Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems in Northland (Draft)

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**Introduction**

In 2014 *Local Food Northland* was established to reshape Northland’s\(^1\) food production, distribution and consumption systems. The initiators saw the growing awareness of the importance of local food, notably from research into the social and economic impacts of the Whangarei Growers Market (Bruce, Patrick, & Romer, 2014), a visit to the U.S. focussing on local food initiatives, and attending the Far North’s *Resilient Economies Conference* (Maxwell, 2014).

From its inception *Local Food Northland* (2015) has focussed on collaboration and “joining the dots”. While local food initiatives have been emerging across the region, there was limited evidence of collaboration, and perhaps more importantly, discourse about the development of sustainable food systems for the region.

*(Whakatauki)*

Over the two years of its existence, *Local Food Northland* has been envisioning a future with a sustainable food system and engaging others around this process. This research has three aims to support this process:

- to identify progress made internationally and nationally in sustainable food systems, that might inform similar developments in Northland
- to further understand and elaborate the systemic and cultural changes required to support sustainable food systems
- to identify thought leaders from the region engaged in food system initiatives, explore their aspirations and means for broader engagement.

The literature review that follows lays the groundwork for these aims.

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\(^1\) Northland is New Zealand’s northernmost region.
Part one: Sustainable Food systems

Defining sustainable food systems

The locality of food, and the proximity of producers and consumers is one dimension of sustainability. Generally, those advocating for local food also have aspirations around sustainability. *Local Food Northland* favours an inclusive approach in efforts to reshape food systems – conceptualising food systems for their sustainability enables a broad approach as there is strong consensus that sustainability encompasses financial, social and environmental considerations.

The Calgary definition of sustainable food systems is:

> a collaborative network that integrates several components in order to enhance a community’s environmental, economic and social well-being. It is built on principles that further the ecological, social and economic values of a community and region (Community Research Connections, n.d.).

The USDA definition enshrined in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act, 1990) characterises sustainable agriculture as

> an integrated system of plant and animal production practices that meet America's need for food and fiber and enhance the natural resources that food growing depends upon. These practices also include efficient use of nonrenewables, keeping production economically viable and enhancing both the farmer's and society's quality of life (Community Research Connections, n.d.).

Community Research Connections (nd) offers four definitions of sustainable food systems. The characteristics of systems gleaned from these definitions can be categorised as system features, production qualities and community benefits.

**System features**

- generates economic benefits for producers and others
- provides local food seasonally appropriate
- is energy efficient
- enhances quality of life
- effective stewardship of water, soil, biodiversity and waste
- mitigates climate change
- creates rich connections between producers, distributors, institutional food consumers, commercial food outlets and consumers
- supports fair trade.

**For producers**

- models environmental stewardship
- production practices are appropriate for the locality and ideally organic
- values animal welfare
- supported by accessible infrastructure

**Community benefits**

- enhances resilience
- provides food security including healthy food
- contributes to community and ecological health
- enhances access to food
- engages health and education institutions

Clare Hinrichs cautions that defining sustainable food systems is problematic. Sustainability, for example, is a process rather than a prescription and is often contested discursively. Our understanding of sustainability will continue to evolve (Blay-Palmer, 2010).

In the Northland context, the Te Tai Tokerau Iwi leaders group provides a model of sustainability based on Mātauranga Māori. While similar to the triple bottom line model, first articulated by John Elkington (1998) in 1994 the model places the social (manākitanga) and environmental (kaitiākitanga) above, but foundational to orānga (generational and sustainable economic wellbeing and prosperity). It also resonates, but contrasts with an eco-centric model that conceptualises the economy as embedded in community which is in turn embedded in the environment (Future Oxford, 2014). While the eco-centric model positions the environment as the preeminent value, the Iwi leaders model privileges both the human and environmental dimensions as the pre-cursors for economic wellbeing. This is consistent with the well know whakataukī (proverb).

*He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata.*
*(What is the most important thing in the world? It is the people, it is the people, it is the people).*
From industrial to sustainable food systems

For millennia food has occupied a central role in human history, fundamental to our survival, sense of place, economy and society. Cities and agriculture co-evolved (Steel, 2009) but with the advent of the industrial age our alienation from food production began. The negative impacts of industrial food systems are well
documented (Blay-Palmer, 2000, 2010, Howard, 2016, Marsden, Banks, & Bristow, 2000, Roberts, 2014, IPES-Food, 2016) An alarming trend is the concentration of market share into the hands of a small number of powerful corporates (EcoNexus, 2013). Industrialisation of food has in the most benign analysis coincided with the rise of diet-related health conditions, such as obesity (Stuckler & Nestle, 2012).

