

# REPORT: Collaborative Futures: Food Futures 2031

# The Challenge (235 out of 235 words)

* Initial challenge/ briefing
* Industry sector/ context
* Outcomes and objectives
* Target market

Tackling issues in the food system cannot be solved by the food sector alone as wider systemic change is needed. Collaborative Futures involved a fourteen week partnership project between the public sector and academia, using food systems to identify opportunities that build citizen power to take action for systemic change.

The project brief tasked us to “investigate, in both analytical and speculative ways, what the city’s food futures in 2031 might look and feel like”, examining issues such as food poverty and scarcity.

The key objective was to incorporate tangible, future directions and opportunities for neighbourhoods, communicated as compelling narratives to support and direct the ongoing work of the city council.

Our audience and beneficiaries were citizens and city council. At its core, this project applied a co-production approach with individuals, organisations and policy makers to explore the city’s existing food systems and imagine preferable futures. Through our design process, we identified new opportunities to help centre citizen power, inclusion and resilience through abundance, equity, identity and dignity through choice.

The outputs and objectives delivered by the project included:

* A co-designed future city, including speculative artefacts, roles and activities.
* A roadmap setting out how our preferable future intersects with current city council planning and how our work supports policy implementation
* Research cards, which made our research shareable and easy to digest
* Dissemination activities: executive presentations, a book and website to communicate our work more widely.

# The approach (705 out of 705 words)

Concisely explain and illustrate the entire end-to-end service design process or project development. This can include but is not limited to: visuals or images of specific tools and methods such as journey maps, stakeholder maps, service blueprints, personas and etc. These artifacts can be shared in the visual document.

* What type of research did you do and why?
* How many participants were involved in each stage of research?
* Explain how you gathered customer insights
* Describe the specific design tools, methods and processes
* Why were these specific tools and methods used?
* Outline key insights and how you used research findings to move the project forward
* Clarify how you developed and tested the product or service concepts

Our process centred real-world engagements by working from the ground up and placing collaboration at the core of our practice. To do this, we created a co-production strategy\* to embed engagement and relationship building over the three phases of the project.

Over the course of the first and second phases we interviewed twenty food sector and citizen experts from the UK and beyond, attended four community events, and visited five growing spaces / food initiatives within the city.

1. Discover

* Desk research
* Fieldwork observations and mapping.
* Co-Production Strategy
* Semi-structured interviews.
* Insight visualisation.
* Project management tools.
* Paper prototyping.
* Ethics and risk assessment.

In Phase 1 we immersed ourselves in desk research and conducted fieldwork in neighbourhoods to the east, west and south of the city to better understand people’s place-based, lived experience of local food systems.

We connected with people from a diverse range of backgrounds, industries and practices - including growers, policy makers, councillors, social enterprises, producers, conservationists, scientists, and academics. This group formed our collaborative partners, supporting our co-design workshop in Phase 3.

Key insights were gathered and analysed by the partnership team, with much of our practice being asynchronous. We developed tools and digital methods to ensure that research insights were being communicated effectively for all. To do this, in our studio we created a visual ‘pizza’\* to collect and thematically display our desk research. We also created ‘interview role cards’\* to share distilled headlines from our interviews so that all team members could easily understand the key messages from our contacts. In this phase we also began to create paper-prototypes of our outputs for feedback.

From our insights, we formulated our central research question:

*How might food systems support the development of more equitable and resilient neighbourhoods?*

2. Develop

* Thematic synthesis and insight mapping.
* Insight and research visualisation through storytelling.
* Speculative Design methods: speculative role mapping, causal layered analysis (Iceberg Model)\*.
* Workshop experience prototyping and model making.
* Partner workshop for capacity building and testing engagements.

In Phase 2 we synthesised our research, identifying commonalities to distil our learning into a succinct set of findings. Using short videos we were able to quickly and effectively share these key concepts asynchronously, helping us to clarify our development directions with our stakeholders. Within our research synthesis, five core values emerged as being significant for building collaborative and inclusive communities:

* Power in Neighbourhoods
* Regenerative Neighbourhoods
* Abundant Neighbourhoods
* Caring Neighbourhoods
* Neighbourhoods that Learn and Grow

These values informed our co-design workshop plans, providing a framework to help our collaborators connect to our research insights and build upon what we had learnt.

In order to make sure that the workshop would be accessible and inclusive, we designed and iterated the workshop experience by creating models of the space, prototyping engagement tools and testing the activities with our partners to interrogate their form and efficacy.

3. Deliver

* Co-Design Workshop - future world building.
* Narrative storytelling.
* Digital, asynchronous co-evaluation.
* Roadmap for strategic planning.
* Dissemination.

During the co-design workshop, we explored the five values within an activity that asked our participants to co-create three world-building ‘platforms’, prototyping our future world at three distinct levels: for neighbourhoods, the city and beyond.

