



Dopo av
alimenta
risultera
essicati
aiutando
in comp
100 gram
volta l'a
omogene
mattarello
2 millime
i vostri sta
da risultare
necessario

^D
bis
COMPOSTABLE

condizione contiene 50g



Figure 1. BIS. Prototype by Giulia Centineo, Margherita Lequio, Li Changrui, Shi Xinran. CFC Food Shakers | Food Remakers Workshop Genova. Photo by Matteo Paolillo 2019 for UNIGE Department Architecture and Design DAD.

FOOD REVOLUTION. SERVICES AND SOCIAL INNOVATION AS A REACTION TO LOCKDOWN

Chiara Olivastri

The global coronavirus pandemic is revealing major weaknesses, inequities, and system-wide risks in global food systems, renewing the urgency to foster novel pathways towards a greater sustainability and resilience of supply chains. This emergency not only has affected human beings, but also caused crisis in the entire economic, political, and social spheres. Yet, in these situations the resilience of society as a whole can be measured. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the initiatives adopted in the food sector during the pandemic that have contributed to the creation of new supply chains, new behaviours and good practices leveraging social innovation. The service sector has been a fertile ground to convert and revive different activities and, as designers, we observe and interpret these phenomena to turn the health emergency into a new scenario of virtuous practices.

food / social changes / services / technology / new post-pandemic scenarios

History has shown us that after every moment of war, famine, or epidemic important social, behavioural and food changes follow, many of which endure marking the event as a revolution. In the Cambridge Dictionary, in fact, revolution stands for a significant change in the way people do things. Infectious diseases are still challenging societies. After the outbreaks of SARS in China in 2002, Ebola in West Africa and MERS in 2015, the beginning of 2020 has been marked by COVID-19, a novel coronavirus. The international spread of social distancing has turned the virus into a social disease, affecting food as a cultural product. Over three months, one third of humanity was under a lockdown, urged to stay at home and to go out only to meet the most essential needs like buying food. In the book "Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present," Frank M. Snowden, a professor emeritus of history and the history of medicine at Yale, examines the ways in which disease outbreaks have crushed revolutions, and entrenched racial and economic discrimination. "Epidemic diseases are not random events that afflict societies capriciously and without warning," he writes. "On the contrary, every society produces its own specific vulnerabilities. To study them is to understand that society's structure, its standard of living, and its political priorities." (Snowden 2019) Thus, as designers we have to observe and analyse the crucial levers of change and to create reactions not only to fight diseases but also to develop better behaviours and processes.

Epidemics have also altered the societies they have spread through, affecting many aspects of people's relational life, the work of artists and intellectuals, and the man-made and natural environment. The coronavirus epidemic has taken us back more than half a century, when the majority of Italians prepared and consumed meals mainly in their own homes; food has become a sort of authorised release valve. Besides it, the quarantine has also triggered initiatives by developing new forms of resilient answers. The globalisation we were accustomed to has suddenly stopped due to the closing of national and also regional borders: food was one of the few goods that continued to travel, with restrictions and fears about origins and sanitary measures. As a result, this emergency has forced us to reconsider the local food and distribution network by activating new behaviours. At the same time, adaptive responses to the coronavirus illustrate the multiple ways in which more resilient and sustainable food systems could evolve, going forward.

The already high-growth service economy has accelerated, and it was the strategy of redemption and innovation chosen to attend consumers' needs. The service economy primary activity is the provision of services, so the access and use of the

goods rather than the production and the property of goods.

In the last decade, indeed, our lives have largely moved to “clicks”, shifting from a physical dimension to the digital world where most transactions are concluded online. Services create smart and real networks to optimising what already exists by enhancing the sharing concept and technology speed. During the pandemic what was considered a trend has become a priority, and Internet-based platforms turned the leading actors of this technological shift, thus standing unquestionably at the heart of today’s digital economy. They offer outstanding advantages, including a new outlet for goods and services, easier access to information and content in general, a large variety of choices, real price competition, and new business opportunities. The service sector touches all areas of our lives and in particular food becomes the main driver for resilience.

