

Building relationships: Is this the answer to effective nutrition policy formulation?

Abstract

Policy makers are still struggling to deliver effective nutrition policies. For nutrition policy development has not seen the context as one interconnected food system. So, we explored the relevance of including a wider (relational) marketing perspective to enable nutrition policy formulation through depth interviews with stakeholders of the food system and focus groups with citizens. A relational approach would release the potential to build trust and collaboration by focusing on the shared goal of citizen wellbeing. A power shift is needed from large corporations to government and end users (consumers/citizens). For this to happen, government needs to address power sources to orchestrate policy development, rather than merely monitor the actor set. Interdependence, re-balancing power issues and inclusion of citizens' input in nutrition policy development are vital.

INTRODUCTION

Food policy shapes what people eat, how food is produced and distributed and at what cost. It impacts people's health and wellbeing as well as economies and the environment (Hawkes and Parsons 2019). The ineffectiveness of current food policies manifested in persisting food-related problems and increasing food system pressures makes clear the need for better food policy (Hawkes and Parsons 2019, Candel and Pereira 2017, Lloyd-Williams et al. 2014, Swinburn et al. 2019). Comprehensive food policies include three pillars; nutrition/healthy eating, food safety and sustainable food supply (WHO/Europe 2001). This paper focuses on the first pillar, i.e. nutrition/healthy eating and therefore, addresses nutrition policy.

Nutrition policies are constructed and shaped by three main parties: government, civil society and the food supply chain (Lang 2005). We shall refer to these as 'actors' in relationship in policy development and implementation throughout this paper (Lusch and

Vargo 2014). At present these three actors do not interact well. Vivid examples of poor interactions include the lobbying efforts of the food and beverages industry to undermine policies that protect public health (Ludwig and Nestle 2008) and public private partnerships being criticised for suffering from fundamental differences of interest, power imbalance and conflicted objectives between actors (Hawkes and Buse 2011, Lund-Thomsen 2009, Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the ineffectiveness of food policies and how the different food system actors operate and react to develop and adapt food policies (iPES FOOD 2020).

To propose solutions we followed McGuire's (2012) suggestion that research on the topic of health policy implementation should adopt a marketing, rather than public management perspective, as well as Aschemann-Witzel et al.'s (2012) evidence that food and health policy development can learn from marketing theory and concepts. Trischler and Charles (2018) also suggest the adoption of a service ecosystems approach to public policy development. So, in this paper we apply a relational marketing framework to the nutrition policy system as a whole, aiming to understand the impact of trust, power and collaboration among the food system actors on effective nutrition policy development. This relational thinking approach, "can enable a closer consideration of the relations and interactions among food marketers, nutritional experts and regulators, by identifying and assessing relations and stakeholders" (Bech-Larsen and Aschemann-Witzel 2012, 209).

The study focused on the nutrition policy of Greece. Greece has among the highest obesity rates in Europe and worldwide, with 17% of adults being obese and 40% of children aged 6-9 years being overweight or obese (OECD 2017a, World Health Organisation 2018), showing that the existing nutrition policy framework is not very effective, even in a location famed for its healthy Mediterranean diet. To draw a holistic understanding of the food policy

system and achieve the research objectives, our research was designed to gain perspectives from each nutrition policy actor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current Actors within Nutrition Policy Development

Lang (1999) pays attention to the issue of where power lies within the food system affecting policy decision making. In 2005 he proposed a triangle model to describe, in a simplified manner, the way that food policies (including nutrition policies) are developed, based on the interaction of three power groups, i.e. government; food supply chain; civil society (see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Commercial interests have tended to dominate, within each of these three areas, even when a stakeholder approach is adopted leading to a power asymmetry (Carey et al. 2016, O'Keeffe 2016, Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2018, Brooks et al. 2017). Since the strong lobbying power of the big food corporations does not always allow for interest-free decision making (Carey et al. 2016, Baker et al. 2018) it is unsurprising that nutrition-related diseases data shows that governments have indeed been weak (Roberto et al. 2015, Swinburn et al. 2019).

Yet, due to its regulatory power, government can intervene in any of the food supply chain stages, from production and imports to the final consumer, ostensibly to protect the rights of the citizens and the public good (Meadowcroft 2007). Indeed, government is tasked with creating policy to improve citizen health and wellbeing. So, what is it that is making them so ineffective? What may be needed is to develop a key role for another actor to the

process: civil society's input is needed to hold the different actors accountable for their actions (Swinburn et al. 2019). So, we consider that consumers could be usefully re-conceptualised as citizens (as a subset of the wider civil society) in their role as actor to policy development. For historically, the context of policy formulation is to focus on policy content as the core (Walt and Gilson 1994) to be passively received by consumers understood merely as passive end-users.

Citizens are conceptualised as active members of the community interested in public affairs and societal welfare, while customers in the consumer marketing literature are mainly driven by individualistic motives to get the best deal at a series of discrete points in time (Berglund and Matti 2006). We, therefore, included "citizens" in the research design and adopted a marketing approach where the longer-term focus on developing relationships shows how interactions among actors across the whole food system can be conceptualised in such a way as to lead to more effective policy formulation.

A Relational Marketing Approach for Nutrition Policy Development

Relational marketing is defined as "all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges" (Morgan and Hunt 1994, 22). Milne, Iyer, and Gooding-Williams (1996) argue for public policy makers to shift from a predominantly supervisor role to one that is relationship building. Hence we introduce relational marketing as a concept to frame more constructive policy development processes that could result in better implementation. Relational marketing concepts such as 'cooperation' 'trust', 'power' and 'value-in-use' are central to consciously building long-term relationships and will be briefly discussed here.

Cooperation implies that both sides are working to achieve the best solution with coordinated efforts producing outcomes better than one firm will achieve alone (Anderson

and Narus 1990, Doney and Cannon 1997). It can reflect power imbalances and be experienced as a restriction. We discuss this element below, along with power and power asymmetry. Trust is an expectation about an exchange partner that results from the partner's expertise, reliability, and intentionality (Ganesan 1994) and it needs to be actively built during the relationship (Halliday 2008). This reciprocal arrangement, with rights and duties, is particularly relevant due to the global decline in public trust towards government that has been witnessed around the world, leading to worries about gaining public support for policy implementation (Johnson and Scicchitano 2000). To know how to create this it is also important to investigate what would facilitate relationship development within the whole system (Singh et al. 2005). Therefore, our first research objective is:

(RO1) to investigate whether there might be potential to enhance collaboration and trust among the actors in nutrition policy development, to in turn enhance policy effectiveness

Cooperation results in acknowledged interdependence but the vulnerability then sensed means that there is a negative to be addressed as power asymmetry. For in practice one actor can overbalance into dependence on another and experience power as negative cooperation and as the antithesis of trust (Anderson and Narus 1990, Doney and Cannon 1997). Power is often discussed as having the property of a thing, and it can be understood as the ability to get what one wants (Pratto 2016); more usually it is seen as power over another, such as the ability of one partner to coerce the other into doing something they otherwise may not do (Wilson 1995) and the focus is therefore on power asymmetry. Yet power not only explains but it produces relationships (Foucault 1991). Therefore, our second and third research objectives are:

(RO2) to investigate who has the power in the current system and

(RO3) to explore whether a power shift might be needed to develop effective nutrition policies and if so, from and to which actor