Figure 2: Outcomes of the industrial food system (IPES-Food, 2016)

In response there is an evident rise in the number of farmers markets, a renewed interest in home gardening and the role of nutrition in health and other innovations in sustainable food systems (Bruce & Neeley, 2016).

Figure 3: Soybean harvest in the Matto Grosso, Brazil

Alongside concerns about industrial food production, attention is also focussed on the business systems and ideologies that fostered them. Those advocating for the
free market privilege market dynamics, personified as the “invisible hand” as the main arbiter and shaper of business systems. It is now clear that a consequence is an increasingly disproportionate concentration of power and wealth (Korten, 2015).

Forces of change, such as increasing levels of education and the democratisation of information expose the deficiencies of industrial systems.

   Community, transparency, freedom, meritocracy, openness, and collaboration—these comprise the fundamental ethos of the Web. Within the precincts of corporate-dom, the values of control, discipline, accountability, reliability, and predictability reign supreme. Twenty-first-century organizations must integrate these counterposed values…(Hamel, 2012)

**International developments in sustainable food systems**

**Global developments**

The World Health Organisation (2016) acknowledges food policy as contentious.

Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. There is a great deal of debate around food security with some arguing that:

- There is enough food in the world to feed everyone adequately; the problem is distribution.
- Future food needs can - or cannot - be met by current levels of production.
- National food security is paramount - or no longer necessary because of global trade.
- Globalization may - or may not - lead to the persistence of food insecurity and poverty in rural communities.

Over the last two decades, at the global and national levels there are increasing numbers of NGOs aspiring to sustainable food systems.

The recently formed (2015) International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) is an example of the proliferation of organisations focusing on sustainable food systems. Co-chaired by Belgian Olivier De Schutter and Kenyan Olivia Yambi, the IPES-Food is a "transdisciplinary initiative to support, inform and advise the policy debate on how to reform food systems across the world"
The nature of their work is reflected in the breadth of policy they seek to integrate and influence.

Figure 4: Some of the potential policy influences on food systems (International Panel of Experts on sustainable food systems, 2015)

**Food policy councils**

It is not surprising that we find strong momentum towards establishing sustainable food systems in the nation that has been at the forefront of the proliferation of fast food chains, food processing and long food chains. In 2015, The United States had 215 Food Policy Councils, with a total of 282 in North America.

Figure 5: Food Policy Councils in North America (Center for a Livable Future, 2015)
This graph (from John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future) reveals dramatic growth in Councils from 2000 to 2015. Growth appears to have plateaued, but based on its proliferation in North America is primed to expand in other locations world-wide.

Seventy eight percent of these councils are either independent grass-roots organisations or NGOs with Twenty one percent embedded in government or government funded organisations (Center for a Livable Future, 2015).

The Center for a Livable Future’s mission is “to promote research and to develop and communicate information about the complex interrelationships among diet, food production, environment, and human health” (Center for a Livable Future, 2016). The top priorities for Food Policy Councils are healthy food access, urban agriculture/food production, education, purchasing and procurements, networking and food hubs. Other interests are anti-hunger, food waste and fitness(Center for a Livable Future, 2015).

Two examples of Food Policy Councils follow – the first metropolitan and the second regional.

**The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC)**

The Toronto Food Policy Council, established in 1991 is one of the oldest. The TFPC “connects diverse people from the food, farming and community sector to develop innovative policies and projects that support a health-focused food system, and provides a forum for action across the food system” (Toronto Food Policy Council, 2016).

Key documents include the *Toronto Food Charter* and *Cultivating Food Connections, Toronto Food Strategy*. The TFPC also collaborates with other organisations in Ontario to promote policy and legislation to shape a sustainable food system. Wayne Roberts (2014) uses a flywheel as a metaphor for food policy councils. They institutionalise and foster innovation providing momentum, rather than having new projects have to start unaided and poorly connected to the diversity in the food system.

**Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council (PSRFPC)**

The PSRFPC is much younger, established in 2010. Its vision is a “thriving, inclusive and just local and regional food system that enhances the health of: people, diverse communities, economies, and environments”(Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council, 2011). In addition to policy work, the PSRFPC has worked on farmers market viability.
Food plans

Food planning has developed alongside the development of food policy councils. They seek to draw together the diverse elements underpinning sustainable food systems.

The recently published *From Uniformity to Diversity* advocates both policy and planning.

None of the changes envisaged above will move far or fast enough while policy processes are constrained by compartmentalized approaches (Lock-in 4) and short-term thinking (Lock-in 5). It is therefore crucial to establish new, more inclusive and more-joined-up processes, responding to the growing proposals for redesigning food policy-making (Opportunity 2). Long-term, cross-party, inter-ministerial planning around food systems – reaching across political boundaries and transcending electoral cycles - should therefore be facilitated. (IPES-Food, 2016, pg 73)

A sample of brief summaries of food plans follows.

**A Good Food Plan for Bristol** (Bristol Good Food, 2013)

Bristol's plan seeks to transform its food culture, safeguard the diversity of food retail, safeguard land for production, increase urban food production, redistribute, recycle and compost food waste, protect infrastructure for local food supplies, increase market opportunities for suppliers and support community food enterprises. [more](#)

**The People’s Food Plan** (Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance, 2013)

The Australian Food Alliances plan opens with: “Our food system is broken. People are hungry in the outer suburbs at the same time that supermarkets are throwing away food. Farmers are leaving the land in increasing numbers. Food is full of additives that are making us sick. We, the Australian Food sovereignty Alliance, are a national coalition of people and organisations working for a fairer food system better suited to a democracy. We’ve come up with a plan for a better food system — it’s called the People’s Food Plan”. [more](#)

**Sustainable Food Plan 2015-2020** (Agence D’Ecologie Urbaine, 2015)

The Paris plan reports gains in organic foods served from public purchasers from 7.4% in 2008 to 24.3% in 2013 and sets more ambitions goals for its municipal and departmental catering services including no GM foods, 100% free-range eggs, no
Edible Edinburgh envisions a city “where good food is available for all, making for healthy people, thriving communities and a sustainable environment”. The aims of the plan are broadly health and well-being, land use, the environment, buying food, the economy and cultural change.

Vancouver Food Strategy (City of Vancouver, 2013)

The Vancouver Plan lays out 5 clear action areas, food production, empowering residents, food access, food processing and distribution and food waste. The strategy is based on a legacy of food planning, preceded in 2004 by an action plan, in 2007 by a food charter and 2011 by the Greenest City Action Plan.

These plans reveal clear commonalities revealing aspirations for sustainable food systems. As a sixth example here is the Vermont plan in more detail.

Vermont

The state of Vermont in the north-east of the U.S. has made impressive progress with sustainable food systems. It has approximately four times the population of Northland. Vermont has ranked as the U.S. state most committed to locally-sourced food for 2014, 2015 and 2016 (Strolling of the Heifers, 2016).

The Farm to Plate 2015 Annual Report reveals some impressive achievements from the five years of the 2011 to 2015 strategic plan. Here are some highlights.

- 11.6% increase in food system employment
- 32% increase in food system gross sales
- 58% increase in net value added food manufacturing
- 72% increase in recovered food from 2014 to 2015.

A sobering reality is that given the state’s leadership in sustainable food systems, there is yet to be a clear impact on health. In 1995 52% of Vermonters were normal weight but by 2013 this had dropped to 37%, with 63% either overweight or obese. Read the full report here. However Vermont is rated as one of the healthiest states in the U.S.

A more sustainable health system should inevitably lead to better health outcomes. Perhaps this points to the importance of an integrated whole of system approach to
turn the tide of the social, cultural and regulatory influences that continues to shape an environment hostile to good health.

**The Farm to Plate Strategic Plan**

The new strategic plan maps out Vermont’s progress to 2020. It is presented comprehensively on the Farm to Plate [website](#).

The 25 goals of the plan resonate with those of the plans and policy initiatives outlined above and reflect the advanced development of Vermont initiative.

Figure 6: The key elements of the Farm to Plate plan

Figure 7: the 25 Vermont Farm to Plate goals (Vermont Farm to Plate, 2016)
The graphic presentation to these goals lend an impressive clarity to the Vermont plan. Each of the icons is hyperlinked to detailed data of the current situation as a benchmark for further gains.