This paper focuses on the innovation triggered by novel relationships between food and social behaviours in the service sector and highlights the main changes in each sector of food cycles: production, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food. For each cycle, a project deriving from a bottom up approach or proposed by start-ups has been identified that develops services capable of innovating the relationship with food. The sector most engaged in such innovations was that of distribution, with the creation of new supply chains or the optimisation of existing ones; however, interesting projects raised in the other food cycles too.

PRODUCTION PHASE – THE GLOBALISATION STAND-BY

The pandemic is making agriculture across Europe suffer. Every year, Coldiretti writes, 370 thousands regular farm workers who come from abroad, especially from Eastern Europe, work in the Italian agricultural supply chains. As travelling across international borders has been suspended under lockdown, they will not be able to reach our country to harvest fruit and vegetables and sow the various crops, thus a good part of the yield will be wasted. Farmers with longstanding reliance on migrant agricultural labour struggle to access support for the upcoming harvest season. Lockdowns and border closures are reducing economic opportunities such as day labour and agricultural markets in some regions. As such, the production chains have been shortened by activating local networks and encouraging ethnocentrism.

The EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (FLW) has focused the first issue of its Newsletter on the prevention actions taken by its members in the different Member States of the EU in the context of this unprecedented crisis. For the larger amounts of products made available by farmers with no market access, the Dutch



Figure 1. The year 2020 will also be remembered for activation of new paradigms

Food Waste Taskforce, a case described in the EU Newsletter, has launched a B2B marketplace to support the matchmaking process. The Dutch Taskforce, launched in January 2017, aims to contribute to preventing and reducing food waste becoming an international frontrunner in the valorisation of streams of agri-food residual. The Taskforce is a coalition of companies across the whole food supply chain, national and local authorities, a civil society organisation, and other invited members. Regarding interventions to prevent consumer food waste, emphasis is currently being given to the “value” of food as well as to the aspects of shelf life and storage. In June 2020, a multimedia campaign on shelf life and date marking will be launched. Small-scale farmers are innovating to connect with buyers and with each other, including through new online marketing initiatives. Digital agriculture¹—where farmers use digital technologies to access useful information—could revolutionise how communities secure their livelihoods. Since COVID-19 has been making us more dependent on digital technology than ever before, it is necessary to ensure that the world’s poorest communities are not left behind in the process of a food revolution. Increasing investments in technologies to help small-scale farmers will yield far-reaching benefits long after the end of pandemic.

The web platform “Barn2Door”, for example, connects farmers to customers by in-



Figure 2. A distribution solution developed during COVID-19 lockdown

tegrating online and local sales, while “La Ruche Qui Dit Oui!” links consumers with local producers for trading foodstuffs produced within a short distance from the distribution point in France. Moreover, in Milan a map² with local farms and farmhouses has been created in order to promote their activities and the new service of home delivery.

DISTRIBUTION PHASE – CAPILLARY AND SOLIDARITY NETS

Consumers have turned to online grocery providers as a safer alternative to shopping in stores. The closure of bars and restaurants to the public has been also one of the first measures put in place by many governments, forcing businesses to increase or, in some cases, build from scratch their online presence.

The Italian startup “Fresco Frigo” was born in 2018 to offer a healthy alternative for vending machines. The founder Enrico Pandian explains that the vending machines, for a matter of shelf life, cannot contain fresh and very fresh products; for this reason, they thought of a normal refrigerator that would contain fruit, vegetables, dairy products to be consumed in the workplace and, thanks to Rfid technology and cloud connection, could be stocked whenever it was lacking. With the pandemic, positioned refrigerators in condominiums too.

