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**11TH
AESOP
SUSTAINABLE
FOOD
PLANNING
CONFERENCE**

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**CONFERENCE
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11TH CONFERENCE

AESOP SUSTAINABLE

FOOD PLANNING

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Papers are organized according to the paper session in which the paper was presented during the Conference.

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PAPER SESSION 2.D
DESIGN STRATEGIES
FOR
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FOODSCAPES

The Architecture of Sustainable University Foodscape. Design Strategies and Practices for re-shaping the Food-City Nexus

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The Architecture of Sustainable University Foodscape. Design Strategies and Practices for Reshaping the Food- City Nexus

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In recent decades food projects, practices and policies enacted by universities have multiplied, crossing the spheres of teaching, research and the third mission. However, the perspective of urban and architectural design still seems to be underestimated in this interdisciplinary and intersectoral endeavour. On the one hand, design disciplines may contribute to socio-spatial analysis, making food systems' spatial effects visible. On the other hand, design may explore scenarios, triggering or facilitating alternative food processes and practices. Thus, this contribution investigates the spatiality of food across universities, focusing on how a food system may be reshaped by sustainable design research and practice. Framing the observation between the terms 'foodspace' and 'foodscape', interweaving the material and sociocultural dimensions of food spatiality in universities, the contribution detects manifold case studies to understand how design strategies and practices may deal with the city-food nexus across contexts, scales and actors. Rethinking the architecture of their foodscapes, universities could embrace a critical role in the struggle for the right to food and the right to the city, thereby eliciting the societal transition towards a prospective sustainable future.¹

Keywords: architecture, foodspace, university, foodscape

University between Foodspace and Foodscape. A Design Research Perspective Intersecting Food, Rights and Social Practices

In recent decades the food projects, practices and policies implemented by universities have multiplied, crossing the spheres of teaching, research and the third mission (Bartlett, 2011; Bartlett, 2017; Dansero *et al.*, 2019; Classens *et al.*, 2023), mobilising and intertwining spaces, actors and food habits both in the university community and in the cities and territories they inhabit. Enabling projects such as ecological and solidarity canteens, bio-restaurants and social farms, community gardens and markets go hand in hand with the renewal of food services, spreading food-related experiential learning activities and refocusing the research agenda on food systems. In virtuous cases, renewed practices trigger the implementation of universities' food policies by creating green offices and food working tables while developing visions and strategic plans to design campuses' food sustainability guidelines, monitor their achievement and make the effects visible to the university community and beyond.

This trend suggests that universities claim an empowered leadership role in the societal endeavour towards achieving the SDGs, already focused, for instance, on energy and waste, to which the lens of food joins. Universities' food systems hold an impactful and pioneering position in the broader collective food sector (Bartlett, 2011), which comprises other institutions such as schools, hospitals and prisons but also companies. Among these, universities may constitute a critical player in the conventional food system agency, comprehensively embracing their social and ethical responsibility towards the issues of food safety and food security, which call into action a renewed mission ensuring the right to education with the right to food. This tendency also seems symptomatic of a critical shift in the discourse and practice of sustainability, where food is an increasingly prominent observation lens. As the emergence of the 'food studies' field testifies, food enacts a gravitational centre of alliances and

¹ Authorship attribution: Given that all authors contributed significantly to the conception, design, implementation and writing of this manuscript, the introduction "University between foodspace and foodscape. A design research perspective intersecting food, rights and social practices" is attributed to Valentina Rodani; the case studies' section "Exploring the university foodscape. The design of hybrid and dynamic foodspaces crossing the boundaries of food consumption, digestion, transformation, distribution and production" is co-attributed to Sara Basso and Valentina Rodani; the conclusions "Learning from the Edible University. Design Strategies and Practices to Make Visible Just, Feeding and Learning Communities" is attributed to Sara Basso.

interactions across disciplines and sectors. However, the architectural and urban design perspective still seems to be underestimated when considering the liaison between university and food systems. On the one hand, design research and practice enduringly contributed to the understanding of the spatiality of the university, its conceptualisation and design, its evolution and transformation, and its relationship with the city and territory, recalling its role in urban regeneration and societal transformation at the intersection of the right to education and the right to the city (De Carlo, 1972; Muthesius, 2000; Hoeger, Christiaanse and Bindels, 2007; Tattara, 2017); as well as to the understanding of the spatiality of food, questioning its potential in reshaping the food-city nexus at the intersection of the right to food and the right to the city (Viljoen, Bohn, Howe, 2005; Verzone and Woods, 2020).

