220

Tue, Mar 29, 2022 4:37PM • 1:11:02

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

connections, food, people, local food system, flint, producers, folks, affecting, question, system, sectors, zoning, exist, production, seasonality, concepts, education, healthy foods, grow, products

**SPEAKERS**

Participant 220, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:02

All right, so check that box. There we go. So thank you for permission to record. So you can see now it's recording. Sam, your participation in the interview is completely voluntary. And your choice questions, question and answer any questions if you'd like or to withdraw from the interview at any time, the research at any time, we'll keep the recording confidential, mainly, it's so Chris and I can do a great job of connecting with and capturing everything that you're sharing. But the research will be shared within the research team, but not beyond that. Your name, your, your name, your name, and any other identifiable information will not be shared in the research results that we've published. Just want to remind you to be aware of who's around you. So you have the same ability to construct, you know, to manage your confidentiality in a space that's around you. In case there's comments, you don't want anyone else to hear. As we go through this, if you have questions afterwards, you have Chris's contact information, you also have access to me. So reach out to us and share, ask any questions that you might have. And your consent is demonstrated by continuing to participate in the interview itself. Any questions before we proceed?

**Participant 220** 01:31

I do not.

**Interviewer 2** 01:33

Okay, we will all know this by heart in a minute, won't we? Alright, so yeah, let's get started by just hearing from you, how you would describe your role and experience or experience in the local food system.

**Participant 220** 01:50

So currently, I my role is shifting a little bit. So I it's still at the Crim, but have a new position. So I'm now that we're new title hub director for food systems. And so that is exciting. And I think it's definitely going to take the work we had historically been doing in a new direction, but currently, that really consists of overseeing different projects. One of them is snap Ed grant, or SNAP ed at work in Flint. And so that is teaching nutrition education, doing garden education, doing some policy systems and built environment changes around food access, and physical activity. helping folks we can get people to enroll in benefits, but helping folks to navigate their food assistance benefits or, you know, encouraging folks to make healthier choices. So that's all kind of the the work of this NEPAD grant. There's a couple of other projects that we have going on right now. One of them is the Food Policy Council. And so I'm a co convener of that. And so that's a pretty new initiative or new group. But So right now we've really just focused on getting the network together the network, Policy Council network together and making sure that strong we're working on like, foundational documents, bylaws, things like that. And then I guess I'll just stop there. Those are kind of like the main projects that I oversee right now.

**Interviewer 2** 03:31

Yeah. Great. So what was telling repeat your new title Sam, Director, food systems, Director of Food Systems, well, first of all, congratulations. That's pretty awesome.

**Participant 220** 03:43

I'm excited. Yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 03:46

Um, so let's start out by talking about the sectors in the phone system. And what we're focusing on for this interview for this conversation is the is the five sectors we're looking at Sam our production, so everything that's grown or raised livestock and anything from the backyard to you know, the larger scale operations. We have coupled processing and and packaging together. So, washing, packing, and those things you do to prepare foods, as well as the folks who take product like tomatoes and turn it into beautiful things like salts and sauces and things of that nature. Those folks that are wholesalers, you know, the people who are taking those products, and then making sure that they get moved out to others who are going to sell them and resellers. And the retail folks everywhere we go to get the food that we eat, whether it's the convenience stores, grocery stores, farm stands, farmers markets, restaurants. The caterers, the chef's, even though the full box isn't all of those places are included in, in retail, everything is sold to customers. And then last but not least, because we we can't eat everything, some parts are not edible, and some things we don't eat. We're looking at the waste. So whether it's something that is up composted, or maybe even rescued, you know, the food moved, you know, through to other people. So those are the five sectors that we're looking at. Any questions or comments about those? Nope. Okay. All right. So based on your experience, which would you say which sector or sectors would you say you have the most experience and expertise in?

**Participant 220** 05:48

Um, I would say production and retail?

**Interviewer 2** 05:57

Retail, okay. All right, great. Right, right, right.

**Participant 220** 06:02

I'm sorry, I guess I do have a question about a retail site like, consider, like food pantries? I don't know if that, is it? Does that fall into the retail? No,

**Interviewer 2** 06:15

no, we will put those in the category of like emergency food where you purchase it. Okay, so maybe not retail. Okay. So primarily production. Yeah. Okay. All right. Cool. Thank you. Chris is gonna do a bit of a refresher for you, on how we do the mental models, just because it's been a little while since your first interview, this will reconnect you to that.

