

Digital Food Kampongs: identities, spaces and practices of food sharing in Singapore

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Technology-mediated identities in the futures of place
RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2018
31th of August 2018



Food sharing and technology

- Having a portion [of food] with others; giving a portion [of food] to others; using, occupying or enjoying food jointly [and food related spaces to include the growing, cooking and/or eating of food]; possessing an interest in food in common; or telling someone about food' (Oxford University Press, 2014; Davies et al. 2017).
- From the social practice perspective, the definition accentuates performative and spatial element of *doing things together around food*; an assemblage of meanings (commensality, affect), skills (eating, cooking), spaces (kitchens, gardens) and stuff (devices, technologies) (Davies et al. 2017).
- Technologically mediated food environments and practises aim to:
 - cultivate new forms of food sociality and commensality (Choi 2014)
 - reproduce a “backward-looking impulse” for rurality, authenticity, connectedness and traditions and create a sense of “hyper-reality”; a desire to reconnect and reengage with something that went lost (Holloway 2002:79)
 - recreate food community relationships by giving value to food and its social, cultural and symbolic meanings and values (Bell and Valentine 1997)
 - reconnect consumers to food sources (Bos and Owen 2016)





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A COMMUNITY FOR FARM INNOVATION



LeftoverSwap



Compare and Share

mesh
the pulse of the sharing economy

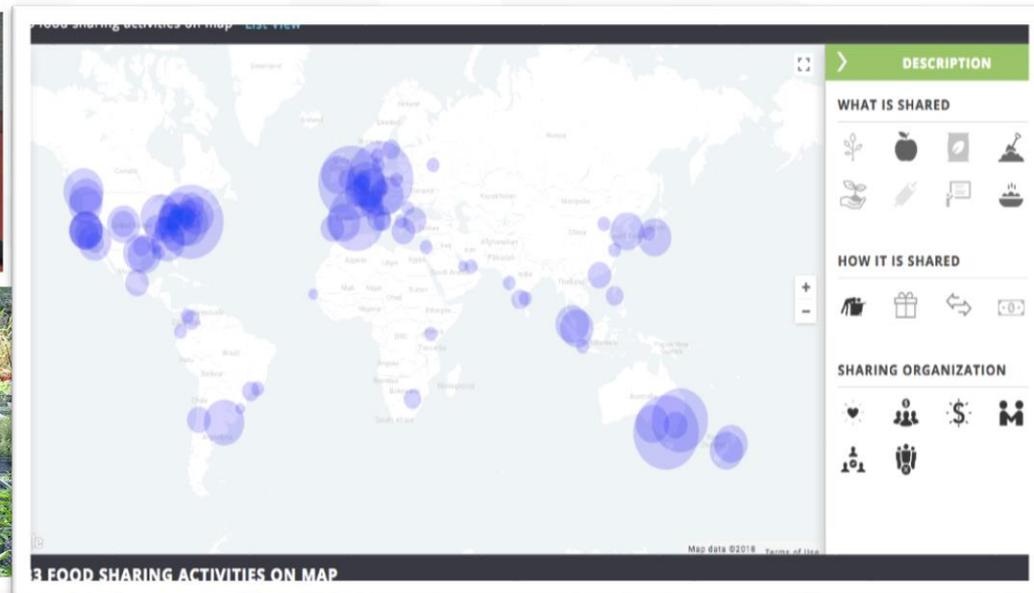
OUISHARE



P2P foundation



EatWith



Methodology

	What is shared?	How is shared?	ICT Usage
Citizen Farm	Plants, vegetables, land, space, equipment, labor, profit, knowledge and skills, compost	Selling, gifting, bartering	Facebook WhatsApp
Share Food	Meals, food products, knowledge and skills	Selling, gifting	App Facebook WhatsApp
SG Food Rescue	Meals, food products, vegetables and fruits, space, logistics, knowledge and skills	Selling, gifting	Facebook WhatsApp
Foodscape Collective	Seeds, plants, vegetable and fruits, space, meals, compost, knowledge and skills	Gifting , bartering	Google Map Facebook WhatsApp

Ethnography included:

- Site visits
- Participants observations & user engagements
- Semi structured interviews
- Field notes
- Digital ethnography





Source: <http://bitspiece.blogspot.com/2013/03/urban-kampungs.html>

- Spontaneous and semi-autonomous architecture of kampongs enhanced practices of food sharing, a major cultural element of the “kampong spirit”
- Kampongs dwellers would share land for growing food, animals, cooking pots, straw mats, kitchens, ingredients and meals
- ‘Un-civilized populace’ that needed to be reformed into ‘disciplined citizenry’
- State-regulated kopi-tams and hawker’s centres narrowed down traditional food tastes and led to erosion of social and cultural relationship with historical spaces and culinary traditions
- Rise of ‘another modern metropolis’, ‘faceless, homogeneous and lacking in any sense of place’

Multiple source: Xiong and Brownlee, 2018; Kong 2015; Seng, 2007:617; Teo and Huang 1996:307





Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction.



