Nexuses of the Urban Interactions between water, energy and food provision for sustainable cities

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THE NEXUS NETWORK
new connections in food, energy, water and the environment
An ESRC investment
Brighton & Hove: A sustainable food city

Emily O’Brien
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership
emily@bhfood.org.uk
www.bhfood.org.uk
@harvestbh
We are... A hub for information, inspiration & connection around food

- A non-profit organisation that helps people learn to cook, to eat a healthy diet, to grow their own food and to waste less food.
- Work with individuals
- Work with groups
- Work at a strategy and policy level

*These are interconnected*
What we do

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRtftqTkqdI
About Brighton & Hove

- Between the sea and the national park – *limited space*
- Nearby- mostly grazing land
- Water supply vulnerable
Brighton & Hove – constrained land

• **Small city but expanding**- 2011 census figures = 273,400 residents (25,000 more than 2001)
• More people live in **flats** than houses
• **PREMIUM land prices** – e.g. housing costs similar to London although (our wages aren’t)
• 8 million people a year **visit**.
We need...

To produce **enough food** to feed the population of Brighton & Hove we need (per year)

- 750,000 barrels of oil
- 625 million tonnes of fresh water.
- 70,000 hectares productive agricultural land

( => half a million tonnes of greenhouse gases)

Figures and references from our city’s food strategy – on our website
Some challenges: nutrition & health

• 45,000 adults and 25% of children are overweight – poor diet associated with many illnesses

• Obesity cost the NHS in Brighton & Hove £78.1 million in 2011
Some challenges: economic resilience (just an example)

- Supermarkets are important employers in the city; may provide convenient affordable shopping
- However, can squeeze out ‘local’ shops; can be low wage employers (creating food poverty)
- How can food employers (retail, catering) be part of the solution (not the problem)?
- E.g. Large organisations can affect food systems through their food-purchasing decisions
Some challenges: environmental

- 35% of household waste is food plus food wasted at farm, shop and in transport
- 26% of city’s ecological footprint related to food
Social challenges: Inequalities

- 19 out of 164 areas are in the 10% most deprived in England. (two are in the most deprived 1%)
- Deprived areas of the city: life expectancy is up to 10 years less than affluent wards
- Food poverty is increasing – both emergency and long term
61% of local residents believe they will have enough money to meet their basic living costs (after housing costs) in the next year

almost a quarter (23%) don’t think they will have enough income to cover basic living costs, unchanged on 2014

Those most likely to struggle concentrated in particular groups:

Two out of five renting privately (42%) or living in social housing (41%) disagree that they will have the ability to meet basic living cost compared to only 12% of those who own their home or have a mortgage.

A third of those aged 18 to 34 (35%) compared to only 17% of those aged over 34

A third of those with a health problem or disability that affects their activity (33%) compared to only 21% without.
Food can act as a lens for other issues
Food at the heart of the solutions

- Health and wellbeing
- Economic development
- Environmental sustainability
- Social cohesion
- Reducing inequalities
- Culture
Spade to Spoon the city’s food strategy and action plan

- People eat healthier, more sustainable diets
- Improved access to good food
- A vibrant sustainable food economy
- Public procurement
- Local production and processing and the environment
- Reduced waste
- Celebration and culture
- Cross sector links, information – part of something bigger
Dilemmas

• Ensuring affordability with sustainability (not just a middle class lifestyle choice)
• Food surplus shouldn’t be the ‘solution’ to food poverty
• Free food vs fair food – how can we ensure fair wages?
Thanks for listening!

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