**Interviewer** 06:48

Yeah, so I'm just gonna run through an example really quick. Just go through the process. Again, if you remember, we have these concepts that will build connections to sort of expand your understanding system. And the two things we want to know about these connections are if it's positive, or negative, which doesn't mean like good or bad. But if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down. So if I'm looking at the issue of traffic, if we have more cars, we would also have more traffic. So we're going to have a positive connection, which will show up as a blue arrow. And a negative connection is one, if it goes up, the other goes down. So if we have more public transportation or a better public transportation system, then we're going to have less traffic. And so we'll have an orange arrow there. So as positive and negative. And the last thing we want to know is the connection strength. So really, how impactful or influential is one thing on another, so cars are traffic, I might put that as a really strong relationship. If tomorrow everyone decided to stop driving their cars, we wouldn't really have a traffic problem. Whereas public transportation might be more of a medium connection, because while it does have a fair amount of influence on traffic, maybe it's not the end all be all that there's going to be people who really like driving their cars or that they live or work somewhere that's not very convenient to get to on a public transportation system. A weak connection might be something like the number of cyclists that, you know, city promoted biking to work or something like that. It might help traffic a little bit, but it's not like a realistic solution. You know, you can't hit your groceries very conveniently on a bike, you can't move a couch on a bike. So it's not really a solution to the traffic problems. It's not that influential. Um, any questions about that process?

**Participant 220** 08:40

I don't think so, sometimes I just learn by doing so.

**Interviewer** 08:46

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And so I just want to do that also the you know, that's the the details of it, the nuts and bolts, but also high level, I'm going to be building out the system, you know, adding in concepts, making connections based on your own Rene's conversation but we want you to definitely feel ownership over the map, it is your map, it is your understanding as your knowledge, I'm just trying to accurately capture it. Definitely jump in and correct me at any point of you know, I wouldn't connect it like that. I wouldn't wear that concept like that. Absolutely, that we would, that would be great. I'll just be quietly mapping in the background and then we'll check in every so often and say like, Okay, this is how I drew it out, based on what you said is asking accurate but definitely jump in if it's if it's not to your liking because it's your map.

**Interviewer 2** 09:31

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And we check in all along the way, Sam so you know, so here you're seeing those five concepts now the sectors and and retail, cast out into the markets, the stores and, and restaurants and we'll be listening, if any other concepts that you want to add. And then we'll we'll loop in this lands around racial equity or inequities. but you can connect things all along the way as you go. So, so based on based on your experience, as well as you know, your role and other things you're about and Sam, how would you make connections between these sectors? You know, in the full system, what connections do you see? Or would you like us to map for you?

**Participant 220** 10:27

Well, I think I mean, starts often with production or you need producers to produce the food and I think everything is connected at some point to that; that kind of starts there. So the value added productions, yeah, the wholesalers, retailers, composters, I mean, I would say, yeah.

**Interviewer** 10:56

How would you see sort of like the differences and connection strength between producers? And let's just focus on on these three to begin with. Like specifically in Flint, do you think that when like farmers in Flint or producers in Flint sell their products, are they mostly selling to retailers to wholesalers to value added processors, you know, how do these connection strengths differ?

**Participant 220** 11:21

Yeah, I think the value added processors is probably the least like strong connection. Retailers, I would say is the strongest and wholesalers or resellers is a medium strength, and composters-I mean. I'd focus on those, so [inaudible] I think that there's a pretty strong connection there though.

**Interviewer** 11:50

Yeah, I was just if sometimes it's easier to think about, because it's a very different-products going to these three then the composters, so yeah.

**Participant 220** 11:58

Though, I don't necessarily think that producers are producing right now to get a compost product.

**Interviewer** 12:05

Yes.

**Participant 220** 12:06

It's more just, that's not happening, though. It could be, but it's not.

**Interviewer 2** 12:13

Okay. Alright. Other connections that you would make? So everything starts with production? We got that.

**Participant 220** 12:27

I mean, I think like, just reacting to this, like what I'm looking at, I think so I'm sorry, is there another like-what else should I be considering?

**Interviewer 2** 12:39

Oh, just as you as you think about it-for example, you talk about the producers being connected to everything. Are there things that influence those connections? Are there any barriers between those connections and things that you feel actually support those connections in some way? Just kind of get the idea of how all these things fit together? So that's a direct line there.

**Participant 220** 13:09

Okay. Yeah, I mean, I guess what I'm assuming is that there are-what we're assuming is that there's a strong group of producers or that those producers exist, though that, at least locally, that's not so true. And so where most of folks get their food, even like wholesalers or resellers, they're not-they're not from Flint producers, necessarily. They're from other people, and so a lot of the food even though production just in general, like that's the base of where all of our food comes from, like, where's that coming, locally? It doesn't. Not a lot of it. So yeah, in fact, I would-I'm not going to guess the percentage but very, very low. And I guess we can define locally in different ways, but I'm thinking Flint, Genesee County, like that. There's not a ton of production or there is not as much as there could be. Okay. So I guess when I was sort of drawing-or said that like, everything comes from production, well thinking of where that comes from is important.

**Interviewer 2** 14:26

Yeah, no, that's fine. You're doing fine. It's just as we explore, you know, the existence, the how much, because that was a great example that a lot of it-there's not a lot of producers in Flint, and so a lot of your food is coming from non local produce. Okay. Got that connection. Mm hmm. What would you-are there things that you would attribute that to, [Participant 220], that might be other concepts we should consider the lack of local production.

