities. Another example: combining circularity efforts to tackle food waste with ameliorating food poverty. While these are good starting points and examples of working with food from a system thinking perspective, the fact remains that some people have access to good quality foods and others only have access to the remaining, not good enough quality products. Therefore, inequality in access to the same food remains and food security is improved but there is no food justice. This could thus be related to the characteristics of a reformist rather than a progressive approach (Gimenez and Shattuck, 2011).

Finally, as was already visible in the need for an internal lobby, the results also pointed out that differences exist between personal values and organizational values. Most clear here is that generally individuals within municipalities tend to assign more value to 'new' concepts than municipalities as a whole. Such as was observed for circularity, this was perceived to be significantly less valued on an institutional level within municipalities as well as tradition being valued more on an institutional level. This shift of values when it comes to intervene in some of the consumer freedom for the sake of consumer health, was also mainly observed among those frontrunner municipalities participating in the lobby to get these legal instruments. The survey distributed among the larger population of municipalities shows that diverging views on this necessity exist and that most municipalities are still hesitant to take on such a role of regulating the market. This then yet again signals that the approaches of the majority of municipalities tend to be more on the side of keeping the current regime as it is than they could be described as leading to changes when looking at the framework of Gimenez and Shattuck (2011).

6. Conclusion and recommendations

All in all, to give an answer to the overarching research question “*How do values shape the engagement of municipalities in food policy?*”, it could on the one hand be said that since the findings show that the engagement of most municipalities in the Netherlands is still in its infancy, it might be too soon to determine to what extent values within municipalities are actually influencing food policy engagement. Furthermore, it is shown that the task of shaping food policy is difficult and creating a vision of how change should be achieved is perceived challenging due to the complexity of the system. Therefore, no characteristics of a desirable future food system were ascribed insignificant value to and the future perspectives among civil servants were centered around a balance of all types of solutions. On the other hand, despite the complexity of it all, certain dynamics of where values are certainly at play could still be distinguished.

It can first of all be concluded that the values and priorities of individuals within municipalities are significant for the way municipalities recognize the need to take a role in food policy. While some have already succeeded to actively get food to remain on the municipal agenda, others are still trying to convey its relevance within the organization but the most important result is that without individuals valuing the urgency of the topic, food policy engagement would not happen at all since it is not a mandatory responsibility. In this respect, it can also be concluded that differences in influential values on food policy engagement exist in terms of institutional perspectives and personal perspectives and that change on the institutional level is unlikely to happen without values of change within individuals.

Second of all, looking at how the municipal role in food policy is valued, varying perceptions of more incrementalist to slightly more transformative roles can be established. Whereas the municipal role is valued as not very significant without more influential food system actors initiating change, the strength of the municipal role was mainly valued in terms of overcoming this insignificant influence by networking and collaborating across scales and sectors. In this sense, the way forward in food policy engagement at the local level is mainly valued promising by committing to collaborations that will together result in breaking the current regime. However, in order for this potential to be realized, the value of being involved in such networks first needs to be present across many more municipalities in the Netherlands since this still only applies to a handful of frontrunner municipalities.

Furthermore, the results have shown a clear recognition of the value to work with food in an integral way within municipalities which indicates a promising starting point for municipalities to engage with more effective food policy. Yet, although this value can already be observed, it has not led to actual integral approaches within most municipalities. Therefore, the willingness to commit to food policy is not sufficient for active engagement to actually be realized. In this respect, values are of influence but practical circumstances such as capacity and financial resources are important conditions.

Finally, the fact that solutions for tackling food system challenges are still sought within the dominant thought that food is a private commodity and thus changes under the lead of municipalities are likely to result in reaching improvements in food security rather than moving towards a state of food justice or even food sovereignty in which food is in complete control of those who consume. Consequently, it can be concluded that the current views on food policy and the food transition within municipalities could be pinpointed as views informed by values that will lead to somewhat reformist or progressive change in the Dutch food system. By dominantly relying on economic solutions such as true-cost pricing, changes of taxes on healthy foods and regulations in retail locations and placing emphasis on consumer responsibility by focusing on education and nudges in

the physical environment, change is still expected to result from market dynamics. Food thus remains a private good that is hoped to be made more affordable and thus accessible but is not guaranteed as a public good by the government.

However, certain significant evidence such as the lobby arising from the City Deal for careful steps towards market regulation also shows that more far-reaching practices informed by more progressive values are starting to emerge which might be the start of moving further away from the neo-liberal regime. The strong value of health concerns has proven to lead to new ways of justification for municipalities to intervene in current market principles of consumer freedom and moving against the dominant governance value in the Netherlands that consumers should not be patronized.