The Vermont Farm to Plate plan provides a planning framework that could easily be replicated. One of the strengths of the plan is the diversity of its goals and the consequent diversity of the disciplines that can be integrated into sustainable food system planning.

**New Zealand developments in sustainable food systems**

In New Zealand there are emerging signs of the degree of cohesion revealed in the planning and policy initiatives outlined above. A summary of some of the organisations follows.

When searching the Internet there was no evidence of integrated sustainable food policy initiatives in regions in New Zealand. The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) established the National Good Food Network in 2015 to connect the diverse organisations promoting sustainable food (Sustainable Business Network, 2015). Partners are Healthy Families New Zealand, Hutt City, Toi Te Ora and Well South. Other initiatives are evident from health and local government institutions, for example the Canterbury DHB.

The Organic Explorer website lists 44 farmers markets in New Zealand, and there are no doubt more. There are also a number of sustainable production organisations nationally focusing on organics, bio-dynamics, permaculture and Maori organics.

There is some strong academic activity supporting the development of sustainable food systems. Dr Jessica Hutchings of NZCER is a researcher and organic gardener. Her book, *Te Mahi Māra Hua Parakore: A Māori Food Sovereignty Handbook*, defines what a sustainable food system is from a Māori perspective.

Māori food sovereignty is the practice of ensuring food-secure futures for whānau, independent of multinational and national food systems and in harmony with Te Ao Tūroa (the natural world). It is about whānau having access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that is produced locally and free from chemicals, pesticides and genetic modification (Hutchings, 2015).

Amber Pearson and colleagues from the Department of Public Health at the University of Otago has generated an impressive number of journal articles on food
system themes. Dr. Miranda Mirosa is another University of Otago academic researching food systems.

**The evolution of the food system**

The evolution of the food system follows the pattern of paradigm change (Kuhn, 1970). The industrial food system is firmly established and remains on a trajectory of centralising power into a number of large multinationals. This system can be regarded as orthodoxy with reaction to its negative impacts fuelling experimentation with alternatives.

In most places those advocating sustainable food systems run small-scale initiatives without a lot of co-ordination. Among the exceptions are those localities that have Food Policy Councils. From the perspective of a paradigm shift, these councils may represent shifts towards a new orthodoxy that may eventually displace the industrial food system. Thus we can observe around the globe a range of situations from those communities where industrial food systems dominate, through to sustainable food systems projects that over time become more networked, through to efforts to create policy with the support of city and/or regional, and ultimately state legislative support. The diagram on the next page attempts to map this continuum.
Gap analysis

0 disconnected – dominated by multinational food chains

1 some independent projects with weak links

2 projects developing with networked support

3 collaborative, cross-disciplinary networks emerging

4 unified planning and policy aspiring to a sustainable food system

5 unified planning and policy supported by integrated regional policy

6 unified planning and policy supported by integrated national policy

7 a sustainable food system characterised by a healthy people, environment and economy

- industrial food system atrophies
- food systems support human health
- diverse food options available
- food systems enhance the environment

- national laws support SFS.
- the legislative context generally supports sustainability

- regional regulations support SFS
- the regional legislative context generally supports sustainability
- regional finance options available

- has a food policy council
- has a food plan
- the plan is widely supported
- there is support from elements of the industrial food system

- food policy initiatives emerging
- strong networks established
- strong support from educational and health institutions and local government

- diversity of production and processing developing
- emerging support from educational and health institutions
- some support from local government

- alternative outlets such as farmers markets emerging

- industrial food systems dominate
Part two: The change process

The nature of society and quality of life at any place and time on the planet is the result of social, cultural and technological influences. The degree to which people in societies have reflexive awareness of the unique confluence of these influences and a deeper appreciation systemic dynamics is a precursor to their engagement in system rethinking and redesign.

Systemic and cultural change

What are the decades or centuries long social and economic forces hat have shaped systems, including our food systems? Otto Sharmer’s framework helps us make sense of the societal forces that shape economic activity and provide an encouraging vision of how they may further evolve.

Figure 8: The evolution of society and economy (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015)

This framework traces the dominant design elements of economy and society. In “Society 1.0” the state is the dominant actor. With the emergence of “Society 2.0” the free market and the dynamics of competition dominate. To counter the more extreme impacts of free market “Society 3.0”, the social market develops with non-
governmental organisations (NGOs) introducing stakeholder awareness as an element of design.