On the other hand, it suffices to mention a general lack of design literature investigating the spatiality of universities' food systems, whether focused on spatial analysis or the principles and strategies to design it. Paradoxically enough, universities' foodspaces, such as the canteens, seem marginal in the disciplinary literature as far as they often represent the social core and everyday spatial incubator where the community gathers, social relationships nourish and ideas spread while eating. The last decades testify to some shifts in the design of the university canteen in particular and of the university's foodspaces in general. Rather than acting as islands of knowledge or ivory towers, universities are to a greater extent conceived as districts of innovation, drivers of urban regeneration and hubs of knowledge-based economy, fostering interactions across the industry, the government and the socio-ecological environment (Carayannis, Campbell, 2010; Borsi, Schulte, 2018). As the boundary between the university and the city becomes more blurred and porous (Haar, 2013; Martinelli, Savino, 2015), so does the university's foodspace emerge among the spatial thresholds to mediate this interaction.

Thus, this contribution aims to bridge these gaps by positioning architectural and urban design at the core of the reflection. Design disciplines may contribute both in terms of spatial analysis, examining and making visible the systemic spatiality of food with its respective criticalities and impacts, and in terms of design, thus exploring transformative scenarios and responding with strategies and devices capable of triggering alternative food practices according to the principles of social and spatial justice (Agyeman, 2013). The research hypothesises universities as the *genius loci* where the right to education intersects with the right to food and the right to the city, addressing these guiding questions: What is the spatiality of food in universities? How can design strategies and practices reshape the architecture of universities' food systems?

Exploring the university foodscape. The design of hybrid and dynamic foodspaces crossing the boundaries of food consumption, digestion, transformation, distribution and production

Framing the observation between the terms "foodspace" (O'Neal Dagg, 2014; Fodor, 2022) and "foodscape" (Vonthron *et al.*, 2020), this contribution explores the material and sociocultural dimensions of food spatiality in universities by inquiring about manifold case studies to understand how design strategies and practices may deal with the city-food nexus across contexts, scales and actors. Universities assemble a multitude of foodspaces where food is processed and consumed (from canteens to cafeterias, from collective kitchens to informal spaces), where the waste is managed (from disposal points to last-minute markets and solidarity canteens), distributed (from vending machines to minimarkets, food trucks and street food markets) and even produced (from gardens and experimental farms to food banks and forests). Concurrently, universities also generate a foodscape nourished by landscapes of agri-food production, distribution and consumption, which in turn engender landscapes of digestion (Castillo-Vinuesa, Ocaña, 2023). It seems relevant to rethink the university's foodscape, starting from one of its most institutionalised foodspace, a device to mediate the time and the space of the meal: the university canteen. Acting as a medium to spatialise welfare (Muthesius, 2000), the centralised monofunctional canteen model affected many

universities built or expanded since the Second World War by providing a low-cost meal under controlled conditions to the large masses. However, this model often engenders long waiting queues during peak times, the rigidity and monotony of kitchen operations, and intensive energy consumption and food waste. Inherent factors worsen when considering the abovementioned transformation of eating discourse and practice as much as the phenomenon of hybridisation of the boundary between university and city. Nowadays the corralled university canteen model manifests as obsolete and rigid.

By observing recent projects, despite the diversity of context and scale, it is possible to detect some evidence of the tendency to reconceptualise the university's canteen by experimenting with the design of open, plural, and dynamic, sometimes even ephemeral, university foodspaces. For instance, design projects such as Lacaton & Vassal's School of Architecture (Nantes, 2009) rethink the cafeteria as an expandable threshold to mediate the transition from the outer to the inner space, blurring further into the laboratory. Current projects also confirm the demand for foodspace flexibility. SANAA's Bocconi Campus (Milan, 2019) and ADEPT's School of Architecture (Aarhus, 2021) assemble dining convivial areas to shape the transitional space between interior and exterior, aligning the design of the spatial experience in accordance with the offered food experience. The design research for flexibility suggests the unprecedented potential of foodspace to enhance the quality of the university experience. Rather than confined spaces merely for food consumption and catering, open-ended insular dining devices compose restaurants, refectories, cafeterias, fast-food outlets and markets to reshape the boundary between the university and its context. Contemporary foodspaces enact the university-city interaction, sometimes by assembling food squares and inner streets, food courts, food gardens and parks that, overall, seem to stage a sort of food city where social encounter and the transmission of knowledge catalyse.

Nonetheless, a critical reading of these design experiences questions their capacity to face the challenge of food sustainability. On the one hand, it is urgent to understand how food spatial flexibility may contribute to ensuring the right to education in other renewed forms, whether securing the right to food or the right to the city by design. On the other hand, it also seems compelling to understand how to deal with the risk of conforming and reproducing spatial ordering according to the logic of the conventional food system market. However refined design strategies and devices may be, architectural and urban projects could contribute to a limited extent if not joining ethical commitment and alliances with the university's spatial agency and policy to address the entanglement of food, rights and socio-spatial practices in the sustainability transition.