**Participant 220** 14:59

Yeah. I mean, I think that there's a lot of potential there. But I think, too, there's knowledge-there's access to land, there is-like we have a food hub that's relatively new. But not everybody has to or needs to go through those channels. So knowing how to take a product to market-it's not just about growing the food, there's knowledge there that could be developed, but also just business development. I think like capital investment it takes to run a farm, or just an agriculture business is minimal-or it takes a lot and a lot of resources to do that. There's some limitations in the city in terms of like, if for like meat products, or eggs or things like that. There's ordinances that say that you can't have chickens in the city, and so that limits the types of products that you we can produce locally. Let's see... I feel like the factors of why we're not producing locally is our kind of infinite and I think priority, like people don't necessarily see it as a career or see the value in that or want to, which is super valid. I think that there's a huge-or when I used to do work in the urban agriculture space here, race would come up a ton, and I think that is a key factor as well, especially because a lot of where there is available land are in historically black neighborhoods, and so there's tension around well, who's coming in to do this farming? Does that make sense, necessarily? Do the people who live there want their neighborhoods to be, quote, unquote, farmed? Like there's tension around that. So I think those are all-and I'm not saying that as like only white folks are coming in to do farming, but that is definitely a demographic and so there is-so that definitely exists. I think there's infrastructure changes. Like in seasonality issues. Access to water. Yeah, I guess these are all the limiting factors. Okay.

**Interviewer** 18:09

Any of these concepts that I've connected, that you want to change don't like the wording and anything, any adaptations or other connections that you see from these concept to other things in that?

**Participant 220** 18:26

I'd say-I would like the language of like knowledge of how to run a business because I think there are entrepreneurs with specifically an griculture business, or sometimes farmers aren't the-knowing how to grow food and knowing how to sell food are different skills. [laughter] And so yes, yeah, farm business. And then what was the other half of your question, [Interviewer], I'm sorry?

**Interviewer** 19:01

Any of these concept-I mean, they're all sort of things of the question directed towards producers, but if there's any other connections to different concepts in the map?

**Interviewer 2** 19:10

Yeah, I was about to ask the same thing. So do some of the things that you see tied to affecting producers, do they also maybe apply to some of the other sectors? Like the folks that are doing value add processing? Or folks that are running these stores? You know, if so, which of those do you think also connect to these other sectors?

**Participant 220** 19:33

I think access to capital for sure, especially when you're talking about like value added, again, takes investment. The kind of-I think from that idea, the cost of things, I think-is there a market for it? To create this local product, is there a market for that, has come up. Yeah, demand, yeah, exactly. And I don't know if this would be considered space, but just sort of like that access to space to create products is also limited, so yeah, access to land. And equipment, I guess for both farming and for- I'm sorry [Interviewer 2], what was that?

**Interviewer 2** 20:39

So when you were saying space, you're talking facility as well as land?

**Participant 220** 20:43

Yeah, I think yeah, it was more so for the value added producers. I was thinking more facilities.

**Interviewer 2** 20:51

Okay.

**Participant 220** 20:54

Okay, but also the equipment to do whatever-the thing that you want to do. Because even like, I'll just give an example. I know, when the Flint Farmers Market had that incubator kitchen where residents could rent out space and equipment to create their value added products, in a very short amount of time, they were over committed. And now still they're overflowing with-there's more demand than that space can offer.

**Interviewer 2** 21:28

Okay. Okay.

**Participant 220** 21:30

For people wanting to do that.

**Interviewer 2** 21:36

[Participant 220], the things that they're producing there, where's that food going, that the value added processors are creating?

**Participant 220** 21:45

A lot of it is at the market from that particular space. Yep.

**Interviewer 2** 21:50

Okay.

**Participant 220** 21:51

Yep. And a while ago, there were a couple of producers who were value added creators who kind of grew out of that space. I'm thinking of specifically a kale chip business that kind of grew beyond that. And I-her products are in some stores, I think she's gone beyond the Flint area to now. This has been a few years ago, but. So when things like thathave popped up and there have been successful value added product makers, producers, if they're successful, in some instances have kind of moved out or gone beyond Flint to look for their markets specifically. Before I remember, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 22:40

Okay. Okay, market outside. Okay, that's great. That's a great connection. Any of those other variables affecting-just kind of picking up on the things-you talked about briefly, about ordinances affecting things in terms of what you can do. Was that specific only to livestock, or are there other ordinance and policy related things?

**Participant 220** 23:16

Yeah, the city of Flint underwent a master planning process, which I'm sure y'all are kind of familiar about, and they were trying to do a lot of rezoning and the zoning recommendations have not yet been adopted. But, one of the issues that came up was there's areas where people had been-had farms or were producing food-but because of where these proposed new zone areas were going to be, they wanted to buy more land from the land bank, and the land bank wasn't going to sell it to them because they're like, "oh, the city is rezoning. And so this isn't going to be an area that you can produce food in anymore." And so that kind of limited their ability to grow their business because of the zoning and redistricting laws that were coming through-which still, this is, like four years ago-still have not been adopted. So all those sorts of decisions have also affected people's ability to to have a thriving firm business.