Over time these developments help to generate value, but sooner or later come up against the limits of their usefulness. Today’s social and economic landscape is shaped by the interaction, often conflictual, of these three forces. Advocates for each of these “societies” believe a return to their dominant values will solve the problems they perceive. Otto Scharmer identifies the co-creative society, “Society 4.0” as the next stage of our collective development. It is characterised by an awareness of the broader needs of the society and economy and seeks to find synergies. In “Society 3.0”, the larger corporations strive to dominate the economic ecosystem, while in “Society 4.0”, the dominant drive is ecosystem stewardship (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Society 1.0</th>
<th>Primary societal challenge</th>
<th>Response: Coordination mechanism</th>
<th>Primary sector / players</th>
<th>Primary source of power</th>
<th>Dominant ideology</th>
<th>Primary state of consciousness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State-driven mercantilism, socialism</td>
<td>stability</td>
<td>commanding hierarchy</td>
<td>state/government</td>
<td>coercive (sticks)</td>
<td>Mercantilism: socialism (state centric) thought</td>
<td>Traditional awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society 2.0</td>
<td>Free market-driven laissez-faire</td>
<td>growth</td>
<td>competing markets</td>
<td>capital/business: state/government</td>
<td>remunerative (carrots)</td>
<td>Neoliberal and neoclassic (market-centric) thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society 3.0</td>
<td>Stakeholder-driven social-market economy</td>
<td>negative domestic externalities</td>
<td>negotiating: stakeholder dialogue</td>
<td>civil society/NGOs, capital/business, state/government</td>
<td>normative (values)</td>
<td>social democratic or progressive thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society 4.0</td>
<td>Eco-system driven, co-creative economy</td>
<td>global disruptive externalities, resilience</td>
<td>presencing: awareness-based collective action (ABC)</td>
<td>cross-sector co-creation, civil society/NGOs, capital/business, state/government</td>
<td>awareness: actions that emerge from seeing the emerging whole</td>
<td>eco-system-centric thought</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Characteristics of the four societies (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)

Based on this understanding of social and economic drivers, food system design will be based on awareness of externalities, will strive for resilience, aspire to collective action be driven by wider societal needs rather than narrow economic drivers and value and expand the assets of the commons.
Other perspectives, reflexive modernity, democracy, power and reconceiving human nature

The modern era provided opportunities for widespread education, democratisation and the development of science and industry, enabling humanity to control nature to a greater extent than in the agricultural age. Reflexive modernity responds to the negative impacts of modernity and encourages a reconceptualisation of the dynamics of national power and globalisation. In relation to food, the transition from modernity to reflexive modernity is manifest in a shift from trust in authority to a broader appreciation of the diverse risks embodied in long food chains (Spaargaren, Oosterveer, & Loeber, 2013).

Over the last century, public governance structures have evolved alongside the process of corporate power coalescing into fewer hands. The leading world economy, the United States is now considered by some an oligarchy (Gilens, Page, Princeton University, & Northwestern Univeristy, 2014). In New Zealand, central government is the dominant political force and is increasing its reach and influence. For example, the Polytechnics Education Amendment Act in 2009 reduced the size of Polytechnic Councils, and removed stakeholder representation. (Rainsbury, Malcolm, & Hart, 2013). Democracy is more than the occasional participation in elections. Active participation in the food system is an expression of democracy, aligned with food sovereignty. Ideally, citizens have a say over how food is produced, distributed and consumed and are engaged in the complex decisions around food sovereignty (Carlson & Chappell, 2015).

It is important to think about the wider context in which we grow kia to feed our whānau. Acting locally has global implications and this has never been more important than it is now. The drive to achieve Māori food sovereignty is part of a complex political landscape that is shaped by factors such as climate change, peak oil, GE and the tension between multinational and local food production (Hutchings, 2015)

According to Harvard Business Review authors Jeremy Heimans and Henry Timms the way power is manifest is changing. Old power is like currency, held by a few and jealously guarded while new power is like a current, made by many, and is open and participatory. There insights are seem particularly relevant to the shift to a sustainable food system.
In addition to the broad sociological currents shaping society, rethinking human nature also informs our ability to change. Jeremy Rifkin claims our new understanding of neuroscience reveals our empathic nature and that our brains are “hard-wired” for empathy. The empathic drive is fundamental to human nature, but when it is suppressed, secondary drives of competition and greed emerge. This contrasts with the perspective that humans are motivated primarily by self-interest. Jeremy Rifkin asks:

Is it possible that we could extend our empathy to the entire human race as an extended family, and to our fellow creatures as part of our evolutionary family and to the biosphere as our common community? If it is possible to imagine that, then we may be able to save our species and save our planet. If it is impossible to imagine that, then I don’t see how we are going to make it (The RSA, 2010).
Barriers to change

John Kotter’s research revealed that 70% of organisational change initiatives failed (Kotter, 1996). Perhaps the shift to sustainable food systems are inevitable, but by understanding change dynamics, we can accelerate that progress.

