Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of British Columbia, 1985)
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“Transformative Incrementalism: A Grounded Theory for Planning Transformative Change in Local Food Systems”

Department of Geography

Friday, January 12, 2018
12:00 p.m.
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Denise Cloutier, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Dennis Jelinski, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)
Dr. Avi Friedman, School of Architecture, University of Montreal (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Charles Levkoe, Department of Environmental Studies, Lakehead University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Neil Burford, Department of Chemistry, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
**Abstract**

Local Food Systems (LFS) is a relatively new concept in geographical and planning research. Academic, professional, and public interest in LFS is in part a reaction against the social, environmental, and economic effects of a dominant Production Agriculture paradigm (Lyson, 2004), and growing concern with the potential impacts of climate change on the food supply (Ostry, Miewald, and Beveridge, 2011). While there is a growing public and policy interest in making transformative change in LFS, there is a lack of theoretical work that addresses how change processes in food systems occur.

In this study, a classic Glaserian grounded theory research project investigated the subject area of local food system planning. The primary research goal was the development of a theory grounded in the experience of practitioners, elected officials, and members of the public. The emergent theory, called Transformative Incrementalism (T.I) describes the social process underlying planning initiatives focused on achieving significant (transformative) change in local food systems.

The data for this research project are drawn from interviews with 29 elected officials, public stakeholders, and planning staff in five communities with local food system initiatives. In addition, 10 additional member checking interviews were conducted. The core category identified in the emergent T.I. theory was Power, with Values, Praxis, and Outcomes being other main themes. From this research, Power could be defined as the ability, through authoritative or non-authoritative influence, to have an effect on a person, process, action, or outcome. Values act as sources of power to the extent that they motivate and drive the actions of individuals and groups. Praxis includes activities designed to create, use, and maintain power, such as building relationships with other people that will give ongoing support for food planning initiatives. Outcomes include broader system and social changes resulting from local food system planning processes and activities.

The main findings from this dissertation underscore the fact that the role of power has been largely ignored in the planning literature (Friedman, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2012; Assche, Duineveld, and Buenen, 2014). Power is the main driver of change; therefore, a lack of understanding about what power is and how it operates would seem to compromise the ability of planning efforts to be effective. This research identifies and illustrates the interrelationship between the political, public, and bureaucratic spheres of actors, and examines how values, praxis, and outcomes are pivotal to transformative change in food planning initiatives. Transformative change is achieved through a long process of incremental efforts (programs, policies, and actions) by actors within the public, political, and bureaucratic groups whose values and beliefs converge and align over time. The incremental efforts are intended to support a transformative change goal.