For instance, the collaboration of GRAAL architects with the regional education rights agency, Crous, led to the university canteen's renovation and extension (Cergy-Pontoise, 2021) into a flexible and hybrid refectory offering an alternative and fresh food service while reconnecting the commons building with the public park and the city. Design research bridges here with the quest for sustainable eating habits. The corralled canteen is reshaped as a 'threshold foodspace'. It assembles a spatial sequence mediating the transition from the public terraced roof with the new kiosk to the in-between multi-use fast-food area up to the inner dining and serving area with the core kitchen. By emphasising the topographical and landscape spatial continuity connecting the city, the university refectory and the public park, the project qualifies the space and time of meal, increasing food spatial accessibility, transparency, flexibility of use and users' potential for appropriation.

Rethinking the canteen along with the food service and the public space seems an essential yet initial step for universities, who can mobilise a necessary systemic action across food didactic, research and food-related third mission practice acting simultaneously on food provisioning, consumption, disposal and education, from foodspaces to foodscapes (Zdzienicka Fanshel, Iles, 2022; Basso, Rodani, Venturini, 2024), to embark the path towards 'campus food system alternative' (Classens, Adam, Srebot, 2023; Barlett, 2011; Barlett, 2016). Thus, some following examples recommend the understanding of how the alliance of

foodspace design, food socio-spatial practice and food policy can spatially materialise not just the right to food but a broader range of citizenship rights (Rodotà, 2014) in-between the university, the city and territory.

In Turin, the project of an ephemeral design food laboratory intersects the university's teaching, action research and third mission. Initiated in 2017 within a multidisciplinary project aiming to fight food waste (Campagnaro, Ceraolo, Passaro, 2019), the Polito Food Design Lab spatialises a pop-up kitchen composed of several tools and mobile kits to experiment with food recovery and leftovers circular redistribution practices in the university and beyond. For instance, the laboratory triggers in situ participatory processes at the interface between the university and the city by activating a solidarity refectory in asylum seekers' housing. Far from reshaping the conventional food system, the project contributes to the creation and transmission of food systems knowledge across actors and sectors, mobilising the university's community, the catering service, associations and NGOs, markets and supermarkets, food professionals and chefs, local producers, up to public institutions and overall citizens, while implementing local strategies to mitigate its consequences.

In Toulouse, the design of a minimarket crosses university food supply redistribution, foodspace design and the enhancement of the public city. Starting in 2013, the collaboration of architects and designers Matali Crasset, Studio Praline and Terres Nuages with the national education rights agency, Cnous, led to the creation of Mini M in the university housing *Les Tripodes* in the peripheral and proximity food supply services lacking campus Rangueil. The minimarket materialises Cnous' democratic principles of "quality, rapidity, and equality" (Acerboni, 2013), which concurrently inform the qualitative innovation of food offers and their spatial quality. The project transforms the accessory volume of the student's residence into a hybrid and convivial foodspace, combining a market, a fast-food and a grocery. Acting as a threshold, the minimarket reshapes the relation between the inner space of the student's residence and the campus public garden, bridging the university's community and citizens. Here, thanks to the alliance among the campus gardener, Cnous, the students and a community horticulture association, the intermediate foodspace triggers the creation of a collective community garden. Even though it is a limited case, this design process highlights how universities may contribute to securing the abovementioned rights to education and food with the right to the city.

Other university design projects and practices explicitly explore collective gardening on campus as the socio-spatial practice of community making and experiential learning to make visible alternative foodscapes while bridging teaching research and third mission. In Montréal, the School of Architecture's Edible Campus project (Minimum Cost Housing Group, 2008) rethought marginal or unused open spaces such as rooftops, impervious surfaces, balconies and transition spaces into collective community gardens whose harvest is self-consumed or redistributed to local food security NGO. Among the several edible campus projects that are currently spreading, it seems relevant to observe one of the most radical.

Rural Studio's off-campus project is emblematic in this sense because it intersects the spheres of teaching, research and third mission by constituting a design laboratory of food policies, plans and projects for a sustainable and healthy rural learning community. Founded in 1993 and permanently established in the Morrisette house in Newbern in 1996, the Rural Studio developed a corpus of incremental design experiments over thirty years that transformed a former farmhouse into a rural university community (Oppenheimer Dean, Hursley, 2002), offering an alternative model to the American campus. Since 2010, Rural Studio has created the Newbern Strategic Plan and the Morrisette Strategic Plan by building a collective kitchen conceived, designed, self-built and maintained by the students, a photovoltaic greenhouse, a workshop, a warehouse, and a seed house. The farmhouse's spatial transformations to accommodate the activities of growing, harvesting, preparing, and eating locally produced food are closely linked to the transformations of food practices and eating habits, as the students have even devised an ad hoc diet. Harvesting in situ, providing six meals a week, and CSA

(Community Supported Agriculture) combine to feed the community. Since food production exceeded the actual needs, Rural Studio begun experimenting with food surplus redistribution practices. The Black Belt Food Project is a non-profit initiative that helps feed the broader West Alabama community via various public collection points in the area (Rural Studio, 2024). Rural Studio's holistic approach, where eating, designing, and living are parallel practices, slowly but incrementally allowed the learning community to upscale its agency from food micropolitics (Dolphijn, 2004) to urban food policies, building food citizenship.

