



Experimenting with Future Foods

AIM OF ACTIVITY

In this activity, students experiment with different food-related practices to learn experientially about the multiple impacts of their food choices.

I have not yet tried out this activity in my own classrooms. It is based on the work of Diana Garduño Jiménez, who undertook a more extensive version of the experiment and scenario building for her MA in Design for Social Change at the University of Edinburgh. I describe her work in detail in the book.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

1. Map Current Food Practices

For a week, students keep a food diary in which they document the (multiple) origins of all the food items they consume, from foreign countries to local shops. They can use online tools such as food mile calculators or climate change food calculators.

In addition, they conduct research to find out as much as possible about the social, environmental and ethical impact of their food practices and trace the webs in which their food practices are embedded.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

2. Experiment with alternative food practices

These experiments are based around different challenges students set for themselves, for example to reduce their food-related emissions, food miles or food waste to zero for a certain number of days. Other challenges could include not getting any food items from conventional supermarkets, turning each meal into a collective experience or increasing their own food-related labor through foraging or gardening. These challenges will depend on the contexts in which students live.

Students document these experiments through video diaries, keeping track of their physical activities, embodied and emotional sensations, culturally-salient connections, ethical dilemmas, social encounters etc. They then bring these experiences into conversation with critical analyses of the current industrial food system, food justice and security and other related issues.

ACTIVITY OUTLINE

3. Forward-Looking Speculations

Based on their critical-creative explorations of alternative food practices, students work collectively to develop future food scenarios. These could focus on their university campuses and how to establish or make better use of existing allotments or to set up a social enterprise cooperative food outlet or zero waste café. This element could include scenario building, social business planning and establishing networks with ethical farmers, food activists and academics. The emphasis of these speculations is on manifesting food practices as simultaneously personal and collective politics.

4. Share-out

Student groups create final pieces to show the findings from their experiments and forward-looking explorations. These should be as creative and multi-sensorial as possible and could be shared during an event incorporating collective cooking and eating.