

Co-Imagining Circular Futures In The Food Industry

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Abstract

Many people are not strangers to the paradoxical statistics around food, especially those within the food system. With 14% of food being lost between harvest and retail every year (United Nations, n.d.) and 1 in every 10 people in the world suffering from hunger (Goal 2 | Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.) the issue is apparent. But the challenge of tackling food waste is complex and invites us to navigate many systemic social and economic problems and paradigms; trying to find solutions may feel confusing and messy. This is why collaborating with real actors from the field can help us work through the uncertain process together and allow space for emergence.

The Circular Food Innovation Lab is a research project that brought together the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Economic Commission, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and Vancouver-based food businesses to learn from each other and find places to intervene in the food system through action research and co-creation. Embracing change-making as a form of intervention in a process that involves the opening up of many possibilities (Akama et al., 2020), we've learned that social innovation solutions can be unpredictable, emergent, and nonlinear, meaning that there are no clear right answers, and causes and effects are only visible afterwards. Challenging designer's exceptionalism, CFIL created the conditions for exchange in which all participants benefit (Richard Sennett in Manzini & Coad, 2015). Through this workshop, we intend to share our learnings with designers and practitioners in a Brazilian context.

Embedded in a local context, this workshop invites ServDes participants to collaborate with staff members from a Rio de Janeiro restaurant - Delírio Tropical - to co-imagine circular futures within the food industry.

Keywords: co-creation, food systems, circularity, locality.

Workshop description

In this workshop, ServDes attendees will experience an in-place co-creation activity with a local food business in Rio de Janeiro - Delírio Tropical Restaurant, our partner for this workshop (see below). By connecting different food system realities and perspectives - ours being the Canadian context, and Delírio Tropical's, being the Brazilian context - we can share our learnings and together co-imagine possible circular futures.

Centred around co-creation, we will be sharing tools, ideating around concerns Delírio has posed to us, and experiencing the importance of a design approach in which you design *with* rather than *for*. By framing the staff members as the experts from whom we will be learning, we can encourage different voices to speak up, and challenge systems of power. This form of systems thinking will help us to see the diverse and dynamic relationships between the challenges that we work on and the broader contexts within which they are situated. This can then lead to different insights and possibilities into how we might intervene in systems; looking for leverage points, places within a complex system where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything (Meadows, 1999) to get more desirable, durable, and high-impact outcomes.

The workshop will be hosted in Portuguese - with the possibility of accommodation for English speaker participants.

Local Partner: Delírio Tropical Restaurant (partnership already established)

Founded in 1983 in downtown Rio de Janeiro, Delírio Tropical Restaurant is beloved by locals and an icon for visitors delivering light, healthy food in harmony with the tropical climate. Now at the forefront of innovation in how to deliver fresh, nutritious and local food made with love for everyone, the restaurant has been working hard on many ways to reduce their impact in the environment and implementing circular practices into their operation. They work extensively with a local farm partner, with whom they can track where their food comes from and assure some good practices at growing level as well as with recycling cooperatives and organic waste collection businesses, making them accountable for their own waste.

Session set-up

Participants: 6 Delírio Tropical staff members, 3 convenors, 15 ServDes participants.



Welcome (10 min): The convenors will do an introduction to the workshop along with some background on CFIL and the work we have been doing in Vancouver, Canada.

Ice breaker (10 min): ServDes participants will be paired up with staff for each to describe an important childhood or cultural meal from their life - telling a story of what this meal means to them and describing how it looks as their partner constructs a drawing of the meal they are being told about. Convenors are available to step in if there is an odd amount of participants. **Materials:** paper, tape, markers/crayons.

Multi-sensory site tour (20 min): Restaurant tour structured around the desired areas of intervention. This will be a sensory experience led by the nutritionist of the restaurant meant to help deepen one's understanding of the challenge and inspire greater thinking or action. **Materials:** small booklets to note down any thoughts, sketches or aspects of the tour they wish to remember for later.

Co-imagining (30 min): Co-imagining activity: *Unicorns and Horses*. Three *How Might We* questions shaped by Delírio Tropical will be given as prompts for ideation and provide participants more structure for their ideas. Convenors will emphasize the desire for quantity and speed, over quality and profoundness, as well as encouraging the erasing of judgement.

Starting with rapid brainstorming to generate “unicorns” - fantastical and overly ambitious ideas. This is an ideation tool to deter self-editing and fear of ‘bad’ or ‘unfeasible’ ideas. We will then transition to “horses”, which encourages the use of rational and reason. Using the “unicorn” ideas as a jumping off point we will generate some actionable steps towards that same goal. **Materials:** paper, post-it notes, markers.

Synthesis (15 min): Ideas generated from *Unicorns and Horses* will be sorted based on predetermined criteria decided by Delírio, such as scalability, ease of implementation, etc. Participants will discuss and nominate ideas they think are the most promising, creative, simple to implement, etc, to move forward with. The restaurant will leave this workshop with a list of ideas that were co-created with designers and their very own employees all around areas that they struggle with in their day to day operations. **Materials:** coloured stickers.

Wrap-up (5 min): In closing, the group will gather to celebrate their ideation accomplishments and for a closing thank you from all the convenors.

Documentation: Convenors will take process photos of participants working together and photos of finalized ideation boards (papers and post-it notes). Convenors will digitize information and share it back with the restaurant.



Space requirements

The workshop will take place in Delírio Tropical Gávea restaurant - R. Marquês de São Vicente, 68 - Gávea, Rio de Janeiro - RJ, 22451-040, Brazil. They will provide space, tables and chairs.

References

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Convenors bio:

Convenor 1: Bianca Del Rio Kodato is an emerging designer graduating from Industrial Design at ECUAD in May 2023. Her practice focuses on social innovation, community engagement and the combination of craft and new technology.

Convenor 2: Marcia Higuchi is a communication designer and researcher, with a Bachelor degree in Design from UNESP (2002) and Master of Design (2022) at Emily Carr University where she currently teaches.

Convenor 3: Hunter Milroy is an Industrial Designer that graduated from Emily Carr this past spring (2022). He questions our future with nature in hopes to usher ourselves into a more reciprocal and durable future in our built environment.

