

# Food Systems Governance in Canada: Taking Stock of Civil Society Engagement

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Association canadienne sur le droit  
et les politiques agroalimentaires

Canadian Association for  
Food Law and Policy

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# Why focus on Civil Society Organizations in food systems governance?



## -- PRESENTATION 1 --

# Engaging with Food Systems Governance from the Perspective of Civil Society Organizations in Canada

**Objective:** To better understand the theory and practice of food systems governance, our research explores the experiences and perspectives of Civil Society Organizations involved in food systems governance initiatives across Canada and Indigenous territories



## Findings . . .

# 1) Food Systems Governance as Confronting Power Relations

CSOs advocate for more participatory, inclusive and democratic governance approaches. Along with the imbalance of power within governance, **high levels of corporate concentration** in food systems affect food systems governance.

*Food systems governance “is all about power dynamics”, and how “local government has a lot of responsibility, but not authority or resources.”*

~ Barbara Emanuel, retired manager of the Toronto Food Strategy

*“Increasingly, we see the concentration of power in the hands of a number of global corporations, these are working in global trade, these are companies controlling the seed industry, these are companies controlling the food agency.”*

~Mustafa Koç, sociology professor at the Toronto Metropolitan University

## Findings . . .

# 2) Integrative, Cross-Scalar, Collaborative and Context Specific

Food systems governance requires new approaches that address the weaknesses and blind spots of siloed, top-down governance



*Governance “is how we work well together so that everyone has access to healthy, quality food... when it comes to the governance of food systems, we need to be putting many different heads together to be able to work on these issues and the involvement of people who are most affected by those kinds of decisions absolutely need to be at the table.”*

~Audrey Demars-Vandenberghe, director of Réseau Agriconseils Outaouais



Findings . . .

### 3) Modeling Participatory Decision-Making Processes

Food systems governance requires new approaches that address the weaknesses and blind spots of siloed, top-down governance

*Food systems governance is like a “pot of soup in which ingredients are to be added. Water is necessary to make it cook. . . But the ingredients are different, and the ingredients matter most.”*  
~ Faris Ahmed, food systems consultant



## Discussion . . .

- Overall, CSO actors have a wide and varied understanding of food systems governance - For participants, governance meant much more than engagement with government.
- The three themes identified in our findings each expand existing scholarly understandings of food systems governance.
- Applying these findings to the ways that food systems are currently governed would mean a significant shift in governance processes



-- PRESENTATION 2 --  
**Situating Elder Insights from Across the  
Food Movement**

Patricia Ballamingie, Charles Levkoe, and Dana  
Korten

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21 LEGACY INTERVIEWS WILL BE STORED ON MACODRUM LIBRARY'S DATAVERSE



**Brewster Kneen**



**Abra Brynne**



**Mary Lou Morgan**



**Linda Best**



**Pat Mooney**



**Deb Barndt**



**Anne Bishop**



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**Henry Lickers**



**Dan Longboat**



**Larry McDermott**



**Barbara Emanuel**



**Patti Williams**



**Mustafa Koç**



**Debbie Field**



**Wendie Wilson**



**Faris Ahmed**



**Av Singh**



**Patricia Bishop**



**Margo Riebe-Butt**



**Trevor Hancock**

# Context

- Listen to your Elders who...
  - Prove thoughtful and self-reflexive
  - Reflect critically on accomplishments and shortcomings
  - Understand the lineage of social movement organizing



Situating Elder knowledge



Advancing a food systems lens



Placing relationships (and relationality) at the fore/core



Working in a multi-faceted way



Conceptualizing progress in a good way

Focus on	Focus on intergenerational knowledge transfer
Elevate	Elevate Elder perspectives we are at risk of losing
Value	Value personal narrative



# Situating Elder knowledge and unique positionality

- Brought full life experience to bear
- Understood themselves as food movement actors
- Embraced humility, intuition, luck, altruism, responsibility
- Implicitly recognized intersectionality







# Advancing a food systems lens

- Valued relationships (to people, organizations and place) as central to the work
- Fostered dialogue among disparate positions
- Built relationships at the “speed of trust”