Policy development processes that bolster the otherwise passive, dependent receipt of expertise by instead, treating them as “citizens” able to create value in their own terms, could balance the power asymmetry. What Carr (2006) notes is that members of society are never merely fixed recipients of policy but “instead they are constantly under construction as they are put into practice” (p.20). For in practice, each actor is working out benefits to themselves, rather than simply accepting guidance. This indicates that the subjective meaning, the actual value-in-use in the beneficiary’s mind needs to be engaged by policy makers. All actors in the system will be creating value-in-use from the relationship (Grönroos 2004). The emphasis on value-in-use (Lusch, Vargo, and O’Brien 2007, Lusch and Vargo 2014) lends itself to a focus on the dynamic use made of, in our case, nutrition policy, by citizens, rather than on the passive role of consumers purchasing food products. Our fourth research objective, therefore, is:

(RO4) to investigate to what extent nutrition policy development processes focus on outcomes oriented towards citizens

Models of strategic alliances from the relational marketing literature offer more than just ‘competitive advantage’ and ‘making profits’ (Varadarajan and Cunningham 1995). Such models could be usefully applied in the area of partnerships in the food policy system as they have been in partnerships in local government (Rees and Gardner 2003) and the not-for-profit sector (McCort 1994). We acknowledge that this relational marketing holistic approach is surely influenced by the reach of ecology from natural sciences into many other areas, such as services marketing (Ng 2018) and health promotion (McLeroy et al. 1988). Researchers should analyse relationships to understand interconnectedness, interplay and complexities (Singh et al. 2005).

There is an opportunity, therefore, for relational marketing, by means of these four key concepts, acknowledging in particular the notion of power as asymmetrical, to be of assistance in the implementation of food policy. Milne, Iyer, and Gooding-Williams (1996) suggest that defining shared goals would lead to greater success in influencing government and they warn: “adversarial models of public policy pitting the non-profit, government and business sectors against one another are not relevant [anymore]” (p.214).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore perspectives on the relevance of relational approaches to connections across the food system in order to answer the four research questions. We ask questions about current nutrition policies, how the system works and how it should work for better outcomes, prompting on issues of trust, cooperation, value (as perceived benefits) and power in policy decision-making.

The aim is for a realist understanding of the whole system of nutrition policy development. This permits ‘thick’ description, as is appropriate in this early exploration of multiple actor-sets. The focus is on socially constructed realities in the nutrition policy development. This focus gives social science a role, not only to, on occasion, predict, but also to seek out the generative mechanisms so as to explain and then enable - even promote - change. So, we take the critical realist approach that the real world is out there, but that facts are not clearly, objectively distinct from perception and therefore that data collection and analysis require interpretation (Sayer 1992). To achieve this, two methods were adopted to enable exploratory understanding of the nutrition policy terrain: focus groups to capture citizens’ views and semi-structured interviews for food system actors.

For the citizens' perspectives, focus groups were used to investigate whether they experienced a citizen focus in current nutrition policies; their interactions with food system actors; their trust towards these different actors and their recommendations for changes to the way nutrition policies might be shaped and implemented so that they are embraced by citizens. Fifty-nine young adults, 18-26 years old, participated in 9 focus groups of 5-8 participants each. The selection of this target audience was to sample the perspective of those who represent the future of the country, who would face any consequences of current initiatives while at the same time they may drive policy decisions in the future.

According to Dalton (2005, 149), "better educated youth [...] serve as opinion leaders on politics, and are more likely to be politically active" and this is why we recruited young adults who were either undertaking or have completed vocational or tertiary education. In order to increase the degree of representativeness, during the recruitment there was an effort to balance the following factors: gender, age, annual income and place they grew up (big/small city, town or village). Focus groups were selected as they allow investigation not only of people's knowledge, attitudes and experiences but also their perceptions, feelings and opinions and how those opinions are constructed, helping to reveal influential factors of complicated and multifaceted behaviours (Carson et al. 2001). The duration of the focus groups varied between 55 and 90 minutes. The data were coded by two researchers (Silverman 2013) and Cohen's Kappa coefficient for inter-rater reliability was .921.

In addition to the focus groups, 30 in-depth interviews carried out with all actors of the food policy triangle (see Figure 1), including government representatives, members of the food supply chain and civil society agencies. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate when the objective is to collect data from specialists in order to express their experience in a field and comment on similar issues (Silverman 2013).

A purposeful judgment sampling was used based on participants' involvement in key initiatives and key policy formation regarding nutritional issues (see Table 1). Respondent choice led to 14 interviews conducted face to face and 16 by telephone. The interview length ranged from 10 to 75 minutes and they were audio-recorded, having gained interviewee consent. The discussions were around current nutrition policy in Greece with a focus on relationships across all actors in the food system; on issues of power and trust and on any recommendations for more effective policy development and implementation.

All the participants were informed about their anonymity indemnity and no incentive was provided. Written consent forms were signed and collected before the group and individual interviews and ethics approval was sought by the Ethics Committees of a Greek and a UK University [*anonymous for peer-review*].

[Insert Table 1 about here]

A thematic analysis of the transcripts was carried out based on the main themes of the relational thinking theoretical framework but also on emerging themes from the findings (see Table 2 for the key themes and subthemes). Two researchers coded the data independently and discussed to resolve any disagreements. The inter-coder reliability using Cohen's Kappa coefficient was measured to .87.

RESULTS

Thematic analysis of the transcripts from the 30 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and the 9 focus groups with citizens yielded 6 themes as shown in detail in Table 2, grouped by the two areas identified in the literature; interdependence and power asymmetry. Results from the fieldwork are grouped under these two issues as they are areas

of criticality that would warrant a relational approach to future effective nutrition policy development, as supported by the theoretical framework.

Interdependence

Four themes were identified under the interdependence umbrella and included discussions on (i) how the different actors focus (or not) on citizens' wellbeing; (ii) how the different food system actors cooperate (or not); (iii) what are the conflicts among the actors of the food system and (iv) trust among the different food system actors (see Table 2 for sample quotes).

In the focus groups citizens were not very satisfied with current nutrition policies in Greece. They feel that the government does not really care about their needs. They trust neither the government, because of its “ineffectiveness”, nor the food industry, because of its profit-driven motives, but they believe in the “pure motives” of the non-governmental organisations. Citizens reported that individuals need more support from government to adopt healthier eating habits and they call for changes in order to create more supportive environments.

A leading policy must be created in order to improve eating habits, which will include advertisements for healthy foodstuffs and the development of governmental organisations which will promote healthy eating [citizen 2nd focus group]

This support often required better monitoring of the industry and harder legislation which shows the perceptions of the citizens about the power of the food industry actors over governmental initiatives. For example, two participants reported:

The State must control the middlemen [...] support the producers [...] so that the consumers could buy healthy products at reasonable prices [citizen 6th focus group]

The State must make it more difficult to open a fast-food store and facilitate the establishment of healthy food outlets [citizen 8th focus group]

In terms of cooperation and conflicts, participants identified many areas of collaboration among all the three sectors but ask for better inter and intra sectoral collaboration and coordination, better support from government and less conflict; they see the importance of having a shared goal of citizen wellbeing. Importantly they believe that without collaboration and cooperation there can be no effective nutrition policy. Support and coordination of these efforts by government as the lynchpin among the stakeholders is seen as vital by many participants (Table 2 provides example quotes that support all these views). For example, an NGO manager and a governmental employee said:

Many times we have common objectives with other agents. In general, there are many agents who do different things on the same subject and maybe this result in higher expenditure [...] If we cooperated, or if the government coordinated all these efforts the cost would have been lower [NGO manager].