**Interviewer 2** 24:17

Okay, so the zoning is what I heard you say was that it's affecting the growth of businesses?

**Participant 220** 24:25

Yeah in that specific example? Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 24:27

Is this growth okay, yeah. Okay, alright.

**Participant 220** 24:31

And needing to stay within those laws-those rules, because the available land might not might be anywhere, but.

**Interviewer 2** 24:44

Yeah, so it's tied to land availability as well. Okay, so we got that access the land and zoning. Thank you.

**Participant 220** 24:56

Yeah, trying to think of any other laws or ordinances. I don't think so that, none that are coming to mind.

**Interviewer 2** 25:08

Okay. Okay. You you talked about, I'm just kind of building off of what you have there-with the seasonality you talked about. Can you say-so is that mainly-what's the application of that? I mean, what do you speak into there?

**Participant 220** 25:31

Just oh, yeah, sure, just that if we're thinking of having a pretty local food system that this growing season in Michigan is limited and that to grow beyond that, you need certain infrastructure, things like a hoop house or a greenhouse. Yeah, so without those things, you're kind of limited in the time of year that you can grow certain things, and that we're also limited in products, which is fine, but that, you know-and that's maybe just some consumer information too, that you're not going to get a tomato in Michigan in December, or you're not going to get a locally grown avocado or banana or something. I think there's some work around education that we can do so that consumers can expect that.

**Interviewer 2** 26:29

Mhmm. So education tied to food diversity demands? Yeah. Okay.

**Participant 220** 26:39

Well, when I would do gardening and I still do, but you know, it'll be like in June, we're just putting the plants in or May or June just putting the plants in and people are coming up and asking, "Well, do you have this ready?" And I'm like, "No, literally just just put that plant in. That's not gonna be ready till August, we got a couple months." And So just like-it would be nice to engage in those conversations which are directly with people who are, you know, just coming by, but in a large scale, a lot of folks I don't think know-realize that, because the grocery store has it all the time.

**Interviewer 2** 27:10

Gotcha, exactly. Yes. Yes, yes. The education. Mm hmm. That's a great connection. You're right. This is not Hawaii, though, or Florida.

**Participant 220** 27:28

[laughter] Exactly.

**Interviewer 2** 27:28

Okay. So just looking at some other connections here. So when you talk about-you mentioned the knowledge of how to grow. Is there a connection between that and any of these other things that you've talked about here?

**Participant 220** 27:48

Of how to produce, um.

**Interviewer 2** 27:49

Yeah, knowledge for growing, how to grow, how to produce.

**Participant 220** 27:55

Yeah, I think, well, to see it right next to it-I think that there's a connection between that and the whiteness of farming. I think undervaluing practices from different cultures or people of color. I think when I've done classes or whatever, it's this very white version of farming and production, and there's maybe not as much value put on the diversity of perspectives, which can be I think-there's not this like one right way to do it, right. So when I saw those two there, I was like, hmm, I think there's a relationship there. But the knowledge of how to produce I think does impact food diversity, in some ways. There's things that are really easy to grow here and things that aren't so easy that maybe take a little bit more knowledge or skill. Kind of same thing with seasonality too, there's like how to grow in a hoop house and do that successfully, like it will extend the season, but there's some specific skills needed for that as well.

**Interviewer 2** 29:21

Yeah, absolutely. So you want to draw that connection? Yeah. Education. seasonality. Yeah, a lot of people don't get that. Yeah, very, very well. [Interviewer], is there a connection there between seasonality and education? I can't quite tell-?

**Interviewer** 29:55

It's going through infrastructure and equipment already. So like using hoophouses and that helps with seasonality.

**Interviewer 2** 30:03

I see it now. Okay, thank you. Okay, uh, undervalue diversity. Okay, got that. So let's see if you've got connections between some of the other things that you put up, [Participant 220], so you talked about-we've got the livestock, but the desire-so you talked the education side over here, you know, between production and do you know how to do it and do you have the capital and those things. And over here on the left you have this desire to be. So how do you connect-how do you connect that in terms of desire? How does that connect to some of these other variables, if it does?

**Participant 220** 30:54

Um, let's see. I mean, I'm sure there are.

**Interviewer 2** 31:15

Yeah.

**Participant 220** 31:17

I mean-

**Interviewer 2** 31:20

And if you're not seeing it, yeah, I'm just inquiring because sometimes there's something else there.

**Participant 220** 31:25

Yeah, I feel like-this is just perception, though-I guess it this is all kind of perception, right. So, okay, I don't need to qualify that every time before I say something. There's lack of-there's less interest in wanting to be like a producer of just foods like fruits and vegetables, and more of a desire to be a value added producer or to be a restaurant or like a retailer or something like that. And so, I don't know what the disconnection is there. Or-but I guess-so it's not that people aren't interested in being parts of the food system or that's not necessarily or specifically like to like grow food. Like there's not as many people who want to do that or will-are totally comfortable, this comes up, totally cool doing that as backyard-there's a lot of backyard growers, a lot of small community gardeners. There's a strong network of that. But the desire to take that to the, "Okay, now I want to scale up or I want to now sell that food." That is that's different.