# Placing relationships (and relationality) at the fore/core

- Viewed food as a portal, entry point to myriad other issues and deeper, structural change
- Internalized complex, embedded and relational food systems lens
- Embraced a plurality of food systems

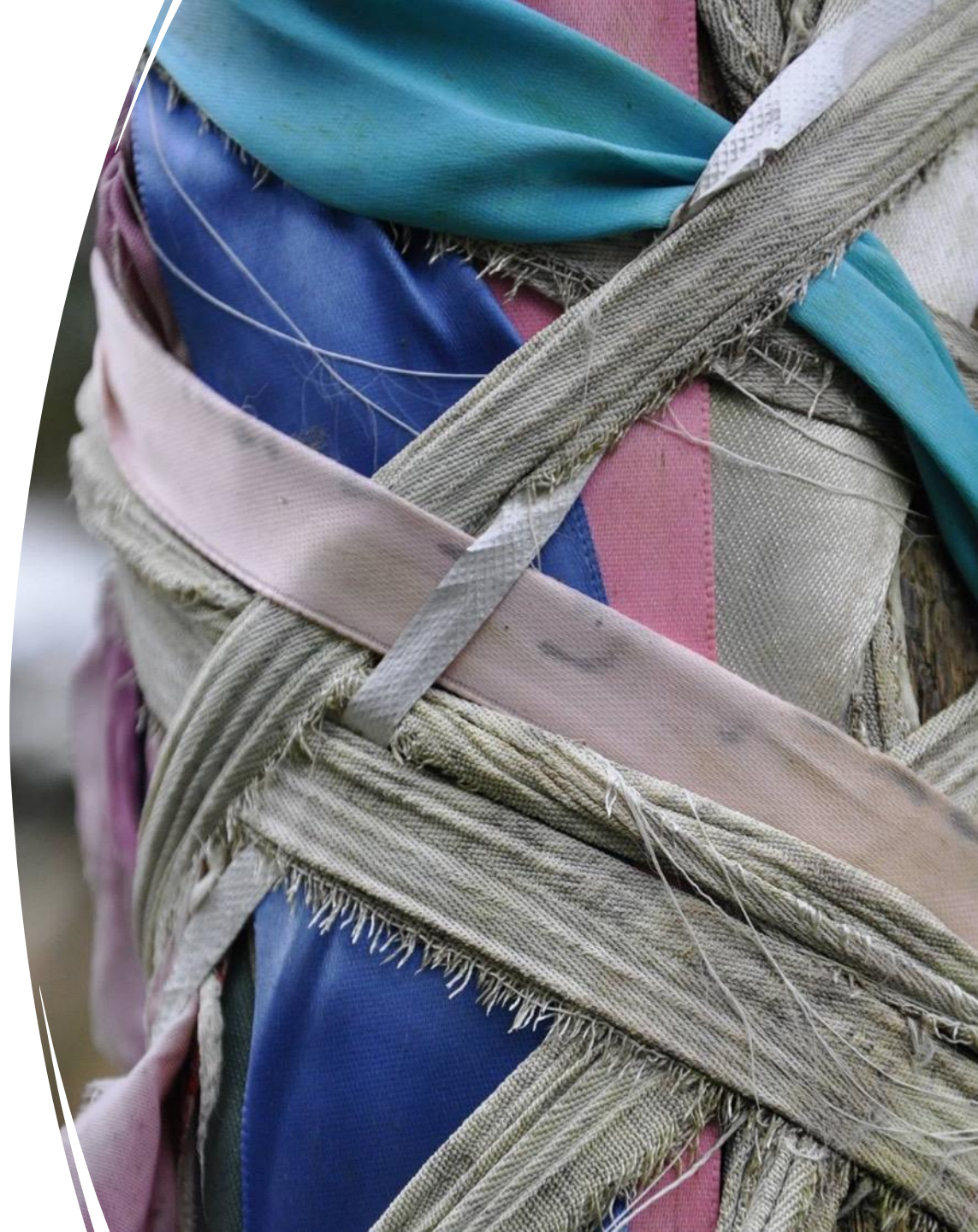


# Working in a multi-faceted way

- Connected across boundaries, scales, sectors, disciplines and spaces
- Brought together diverse communities to find common ground
- Created organizations that bridge divides

# Conceptualizing progress in a good way

- Understood the path *is* the progress
- Reflected on small changes with big impacts over time
- Learned from failures to move forward
- The more things change, the more they stay the same...?