If the involved agents cooperated, things would be better in the nutrition sector. The relationships between the responsible services should be better in terms of the division of work and responsibilities. There is a need for better coordination [Governmental body for control and advising employee]

The importance of collaboration among the actors involved in micronutrient policy development was also highlighted as a crucial determinant of its success in a study among 10 European countries (Jeruszka-Bielak et al. 2015).

The interviews revealed ineffective nutrition policies, frequent lack of governmental support, and an urgent need for many inter-governmental changes and improvements to lead to better policy development and implementation. This need for change is reflected in the quote of a participant who said

...the best solution is to get three- four people from different bodies that are interested in healthy eating policies and who really want to collaborate and coordinate these initiatives [that promote healthy eating behaviours]. This is the only way to have something good and organised [Ministry of Food and Rural Development employee].

Participants from civil society, including citizens, and government do not trust the private food sector, particularly the big corporations, as they perceive its motives to be profit-rather than citizen-driven.

[food companies] work is based on demand and profits and they can deceive us in order to make profits [Citizen 6th focus group]

They believe, therefore, that government along with the support of civil society, should monitor the food supply chain and ensure policy development based on citizens' needs rather than private/commercial interests. However, this clinging to the need for monitoring indicates how a lack of trust drives actors away from mutually beneficial relationships.

These findings are somewhat expected given that they reflect citizens' deeply rooted – negative - beliefs towards the government and corporations (Harrington 2017). However,

what was interesting is that participants mainly blamed the government about how companies operate in the food system. They believed that, regardless of how social responsible companies may be (or may not), it is the government's role to protect citizens from their unethical behaviour (unhealthy food, misleading/ manipulating promotion messages, etc.), and not the companies themselves for not paying equal attention to profits and to social wellbeing.

Man: The State should protect the people from the food industry which provides products that can harm our health.

Woman 1: I agree, and also the State should organise initiatives to promote healthy eating.

Woman 2: Some foods are expensive, like fish, so the government must ensure that these products are available at reasonable prices... [Citizens 1st focus group]

Power asymmetry

Under the second overarching theme of power, participants discussed two main areas (themes); (i) current power in the food system and (ii) power shift. Example of detailed quotes to support these areas can be found in Table 2.

There was a wider agreement among the participants from the civil society and government as well as from the citizens that the power lies in the hands of the few big players of the food industry which is in line with research in this area (e.g. Swinburn et al. 2019, Ludwig and Nestle 2008, Brooks et al. 2017, Carey et al. 2016) For example, one citizen reported

Food industry is powerful and someone has to arbitrate [Citizen 8th focus group]

It was also acknowledged that this power has been concentrated there because of the lack of governance which has also been identified as a big challenge around the world by the World Economic Forum (2017).

The government cannot effectively control the food industry as there isn't the right legislative framework [Member of Scientific Association]

The main weakness of the State is the inspecting mechanisms. The market is not controlled at all... [Member of food production trade association]

When participants were asked if they prefer to leave policy development to market forces they reported that this could be “catastrophic for the citizens” and that the government should take the lead. They, however, propose adopting a private sector “think of the state as an enterprise” approach in terms of managing and organising policy development and implementation. Smaller food producers’ representatives also supported the governmental and civil society perceptions about the power of the big food corporations and retailers.

No, no private involvement because their interests are not pure, so we must not allow them to take the lead. I understand that when funding is not sufficient interventions often get private sponsors such as food companies [the interviewee gave examples here off the record] but it is better if they don't take the lead because they only care for their own financial interests [NGO manager]

All civil society (state organisations and citizens) agreed that currently power is weighted towards the private food sector but they ask for the government to reclaim this

power and with appropriate reforms to take the lead for effective policy development that enhances citizen wellbeing.

During the economic crisis there is an increase of unhealthy foodstuffs consumption and the food industry is going to take advantage of this situation. So, the State must intervene to discourage this trend [Member of Scientific Association]

Food industry representatives did not provide a direct answer to the question about food corporations' power and its impact on shaping eating trends. The answers were related to the free will of the citizen, "we listen to the market" **[Food manufacturer]**, and their openness to support and design initiatives to promote healthy eating as part of their corporate social responsibility which has been repeatedly accused of being just a marketing exercise (Fleming and Jones 2013).

We have developed a programme for children 5-12 years of age in schools of the 7 big cities in Greece in order to promote healthy eating habits. It contains educational material for 32 educational hours for children, teachers and parents [Food manufacturer]

Participants representing the food supply chain agreed that they are ahead of the government "we are one step ahead of the government because our antennas are more sensitive towards the market messages" **[Member of food production trade association]** and that they do whatever they can to support NGOs and the government to promote healthier eating habits as part of their corporate social responsibility. For example,

As regards the nutritional aspects of our initiatives, we cooperate with Universities and nutritionists. Also, nonprofit organisations and the Ministry of Health have approached us in order to have us support their initiatives for healthy

eating promotion and we support them because our mission is to support these actions [Manager of a big supermarket]

The unclear position of the food industry was raised by a civil servant who collaborates with the food industry as part of his role.

[The food industry] is good only in words but when they have to take action they do not have a clear position [Ministry of Agriculture employee]

More example quotes to support the different themes discussed above can be found in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

DISCUSSION

Three overarching areas emerged as we interpreted and shared meanings from the data to draw conclusions that would aid more effective nutrition policy development and implementation. First, collaboration is being impeded by tensions in policy development which call for a greater acknowledgement of interdependence; secondly issues of cooperation and trust are relevant and need to be seen in the context of the salience of power asymmetry; finally, there is a clear need for a shared citizen focus and, to achieve this, a need for a shift in power across the food system. These areas underline the pressing need for government to implement changes.

Our results drive a new model (Figure 2) to express how this dynamism and shared focus on citizens in developing and implementing nutrition policy might look if this critical step-change to real collaboration were enacted among and between the four actors in nutrition

policy development. For more effective nutrition policy development there must be a shift from a model that focuses on the tensions between independent actors (Figure 1) to a model that focuses on collaboration across interdependent actors with the shared goal of citizen wellbeing (Figure 2).

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Figure 2 is a development to nutrition policy practice. The ecological model of health promotion has the individual at the centre due to its focus on behaviour change (McLeroy et al. 1988), while Figure 2 suggests that citizens should be at the centre of policy formulation. Our model does not focus on individual behaviour change but instead on a shared-focus on citizens' well-being to be used to inform policy development processes across the system as a whole. Nevertheless, an important similarity between the two models is that they both advocate for an active involvement of the target population – in health promotion activities for the ecological health promotion approach and in policy formulation for the relational marketing approach. The relational approach adds a sustained focus on connection by means of relationship building through building trust and commitment. Intentional trust-building has a shared interest across the system by means of practical collaboration in developing shared goals in the co-creation process that would in turn build trust in the system and policy outcomes. Our model depicts a possible reality for nutrition policy development, with the actors interacting within a dynamic of power such that together they co-construct and implement policies. Relational thinking includes an understanding of "sick rather than healthy relationships" (Young and Wilkinson 1989, 109) and so does not lead to simple naïve optimism, but rather to sober discussion of power asymmetry and tradeoffs around acknowledged shared interests and longer-term goals.