**Interviewer 2** 32:48

Okay. Yeah. Yeah. One is for yourself a substantive and the other is market. Yeah. Less desire for scaling up to sell phones. Okay.

**Participant 220** 33:01

Yeah, yep. And so, yep. Or even and I think, just, you know, there's lots of people who, like you said for yourself, but-just even if you want to grow food for the community, or even have a backyard garden, there's a strong network of them, or strong culture here of sharing that food with your neighbors, your friends, your community. That exists a ton. Okay. And I think that because that culture is so prominent that the idea of "well then I would scale up" or want to then sell that, and I think there's a disconnection there. And I don't under-I don't know-I don't know where or how, but I definitely see that existing.

**Interviewer 2** 33:41

Okay. Okay. There's this culture of sharing foods. Strong culture of sharing food. Okay. Okay, well, that's okay. That's something we definitely want to pay attention to, the culture of sharing of food, got it. Okay. Any other connections you want to make here that you're seeing if you think about-even as you think about the work that you all do, you talked about your staff education and teaching nutrition and gardening as well people's benefits in the system? Any connections between those direct things and the sectors?

**Participant 220** 34:31

Well, I think just food systems education in general, I don't know, doesn't really happen, especially at a young age. I think we're starting to do that or I'm trying to do that a little bit. But-and I think that maybe even can tie into this desire to want to be a food producer-if they're not learning that as a career option, or that it's important and that it's part of all these other networks, then like-if you don't learn that young, how would you learn that or how would you know it? And I think that kind of ties into seasonality as well, like trying to teach kids right now about where their food-like they can go in their school garden and try something and hey, that's where carrots grow. That's how carrots grow. That is something that we're trying to do now too. So education about where food comes from that is not just about seasonality, but just that somebody has to grow that. It doesn't just appear on the grocery store shelf. That has to come from somewhere.

**Interviewer 2** 35:49

Yes. Okay, connections to your nutrition work that you guys do? You said you guys focus on nutrition? And how does that-do you see connections between that and the sectors?

**Participant 220** 36:16

Yeah, I think-see the nutrition work-I mean, a lot of that, for us comes down to access to food in some ways. We teach choice, but I say all the time, it's like, if I can teach you to make healthy choices, but in folks' neighborhoods or in places they shop, they're-those choices are limited, then, like, what are we really teaching, and what are we really doing, I guess? But-so that does come up. And I think, you know, especially as like things with supply chain have-the prices have gone up, I think it definitely points to a need for a stronger local food system, and some of the choices we've had-this is all very Doomsday, but some of the choices we have had, I don't know if we will have those choices, just the way like things are shifting in our bigger culture, the society. So what are those other options, and what can we do to create a strong like local network of food and where's our money going? Is it going back into this community? Sorry, that was a diversion from the nutrition question, but.

**Interviewer 2** 37:49

No, actually, hey, wherever the thought takes you, that's what's important because you just-you just highlighted some really important things that the supply chain issue helped to trigger this whole need for a stronger local food system. You know, you talked about that, [Participant 220], that's a great connection there. And a stronger network you've talked about, you know, so that's an outcome from the supply chain, you know, disruptions. That's a good one. Food prices.

**Participant 220** 38:35

I think-I was gonna say that thinking about that nutrition piece again, something that comes up is where people get their food and how are they getting it? Do they have the luxury of choice? Or is it-is there a food pantry that folks are getting foods from? Or can they shop at the grocery store? Or what sort of financial choices are people make needing to make to eat healthy foods? I think that comes up a lot too. And obviously everybody should have the choice but don't always

**Interviewer 2** 39:27

Okay. Okay.

**Participant 220** 39:34

I think just in seeing the supply chain disruptions, it seems like-does that-are there connection there between wholesalers and resellers too? Is that? I'm assuming, I don't know-but the disruptions in supply chain have affected every aspect.

**Interviewer 2** 40:05

Yeah

**Participant 220** 40:05

Like value added producers maybe can't get certain things, resellers might not be able to get certain things. Stores, markets, yeah. It's affecting every aspect of our lives.

**Interviewer 2** 40:27

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. So that's a really good point. Because everybody has challenges getting stuff. Everybody in this-in the whole thing, the producers too. So yeah, okay, that's a good one. The supply chain, and also affecting the demand on local foods as well. Okay. And then we got the increase food prices. So that affected affordability and access. Anything else that the food prices are affecting you think?