## Interview

### Wayne Roberts: Food Systems Thinker, Public Intellectual, “Actionist”

Patricia Ballamingie<sup>a</sup> and Charles Z. Levkoe<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Carleton University

<sup>b</sup> Lakehead University

## Abstract

Wayne Roberts (1944–2021) was a food systems thinker, public intellectual, and “actionist.” This text was developed from a series of oral history interviews conducted between December 2020 and January 2021. It touches upon several of the key themes addressed during the interviews: adopting a food systems approach; employing the power of ideas; identifying solutions and being propositional; acknowledging progress for political credit; enhancing impact through media, old and new; working strategically to “seed” then “tip”; influencing government; and forming alliances with academics and other champions. In addition, we provide links to additional resources. In this article, which inaugurates the Interviews section of *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue canadienne des études sur l'alimentation*, we aim to do justice to the gift of Wayne’s experiences and knowledge by sharing a selection and synthesis of his words.

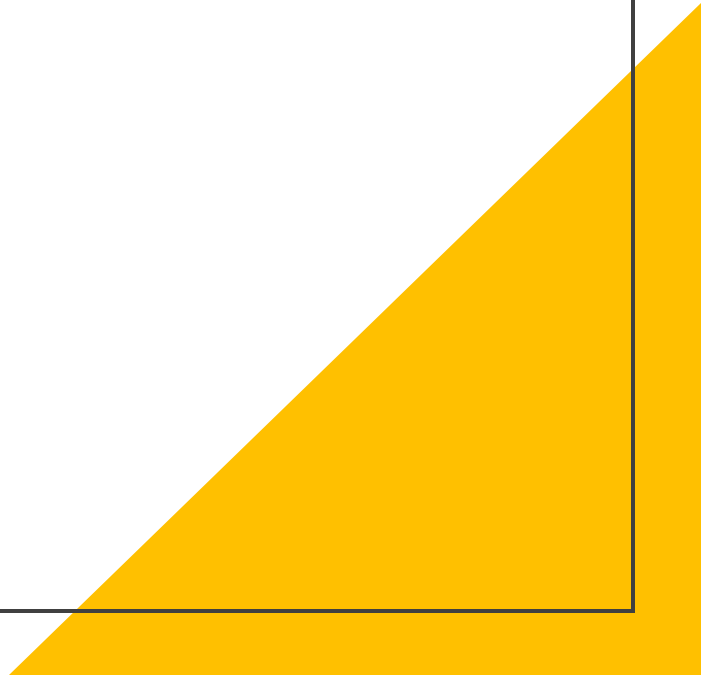
Keywords: Food policy; food policy councils; food systems



## -- PRESENTATION 3 --

# Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council

**Objective:** To better understand the experiences of council members and expectations of advocates as it relates to the implementation of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council.





**Results:** Overall, there was a sense that the Council is learning-by-doing in creating more innovative governance processes between government and stakeholders. Based on early feedback, ways of strengthening the Council include:

- ensuring members' feel their time and expertise are valued and
- establishing a more transparent feedback process on advice offered to the government may strengthen overall CFPAC processes.

“The Council will incorporate diverse perspectives in its advice to contribute to building consensus on the nature of food challenges and solutions to address them, building greater trust among key food system stakeholders, and supporting the ability to collaborate across sectors.”