In creating these platforms together using different materials such as wood, paper and salt dough, our ten collaborators debated and imagined future roles, policies, activities, artefacts, and interactions. This rich discussion then informed five foundations for our future world that would have impact at citizen, neighbourhood and city-wide levels:

* Support and Care for All
* Inclusive Growth
* New Narratives for Inclusion
* Dignity in Choice
* Valuing Local Neighbourhood Systems

Following the co-design session, we constructed a series of narratives and systems to help communicate our imagined future world, defining preferable roles, speculative spaces, artefacts and activities. We shared the workshop results through video using narrative and imagery, followed by an asynchronous, on-line engagement to gather feedback from our collaborators.

Finally, to help ground our speculative future city in current policies and planning, we created a strategic roadmap with actionable steps for the city council to align their food strategy and sustainable development goals with citizen’s visions for a preferable future. In this final stage we also shared our future vision with city council decision makers and the wider community, through presentations, a book and a website.

# The outcome (703 out of 705 words)

Concisely explain and illustrate the outputs at each stage of the process, final deliverables to your client and the final user-facing outputs of the project. Make sure to isolate what you supplied from what client finally delivered to the market. Images and photos can be shared in the visual document.

The outcomes of our project were all co-produced with our project partner, with some outputs shared internally within the partnership, between city council and academia:

* A digital databank of qualitative and quantitative research.
* Creation of a co-production strategy alongside planning and engagement tools to support collaborative practice.
* A suite of ‘Research Cards’ that communicate our synthesised research in an easily digestible format.
* Project evaluation and reflections for continuous learning and development.

And others were shared more widely with our collaborators and civic decision makers using a range of designed communication artefacts, in the form of presentations, a project book, website and degree showcase:

* A speculative, future world described through neighbourhoods, roles, places and tools that describe our social innovations.
* A strategic roadmap to support city council planning and the achievement of sustainable development goals.
* A process poster describing our design journey.

In addition to these deliverables defined in the brief, the following outcomes were also generated through the project:

* Partnership building between the city council and academia through knowledge exchange and skills development.
* Practice based learning to support innovation in design pedagogy.
* Development of a community of practice of citizens, designers, organisations and academics working in food systems and social design.

In the first phase of the project our research insights were used to draft a set of Research Cards\*. Research Cards converted our research themes, which can feel conceptual and abstract, into physically designed artefacts that helped us to view, sort and interrogate our findings, as well as communicate them with others.

In Phase 2 we also developed a set of planning and engagement tools, activities and prototypes to support our co-design workshops, These resources have been shared for future use within the partnership.

In this phase we created a workshop output for our partners to share skills in speculative thinking, supporting their work in data analysis, strategy and design within city council planning and decision making. This output included adapting a Causal Layered Analysis model taken from the field of futures studies to the work of the team, supporting them to engage with the model and apply it within their work.

In Phase 3, following the ideas generated within our co-designed session, we were able to construct a clear narrative around our imagined future world for 2031, defining preferable roles, spaces, artefacts and activities.

The City in 2031:With our collaborators we identified three main neighbourhood functions, or eco-systems that would have the most impact for social innovation within our imagined preferable future city:

* the ecosystem of innovation
* the ecosystem of inclusive care
* and the ecosystem of learning

These ecosystems overlap and interact to create a more equitable future where all are supported.

The Ecosystem of inclusive Care, describes a network of support within neighbourhoods. They provide informal spaces for local communities to meet, provide care and build relationships; as well as ensuring access to affordable, fresh and good food for everyone to be able to actively participate and support wellbeing for all.

The Ecosystem of Innovation permeates all areas of civic life, driving co-design within neighbourhoods for greater impact and ownership of local problem solving. Transitioning decision making power to neighbourhoods helps to enhance citizen engagement and give voice to communities.

The Ecosystem of Learning nurtures a culture of peer-learning and provides multiple opportunities for all abilities to build capacity, employability, and skills throughout the life course, using food growing as a mechanism for learning for all. Knowledge exchange from generation to generation helps to create community connections, as well as reduce isolation.

Overall, our innovations aim to deliver better decision making and problem solving, confident citizen practitioners, and more responsive city councils. Building connections across the city and beyond will allow the wishes and feelings of neighbourhoods to be heard, and innovations to be developed.

In order to help guide us to this preferable future, we created the Strategic Roadmap which grounded our speculative future city in current policies and strategies, connecting to and making possible our future world. This Roadmap was used by our partners to take to their audiences within the council to help find alignment between different areas of work and how their team might support the attainment of sustainable development goals and other council priorities.

# The impact (694 out of 705 words)

The impact statement should, to the best of your ability, include before-and-after quantitative and/or qualitative data. In case of a methodology or project that has not yet been fully applied or rolled out, specify the projected impact based on your case study or other work.

* Describe cause and effect related to the project
* Describe the scale of impact locally and internationally
* What was the impact on the client department, wider organisation and other stakeholders?
* Did impact match initial objectives?