**Participant 220** 41:18

No, I don't think so, not that's coming to mind right now. Alright. I'm sure there are others, but-

**Interviewer 2** 41:26

Right. Okay. Yeah, no, they tend to pop out on their own sometimes. So as we look at this, I mean, you mentioned access to water. So let's talk a little bit about water, we can talk about some of the other impacts on the system. So if you think about influences, so what are some of the things that you've seen, that are major influences on the food system in Flint?

**Participant 220** 41:59

Hmm. Yeah, I think a lot of it, there are a lot of just like external things that affect how we eat. I'm trying to think about like water specifically. Things that influence the food system. I mean, I think, we've talked about it a bunch, but poverty, just in general, I think affects how people consume things. I think transportation impacts that-and I guess that's related to poverty, but in some ways, I think-I'd like time, like if people are also busy and have like multiple things, they're juggling, whether it's families, or jobs or responsibilities, or holy crap, we're still in a pandemic. Like all of that relates to how we consume food, and I think and nutrition as well, I think folks are definitely more interested in things that are of convenience. Not just in-and also like that kind of time thing goes into like, there's a lot of delivery and subscriptions and those types of services that are happening now which again, are less of a local food system thing. Just because you know, whatever's easiest.

**Interviewer 2** 43:54

Being in Flint, what do you what do you see as the impacts that the water crisis, when you think about these sectors? What was the impact of the water crisis?

**Participant 220** 44:09

I mean, the water crisis impacted everything. And I think not just-I'm thinking-I'll just start from the production there. People were afraid to grow food here. We had to do a lot of teaching and coaching about like and research didn't exist about, can you grow food here with high lead levels safely? Like what is the high lead levels and water how does that impact food production? That research didn't exist and so we had to develop that. So that was an issue. But in-one thing that came out was that there was all these lead mitigating foods and so you know-doing-having proper nutrition was a sort of way to combat some of the effects of having lead in the water, and so some resources did go towards, how do we get people these healthy foods? So that was great. And we did see an influx of certain resources, but that's temporary. And it also creates, and it's still experiencing that-like a certain dependence on those safety nets, which I think are important and should exist, and I don't want to be misunderstood in that way. But I think then it's like, how do you continue that? And also, like the kale chip person, like that was an expensive product, if we're used to getting healthy foods that are subsidized or cheaper, coming from elsewhere, there's some-that can be tough. That's a tough thing to pivot to. And so that would definitely, still, I think, an issue with the water crisis, just that sort of like culture, I think. There was also-I think there was some really good work that was happening leading up to the water crisis around food systems. And just in making certain connections and some really good community work that was going on that got very derailed, because there's this huge crisis that happened, right. And so it was sort of like a pause and pivot to this very important and critical thing that was happening and playing in your community in such a huge way. And so, now it kind of feels like we're starting over, and then there was the pandemic. And so it's like in terms of making certain progress. There have been a lot of starts and stops, and it's really hard to get momentum for tackling some of these big issues. And I'll say, think of that for producers. Like before the water crisis, there was kind of an established network of producers who were from Flint who were excited about growing food here that like, was very much like derailed. People moved, because they didn't want to be here, which I get why that, so, it was very disruptive, I would say. Yeah, those are, those are so strong connections, leading to the network, of being derailed people left Flint, the momentum-you talked about-which, as an observation, we hear periodically, start stops, you know, that you're not able to keep some continuity in the work. The combination, as you said, COVID andwater crisis, affecting the momentum of the work. You also mentioned, and we'll see if I-and [Interviewer], tell us where it is, where the water crisis has led to, creation of certain value add, but afterwards, it's kind of like, can you sustain it? Did I get that right? Ability to sustain products that, you know, kind of came out of the water crisis? Yeah, well, just because so many things during that time, were subsidized before a pretty short amount of time. So I-during that time-worked on the Healthy Corner convenience store project, where we tried to get healthy foods-not necessarily-we did some local foods, and we did work with a small farmer to get her products into a corner store and provided refrigeration space and everything. But that was a like, one to two year project. And when that project ended, there was no way to sustain that. And a lot of things just reversed because it was temporary. It wasn't enough time to really like create that important systems change that I think that was happening. And so-and that was just my like one experience, but I know that happened in a lot of other ways, too. Okay, like okay, here's this-yeah. Oh, go ahead. I'm sorry.

**Interviewer 2** 49:38

No, no, no, you go.

**Participant 220** 49:40

All I was gonna say is like-and it happens a lot. But it was specifically because there were so many resources being poured in during that time, and then so many left within a few years. That was, I mean, it was challenging, not just for like people just in the nonprofit space, but as a resident too, knowing like, "Oh, I could go here and get water or I get my water filters here." Like that all went away.

**Interviewer 2** 50:14

Gotcha. That's a catch that the subsidized funding that came from the water crisis, while it spawned new businesses, the absence of that funding-we've pretty much reversed a change.

**Participant 220** 50:30

Mm hmm.

**Interviewer 2** 50:31

So, you know, that funding can reverse the change. Yep. That's a gap. Reversed change not only for the food businesses, but also for you said, in terms of access to resources for the residents as well.

