**Title of Case Study**: Food for Good

**Author**: Siân Cook

**Date**: 2012

**Keywords**: Socially Focused Design / Design Authorship / Collaborative Learning

**Client**: Homeless charities (The Salvation Army, The American Church)

**Project Title**: Self-Initiated Project

**Duration**: Preparatory research carried out during the previous year. Main focus on the project in college: approx. 12 weeks. The project continues to evolve and is ongoing.

**Team**:

**Student Team**: Chiara Astuti, Anna Cennamo, Martina Giulianelli.

**Tutors**: Siân Cook, Monica Biagioli, Sarah Temple.

**Key Collaborators**: Carluccio’s restaurants, Planet Organic, ‘Feeding the 5000’.

**Description**:

We live in a world where the demand for a high standard of food generates a large volume of surplus and waste. At the same time, an increasing number of people in our society are experiencing food poverty. Food for Good aims to eradicate food waste and make a positive impact on the environment, simply by turning waste into value.

The project began through personal experience – witnessing how much surplus food was thrown away at the end of every day at just one bakery. In order to try to tackle the twin issues of food wastage and food poverty with a ‘real world’ applied outcome, three students negotiated working collaboratively as part of their final year degree studies. Collectively, they looked at the core problem of how to redistribute unwanted food from restaurants and shops to people who could make good use of it.

On the Graphic and Media Design BA, students are encouraged to use their own observations and experiences as a starting point for identifying design problems to solve. The course also has a strong ethical philosophy which is reflected in the ways that students often choose to approach self-initiated work.

When relevant, projects with potential are supported in making applications for funding and external support. This helps develop entrepreneurial skills, fosters a sense of ambition for the work and encourages the application of visual communication skills to the presentation of ideas in a professional context.

**Budget**: £2,000 grant from UnLtd (an organisation that supports social entrepreneurs in the UK) to fund the pilot scheme.

A further £5,000 grant from the University of Arts London SEED Fund was awarded to develop the project post-degree.

**Research**: Initial research was conducted into the reasons behind food surplus and the impact this has on the environment, as well as the societal need for resource redistribution. Statistics and evidence were gathered to help make a strong case for a social entrepreneurial project to tackle these issues. The team attended the Internazionale Festival in Ferrara where they met food waste expert Tristram Stuart (prize-winning author of ‘Waste; Uncovering the Global Food Scandal’ and founder of ‘Feeding the 5000’), who encouraged their endeavours and has remained a supporter of the project.

First ideas included looking at developing a web platform to facilitate food redistribution. This led to making contact with Plan Zheroes, an organisation who had a similar online scheme. Connecting businesses and charities was already possible via their website, but there was a need to find ways to actually transport waste food between donors and recipients. Transport therefore became the focus of the project pilot scheme.

A number of experts and organisations were consulted at various stages throughout the project, helping to shape and guide the ideas as they evolved (the diagram shows the extent of this network). Key case studies and interviewees were Fare Share, The People’s Supermarket, Love Food Hate Waste, the Sustainable Restaurant Association, Pret A Manger (sandwich redistribution scheme) and Thames Reach (a homeless charity).

An important aspect of the research was attending and participating in conferences and events. Through networking and meeting relevant organisations and activists, the team were inspired but also alerted to potential problems, which helped to build a more credible project plan. Food for Good attended a conference hosted by the World Food Programme, where they participated in workshops looking at global food issues. They were then invited by ‘This is Rubbish’ (a Community Interest Company) to present at the ‘Forum & Feast Conference’ at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales, where they talked about food wastage solutions. Throughout the research process, the students were constantly presenting, refining and re-presenting their concept.

**Challenges**: The biggest challenge for the pilot project was learning how to organise the logistics of food redistribution. The team had to consider timing (transportation had to occur at night after close of business), food storage, compliance with hygiene and food safety guidelines and liaison between businesses and charities.

Whilst the two week pilot was successful, it also demonstrated that it would be a massive undertaking to continue on a long-term basis or to scale up the operation without a large number of regular volunteers and funding support. They would also have to consider different types of food in relation to charities’ needs, alternative storage methods and a more sustainable means of transportation.

