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

of

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“Growing Local Food: Charting Meaning Emergence through the Dynamics of Discourse, Rhetoric, and Framing”

Peter B. Gustavson School of Business

Tuesday, August 4, 2020
2:00 P.M.
Conducted Remotely

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Roy Suddaby, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. A.R. Elangovan, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic (Member)
Dr. Wade Danis, Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic (Member)
Dr. Diego Coraiola, Department of Social Sciences, University of Alberta Augustana Campus (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Hokyu Hwang, School of Management, University of New South Wales Business School

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Wanda Boyer, Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract
This dissertation seeks to understand how new meanings emerge in the context of institutional change. Existing research seeking to understand shifts in meaning has primarily accessed meaning, across numerous contexts, via the three key constructs of discourse, rhetoric, or framing. Within the context of the emergence of the local food movement in Canada, I employ a mixed methods approach using term frequencies, topic modelling and qualitative content analysis, within a computational grounded theory framework for Big Data analysis. My data consists of all articles containing any mention of the term “local food” in popular Canadian press over 37 years from 1978-2014, a database totalling 31,421 articles. My results show that firstly, new meanings pertaining to local food emerged rapidly over the 37-year period. The emergence of a new meaning for local food, associated with the politicization of food production occurred in the second half of my dataset, whereas the first half was marked by connotations of poverty and hunger, associated with the local food bank. Secondly, unexpected actors were found to significantly impact the propulsion of meaning change, by establishing new vocabularies surrounding the term “local food”. Finally, this dissertation shows that the new meanings associated with local food emerged as a result of discursive opportunities, momentarily arising through the confluence of discourse, rhetoric and framing. I propose an emergent process model of meaning change and, further, propose that discursive opportunity structures can be better understood through the metaphor of an emergent property.