It is noteworthy that ideological differences between political parties can lead them to prioritise different approaches to achieve their nutrition policy goals; citizens' ideologies can lead to varying value perceptions and acceptance of different policies (Cullerton et al. 2016, Lusk 2012). This is all acknowledged within the relational marketing concept of 'value-in-use' (Grönroos 2004). Therefore, similar to marketing ecosystems, in the policy context nutrition policy actors need to together develop a shared goal. This will be arrived at, to be sure, via explicit compromise. This shared goal will ensure the development and implementation of effective nutrition policy, regardless of ideological backgrounds, since current divides have clearly been proven ineffective. Trischler and Charles (2018) suggest that the government should map the value creation process and capture how value is co-created between actors with often different interests. This includes the identification of the compromises that need to be made by the various actors to achieve the shared goal. Cullerton et al. (2016) highlight that public mobilisation and strategical targeting of decision makers who embrace the shared goal can enable nutrition policy change. So, while ideological differences may lead to different policy approaches and explain most of the competing views, the identification of a shared goal of citizen health and wellbeing, across all the actors could lead to a more effective policy development.

Our findings suggest that there is, indeed, potential for more intentional and positive collaboration within the whole system. The literature indicated and the findings corroborated that for these collaborations to happen, actors, despite their ideological background, must have a similar long-term objective in order to be able to pursue mutual gains (Milne, Iyer, and Gooding-Williams 1996), which in this case could be citizen health and wellbeing. These collaborations need to include "citizens" as some kind of construction and representation of "society" in order to develop policies focused on improving citizen wellbeing, and so gaining the citizen buy-in that might lead to policies becoming effective. This could provide a

powerful counterbalance to the power of large food corporations in formal discussions of policy.

A Sense of Interdependence Needed in the Development of Nutrition Policy

Interdependence is broken by the perception of pressing power asymmetry and negative collaboration by a dominant actor in the system acting without citizen health and wellbeing as a focus. This perceived dominance is then actively, and even passively, resisted. For our respondents do not trust the agents of change: either government or private organisations. This lack of trust is a key barrier to individuals making the effort to change behaviours necessary for effective implementation of nutrition policies.

Many citizens complained about the lack of governmental support in developing new habits, leading to the dilution of their intention to change what they eat. Johnson and Scicchitano (2000) also found this link between trust and willingness to take action and showed that policymakers need to build public support if they want their policies to be embraced by the citizens. The missing player can again be seen to be the constructed and articulate “citizen”. Trust in governmental institutions is a key indicator of the quality of government–public relationships (Hong et al. 2012). Low trust levels lead recipients or beneficiaries not to accept policies in practice (OECD 2017b); this lack of acceptance stems from low levels of commitment (Moorman, Deshpande, and Zaltman 1993).

Our findings add finesse to a growing argument regarding the role of government pro-activity: to orchestrate the players (Tonkin et al. 2018) and focus on citizen wellbeing as the long-term output. As mentioned, a previous study across 10 European countries found that in northern European countries, where nutrition policies were successful, governments were actively involved in policy development and there was also strong consumer interest in policy development participation, as opposed to southern European countries, including Greece,

where lack of governmental initiative and commitment to micronutrient policy development was reported (Jeruszka-Bielak et al. 2015).

Therefore, we see that participation of citizens in policy making and implementation increases engagement and trust towards the government (Hong et al. 2012) and therefore commitment, leading to the concept of co-creation reflected in our new model (Figure 2). Tonkin et al. (2018) found that consumer moral concern on food matters was not responded to by government. Yet it is the very complexity of interconnected relational concepts such as trustworthiness that make it is so very difficult for governments to effectively implement their policies even if these are for citizens' good (Keele 2007). So, this paper supports those who have drawn attention to the need to focus on interactions between groups of actors and the important role for civil society in the effective implementation of policies (Kingdon 2010).

Interestingly, despite the lack of trust in government by most of the food system actors and citizens, our participants highlight that it is government that should take the lead. But to do so as connector of the other actors rather than as mere regulator. So, for the development and effective implementation of food policies, interdependence needs to be recognised. And for this recognition to be real, there needs to be a power shift within and across the whole food system.

Power Asymmetry Issues in the Development of Nutrition Policy

Formally, in Greece, power is given to government; however, in practice, here as elsewhere, there is a perceived lack of power due to the strength of large corporations. This was reported by participants from civil society, government and the less powerful actors of the food supply chain. Our finding that larger food corporations have dominant power over government and that there is lack of effective monitoring and accountability systems, support

previous evidence of the power asymmetry within the food system (e.g. Dahlberg 2001, Caraher et al. 2013, Fuchs, Meyer-Eppler, and Hamenstädt 2013, Swinburn et al. 2019).

Overt power is useful to influence decision making in order to favour positive outcomes, from shaping consumer needs to framing social and political issues (Dahlberg 2001, Pelletier et al. 2003). In our study, larger firms are seen to have undue influence. This is reflected, among others, by Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002, 358) who note that "since economic power does translate into political power, many of the economic and regulatory structures of the food system are weighted in favour of these firms". So research participants raised the issue of governmental reforms in order to be more effective in nutrition policy development and implementation.

Citizen Focus and Power Shift Needed in the Development of Nutrition Policy

Given this power asymmetry, we argue that there is a pressing need for a power shift. This shift would mean government taking on a more active role than merely monitoring and citizens taking on a more active role than merely being the end users of policy. For power is constructed by and constructs relations among actors in the food system. The system needs citizens consciously using citizen power.

Calabrese (2017, 3) has noted that "the rhetoric of choice is a principal means through which consumers are told that the regulation of the food industry on their behalf is how the state attempts to undermine their sovereign power". However, this claim needs critiquing and citizenship promoted over consumer choice. This needs governmental organisations and civil society to collaborate to strengthen their relationships to counterbalance corporations. Lyson and Raymer (2000, 207) suggest that this power imbalance requires that "researchers, policy makers, and activists monitor, analyse, and report on the corporations and officials who sit on

top of today's global food and agricultural system". Importantly, we take this further by the suggestion of co-creation rather than relying on analysis and reporting post-facto.

Swinburn et al. (2019) call for stronger national and international governance levers to fully implement policies and Lang (2005) also discusses the need to pro-activity by government in shaping nutrition policies:

Even within market theory, whose purest ideologues propose that food is or ought to be subject to market forces, and whose policy central tenet is to restrict the role of the state or remove it altogether, the relationship between the supply chain and civil society/consumers is in fact mediated or framed by the state (p.127).

Hawkes and Buse (2011) recommend the development of public-private partnerships only after policy makers take the lead to set public health objectives. Our respondents all recommended that by reducing bureaucracy and actively taking a lead, government organisations could reform nutrition policy making by making the focus citizen wellbeing. Interestingly, this is not to suggest a firmer monitoring role. So, based on the research findings, government needs to move from a transactional-electioneering approach to a relational thinking framework (O'Malley and Tynan 2000) that focuses on its connecting power; its empowering of the citizen voice.