Finally, the major steps ahead will be to get values across municipalities in the Netherlands to align and to work towards a clear common vision of how to go forward. Otherwise, actual change is not likely to be achieved easily. Values that do not align will thus remain a challenge that - dependent on how there will be dealt with- will shape how food policy will be further engaged with.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended to conduct further research about the further evolvement of food policy in the Netherlands and to explore how food policy will be engaged with on a wider scale besides these municipalities that are considered frontrunners. Moreover, since the City Deal has not come to an end yet, it would be relevant to investigate to what extent this efforts of this deal have eventually achieved and what kind of change has resulted from it. Finally, further research could investigate how the food policy approaches of municipalities are experienced by actors involved in the relevant networks in order to get another view on their narratives than what is expressed from within the municipalities themselves.

7. Critical reflection

Although the internal validity of the research was strengthened by approaching the research question from various methodological angles, it is important to acknowledge several limitations. First of all, due to the lack of a clear conceptual definition of urban food governance and the identified gap in the literature of food system values as described in the academic literature (Belisle-Toler et al., 2021), both the interview guide and selected survey items were constructed in a relatively inductive manner, relying on the interpretation of the researcher of what could be selected as relevant. Therefore, there is a possibility of the results not being entirely significant to the existing theory.

In addition, due to a response rate of only 23% to the survey, the results only reflect the values and views of a limited sample of municipalities. The results therefore have a limited external validity to the context of the entire country. However, as can be seen in Appendix D, p.14, the participated municipalities contain a mixture of smaller and bigger municipalities spread throughout all regions of the country, which enhances the representation of different local contexts. Yet, it is also important to note that this survey did not take into account questions about the wider political, economic and geographic contexts of the surveyed municipalities. Consequently, further research could take these aspects into account to get a better understanding of possible variations in values among the respondents. In addition, although it is also relevant to take into account the possibility that the researcher to some extent developed a bias throughout the research process by getting invested in the importance of the topic, the researcher attempted to maintain an open-minded and neutral attitude during the interviews to not steer the interview in a certain direction and to give the interviewees the opportunity to respond freely.

Moreover, as was also made visible in the arguments of respondents as to why the municipal level is relevant for governing food, the municipality is the most appropriate body to make policy fitting to the local context. In the survey results, these local contextual characteristics were not accounted for. Consequently, answers may vary due to respondents considering these characteristics when answering since different priorities might be important dependent on local problems and circumstances. When these would have been accounted for, the results of the survey might have been interpreted differently. This is thus important to consider when assessing the reliability of these results.

Also important to note is that a number of interviewees indicated that they only recently started working in their current position at the municipality and therefore had limited knowledge and/or experience of the subject. This can therefore have had an effect on their answers given in the interview. Similarly, for the municipality of Rotterdam, the respective relevant person that was specifically responsible for the food strategy, was absent until after the timeframe of this research and was therefore not able to be included as an interviewee. The interviewed respondent of Rotterdam thus indicated that they, although to some extent involved in the City Deal, were not the most relevant person to participate in the interview.

Additionally important to consider when interpreting the results is that the interviews only included a limited amount of pre-determined questions while the majority of the interviews consisted of more spontaneous probing questions based on the interviewee's answers in order to gain more context-specific answers. However, this has led to the results being more difficult to compare and diversity in the answers per interview. Moreover, as the results show that municipalities themselves are also still in the beginning stages of food policy engagement and thus still figuring out how to proceed with the subject themselves, it was difficult to pinpoint what exactly the vision or approach of the municipalities are on the matter of food. Therefore, the results turned out to be not as much of a concise and comprehensible story as would have been preferred in the presentation of the results.

Furthermore, two critical notes on the methodological process can be made. First of all, it was first decided to also include a document analysis of relevant municipal documents in the method. However, as the analysis was carried out and the results were being written, it turned out to be too much data and the analysis of these documents did not seem to add a lot of significant results to the research. Therefore, this methodological approach was finally left out of the scope of the thesis but it could eventually have led to more detailed results. Similarly, since the combination of interviews and survey data together formed a very broad data base, it was also decided to leave out data from the survey because they were eventually perceived to not add much significance to the key points of the research results. Therefore, not all survey questions were eventually used to form an answer to the research question. However, the analyzed data of these questions can still be viewed in the appendix.

Finally, due to the often vague and interchangeable definition of the concepts of urban food governance, urban food policies and the diversity of explanations, descriptions and arguments made in the relevant academic literature, it was challenging to theoretically support the conceptualization of this research and to embed its scope into the theoretical framework. This has influenced the extent to which the researcher accurately and in a focused way made its way into the empirical field and collected the data. Moreover, due to the newness of food governance in municipalities, it often led to a certain extent of confusion during the process and an exploratory approach to the case. This has therefore limited the depth of the findings but it has also contributed to concluding that there is still a lot to gain in this research field.

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