Learning from the Edible University. Design Strategies and Practices to Make Visible Just, Feeding and Learning Communities

A Strategic Role for the University, between Upscaling and Downscaling

The case studies exploration highlights how a systemic approach towards university foodspace projects can reframe them as incubators of alternative local food chains. These projects can go beyond the demonstrative and didactic character, embracing a political, social and economic impact on the agri-food system. By working between micro and macro, they can experiment with downscaling and upscaling strategies that can potentially impact conventional food systems in the long term (Barlett, 2011; Bartlett, 2017). In this endeavour, the university's role as a 'driver of change' is not just crucial but empowering. Through research, teaching and third mission activities, the university can not only become a leader in sustainable food practices. Still, it can also promote actions to enhance local knowledge and heritage. Imagining the university as an edible campus foodscape (Bhatt, 2009) thus makes it possible to reshape the relationship between the university, city and society (Martinelli, Mangialardi, 2023). Therefore, it seems urgent to rethink the spatial and political boundary between the university and the city by the design, in the sense suggested by De Carlo: "permeability means openness to the problems of the context to find questions and materials that can give an overall – and therefore substantially political – sense to university cultural work [...]" (De Carlo, 1992, 242).

What Spaces for What Rights: Food as a Welfare Spatial Device

A second understanding emphasises how university foodscape questions the spatiality of welfare. Food styles and eating habits intertwine spheres of rights for which the university is called upon to account. In the context of university education, access to healthy, secure and safe food can be related to a broadly understood right to study, i.e. not limited to an adequate education, but rather considered as a lens through which to guarantee other citizenship's rights (health, inclusion, environmental protection, etc.) and, more generally, to the right to the city. Spaces where food preparation, consumption, and disposal, as well as food education, can thus be understood as collective spaces where shared practices take place, affecting the quality of life of the entire university community and the democratic affirmation of study-related rights. Hence, design research and practice should push for reshaping the restricted monofunctionality of catering. Learning from the case study exploration, it emerges that foodspaces must be reconceptualised as places of hybrid practices linked to study, meeting, learning and beyond. They are places capable of influencing the reconceptualisation of other university spaces, such as those intended for student residences (Bellini, Gullace, 2023). Again, concerning the spatialisation of welfare, it should also be considered how projects linked to food can offer the university various opportunities to activate virtuous processes that involve local communities and, in particular, the most fragile subjects precisely through food (think, for example, of the recovery of food surpluses in which some universities are already involved, but also the opening of social bars, etc.). Promoting sustainable projects related to food processes means that universities not only take charge of themes and issues relevant to settled communities, bringing them into the groove of more general reflections and themes shared by the disciplinary community, but also initiate broader processes of involvement aimed at regenerating the common good (Cognetti, 2012) by interweaving the sphere of rights of the university community with that of the fragile subjects of the communities.

From Passive Consumers to Participating Food Citizens. Feeding University Communities of Practice and Learning

Finally, food practices and processes offer to transform the university community itself into an open learning community. Working on food processes generates opportunities for learning and experimentation through activities that are transversal to the more traditional pathways of skills acquisition, from interacting between the various territorial stakeholders (administrators, local actors, or citizens) to the possibility of using interactive and dynamic socio-spatial survey tools for food system mapping operations (questionnaires, surveys, interviews, creative practices). Activities of this kind can concretely go beyond the field to interdisciplinary comparisons, which are necessary for those who deal with cities, to structure learning communities on issues that have strategic relevance for the university and the territory (Lenning, Ebbers, 1999; Cognetti, Fava, 2019). At the same time, these activities can increase the university communities' awareness of food sustainability, fostering the transition of subjects from passive consumers to participating ones, a prerequisite for the success of policies and projects to reshape the campus foodscape towards the emergence of food citizenship. Imagining the formation of 'feeding' and 'learning communities' also offers an opportunity to return students to the centre of the reflection on changing educational pathways. This entails, first and foremost, questioning our ways of teaching and behaving towards them, as well as our ability to intercept their inclinations and turn them into genuine passions. Working between foodspace and foodscape offers spaces for action to question the relations between city and university, imagining the latter as De Carlo already advanced at the end of the 1960s by his design research and practice "an open structure, branched out in the fabric of social activities, capable of articulating itself to its continuous variations [...] unstable configuration continually recreated by the community that uses it, introducing the disorder of its unpredictable expressions" (De Carlo, 1972, 68).

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