Given the lack of trust evident in our findings, shared ownership of policy requires development of a shared focus on citizen wellbeing. This is as distinct from blaming individuals for not changing. Failure in the system to deliver the desired outcomes of improved citizen health and wellbeing is often blamed on consumers as somewhat passive end users; that is on the individuals prone to disease and suffering ill-health by, for example, becoming overweight (Witkowski 2007).

Our model (Figure 2) does not overlook any inevitable tension and conflict but keeps the citizen at the centre of every decision. This relational approach would facilitate the development of appropriate policies to promote and support healthy eating behaviours through the interaction of all actors, since value is co-created within interactive processes (Grönroos 2006). This interaction will add value to citizens (healthy lives/wellbeing), stakeholders (higher profits, less healthcare expenses, increased trust by the citizens/voters/consumers) and society (wellbeing, sustainability, local production and economic development, environmental protection). It would then mean that a strong accountability system is in place (Swinburn et al. 2019).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

We conclude that in the policy development context there should be a power-shift based on a relational marketing approach acknowledging the interdependence of all policy actors. Our findings demonstrate that conflict and the presence of dominant power in the system concern almost all the participants. Reallocation of power within nutrition policy development is, therefore, crucial. This could happen best through an intentional focus on developing a shared goal of citizen wellbeing. For this to happen, consumers need to consider themselves less as passive receivers of consumer goods and services and more as active citizens, co-creating their health and wellbeing, conscious of being members of civil society.

Our findings suggest a need for government to lead in nutrition policy creation. Yet the findings indicate many governmental weaknesses. This is clearly problematic. We model how a greater balance of power could be achieved by iterative interaction and government action by reducing food supply chain power and increasing government participation. So, our study enriches policy formation theory by focusing on the whole system at the same time to ensure policy develops holistically addressing power imbalance and ensuring government

holds actors to account. The overall policy implication is that it is vital for government to create the context for the development of collaborative relationships among the actors: government, the food supply chain and civil society. This role for government is more important than overt regulatory power.

We identified two key implications for theory relate to the application of relationship thinking to nutrition policy development. One implication is the need to see from a theoretical perspective nutrition policy development as a set of stakeholders who have the potential both to create and destroy value-in-use for themselves and across the system. Relational marketing encourages an understanding of the importance of re-balancing power asymmetries for the common good within the system. The second is that we develop a more nuanced understanding of relational dynamics such that actors commit to moving towards a more interconnected, interdependent, approach as they create relationships, focused on a shared goal of creating citizen wellbeing.

Our overall contribution is to stress that shared goals need co-creation by all actors. This is the needed change in state-civil society- food supply chain relations. Policy makers should initiate relational processes as part of their approach to policy creation in order to increase whole system trust and cooperation and create the context for citizen buy-in.

To move from the status quo where it is widely perceived that large corporations wield too much power whilst government is weak requires a power-shift. Our pyramid model (Figure 2) shows bi-directional relationships that are acknowledged as part of power dynamics, open to being better balanced between all four actors; we indicate this dynamism with two-way arrows. To facilitate this shift, structural changes to enhance communication, collaboration and better organisation within governmental bodies are required. They need to play the crucial role in the process of flexing connecting power, rather than thinking of government's role as mere governance.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Our study has a few limitations that may open up avenues for future research. The citizens' sample consisted of educated young adults as these are more likely to get involved in politics and consequently shape future food policies, however, this can be a limitation of our study as it does not include the views of older and less educated people whose opinions may also be important to policy formulation. To overcome this limitation, we made sure that we recruited people from various socio-economic backgrounds and types of education. Similar future studies could consider a broader sample of citizens to better understand how different groups could influence food policies and how they could be more engaged to play an active role in policy development; an inclusive policy development approach may require inclusivity of various views. Moreover, this study focuses on one food policy pillar, i.e. nutrition policies. While many aspects we identified around policy formulation, such as collaboration among actors, citizen engagement with policy development, power asymmetry and trust to the policy actors, can have an impact across these pillars, it would be interesting for future studies to investigate if the other food policy areas face similar or different challenges. This will help to develop a better understanding of the factors that lead to food policy success as a whole.

REFERENCES

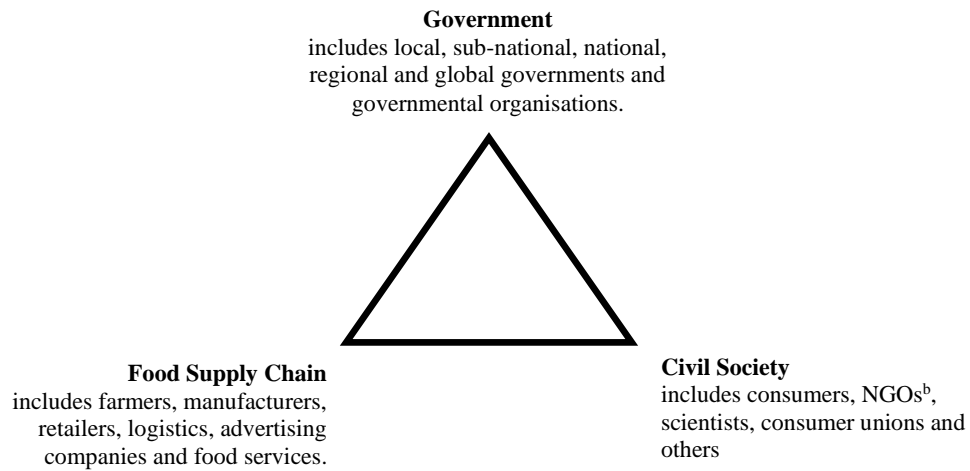
- Anderson, James C, and James A Narus. 1990. "A model of distributor firm and manufacturer firm working partnerships." *Journal of Marketing*:42-58.
- Aschemann-Witzel, Jessica, Ilona E de Hooge, Valérie L Almli, and Marije Oostindjer. 2018. "Fine-Tuning the Fight Against Food Waste." *Journal of Macromarketing* 38 (2):168-184.
- Aschemann-Witzel, Jessica, Federico JA Perez-Cueto, Barbara Niedzwiedzka, Wim Verbeke, and Tino Bech-Larsen. 2012. "Transferability of private food marketing success factors to public food and health policy: An expert Delphi survey." *Food Policy* 37 (6):650-660.
- Baker, Phillip, Corinna Hawkes, Kate Wingrove, Alessandro Rhyl Demaio, Justin Parkhurst, Anne Marie Thow, and Helen Walls. 2018. "What drives political commitment for nutrition? A review and framework synthesis to inform the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition." *BMJ Global Health* 3 (1):e000485.
- Bech-Larsen, Tino, and Jessica Aschemann-Witzel. 2012. "A macromarketing perspective on food safety regulation: the Danish ban on trans-fatty acids." *Journal of Macromarketing* 32 (2):208-219.
- Berglund, Christer, and Simon Matti. 2006. "Citizen and consumer: the dual role of individuals in environmental policy." *Environmental politics* 15 (4):550-571.
- Brooks, Stephanie, Adam Leaver, Michelle Spence, Christopher T Elliott, and Moira Dean. 2017. "Pragmatic engagement in a low trust supply chain: Beef farmers' perceptions of power, trust and agency." *Competition & Change* 21 (2):114-131.
- Calabrese, Andrew. 2017. "Caveat Emptor! The Rhetoric of Choice in Food Politics." *communication+ 16* (1):2. doi: 10.7275/R5CZ35CR.
- Candel, Jeroen JL, and Laura Pereira. 2017. "Towards integrated food policy: Main challenges and steps ahead." *Environmental Science & Policy* 73:89-92.
- Caraher, Martin, Rachel Carey, Kathy McConell, and Mark Lawrence. 2013. "Food policy development in the Australian state of Victoria: a case study of the Food Alliance." *International planning studies* 18 (1):78-95.
- Carey, Rachel, Martin Caraher, Mark Lawrence, and Sharon Friel. 2016. "Opportunities and challenges in developing a whole-of-government national food and nutrition policy: lessons from Australia's National Food Plan." *Public health nutrition* 19 (1):3-14.
- Carr, Edward R. 2006. "Postmodern conceptualizations, modernist applications: Rethinking the role of society in food security." *Food Policy* 31 (1):14-29.
- Carson, David, Audrey Gilmore, Chad Perry, and Kjell Gronhaug. 2001. *Qualitative marketing research*: Sage.
- Cullerton, Katherine, Timothy Donnet, Amanda Lee, and Danielle Gallegos. 2016. "Playing the policy game: a review of the barriers to and enablers of nutrition policy change." *Public health nutrition* 19 (14):2643-2653.
- Dahlberg, Kenneth A. 2001. "Democratizing society and food systems: Or how do we transform modern structures of power?" *Agriculture and Human Values* 18 (2):135-151.
- Dalton, Russell J. 2005. "The social transformation of trust in government." *International Review of Sociology* 15 (1):133-154.
- Doney, Patricia M, and Joseph P Cannon. 1997. "Trust in buyer-seller relationships." *Journal of Marketing* 61:35-51.
- Fleming, P, and M. T. Jones. 2013. *The end of corporate social responsibility: crisis & critique*. . London, UK: Sage.
- Foucault, M. 1991. *Discipline and punish*. London, UK: Penguin.
- Fuchs, Doris, Richard Meyer-Eppler, and Ulrich Hamenstädt. 2013. "Food for thought: The politics of financialization in the agrifood system." *Competition & Change* 17 (3):219-233.
- Ganesan, Shankar. 1994. "Determinants of long-term orientation in buyer-seller relationships." *the Journal of Marketing*:1-19.