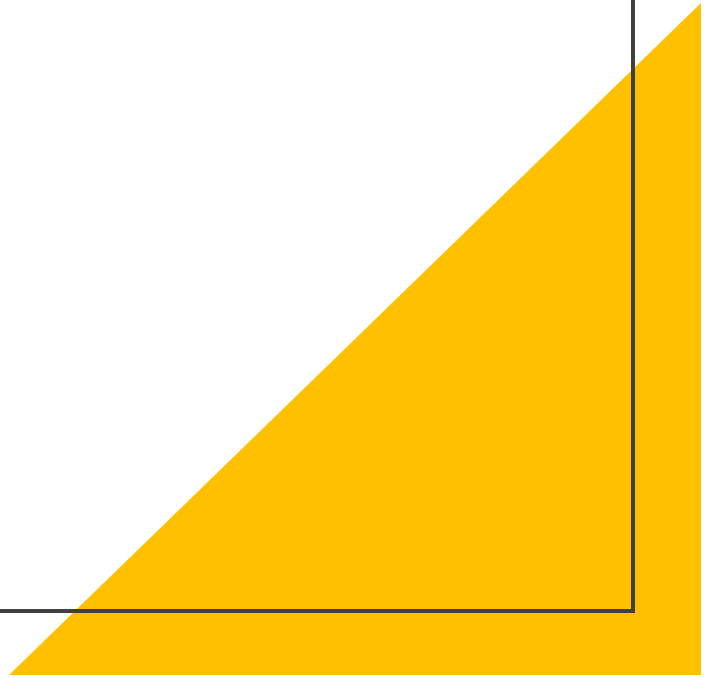
- Government of Canada

Emerging Themes:

1. Relationships with Staff
2. Members Have More to Offer
3. Representation and Participation
4. Agenda Setting
5. Feedback and Evaluation
6. Collaboration
7. Diverse Understandings