As the project developed, the team benefitted from the free legal advice that came with their successful funding bids. This helped them write service agreements and learn about intellectual property. Because of all these challenges, Food for Good realised that their role as social entrepreneurs could allow for projects to change and that a more flexible overarching ethos encompassing a number of different strands might be a model for the future.

**Strategy**: The first stage was putting together a definitive proposal and presentation in order to apply for project funding. Once this was successful, it was possible to devise a pilot scheme, in collaboration with the Salvation Army, to test how to redistribute food from restaurants and small supermarkets effectively. A refrigerated van was hired for two weeks and used to collect and transport surplus food overnight from two Carluccio’s restaurants and two Planet Organic shops to Booth House and The American Church, where the food could be incorporated into the next day’s lunch menu, serving homeless people in Whitechapel and central London.

At the same time, the students were keen to keep raising awareness about the wider issues and generate additional funding for the continuation of the project. The brand ‘Food for Good’ was adopted and applied across a number of designed formats including flyers, website and badges. Posters and tote bags were screen-printed in the college workshops and sold at every opportunity.

To involve audiences further in the debate and challenge preconceptions about ‘recycled’ food, ingredients donated by Plant Organic were used to create meals served to students during the college ‘Green Week’ 2012. This method was also employed as a contribution to the ‘Feeding the 5000’ lunch event in Trafalgar Square, part of a global campaign aiming to empower and inspire positive solutions to the issue of food waste.

Since graduating, the students have continued to collaborate as Food for Good and search for further innovative and sustainable solutions to minimise food waste. This includes setting up a bespoke ethical catering service for which a range of serving accessories, made from off-cuts and recycled materials, were designed and made. The college hired this catering service for ‘Green Week’ 2014, to serve 1,000 canapés and drinks to exhibition attendees. The catering aspect has been developed as an ongoing collaboration with chef Arthur Potts-Dawson, founder of the People’s Supermarket and The Water House (the first sustainable restaurant in London). This was a useful contact because of his involvement in the area of food waste and interest in exchanging his cooking competence for the team’s design and communication skills.

Food for Good are currently exploring ways of extending the life of fresh food from markets and showcased this idea at the Make Good Festival, May 2014.

**Effectiveness**: In an average night of the pilot scheme, 40kg of food was saved and distributed. During the two weeks, 500kg of food was repurposed in total.

To celebrate the project’s success, thank collaborators for their support and raise further funds, Food for Good hosted an evening at the college described as ‘A New Dining Experience’. In collaboration with catering professionals, a dinner for 100 people was created from surplus food. Tristram Stuart attended and made a speech in which he expressed his support and admiration for the project team.

The project was shortlisted for the Student Enterprise and Employability Creative Enterprise Awards, selected to present at Pulse London (a showcase event for new products, trends and insights) and has continued to attract media interest.

**Assessment**: This case study is unusual in that it quickly developed from a theoretical proposal into a practical service design that required a wide range of skills. What the students achieved was to independently source expertise, involving others with their infectious enthusiasm and providing a good example of how to realise an ambitious undertaking. It illustrates positive reasons for students to work collaboratively, both with each other and externally.

The college provided a ‘safe’ environment for trialling the project whilst supporting the transition into outside work. Elements could ‘fail’ because the reflective learning experience was always a priority above the project impact. As a model for future briefs, actual execution and assessable elements might need to be a rebalanced. But what the project did well is to demonstrate the scope for applying design thinking and harnessing graphic skills to promote and ‘sell’ the concept in order to make it a reality.

**Resources**: The project made full use of the print and 3D workshops at London College of Communication. A number of students helped support the core team and Lightgeist Media (a production company run by recent graduates) filmed many of their events.

**Additional Information**:

Website: <http://www.foodforgood.me/>

Vimeo channel: <http://vimeo.com/user11734401>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/we_foodforgood>

**Collaborator Links**:

Feeding the 5000: http://www.feeding5k.org

The People’s Supermarket: http://thepeoplessupermarket.org