- Grönroos, Christian. 2004. "The relationship marketing process: communication, interaction, dialogue, value." *Journal of business & industrial marketing* 19 (2):99-113.
- Grönroos, Christian. 2006. "On defining marketing: finding a new roadmap for marketing." *Marketing theory* 6 (4):395-417.
- Halliday, Sue Vaux. 2008. "The power of myth in impeding service innovation: A perspective gained from analysis of service providers' narratives." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 17 (1):44-55.
- Harrington, M. 2017. "Survey: People's trust has declined in business, media, government, and NGOs." *Harvard business review*.
- Hawkes, C., and K. Parsons. 2019. Brief 1: Tackling Food Systems Challenges: The Role of Food Policy. London: Centre for Food Policy.
- Hawkes, Corinna, and Kent Buse. 2011. "Public health sector and food industry interaction: it's time to clarify the term 'partnership' and be honest about underlying interests." *The European Journal of Public Health* 21 (4):400-401.
- Hendrickson, Mary K, and William D Heffernan. 2002. "Opening spaces through relocalization: locating potential resistance in the weaknesses of the global food system." *Sociologia ruralis* 42 (4):347-369.
- Hong, Hyehyun, Hyojung Park, Youngah Lee, and Jongmin Park. 2012. "Public segmentation and government–public relationship building: a cluster analysis of publics in the United States and 19 European countries." *Journal of Public Relations Research* 24 (1):37-68.
- iPES FOOD. 2020. "COVID-19 and the crisis in food systems: Symptoms, causes, and potential solutions." http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/COVID-19_CommuniqueEN.pdf.
- Jeruska-Bielak, Marta, Ewa Sicińska, Liesbeth de Wit, Jiří Ruprich, Irena Řehůřková, Kerry A Brown, Lada Timotijevic, Anne-Mette Sonne, Pernille Haugaard, and Antonella Guzzon. 2015. "Stakeholders' views on factors influencing nutrition policy: a qualitative study across ten European countries." *Polish Journal of Food and Nutrition Sciences* 65 (4):293-302.
- Johnson, Renee J, and Michael J Scicchitano. 2000. "Uncertainty, risk, trust, and information: Public perceptions of environmental issues and willingness to take action." *Policy Studies Journal* 28 (3):633-647.
- Keele, Luke. 2007. "Social capital and the dynamics of trust in government." *American Journal of Political Science* 51 (2):241-254.
- Kingdon, J.W. 2010. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Update Edition, with an Epilogue on Health Care*. 2 ed. London: Pearson.
- Lang, Tim. 1999. "Food policy for the 21st century: Can it be both radical and reasonable." *For hunger-proof cities: Sustainable urban food systems*:216-224.
- Lang, Tim. 2005. What is food and farming for? – the (re)emergence of health as a key policy driver. In *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development*, edited by F. H. Buttel and P. McMichael: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Lloyd-Williams, Ffion, Helen Bromley, Lois Orton, Corinna Hawkes, David Taylor-Robinson, Martin O'Flaherty, Rory McGill, Elspeth Anwar, Lirije Hyseni, May Moonan, Mike Rayner, and Simon Capewell. 2014. "Smorgasbord or symphony? Assessing public health nutrition policies across 30 European countries using a novel framework." *BMC Public Health* 14 (1):1-20. doi: 10.1186/1471-2458-14-1195.
- Ludwig, David S, and Marion Nestle. 2008. "Can the food industry play a constructive role in the obesity epidemic?" *Jama* 300 (15):1808-1811.
- Lund-Thomsen, Peter. 2009. "Assessing the impact of public–private partnerships in the global south: The case of the Kasur tanneries pollution control project." *Journal of Business Ethics* 90 (1):57.
- Lusch, Robert F, and Stephen L Vargo. 2014. *Service-dominant logic: Premises, perspectives, possibilities*: Cambridge University Press.
- Lusch, Robert F, Stephen L Vargo, and Matthew O'brien. 2007. "Competing through service: Insights from service-dominant logic." *Journal of retailing* 83 (1):5-18.