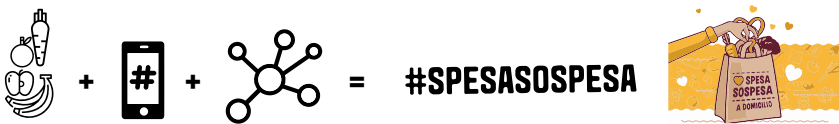


Figure 3. Solidarity food distribution networks based on traditional Italian ritual.

Fresco Frigo offers snacks and lunches based on seasonal products; through the app you can unlock and open the fridge, take the product, and finalise the purchase by closing it. When the lockdown was introduced, Fresco Frigo decided to install five smart refrigerators in the Social Village Cascina Merlata (a residential complex in Milan) to meet the needs of over 900 residents, allowing them to buy basic food without leaving home and queuing at the supermarket.

In this way the consumer does not order the products online, but the new concept is that Coop (supermarket) supplies them according to sales—accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the prices of the products on sale identical to those in the supermarket, to give priority to the products most requested.

Another example in the distribution system is “Food Aid System”, developed by the Municipality of Milan in collaboration with many public and private actors: it aims to offset the closures of associations and charities active in Milan by centralising the entire food supply chain. The System is responsible for the distribution of weekly food aid until the end of the COVID-19 crisis, with eight temporary hubs being opened to prepare food aid packages for the elderly and people in need. Through a new cooperation with the municipal fruit and vegetable wholesale market, fresh food will also be added to the food aid bags. The Food Aid System helped the municipality to monitor the food to be collected and redistributed to families in need,



Figure 4. Aperitivo and food meeting during lockdown.

and take measures to avoid food going to waste.

Another solidarity initiative is “Spesa Sospesa”, promoted by Coldiretti, Italy’s main farmers’ association offers consumers who buy groceries online through Campagna Amica, selling products from Italian agriculture, the possibility to donate a food package to families having difficulty paying for their own food shopping.

The habit takes origin from the Neapolitan tradition of leaving a paid coffee (suspended) at the café as a symbolic gesture to give even the poorest the opportunity to taste the classic Neapolitan espresso. Translated as a social ritual within the food sector, it has inspired initiatives of “suspended groceries” in various areas of Italy. The volunteers of the Shalom Association have taken up and modified this concept by testing a programme of “self-sustenance” for local communities based on “urban social solidarity” in the territory of Torre del Greco. The programme consists of donations left in charity-boxes at collection points, within a solidarity circuit of participating local shops sustained by the association of local traders (ASCOM). Rather than providing specific food products, money is donated by customers to form a budget for the Spesa Sospesa: converted in vouchers, it is distributed monthly among beneficiaries to buy in the circuit during the initiative. Participation in the circuit, in turn, requires shops to sign a charter of ethical com-

mitment to support good practices in the area. On Instagram, the hashtag #Sos-pesa has gathered photos and narratives of those trying, in times of emergency, to open channels and boost initiatives that help and encourage donating as a collective ritual.

CONSUMPTION PHASE – DISTANCE MEALS AND ANTI-WASTE HABITS

During the lockdown 'Altroconsumo' recorded a 41% drop in food waste production: for six Italians out of ten nothing went into the bin. Food waste decreases thanks to a targeted and planned expenditure that avoids rotting products and promotes the use of leftovers (+33%). There is also an increase in good "anti-waste habits" such as planning meals and making the shopping list (39% do it more often) ('waste-watcher'³).

Through the "Love Food Hate Waste campaign", WRAP has been supporting the public to become 'food wise' during the crisis—providing advice and information about how to plan for shopping, store items and use up the food they buy. It is important to observe these trends and to understand whether these attitudes are only due to the restrictions of the emergency or have actually triggered new attitudes over time.

Another interesting trend to monitor is the distance meals with friends and family. In Italy, more than in other countries, the culture of eating together is a hallmark that quarantine has reinterpreted in new forms: remote cocktails have been organised between balconies among neighbours; remote lunches and shared aperitifs have multiplied all over the world using new social media, such as WeParty, Zoom and Jitsi Meet apps, which have been downloaded millions of times during the quarantine.