*“If we give citizens a voice to enable them to create an environment they love, respect and care for, together, are we not building creative, successful, respectful citizens for the future?” (Co-Design Workshop Participant)*

Building on the legacy of work created through last year’s project collaboration, 'ecosystems of care and trust' we continued to prioritise civic democracy and local decision making as a mechanism for citizen collaboration in neighbourhoods and across the city.

This year’s project provided a platform for different communities engaged in food and growing within the city to meet and share ideas about how they would like to imagine their lives and neighbourhoods in ten years time.

The imagined, speculative future vision evolved through the project sets out opportunities for devolved and decentralised civic power, using neighbourhood strategies to engage under-served communities so that all may be given a seat at the table. Within our speculative future world, actionable opportunities for service design within city council include the evolution of existing roles, language, activities and places for impact; such as the current Economic Development Officer function being expanded to include the non-human within a newly described Eco-Economist role.

The creation of the roadmap knowledge artefact traces the implementation of the city’s food futures over the next 10 years, contextualising key transitions and innovations within a broader landscape of city council planning, policy development and sustainable development goals.

Overall, the project outcomes provide tangible directions with intended impact for the food systems, the people of Glasgow and City Council, including:

* More local procurement driving demand for more local produce
* More land in the city is used for local growing, providing more opportunities for affordable food that is responsive to community tastes.
* Food leveraged as a mechanism, rather than a barrier for social inclusion.
* More opportunities for education and employment through local growing, producing and distributing.
* Increased local participation in civic issues and decision-making.

Collectively, our innovations offer alternative mechanisms for decision making and problem-solving to support a more responsive and participatory city, designed and developed by confident citizen practitioners. Building connections across the city supports neighbourhood needs to be heard, innovation to be developed, and impact realised for meaningful change. Whilst this describes potential impact at neighbourhood and city-wide levels, possible future impact coming from change within the city’s food system would likely reach beyond the city.

This project also has immediate, tangible impact for academia, the city council and beyond the core partnership.

For the city council, the research insights from this project have helped to inform current and future work plans, as well as providing narratives and language to demonstrate ideas, objectives and concepts to support their practice. The resources created during the project are re-used, re-worked and re-purposed to support the team’s own design research. Engaging with academia through this project also creates space for the team to imagine new ways to think about the future, to identify opportunities and have new perspectives on the city and citizens needs. Engaging city council staff in fieldwork, design research, co-design workshop development and delivery also adds capacity and skills to their design practice.

Within academia, this project has an ongoing impact on the development of new pedagogical models within studio based teaching, teaching based research and the development of professional practice. Similarly, staff roles, graduate opportunities and research all continuously evolve as the project brief is iterated each year. Wider benefits for students, staff and graduates also include work experience with real world application, portfolio development, relationship and network building within civic, grassroots and design communities.

For both partners, this is a flagship project that elevates the profile of both organisations, demonstrating the value of design research and co-production to wider stakeholder groups. In turn, this also helps to identify new opportunities for collaboration and relationship building in the city and beyond, as well as raising citizen voices and promoting citizen involvement to city council decision makers

For our collaborators, our engagements have helped to support and build a community of practice - connecting growers, producers, youth workers, conservationists, community groups, academics and council representatives all engaged in the city’s food strategy planning to tackle food poverty, scarcity, waste and land management.

# The reflection (228 words out of 235)

In the last step please reflect on your project. What were key takeaways for the service designers and for your clients, the service providers? What worked well and what did not work as you expected? We learn from our failures as well as our successes! Keep this short and sweet in a few memorable bullet points!

* Final thoughts and closing comments
* Highlight main takeaway and impact from the project

On reflection, much was achieved over a short space of time. Our collaborators were given voice to raise issues and ideas with decision makers; and city council was offered a range of practical steps to achieve goals and new ways of engaging with citizens. However, the tight time frame made it difficult to ethically engage citizens that are most negatively impacted by food poverty and scarcity, creating a gap within our co-design approach.

### ***Key takeaways:***

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### *FOR PRACTITIONERS*

* Co-production works best when embedded from the start.
* Speculative design is effective in bringing diverse groups together and supporting more nuanced, value-based discussions.
* Value fieldwork - it helps in making contacts and connecting desk research to the real world.
* Communicating ideas can be faster and more effective when done visually, with lo-fidelity, using materials, objects, videos etc.
* In co-developing a speculative future, framing the activity in terms of creating plausible, positive futures helps people to remain optimistic and identify opportunities rather than deficits.

### *FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS*

* Value of using narratives and futures thinking to build a vision and communicate it.
* Skills development through embedding city council staff in external settings and using new tools, methods and approaches.
* The networks and partnerships developed throughout the project help create more opportunities.
* The future of food is a complicated subject area and speculative projects like this help to make sense of complexity and identify opportunities.