Geographies of ‘good’ food risk governance: public perceptions and the paradox of progress

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“Food Glorious Food….

…Chemicals, toxins and microbes”
## PhD Research Questions

| Q1 | In terms of **regulation**, what has been the role, and impact, of the FSAI on the landscape of food risk regulation in Ireland since its inception in 1999? |
| Q2 | Regarding **communication**, what impact have the strategies of the FSAI had in terms of communicating food risk securitising activities to foster compliance, trust and awareness in external agents? |
| Q3 | Concerning **biosecurity**, how have the logics and strategies of biosecurity infiltrated and performed within food risk governing practices in Ireland? |

Qualitative research incorporating perspectives from:
- **Regulator**: FSAI
- **Regulated**: food industry stakeholders
- **Beneficiaries of regulation**: consumers
Methodology

Empirical Data Collection:

- Documentary Analysis
  - FSAI Website
  - Food safety surveillance reports
  - Media trawl

- Qualitative interviews (30 in total)
  - Key stakeholders

- ‘Natural’ focus groups (8 in total)
  - Consumers
Results: the ‘good’ governance framework

- Governance
  - “rules and institutions for the authoritative organization of collective life” (Donahue, 2002, p1)
  - Beyond the sole the control of government (Chasek et al., 2006)
  - “a process which has the potential to empower citizens” (Haugaard and Ryan, 2007, p194)

- Normative ‘good’ governance
  - Accountability
  - Transparency
  - Effectiveness
Results: good food risk governance?

1) Accountability
   ◦ Consumer awareness of FSAI – 4 out of 49
   ◦ Queries of independence

2) Transparency
   ◦ Consumer confusion
   ◦ Communication issues – conflicting messages
   ◦ Food business inspections

3) Effectiveness
   ◦ Paradox of a crisis
Conclusion: ‘good’ food risk governance?

- Limitations in current governing regimes through eyes of consumers...but challenges remain for the FSAI
  - Consumer voice is not heard...but do consumers speak up?
  - Measuring performance is only the first step, now the challenge lies in implementation

- Potential for adaptive governance in food risk regimes
  - Enough rigidity to prevent gaps
  - Flexible enough so that governing frameworks can adapt and evolve as the food risk landscape changes
  - Inclusion of consumer voice
  - For governance to be considered ‘good’ without the need for a crisis to prove its worth (eliminate the paradox)
Communications and Impact

3 academic papers:
- 1 published in *The Geographical Journal* (Dec 2013)
- 1 under review in *Irish Geography*
- 1 in progress for *Geoforum*
  - Devaney, L. “Food risk governance: public perceptions and the paradox of progress”, *Geoforum*

2 research reports:
- Disseminated to public, private, and civil society sectors

PhD Thesis:
Communications and Impact

>10 academic & public presentations at institutional, national and international conferences including:

- Food Safety Professionals Association Annual Conference 2013 (invited expert);
- Asia-Europe Foundation Annual Conference 2013 (invited expert);
- Conference of Irish Geographers, Limerick, Dublin, Galway (special issue paper offer);
- Food Politics @ The Science Gallery (invited expert);
- Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) London and Edinburgh.

Media/community outreach:

- 3 blog posts on PlanetGeog@TCD and reference in Geography Directions blog
- EcoEye interview, RTE 1, Series 12, Episode 4 ‘2050’, January 2013

Postdoc on CONSENSUS

“Please sir, can I have some more??”

"Fish has mercury, meat has e-coli, veggies have pesticides, desserts cause obesity... so we'll have the 'health-conscious nothing for dinner' special."
Thank you for your attention.

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