The iPES-Food report (2016), *From Uniformity to Diversity: A paradigm shift from industrial agriculture to diversified agroecological systems* identifies eight “lock-ins” that lock “industrial agriculture in place, regardless of its outcomes”.

These are:

1. **Path dependency** – the embedded nature and interlocking of investment, mechanisation, production systems dependence on low energy costs and distribution channels.
2. **Export orientation** – food traded internationally has increased from 15% in 1986 to 23% in 2009, based on the interaction between agricultural, trade, development and energy policies.
3. **The expectation of cheap food** – as the proportion of household income spent on food decreases in relation to other items such as other consumer goods and debt-servicing.
4. **Compartmentalised thinking** – in politics, research and business and creeping privatisation of the commons perpetuates industrial agriculture.
5. **Short-term thinking** – based on short electoral cycles, dividend expectations of shareholders and retail system imperative’s.
6. **“Feed the world” narratives** – argue the need to continue the Green Revolution trajectory to feed the growing population.
7. **Measures of success** - that fail to account for externalities and broader environmental societal and economic needs.
8. **Concentration of power** – created when “food systems, in their current forms, allow value to accrue to a limited number of actors, reinforcing their economic and political dominance, and thus their ability to influence the policies, incentives and imperatives guiding those systems”.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Companies control 50% of the commercial seed market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Companies control nearly 100% of the fertiliser sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Companies share 68% of the agrochemical market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Firms account for 97% of private R&amp;D in poultry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Firms control up to 90% of the global grain trade.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Examples of the concentration of power in the food industry (IPES-Food, 2016)

In [Force field analysis](Lewin, 1951) provides a tool to evaluate forces for, and against change. If we use the iPES-Food "lock-ins" as restraining forces, the tool can be used to clarify countervailing forces to impel change towards sustainable food systems. It is outside the scope of this document to elaborate on these forces – they are offered here as a tool.
Change models

There are many models that guide the change process. A model appropriate to guide a change from industrial to sustainable food systems is Peter Cammock’s 3Es model (2003). Central to the model is the dynamic between the processes of envisioning, engaging and enacting. Rather than vision, it stresses the envisioning process, that
is enhanced by on-going enacting and engaging. The vision is improved by engaging others.

Figure 13: The 3Es model of change (Cammock, 2003)

This model guides the methodology of this research. Identifying good practice in sustainable food systems internationally helps in “seeing the whole” and “clarifying purpose”. The next step is to return to step one to “connect” and move through the engagement process. Those who engage will expand the envisioning process.
Part three: Foundations for engagement

When is *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, Edward Freeman (1984) introduced the notion of the stakeholder into discourse he gave stronger voice to a range of those with interests in organisations. It was not just those investing financial capital who had the dominant voice, but those investing other forms of capital, such as employees, customers, suppliers, the community and the voiceless. Thirty years on, this concept has survived discursively and change the nature of communication to enable broader dialogue, albeit sometimes more in form than substance.

Communication with stakeholders is commonly referred to as engagement. As models of communication have developed from a transmission model in the mid twentieth century to more reflexive models where communication is shaped as shared meaning (Barnett, & O’Rourke, 2011), so has engagement emerged as a collaborative practice.

Further convergences are found with the work of Michael Porter in *Creating Shared Value* (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Otto Scharmer model introduced in part two above is overlaid with a communication model guiding the emergence of co-creation (presencing)

![Figure 14: Otto Scharmer's model of communication (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)](image)

Otto Scharmer encourages communication practices that enable us to learn from the future that wants to emerge.
Engagement, cohesion and collaboration in food systems

This brief coverage of the development of our understanding of communication and engagement should provide encouragement for possibilities to engage and co-create sustainable food systems.

