Redistributing surplus food: socio-technical practices for recirculating food

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www.sharecity.ie
PROJECT
SHARECITY is a 5-year research project funded by the European Research Council which is exploring the practice and sustainability potential of city-based food sharing economies.

Aims & Objectives

To establish the significance and potential of food sharing economies to transform cities onto more sustainable pathways

1) Develop deeper theoretical understanding of contemporary food sharing

2) Generate comparative international empirical data about food sharing activities within cities

3) Assess the impact of food sharing activities

4) Explore how food sharing in cities might evolve in the future
Food sharing as set of diverse, emergent and relational practices

• *having* a portion [of food] *with* others; *giving* a portion [of food] to others; *using, occupying or enjoying* food [and food related spaces to include the growing, cooking and/or eating of food] jointly; possessing an interest in food in *common*; or *telling* someone about food’ (Oxford University Press, 2014)

• From social practice theory the definition accentuates performative and spatial element of *doing things together around food*, and assemblage of skills (forms of competence, procedures), and stuff (materials, technology), which can either co-exists as bundles of practices, or co-depend as complexes of practices (Schatzki et al., 2005; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005; Shove et al., 2012; Davies, 2015)

• ‘More-than-food’ perspective (Goodman, 2015) i.e. visceral affects, emotions and meanings, embodied connectivity

• Political economy and ecology of food sharing (regulation, control and power; food justice - excess/access issues, austerity and precarity; diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008)
# Typology of food sharing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of sharing</th>
<th>IIU</th>
<th>Gifting</th>
<th>Bartering</th>
<th>Not-for-profit</th>
<th>For-profit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is shared</strong></td>
<td></td>
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| **Stuff**
*From seeds, to unprocessed and processed foodstuffs including utensils, food waste or compost*

Sharing the food that has been 'liberated', foraged or gleaned

- **510 fruits, Berkeley, USA**
- **FoodCloud.ie**
- **Swapping foodstuff**
  - e.g. Adelaide Hills Produce Swap, Australia
  - To redistribute excess food on a not-for-profit basis
  - e.g. Foodsharing.de
  - Selling homecooked food that generates income beyond the costs of production
  - e.g. Cookisto, Athens

| **Spaces**
*From shared growing spaces to shared food preparation and shared eating spaces*

- **Guerilla gardening of public open spaces**
  - e.g. Elephant and Castle roundabout, London
- **Providing spaces for growing for free**
  - e.g. The Monroe Sharing Gardens, USA
- **Providing spaces for people to grow food on a NFP basis**
  - e.g. Local foodstores
  - Providing spaces for supper clubs
  - e.g. The Underground Supper Club, Dublin

| **Skills**
*Including the sharing of knowledge and experiences around food from growing to eating and food waste disposal*

- **Identifying places where gleaning or foraging might occur**
  - e.g. Fallen Fruit, Los Angeles, USA
- **Providing skills around growing**
  - e.g. 3000 acres, Melbourne, Australia
- **Opportunities to swap learning about growing food, swap seeds and produce**
  - e.g. Grow stuff, Melbourne, Australia
  - Providing training around nutrition or growing
  - e.g. Hunger mountain co-op, Montpellier, USA
  - Opportunities for travelers to eat at home with locals
  - e.g. Eat With, operating in cities globally
Mapping food sharing landscape

http://sharecity.ie/research/sharecity100-database/
SINGAPORE

Singapore is ranked 27th in the SHARECITY 100 Database of global ICT-mediated food sharing, with 50 initiatives currently active in the city.

WHAT IS SHARED

80% of food sharing initiatives in Singapore share multiple things. Knowledge and skills makes up the largest portion of stuff, spaces or skills shared, followed by meals, and food (including fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and food products not prepared into a meal). Compost, plants, and seeds are least shared in Singapore.

HOW IT IS SHARED

Selling makes up the largest portion of food sharing activities in Singapore, followed very closely by gifting. Collecting and bartering are relatively infrequent. 44% of initiatives use multiple modes of exchange to share food, the most common combination being gifting along with selling.

SHARING ORGANISATION

For profit enterprises are the most common form of food sharing initiative in Singapore, followed by informal initiatives, and non-profits (including charities). No initiatives in Singapore were established as co-operatives. Of the initiatives identified only 20% use multiple organisational structures.

Food Bank

The Food Bank Singapore Ltd 新加坡食物银行

Share Food

find home-cooked food near you

Foodscape Collective

Grow food, cook well, eat well, live well
Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiatives</th>
<th>What is shared?</th>
<th>How is shared?</th>
<th>Organizational Model</th>
<th>ICT Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Bank</td>
<td>Meals, food products, vegetables and fruits, space, logistics, knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Selling, gifting</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG Food Rescue Group</td>
<td>Vegetable, fruits, space &amp; stuff, knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Gifting</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Ethnographic case study (Willis 2007; Parker-Jenkins, 2016)
- Site visits (private homes, community kitchens, charities, food markets)
- Participants observations & user engagements (volunteering, attending and organizing events) n. 20
- Semi structured interviews with funders, employees, volunteers, policy regulators n. 15
- Field notes
- Analysis of policy documents and food regulations
- Digital ethnography
Redistribution paper

- Food waste landscape in Singapore
- Food redistribution initiatives & practitioners
- Practices of recirculating of surplus
- Diverse dimensions of circular economies (Holmes, 2018; Hobson, 2016; Hobson and Lynch 2016; Gregson, N. et al. (2015))
  - What are the practices of recirculating surplus food in Singapore; how food sharing research could lead to greater conceptualization circular food economy/systems?
Empirical findings

- Economies of circularity (unpaid work, time, knowledge and skills sharing)
- Shared infrastructure (shared use of equipment, kitchens, fridges etc.)
- Shared responsibility (rules, boundaries etc.)
- Technologies (ICT mediated collective practice)
- Autonomy (right to food/right to reject)
Discussion

- Potential conceptual frames that align with the social practice approach and ICT?
- Focus on social interactions at different locations, including conflicts and barriers?
- What sort of ICT could support development of food sharing economies?
Thank you!

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