**A Sample of Local and Regional Food System Case Studies**

Drawn from the UC Davis Community Food Systems Bibliography

9/5/14

**Overview**

This collection of articles contains peer-reviewed research in the form of cases studies of particular local and regional food systems. The articles are drawn from a larger Community Food Systems bibliography assembled by a team of researchers from UC Davis. The full bibliography, last updated in March of 2013, is available for download at <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/CFSresources> . We consider sustainable local and regional food systems as ones that seek to benefit a particular, geographically bounded place or region and are concerned with enhancing the environmental, economic, and/or social impacts of the food system.

**Background**

The broad goal of the Community Food Systems bibliography project is to facilitate and inform scholarly work in the field. An initial review of literature in the bibliography identified key challenges faced by the movement and noted that comparative case study research was needed to analyze if and how these challenges are being addressed (Campbell, David C., I. Carlisle-Cummins, and G. Feenstra, 2013). We grew curious about whether the existing case study literature might lend itself to comparative analysis.

**Goal**

In compiling this selective and partial list of case studies, we have three goals in mind:

* To make existing case study data more accessible for researchers interested in conducting comparative case studies or meta-analyses of this body of literature.
* To get a sense for how much of the CFS literature fits into the “local case study” type, as opposed to other types of empirical research or more theoretical literature.
* To provide a snapshot that reveals the state of existing CFS case study research (e.g. locales being studied, disciplines and methods being used, the focus of substantive topics addressed)

**Inclusion Criteria**

We used three criteria in compiling the CFS Case Study Database. An article had to be:

* *Peer-reviewed*: Only peer-reviewed journal articles were considered (articles in the original bibliography primarily cover the period from 2000-2013; for this analysis we limited our scope to articles published between January 2011 and March 2013).
* *Place*: The article must be about a specific local setting or settings and in some way take the context into account in the analysis.
* *Empirical*: The article had to use one or more qualitative or quantitative methods to analyze and reach conclusions of some kind.

Two caveats should be noted: 1) not all of the articles we selected as meeting these three criteria is described by its author(s) as a case study; and 2) not all of the research fitting these criteria meets a more robust understanding of what a case study might provide (such as data that show how local and regional food systems have developed over time, or which tell the story in a way that honors the perspective of local participants). In short, we cast a fairly broad net in looking for local case studies.

Using this strategy, we reviewed 666 articles from the larger bibliography between the dates of January 2011 and March 2013. We found 103 articles that met our case study criteria, representing 15.4% of the sample. The attached database provides references for these articles, along with answers to the following questions about each case:

* What place(s) do they examine (what scale or scales are the focus)?
* Is it a single case or are there comparative cases?
* What is the substantive focus or foci of the research?
* What are the primary methods used?
* What is the academic discipline of the primary author?

To access the database of case studies, download the excel file at <http://sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/CFSresources#community-food-system-case>.

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