There is a growing body of literature exploring engagement around food. For example, the paper *Engagement for Transformation*, (Block et al., 2008) distinguish between supply chains, value chains, and then value webs. This shifts communication and the conduct of trade from a linear potentially unidirectional flow to a much more diverse and interactive collaboration. Two examples of this follow.

*Engagement in the North East Kingdom*

The Northeast Kingdom is three counties in the north east of Vermont, with a combined population of 64,764 (Northeast Kingdom, 2016), roughly the same population as the Far North District in Northland. It has a food system plan integrated with the wider Vermont Plan. The plan’s authors anticipate a diverse engagement web.

A food systems governance network in the NEK will need to be diverse and consist of many groups and individuals: farmers, food producers, value-added processors, wholesale distributors, retail establishments, nutrient management organizations, land conversation groups, food security groups, local leaders, town planners, farm-to-school organizations, economic development organizations, and others. (Northeast Vermont Development Association, 2011, pg 101)

The plan then maps out the diverse elements in the food system and then comments on the complexity of communication that is a pre-requisite for effective implementation.

The implementation structure being suggested here draws on an emerging body of network development research that calls for the assemblage of robust social networks that are tied together through discrete functions and resource flows. (Northeast Vermont Development Association, 2011, pg 102)

*Lessons from Wayne Roberts*

The Toronto Food Policy Council formed in 1991 and employed Wayne Roberts as manager from 2000 to 2010. In guiding the further development of the Council effective engagement was vital. In his book *Food For City Building: A Field Guide for Planners Actionists and Entrepreneurs* he dedicates a chapter to “grateful thinking” –
the personal strategy underpinning his ability to build relationships. Here are some insights from that chapter (Roberts, 2014).

- **Food organizers need to travel light in terms of personal baggage.** Otherwise, their ego gets in the way of dealing with very personal and sensitive issues inherent in conversations about food.
- **It takes a high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills to engage people in constructive dialogue about food choices.**
- **… so many local food meetings are so filled with high spirits, chatter and laughter.** I think that’s why local food issues have such appeal for people, especially youth, looking for places to replenish, rather than dash, their hopes.
- **Arguing policy is a no-win situation,... If you lose the argument, you’ve lost, but if you win the argument, they’ll hate you forever.**
- **I didn’t use e-mail to conduct arguments but spoke face-to-face, providing an opportunity to gauge reaction as I talked and correct for misunderstood statements.** I gave in easily on minor differences. I didn’t talk about subjects that weren’t my expertise, such as nutrition or food safety, invitations to turf wars. I asked critics for their advice on how to handle a problem.
- **I found that being a champion for my city also made it easier for me to speak a deep truth about public health—that it benefits everyone, not just the poor or the middle class or the rich.** That majority-oriented discourse of serving the city and all its people, which has lost ground to a minority rights discourse over the past 30 years, is what pride in your city restores. I’d give that advice to anyone anywhere. If you can’t be in the place you love, love the place you’re with. Make sure your proposal comes from, and is seen to come from, good will.

**Some principles for engagement**

There is a compelling confluence been the development of sustainable food systems, and the forces of change becoming apparent in society. Along with energy systems and financial systems (to name but two) the food system is ripe for reform. These systems exist as social constructions shaped by dynamics of power, culture and the ways we engage with one another.
Ideas explored earlier such as “new power”, the empathic civilisation, democracy, acknowledging stakeholders, voice, co-creation, and value webs all point to better ways to work with one another. Otto Scharmer describes this as a shift from ego-systems, systems dominated by individual ego and personal advantage, to eco-awareness based on the realisation of our interdependence.

In the Northland context, these developments create fertile ground for the development of true partnership between the Tangata Whenua and Pākehā.

This move towards a greater maturity of humankind coincides neatly with the growing desire to achieve sustainable food systems. Here are some principles gleaned from the above to guide engagement with those aspiring to sustainable food systems.

- **Voice and democracy** – engagement is based on the principles of giving voice to those typically not heard in industrial food systems and enhancing local control over critical systems.

- **Trust and transparency** – trust will grow as systems of engagement and organising are shown to be transparent. Internet technologies can assist with transparency.

- **Collaboration and co-creation** – for the food system to deliver to the all people, and support their health and well-being, the focus of engagement is in serving the common good.
References


Further research

The pathway to sustainable food systems and opportunities to learn from international experience and develop shortcuts are fertile ground for further research.