Under normal circumstances, people in Italy would meet in the early evening for aperitivo, accompanied by a buffet of finger foods. This ritual has been one of the first missing elements of social urban life; however, it has quickly moved online, with new "smart" habits taking place in living rooms. An invitation circulates in groups of friends to join an aperitivo through a link, and then they gather online with a glass of wine or beer in hand to converse. This ritual is perhaps more intensive than usual, and maybe more inclusive. Because of the small size of some apartments, it is not easy to create a completely private space, and thus this new gathering event includes relatives of all ages. Digital and real are integrated, not substituted, but often reinterpret traditional rituals and translate them into wider levels, thus providing new opportunities.

The need to meet or even just see people has also changed the way we eat; those

owning balconies or terraces have moved a lot of activities in those spaces, to be able to cross some passing glances, or have a word with the neighbour; in the surreal scenario of the pandemic the streets were isolated but the balconies were crowded. Another interesting DIY and isolated experience regard two neighbours friends of Porto San Giorgio in the Marche region: they placed a wooden plank between the balconies of their respective homes. Then, they laid the tablecloth, set the table, and had lunch together, thus overcoming the forced isolation.

CONCLUSIONS

These few examples are intended to demonstrate how each revolution is a break between pre-Covid, which will remain only in the history books, and a post-Covid era that we can help to improve. Emergencies activate special measures that are implemented quickly and en masse, no tests can be made before, only conclusions can be drawn later. All priorities are reconsidered. Food is one of man's vital resources and as such it becomes a primary necessity to ensure, but also a stimulus to reconsider previous models. In a crucial and difficult historical moment, resilient projects can be activated using the convivial dimension of food, social innovation, and mutual aid as levers to develop interesting and unexpected social initiatives, some of which could remain linked to the crisis of the moment, but many have opened up scenarios that could become new post-pandemic constants. Coronavirus is not just a tragedy; it can be seen as an opportunity to build a better world. As designers, we should read the spontaneous initiatives born from the bottom, as user needs to be strengthened and structured into service and system projects capable of optimising the supply chains and developing new virtuous scenarios.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 <http://www.fao.org/digital-agriculture/en/>.
- 2 Available online at: <https://geoportale.comune.milano.it>. [Accessed 24.06.2020].
- 3 Waste Watcher is the first national Observatory on Waste, active on the initiative of Last Minute Market: <https://www.sprecozero.it/waste-watcher/>. [Accessed 06.07.2020].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barn2Door. Available online at: <https://www.barn2door.com> [Accessed 30.06.2020].
- Coldiretti. Available online at: <https://www.coldiretti.it/lavoro/coronavirus-europa-senza-un-mln-di-stagionali-agricoli> [Accessed 16.06.2020].
- EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste (2016). Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste/eu_actions/eu-platform_en. [Accessed 01.07.2020].
- FrescoFrigo. Available online at: <https://www.frescofrigo.it>. [Accessed 03.07.2020].
- La Ruche Qui Dit Oui! Available online at: <https://laruchequiditoui.fr/fr>. [Accessed 23.06.2020].
- Shalom association. *La spesa sospesa*. Available online at: <https://www.associazioneshalom.org/spesa.htm>. [Accessed 25.06.2020].
- Snowden F. (2019) *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to the Present*, Yale University press, London. Available online at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7371815/> [Accessed 05.07.2020].
- Villa S. (2020) "Coronavirus e alimentazione: meno spreco, più cucina e attenzione ai prezzi". In: *Altroconsumo*, 23 April. Available online at: <https://www.altroconsumo.it/alimentazione/fare-la-spesa/news/coronavirus-cambiano-consumi-e-spesa#>. [Accessed 27.06.2020].