- Lusk, Jayson L. 2012. "The political ideology of food." *Food Policy* 37 (5):530-542. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2012.05.002>.
- Lyson, Thomas A, and Annalisa Lewis Raymer. 2000. "Stalking the wily multinational: Power and control in the US food system." *Agriculture and Human Values* 17 (2):199-208.
- McCort, J Daniel. 1994. "A framework for evaluating the relational extent of a relationship marketing strategy: The case of nonprofit organizations." *Journal of Direct Marketing* 8 (2):53-65.
- McGuire, Linda. 2012. "Slippery Concepts in Context: Relationship Marketing and Public Services." *Public Management Review* 14 (4):541-555.
- McLeroy, Kenneth R, Daniel Bibeau, Allan Steckler, and Karen Glanz. 1988. "An ecological perspective on health promotion programs." *Health education quarterly* 15 (4):351-377.
- Meadowcroft, James. 2007. "Who is in charge here? Governance for sustainable development in a complex world." *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 9 (3-4):299-314.
- Milne, George R, Easwar S Iyer, and Sara Gooding-Williams. 1996. "Environmental organization alliance relationships within and across nonprofit, business, and government sectors." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*:203-215.
- Moorman, Christine, Rohit Deshpande, and Gerald Zaltman. 1993. "Factors affecting trust in market research relationships." *the Journal of Marketing*:81-101.
- Morgan, Robert M, and Shelby D Hunt. 1994. "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing." *The journal of marketing*:20-38.
- Ng, Irene. 2018. "Service Ecosystems." In *The SAGE Handbook of Service-Dominant Logic*, edited by Stephen L. Vargo and Robert F. Lusch, 195-260. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- O'Keeffe, Patrick. 2016. "Supply chain management strategies of agricultural corporations: A resource dependency approach." *Competition & Change* 20 (4):255-274.
- O'Malley, Lisa, and Caroline Tynan. 2000. "Relationship marketing in consumer markets—rhetoric or reality?" *European Journal of marketing* 34 (7):797-815.
- OECD. 2017a. Greece: Country Health Profile 2017, State of Health in the EU. Brussels: OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies.
- OECD. 2017b. Trust and Public Policy: How Better Governance Can Help Rebuild Public Trust. In *OECD Public Governance Reviews*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Pelletier, David, Christine McCullum, Vivica Kraak, and Katherine Asher. 2003. "Participation, power and beliefs shape local food and nutrition policy." *The Journal of nutrition* 133 (1):301S-304S.
- Pratto, Felicia. 2016. "On power and empowerment." *British Journal of Social Psychology* 55 (1):1-20.
- Rees, Patricia, and Hanne Gardner. 2003. "Best value, partnerships and relationship marketing in local government." *International Journal of nonprofit and voluntary sector marketing* 8 (2):143-152.
- Roberto, Christina A, Boyd Swinburn, Corinna Hawkes, Terry TK Huang, Sergio A Costa, Marice Ashe, Lindsey Zwicker, John H Cawley, and Kelly D Brownell. 2015. "Patchy progress on obesity prevention: emerging examples, entrenched barriers, and new thinking." *The Lancet* 385 (9985):2400-2409.
- Sayer, A. 1992. "Method in social science: a realist approach 2nd edn Routledge." *New York*.
- Silverman, David. 2013. *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Singh, Jagdip, Jean E Kilgore, Rama K Jayanti, Kokil Agarwal, and Ramadesikan Gandarvakottai. 2005. "What goes around comes around: Understanding trust—value dilemmas of market relationships." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 24 (1):38-62.
- Swinburn, Boyd A, Vivica I Kraak, Steven Allender, Vincent J Atkins, Phillip I Baker, Jessica R Bogard, Hannah Brinsden, Alejandro Calvillo, Olivier De Schutter, and Raji Devarajan. 2019. "The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: The Lancet Commission report." *The Lancet* 393 (10173):791-846.

- Tonkin, Emma, John Coveney, Trevor Webb, Annabelle M Wilson, and Samantha B Meyer. 2018. "Consumer Concerns Relating to Food Labeling and Trust—Australian Governance Actors Respond." *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 52 (2):349-372.
- Trischler, Jakob, and Michael Charles. 2018. "The Application of a Service Ecosystems Lens to Public Policy Analysis and Design: Exploring the Frontiers." *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* 38 (1):19-35. doi: 10.1177/0743915618818566.
- Varadarajan, P Rajan, and Margaret H Cunningham. 1995. "Strategic alliances: a synthesis of conceptual foundations." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 23 (4):282.
- Walt, Gill, and Lucy Gilson. 1994. "Reforming the health sector in developing countries: the central role of policy analysis." *Health policy and planning* 9 (4):353-370.
- WHO/Europe. 2001. The First Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy. WHO European Region 2000-2005. World Health Organisation.
- Wilson, David T. 1995. "An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships." *Journal of the academy of marketing science* 23 (4):335-345.
- Witkowski, Terrence H. 2007. "Food marketing and obesity in developing countries: analysis, ethics, and public policy." *Journal of Macromarketing* 27 (2):126-137.
- World Economic Forum. 2017. Global Risks Report 2017. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum.
- World Health Organisation. 2018. Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Europe.
- Young, Louise C, and Ian F Wilkinson. 1989. "The role of trust and co-operation in marketing channels: a preliminary study." *European Journal of Marketing* 23 (2):109-122.

FIGURE 1: The Triangle Model of Food^a Policy



Source: Adapted from Lang (2005, 126)

^a *the term food policy incorporates nutrition policy which is the focus of this paper.*

^b *the sides of the triangle can be seen as a continuum in some cases such as NGOs that have business interests (BINGOs) or governmental NGOs (GONGOs)*

FIGURE 2: A Relational Thinking Approach for Effective Nutrition Policy Development (Triangle Model Revised)

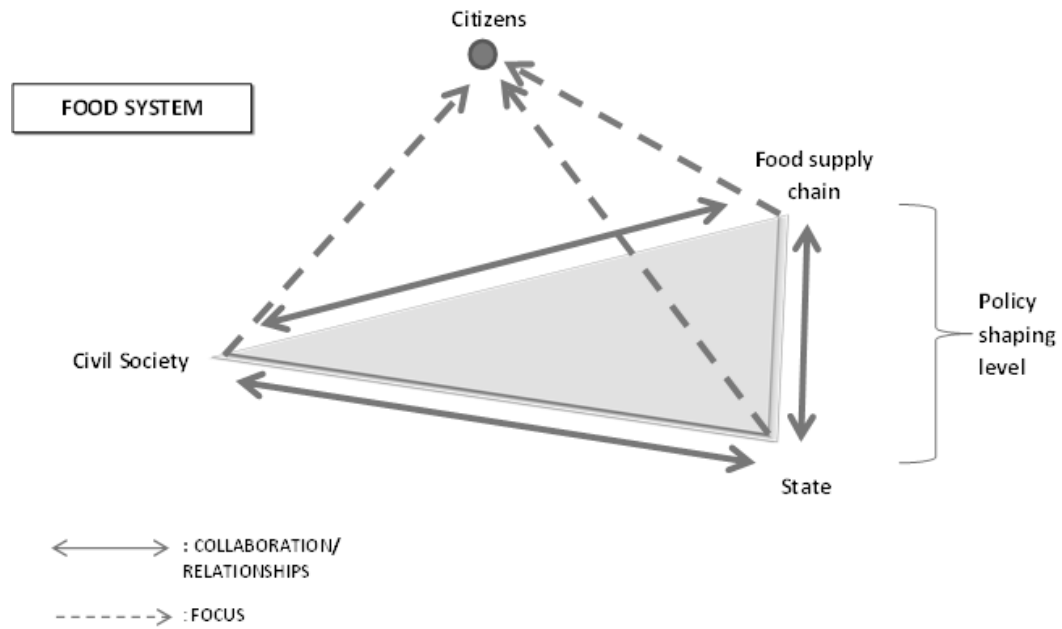


TABLE 1: Details of the Participants

	<i>No of Participants</i>
<i>In-depth Interviews</i>	30
Government	11
Ministries	8
Governmental bodies for control and advising	3
Civil Society	9
Nutritionist	1
NGOs working on healthy eating promotion	4
Scientific associations	3
Advisory committee	1
Food Supply Chain	10
Trade associations	3
Big retailer	1
Food outlet (fast food chain)	1
Food manufacturers	5
<i>Focus Groups (n=9)</i>	
Citizens	59
Male	25
Female	34