Source: Singapore Chinese Clan Associations Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore.



Scan, Pay & Eat

Hawkers: "Smart Nation" NTUC hawker centre a massive failure

July 30, 2018



Rise of the (vending) machines: Singapore takes convenience to next level

Amy Russell, CNN • Updated 1st March 2018



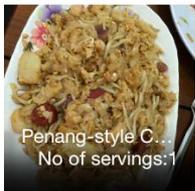
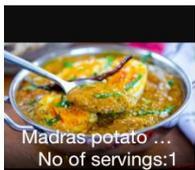


Share Food

Singtel 13:27 87%

Monika Iwonka

Want to try home cooked food and share with others!

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 
Ayam Pongteh (...)
No of servings:1 | 
black pepper c...
No of servings:1 | 
Pineapple Cucu...
No of servings:1 |
| 
Fried Chicken ...
No of servings:1 | 
Pineapple Cucu...
No of servings:1 | 
Penang-style C...
No of servings:1 |
| 
Thousands^Fis...
No of servings:1 | 
Italian Focaccia...
No of servings:2 | 
Homecook Meal
No of servings:1 |
| 
Butter Cookies
No of servings:1 | 
Spinach Vadai
No of servings:4 | 
Madras potato ...
No of servings:1 |





“During the good old Kampong days, food sharing was a norm, so we thought of bringing back this spirit to the community ” (Share Food App)

“In Singapore, we are so busy with work. All you want is to just shut the door and rest. We want to build up the whole community of people talking to each other. They know who are their neighbours around” (Interview 1)

“I think [online food sharing communities] are very good [...] in getting people closer together. Because, in our urban jungle, we have more artificial intelligence and tech stuff, so people are more and more isolated from each other. So when you see [people sharing food] you begin to reconnect again. Hey, actually it is a fellow human being. It’s not another cyborg, you know!” (Interview 2)



Food sharing identities

- Homestay moms: social histories and commensal memories
 - *“My grandma was a hawker to support the family. I helped when I was young, I sold food with her in hawker centre, and cooked with her. These are my childhood memories. So, this is where I picked up my passion for cooking, I cook and share food because of the memory of her. Whatever I cook and share I always think of my grandmother” (Interview 3)*
- Retirees: culinary heritage and social ageing
 - *“I am Peranakan. It’s Chinese intermarried with the Malay. As Peranakans, we never go out to eat in the restaurants (...) the food never comes out as good as you’re having in somebody’s home and the Peranakan lady is making it (...) We want a nice place to sit down and just chitchat the whole night, you know, and not have to worry that the restaurant is going to close” (Interview 4)*
- Young entrepreneurs: sharing best practices and learning opportunities
 - *“For start-ups [Share Food] is a good place to incubate your business [ideas], to test the waters, to see if there’s interest in the kind of food that you want to sell. I mean, [Share Food App] has a ready pool of users so it is a fast way to reach out to people, people who are interested in buying real food” (Interview 5)*



Digital Food Kampongs

- Kampong spirit embedded in rituals such as sourcing ingredients from wet markets, community farms and community gardens; narratives on “healthy and real food”, “[food made of] scratch, fresher and with love” and “feeling of being at home or returning home” & “eating a hearty family meal”; romantic longing for slower village times
- Virtual kinship structures established through food sharing, by encouraging strangers to “knock at your neighbour doors” and “buy from a real person and talk”; a deep sense of nostalgia for “dynamic ways of living” and forgotten food practices, tastes and mealtimes memories
- Digitally enhanced sensory experience through photo and video sharing of “grandmother’s recipes”
- Tech-savvy hawking as a self-regulated and informal food sharing economies through which standards of food safety, hygiene and retail are negotiated via spontaneous stranger- neighbour-online-offline interactions
- Nostalgic commodification of the past through collective reworking of food traditions with ICT connecting the material (foodscapes, kitchenscapes) and social elements (memories, connections, emotions, metaphors)



Future thoughts

- Reflecting on the evolving socio-cultural and historical context of food in Singapore, technologically mediated food sharing creates opportunities for more socially adaptive forms of everyday food consumption
- Technology enhances experiences of food sharing by strengthening weak social ties and creating shared desire for commensality
- However, the platform deliberately uses kampong narrative to create e-commerce business that promotes cooking as food-tech-savvy performance



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Thank you!

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