**Participant 220** 50:54

Yeah, I mean, yeah, ultimately, yeah. And not just for water. But like, I mean, there were so many food drives, there were so many-we had like these crisis centers that popped up, and some of them are on-a couple of them are ongoing, but not at the scale that they were. And so, you know, to pivot to that system, and then to have to repeat it, like, it's challenging, and I think points to issues of trust too. This feeling that anything that we try is temporary can be discouraging.

**Interviewer 2** 51:28

Okay. So issues of trust in making change, you said, you know, it's gonna be temporary. Okay. Okay. That's all good. That's good points. So let's, let's talk a little bit about. And we'll see what else comes up as you continue to look at it. So we were on this particular map, we wanted to talk a bit about the impact of racial equity or racial inequities in system. So I would ask you, the question of, how does racial equity or inequity affect the sectors? The food system, how does it affect it?

**Participant 220** 52:28

Yeah, I mean, that there's an underlying thing, racial inequity is across all six sectors, all systems? For sure, I think, specifically here, like if you're talking about access to land, that's I think one that's very prevalent. Not just who has-who has land where, but also like, where is there available land? Yeah, that's part of it, I think. And I don't know if this is the right space, but just like the-and I'll talk about the farmers market-it's come up for me and for others that folks have said that don't feel like that's a market for them, that that's not a space they feel safe, necessarily. And so where people go to shop, I think there's issues of racial inequity there. I think, talking about supply chain issues like folks-like, again, also, and I guess-that's the disparities-the racial disparities that exist. Because I've noticed poverty, too, again, like, folks who have been historically-like historic issues of poverty have been more prevalent in our black communities. And so like that, when there are issues with supply chain and things get more expensive, well, who does it impact first? Not just the folks who are the lowest, like have less access to resources, but who are those folks? I think this, yeah, exactly, access to capital. Yeah. And that's exactly. Again, kind of the water issues you know, But would this have happened to a white city? I don't know. Some questions about that. Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think honestly that could go to probably every single zoning issues. Like, who are we protecting, and where are things being zoned? And what systems of inequity are being upheld there?

**Interviewer 2** 55:29

Okay.

**Participant 220** 55:33

I mean ratio-the whiteness of farming that's I guess, another one. The desire to be a producer has come up. This one person I talked to you one time said, like, you know, my parents were sharecroppers, I'm not trying to do that. So, yeah, like the historical connection. Yeah exactly.

**Interviewer 2** 56:06

Yeah. I hear that. I hear that. I'm in Detroit. So I had Yeah. Yeah.

**Participant 220** 56:20

Oh, limited food diversity, I think, you know, are we having like culturally relevant foods. I was talking to someone from the Latinx community and they were saying people who are coming here from from Spanish speaking countries feel they want their comfort foods or foods that they're familiar with, and that just does not exist here. So there are issues there.

**Interviewer 2** 56:53

Nice.

**Participant 220** 57:09

Let's see. I'm sure there are more. Looks like everything.

**Interviewer 2** 57:18

Well, you're doing a good job of making those connections, [Participant 220]. Let me ask it a couple different ways for you. So what would you say are some of the-and your answer to the last question really kind of pointed to some of it, but, racialized barriers? So what are some of the barriers to participation in the food system that you see that are tied to racial inequity?

**Participant 220** 57:46

Yeah, I think just that things are-speaking specifically about like food systems issues-are very institution-led, seeming, or most of the time. And that, again, when I say institutions, I think sometimes that's code for white, and so there's issues there. Like, how do we provide space for everyone to participate? Who are the decision makers? I think those are barriers. Let's see, the things like racialized barriers was that the question right? What are those that exist? Yeah, I don't know. It's a great question. I don't know. I don't know. I mean, again, I think that exists kind of across the board here, but specific examples or specific connections?

**Interviewer 2** 59:02

You've done a pretty good job of drawing some something else pops off. That's fine. I'm going to ask in a slightly different way and maybe this might bring up some different thoughts for you is, are there ways that the food system itself contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 220** 59:22

Hmm. Yeah, I think I'll kind of note the thing I just said about decision makers. I think that's a huge contributing factor. I think that the-I think that and I kind of noted it a bit earlier when I was talking about how there's a strong culture here of people sharing food they grow. And I think that folks who've been historically disenfranchised, or where their systems don't like-the traditional systems don't work, find other systems-and I think that kind of happens here too. Well there's the social network of sharing of food, or even like restaurants or like, there seems to be sometimes two systems happening that are pretty racialized here locally. So I think, yeah, I don't know what else to say. Other than-I've noticed that that kind of exists.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:49

Yeah, yeah. Gotcha. Okay, I suppose. That's great. That's perfect. And that's a beautiful map, by the way, [Participant 220].

**Participant 220** 1:00:58

You must say that to everybody. [laughter]

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:06

They are all good! Because they're the representation of what's going on in your head and what you know, and you're making really strong connections, we're seeing the strong connection. So definitely, thank you for that. If there is anything else that is popping out at you before we're gonna kind of circle around to another question for you. Anything that's kind of popping out right now that you want to add?