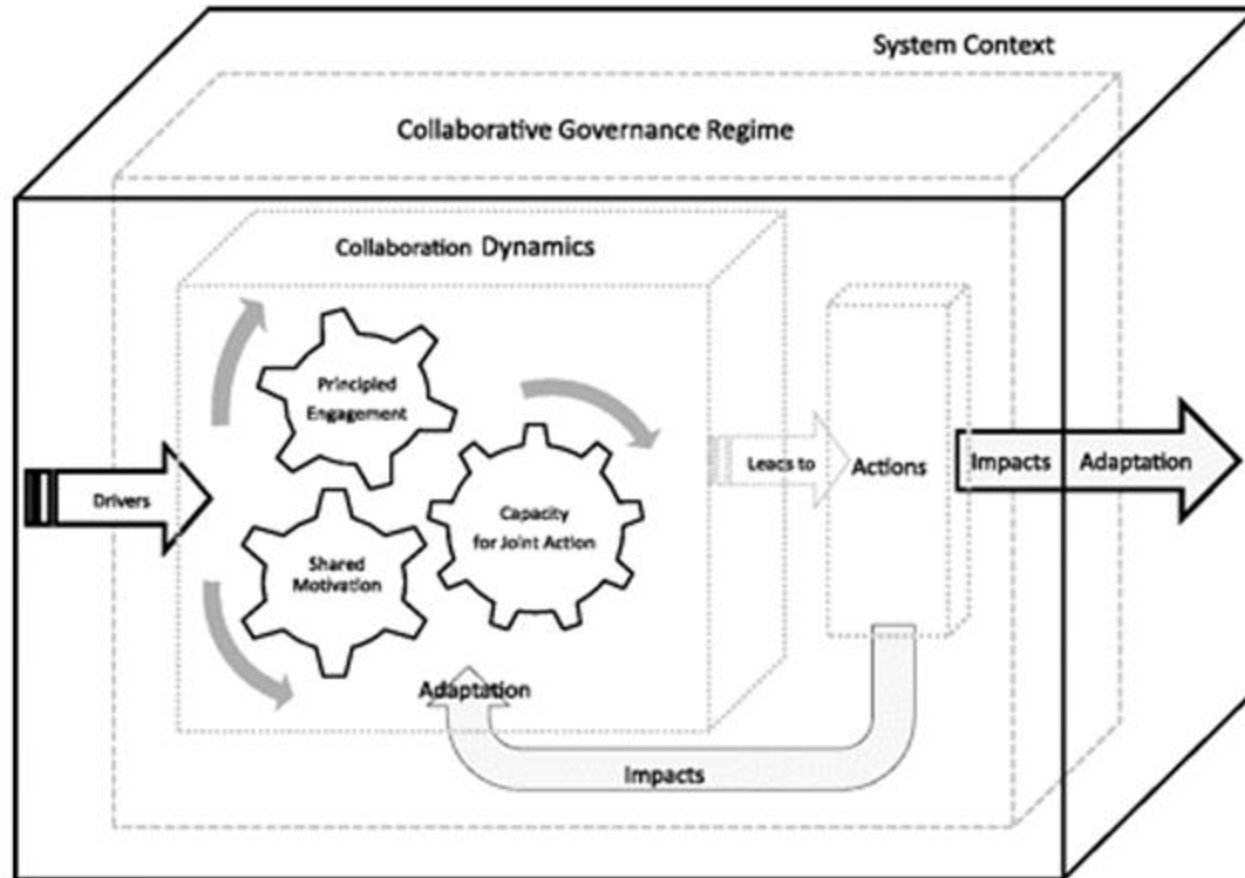
-- PRESENTATION 4 --

# **Governing the Canadian Organic Standards**

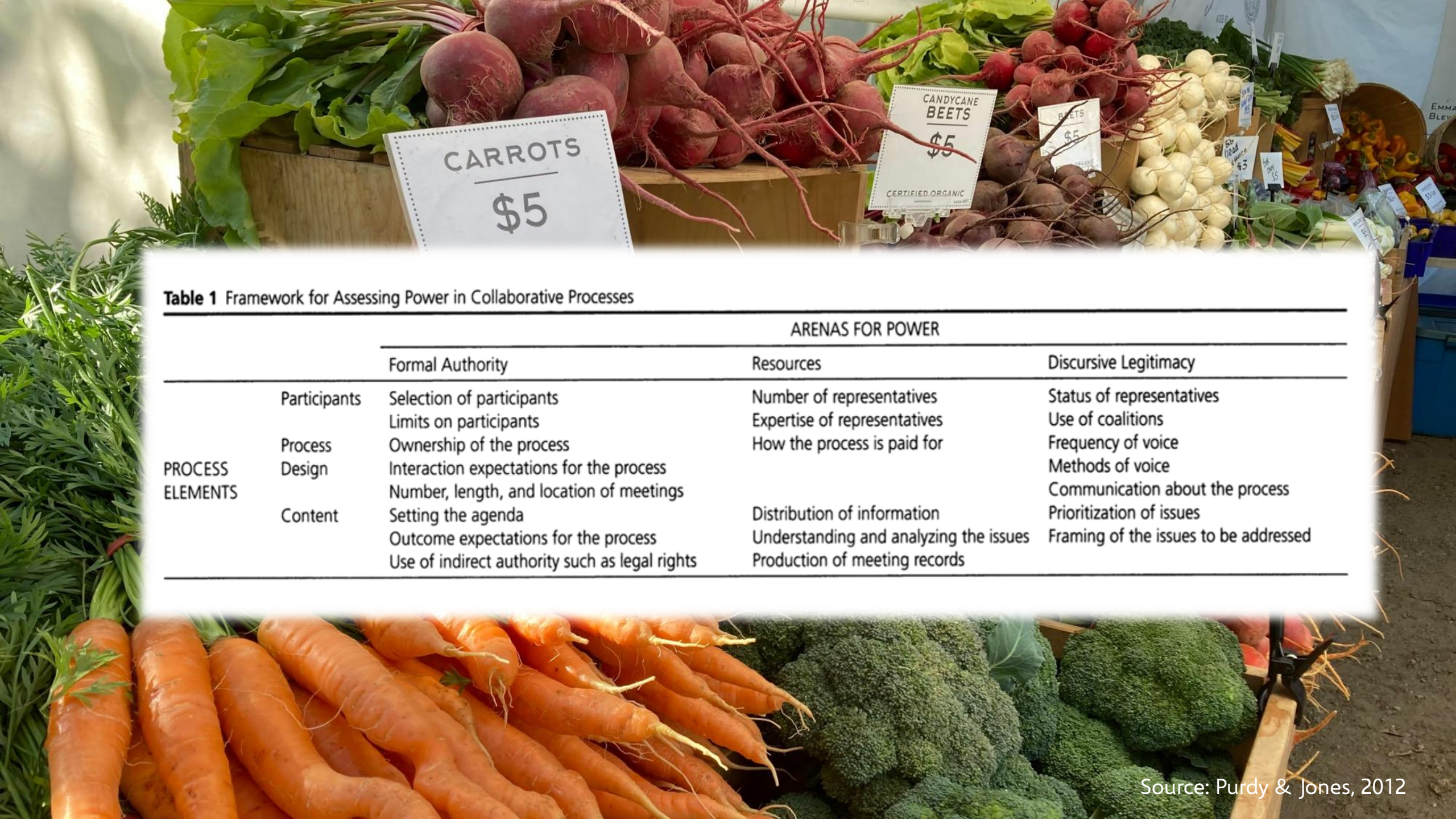




**Figure 1** The Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance





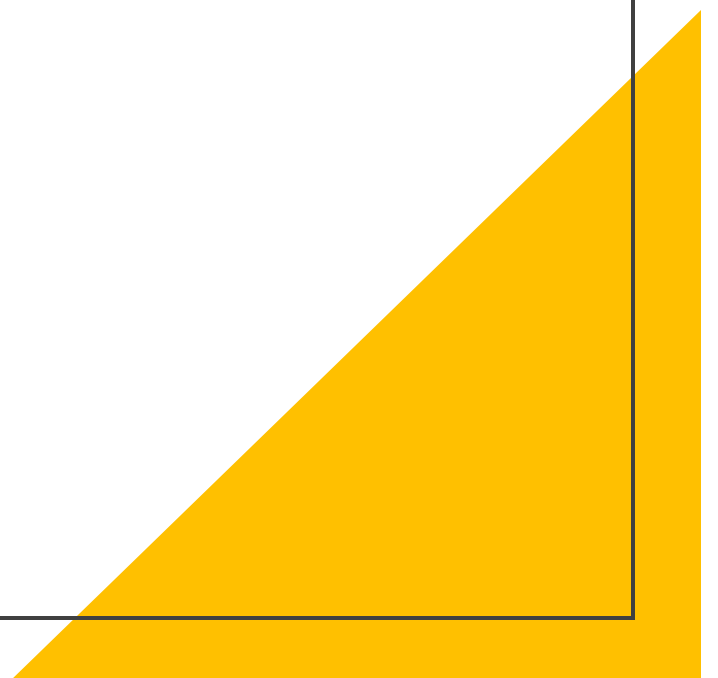


**Table 1** Framework for Assessing Power in Collaborative Processes

		ARENAS FOR POWER		
		Formal Authority	Resources	Discursive Legitimacy
PROCESS ELEMENTS	Participants	Selection of participants Limits on participants	Number of representatives Expertise of representatives	Status of representatives Use of coalitions
	Process Design	Ownership of the process Interaction expectations for the process Number, length, and location of meetings	How the process is paid for	Frequency of voice Methods of voice Communication about the process
	Content	Setting the agenda Outcome expectations for the process Use of indirect authority such as legal rights	Distribution of information Understanding and analyzing the issues Production of meeting records	Prioritization of issues Framing of the issues to be addressed

-- PRESENTATION 5 --

# **Small Scale Fisheries Governance**





# Small Scale Fisheries Governance

*“Resources that originate in our oceans, rivers, and lakes are almost entirely omitted in our conceptions of a sustainable food system” – Seto & Fiorella (2017)*

This case study recognizes that:

- The participation of fisheries and their associated institutions is underexamined within food governance literature
- Interrogating civil society-state interactions in fisheries may help to identify strategies and tactics towards broader food systems transformations



BLUE FISH  
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# Discussion

What role should civil society play in policy making processes?

How to enable food advocates to better understand legislative change?

How to better identify “low hanging fruit” for changing policy?



# Funders



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## Project Website

<https://foodsystems.lakeheadu.ca/participatory-food-governance/>



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