TABLE 2: Main Themes and Example Quotes from Studies 1 & 2

<i>Theme: Interdependence</i>
<i>Sub-theme: Citizen focus</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everywhere you can see ads and fast food outlets and the government does nothing, it doesn't provide incentives to adopt a healthy diet. <i>(Citizen 1st focus group)</i> • The State does not care about what we [the citizens] eat. We must learn from our family. They do not care, not even in schools... <i>(Citizen 4th focus group)</i> • Do you think that there is information made available to the people? For example, let's take obesity prevention...[mention the name of an anti-obesity campaign]...nice campaign, impressive but are there any results? A serious program must have measurable objectives...here they have given neither results nor impact measurements...if people implement these suggestions. Therefore, these are rituals that some Ministers like. They are not programmes. <i>(Ministry of Health employee)</i> • They [food companies] will produce what brings profits... <i>(Citizen 1st focus group)</i> • [food companies] work is based on demand and profits and they can deceive us in order to make profits <i>(Citizen 6th focus group)</i>
<i>Sub-theme: Cooperation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cooperate with all the Ministries occupied with food because there is a need for synergy in order to create sound food policies" <i>(Member of food production trade association)</i> • Two food companies...we were one of them...and other companies, I think one bank, were sponsors of the two Communication Campaigns on Healthy Nutrition...<i>(Food manufacturer)</i>

- The government does not support us, many times the reverse happens and we face problems with the Ministries. For example, we have some issues with the Ministry of Finance...their processes are slow and antiquated **(NGO manager)**
- ...but there is lack of governmental support.... **(NGO manager)**
- We cooperate with everyone involved with nutrition...Ministries, non-profit organisations, professional associations, customer unions, the food industry and museums in order to develop educational programs, Universities, foreign Professors and with schools in order to promote healthy eating to the students **(NGO manager)**
- We cooperate with the food industry in order to facilitate the development of products of high quality by improving safety and hygiene during their production
(governmental body for control and advising employee)
- In general, there is a problem with coordination...this [promotion of healthy foodstuffs] could be more extensive if there was collaboration with the Ministry of Health but this is very difficult **(Ministry of agriculture employee)**
- There are structures but there is no management for sound cooperation...
(governmental body for control and advising employee)
- Many times we have common objectives with other agents. In general, there are many agents who do different things on the same subject and maybe this result in higher expenditure [...] If we cooperated, or if the government coordinated all these efforts the cost would have been lower **(NGO manager).**
- ...all the agents and people occupied with nutrition must set the minimum common targets and try to achieve these goals together. From then on, each one of us independently can do anything else in order to achieve other specific goals. **(NGO manager)**

- If the involved agents cooperated, things would be better in the nutrition sector.

The relationships between the responsible services should be better in terms of the division of work and responsibilities. There is a need for better coordination. **(governmental body for control and advising employee)**

- The best solution is to get three- four people from different bodies that are interested in healthy eating policies and who really want to collaborate and coordinate these initiatives [that promote healthy eating behaviours]. This is the only way to have something good and organised **(Ministry of Food and Rural Development employee)**

Sub-theme: Conflicts

- There is competition between the food industry and the government and other organisations that promote healthy eating habits. This competition is uneven because the industry spends more money in order to promote its unhealthy products, while the government and other nonprofit organisations have very small budgets. So we can't talk about a fair situation and the consumer is in the middle. **(Ministry of Food and Rural Development employee)**

- There used to be a trade association of the supermarkets in Greece but because there were a lot of disagreements among the members it was abandoned and I don't believe that it is going to exist again in the future **(manager of a big supermarket)**

- There is no communication between the Ministries...The issue of nutrition is split into many responsible bodies and agents. We cooperate with all these agents on paper....but actually there is no communication...and we also include people from other agencies in steering committees and many times they don't even appear at the meetings **(Ministry of Health employee)**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many times we have common objectives with other agents. In general, there are many agents who do different things on the same subject and maybe this result in higher expenditure [...] If we cooperated, or if the government coordinated all these efforts the cost would have been lower (NGO manager)
<i>Sub-theme: Trust</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I trust NGOs because their motives are pure (citizen 6th focus group) The State works using an obsolete and anachronistic model, cannot follow the trend and most of the times stays behind... (Member of food production trade association) ...there is no reliable mechanism which can guarantee what we buy, how it is produced and where [...] The State has done nothing all these years through an integrated program. There were some efforts through specific persons but nothing organised. (Member of Advisory Committee) NGOs can use the available resources more rationally [than the government]. (NGO manager) ...it is a political problem that such initiatives [to promote healthy eating] are not implemented because there are initiatives that need a lot of money and others that don't. But even if the budget is high it will result in saving healthcare costs. Probably our politicians are not aware of these issues; they haven't understood the long-term economic benefits. (NGO manager) ... [the food industry] is good only in words but when they have to take action they do not have a clear position (Ministry of Health employee)
<i>Theme: Power</i>
<i>Sub-theme: Current power in the food system</i>

- Food industry is powerful and someone has to arbitrate **(Citizen 8th focus group)**
- ...the promotion of olive oil, fruits, vegetables and other food types is segmented and short term and motivated by the profit of specific private food sectors rather than by public health incentives. Legislative measures for specific foodstuffs such as fresh meat, bread and cheese are based mainly on market regulation objectives rather than on the protection of consumer health **(Ministry of Rural Development and Food employee)**
- The government cannot effectively control the food industry as there isn't the right legislative framework **(Member of Scientific Association)**
- ...there should be someone to control advertisements so that food companies would be obliged to tell the truth about fat and calorie contents and create packages which will show these facts using bold letters and in a way familiar to the public in order to understand what is good and what is not. This is proper and ethical **(NGO manager)**
- The main weakness of the State is the inspecting mechanisms. The market is not controlled at all... **(Member of food production trade association)**

Sub- theme: Power shift

- Private sector works better than the government because the governmental bodies have many weaknesses. The private sector is more capable to do things...the government has lost its power...there are capable people in the country but they are not in the right places in the public sector. I would prefer the government to lead the initiative to improve citizens wellbeing but it should work as an enterprise, think of the state as an enterprise...able to listen to the market and make the right decisions and policies **(Ministry of Food and Rural Development employee)**

- Man: The State should protect the people from the food industry which provides products that can harm our health.

Woman 1: I agree, and also the State should organise initiatives to promote healthy eating.

Woman 2: Some foods are expensive, like fish, so the government must ensure that these products are available at reasonable prices... **(Citizens 1st focus group)**

- The State must control the middlemen [...] support the producers [...] so that the consumers could buy healthy products at reasonable prices **(Citizen from 6th focus group)**

- The State must make it more difficult to open a fast-food store and facilitate the establishment of healthy food outlets **(Citizen 8th focus group)**

- There is a need for coordination by the State which at this moment is absent. There should be something like a pyramid, first the State and then all the others **(Member of Scientific Association)**

- My recommendation is to set an independent body with scientists from different backgrounds around nutrition and obesity; a societal body. The government should coordinate and support this initiative with different policies, price policies to keep the general prices in an acceptable level so that people don't buy cheap, unhealthy food, guidelines to educate people and other facilities and services to ensure that citizens eat in a healthy way **(NGO manager)**