**Participant 220** 1:01:38

I think no, I'm sure there's a lot more to be said. I'm sorry. I feel like I'm just like-[laughter] slow day.

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:48

You're doing great, you're doing great. Well, let's let's step back for a second and ask ourselves okay, looking at this and considering where there might be leverage points or points of change and ways to improve it. Talk a little bit about how you would improve the system?

**Participant 220** 1:02:11

Yeah, I mean, I think that... gosh. I think there's a lot of opportunity in this like production space, there's a lot of opportunity there. I think that you know, changing how to get land for farming or for growing food, I think how to get access to equipment. What kind of-like access to capital, all of those things. I think those are all things that if we could really invest in that and invest in the people who produce our food, there's just so much power we could have. I think that learning things or taking lessons from these sort of like social networks or the sharing of food, I think, like what are things outside of the kind of-I don't want to say outside because it's all part of the system-but just yeah, how have people solve these problems they can look into to them kind of guide this a little bit. There's opportunity there. I think that some better transportation systems would really help a lot of this. I think having-I think mentioned the culturally diverse foods especially as it relates to nutrition and things, I think there's just this narrative that exists that like quote unquote, white foods are the healthy foods but that's not true. And I think promoting and prioritizing foods that that folks want to eat that feel like culturally important to them will help with some of these like nutrition and health issues. I think that the-I don't know-that sort of inconsistency of funding and looking at that one. I think there's opportunities there too, and they're just really to invest in some food system solutions long term, like what's a 5, 10, 15 year project look like, beyond just like a one or two year thing? And then that kind of goes for-to the like the farmers too, and that access to capital. It's like there needs to be some like long term investment, not just like, well, what can you produce in a year? Like, some long term commitment to folks producing our food that they'll be supported. And that there will be like markets for them, and there will be demand and consumers for them, which I think we've seen does exist for sure. Sorry, looking for other opportunities. Yeah, I don't know other ones, I'm sure that again, there are there are many. I think like the zoning, I think there's a lot of opportunity there. Like how can you be supporting what zoning choices decisions are being made, and which ones will actually be supportive of a local food system?Just to kind of like, same thing, like the access to water, like how are folks like watering things and not crops and themselves? But where's that water coming from? Is it safe? Safety? Safe?

**Interviewer 2** 1:06:52

Yeah.

**Participant 220** 1:06:57

Yeah, I think again, opportunity around-and it just goes into food systems education. But I think there's so much pride that this community has, and I think, in a lot of other areas, and I think sometimes in the food space, there's-I don't know, there's not like that intrinsic pride that comes from, people like spending money in Flint, they love supporting their community, honestly. I feel like that comes up a lot. But not that narrative, I don't know exists so much in this-the food system. So I think doing some-I think I guess there's opportunity there to really get people excited about strengthening our local food system, and then also what can their role be in that? And in providing folks tools to be able to do so, whether that's subsidizing a certain way, or, I don't know, I don't know what that looks like, but. I think that education around what's a local food system? Why is it important? And what does that look like here? And how-yeah, like I said, how can individuals support that work?

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:37

That's good.

**Participant 220** 1:08:43

I just keep looking at this. Like, there's-I don't know if there's any other ones that are coming to mind right now.

**Interviewer 2** 1:08:49

Yeah. And if they if they do later, [Participant 220], I mean, you know how to find us. We know you've done-I mean, this is great. There's amazing connections here that you've made here and change you've pointed out. And as we, as we finish this again, wonderful, thank you. We always appreciate your voice and your insights. And as we do this, you know, the interview is confidential, the research team will be looking at this together and not necessarily sharing your name out. If other things come to you, by all means, please reach out, you've got you know, courses, or email contact and, and reach out, let us know if something else comes to mind, particularly as you're thinking about what else could you change? That would be great. We have an evaluation, we'll drop that in the chat. Chris will also send it to you via email. So just let us you know, get that back to us. That'd be great. Couple of minutes and and not only in this moment that we appreciate your time. We appreciate you and all your money. With the CCP and now on the Food Policy Council and gratulations in your new role, that's awesome.

**Participant 220** 1:10:07

I think you associate it. I was loved to be included. So thanks for for all the work that y'all are doing. I know it's it's been I feel like I'm getting involved in sort of the tail end of things but there's so much work that has gone on and just really appreciated and feeling consistently. I'm always like, bringing up this project to people and partners and and yeah, it's I love that this work is happening so

**Interviewer 2** 1:10:35

well, great. Well, even sometimes we come in right when the role is needed, right? Food Policy Council director food systems, I think you're you're sitting pretty, you said for exam. Thank you so very much again, you enjoy the rest of this day, and we'll see you soon.

**Participant 220** 1:10:55

Yeah, we'll see you soon. Thanks so much.

**Interviewer 2** 1:10:58

All right. Take care. Bye bye.