

# How to get public meals on the welfare agenda: sustainability and health as drivers

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New Nordic Food Conference, November 6-7<sup>th</sup> 2012  
Oslo, Norway

# So who can feed the world?





# Is this the future: business as usual?



# Integrated strategy

- Civic food renaissance
- Integrating public meals more widely with wider food system in which policy and civic actions can engage
- Part of a new vision to improve public health and protect the environment

# Critical elements in world of food

Health and wellness

Sustainability (ecological modernization)

Business social responsibility

Food citizen/consumer culture/values

The environment (carbon-neutral/water/global warming/pollution/resource depletion)

Food governance

# Key societal dynamics affecting food

- Urbanization
- Demographic change
- Globalization
- Nutrition transition
- Poverty and inequalities
- Gender bias

# We are urban-humans

“food arrives on our plates as if by magic, and we rarely stop to wonder how it might have got there. But when you think that every day for a city the size of London, enough food for thirty million meals must be produced, imported, sold, cooked, eaten and disposed of again, and that something similar must happen every day for every city on earth, it is remarkable that those of us living in cities gets to eat at all”

*Source: Steel, C. (2008). Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives. London: Random House*



# A healthy city

*A city that is continually creating and improving physical and social environments and expanding community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential*

# The 'civic food renaissance'

- Sustainable cities
- Planning
- Design and architecture
- Public food procurement
- Community development
- Bringing people together through food

# The politics of 'food quality'

- Social control of food provisioning
- 'quality' used especially in relation to alternative food networks
- The 'quality-turn': characterized by innovative socio-ecological projects that challenge mainstream/conventional (industrial) food provisioning
- These debates laden with 'values'

*Source: Goodman et al. (2012). Alternative Food Networks. London: Routledge*

# Conceptualizing a 'public meals system'

From

'production'

to

'consumption'

# An integrated approach

- Suppliers/producing food
- Politics and policy (public food procurement)
- Kitchens and food preparation
- Settings
- The public meal 'consumer'
- (Food safety)

# A new 'territoriality' of food

- Away from 'globalisation' but towards a new territorial approach to food
- Change food production-consumption relationships so they are built on food 'webs' rather than industrial 'food chains'

# CASE STUDY: City of New York

- Launched November 2010 a vision to improve NYC's food system: FoodWorks report
- 59-point blueprint for creating jobs, improving health and protecting the environment
- Proposals focused on combating hunger and obesity, to preserving regional farming and local food manufacturing, to decreasing waste and energy use

# CASE STUDY: City of New York

- Big food system challenges:
  - 25% of New York City's children are obese
  - 3 million people lack adequate access to grocery stores
  - 1.4 million New Yorkers struggle to put food on the table



# CASE STUDY: City of New York

Five point integrated sustainable food system plan built around:

- 1. Production
- 2. Distribution
- 3. Processing
- 4. Consumption
- 5. Post-consumption

# CASE STUDY: City of New York

- Examples of proposals:
  - Facilitating urban-rural linkages
  - Using economic power as a purchaser of food and provider of public meals (e.g. schools)
  - Increase direct farmer-consumer links
  - Strategy for small-scale processing and manufacturing (80-90% all food purchased in US goes through some form of purchasing)
  - Training and skills development
  - Reduce and re-capture waste

# New direction in public food

- Issues such as the quality of the food served, how it is produced, where it is sourced, and its nutritional value largely ignored politically until relatively recently
- Public food now linked to public health and the sustainable development agenda (economic development, democracy/social justice, and environmental integration)

# Examples of solutions (or tensions within public food systems)

- Short producer to consumer food chains – new relations between civil society and the chain of food provision
- Re-valuing public food procurement – new relations between public sector (as buyer and consumer of food) and the chain of food provision
- Urban food strategies – the rise of municipalities and city-regions as food policy-makers, pointing to the potential for new relations between the local/regional government and civil society

*Source: Viljoen and Wiskerke, 2012*

# Major tension in public food procurement

The priority of achieving far greater savings in the cost of food ('best value'/'competitive tendering'/'economic efficiencies')

*versus*

Using public food procurement as a policy instrument for environmental and sustainability objectives *and* nutritional quality and health outcomes

# Role of politics

- Food provisioning should be decided by the 'market'
- Food choice is a wholly 'private matter' for families and individuals
- Problem of political will

# Role of public sector

Can establish:

- innovative connections between the global and the local,
- between conventional and alternative food systems,
- between producers and consumers

*Source: Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p.14*

# Emerging topics

- An 'ethics of care' as part of welfare provision of food
- The responsibility of the state versus private choice
- Public meals as part of a new food culture/'alternative food systems'
- Urban-rural linkages (we are now urban-humans) – new geographies of food



# A 'framework of care'

Food consumption and 'care':

Care should be recognized in the production and consumption of food

*Ref: Kneafsey, M. et al. (2008). Reconnecting Consumers, Producers and Food. Oxford: Berg.*

# København Madhus

“...council’s should be prioritizing the quality of care given through (public) meals – not comparing or competing on how cheaply they can supply (food)...”

*Source: KBH Madhus, 2008 Annual Report, p.5*

# 'Care' in food systems

...making the concerns and needs of others a basis for action

...from this perspective, care is a social responsibility, not simply a private concern,

...care should be recognized in food systems

# CONCLUSIONS: Nordic strategy for public food systems

- Develop a new 'Civic Food Renaissance' and food and nutrition policy for the Nordic region
- Join-up 'disjointed' initiatives
- Across government and policy silos – e.g. food as part of planning (urban agriculture)
- 'Reinvent' urban-rural interactions
- Develop integrated policy for production to consumption for public meals