Making-Experiencing Method Cards: bringing the values of sustainable food practice in people’s everyday life in North Brooklyn, New York City

Xiying Wang
Ph.D. student at Information Science, Cornell University
EARLY STAGE
Food Environment in North Brooklyn | Opportunity

EXPLORATION STAGE
Literature Reviews | Exemplars Reviews | Interviews with Clients

FINAL DESIGN
Making-Experiencing Method Cards
EARLY STAGE

Food Environment in North Brooklyn | Opportunity
Low-income communities in North Brooklyn, NYC, is facing the difficulty of building a healthy food environment.
“Around 10%-15% of the residents living in North Brooklyn report a diabetes diagnosis. “ [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2008]
“Healthy foods are hard to find. For instance, only 1 in 3 bodegas sells reduced-fat milk, compared with 9 in 10 supermarkets.” [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2008]
The unhealthy food products are heavily advertised in the stores of low-income communities in North Brooklyn, NYC. [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2008]
Low-income residents of color have limited access to affordable healthy food. Fast food restaurants and convenient stores dominate the low-income areas in North Brooklyn, NYC. [Gordon et al., 2010]
However, different cultural groups, such as African American, Asian, Latino, are living in those communities. The diversity brings in different perception of food and eating styles.
Despite the problems, there are several local organizations trying to bring in fresh food and promote healthy eating to create a healthy food environment.

Such as small greenmarkets, CSAs, farmer’s markets, retail stores that bring in fresh food, and restaurants that bring in organic healthy food to the table.
This is an opportunity space to investigate
How to learn from the existing models and amplify the actions in low-income communities
How to take advantages of the diversity
What design practice can bring to improve the food environment, and bring changes to everyday life in low-income communities in North Brooklyn, NYC
How design practice can help to improve the user experience in those low-income communities
EXPLORATION STAGE

Literature Reviews | Exemplars Research | Interviews with Clients
Literature Reviews

• Question: How food and culture relates together? What are existing design practices?

• Books
  D’Aluisio, F., Menzel, P. *What the world eats*. Tricycle Press.
  It uses photos to illustrate how people consume food around the world, and provides a view of cultural similarities and differences of food consumption around the globe.

  It illustrates how a kitchen table promotes social engagement with sustainability.

  “The more we care about nutrition, the less healthy we seem to become”
  “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants”
According to Gallagher, communities that have a better access to groceries are healthier. [Gallagher, 2011]
However, Cohen identifies that other environmental impacts, e.g., food prices, food sizes, food advertising, automatic response to food (people’s brain functions when seeing images of food), limited ability of controlling food intake, and exercise, are all important factors to relate people’s health and food together. [Cohen, 2010]
Other suggests define and specify the uniqueness and significant difference of changing the food system (e.g. food distribution system) in modern context. [Donofrio, 2007]
• Besides, cultural aspects are not be neglected when thinking about constructing a healthy food environment in a neighborhood [Cummins, Macintyre, 2005]. In particular, cultural differences in understanding and interpreting need to pay special attention.

“technologies that celebrate the way people interact with foods”

New opportunities for designing food is
- Creativity – “preparing meals as a way of expressing creativity”
- Gifting – “Food acts both literally and symbolically as a gift”
- Family connectedness
- Relaxation

“Food and eating play an increasingly central role in individual’s lives”

This paper examines “the social construction of comfort food”, and discusses how food can “modify and change people’s emotion and feeling”.
Exemplar Reviews

Food Connect
About Us

At Food Connect we all share the risk. Our farmers jump out of bed excited, city folk get great produce, and that creates real community.

Based on the principles of Community Supported Agriculture, our delicious, seasonal produce comes from local farmers living within a short radius of our city Homestead, packed into boxes, and collected by our subscribers from a network of City Cousin pick-up points.
iPhone Apps: FoodScanner, What’s on My Food
Interviews with Clients

• Clients: Design researchers at DESIS labs in Parsons The New School for Design

Key Questions:
• What are the major challenges they found in their previous projects?
• What are their needs and requirements for the design?
What are the challenges?
• Diversity brings in different perspectives, understanding, and interpretation of food.

• Different cultural shares different definition of healthy food
• Different languages
• The role of food in people’s life
• Information is not reaching out to the community members
  • A lot of interesting organizations and design practices going on
  • But, the information is not known
• Food desert, lack of access to fresh food

• Difficult to bring the models/concepts, such as CSA, farmer’s markets, to the people who are living in a food desert area
What are the clients’ needs?
• Address the current problems of low-income community in North Brooklyn:

1) Most of the low-income people cannot afford fresh food because of expensive prices
2) Several community members cannot get access to healthy food
3) Different cultural groups are living in the community, which bring in different perspectives and cultural differences
• Amplify the existing ways of sustainable food practices, such as CSA, farmer’s market.
• Make the information accessible to community members.
• Encourage participation in the sustainable food practice.
• Design should be low-barrier in learning, lightweight, and easy to use.
• Design should properly overcome the difficulties and challenges that are identified in the previous projects.
• Design should take advantages of the diversity.
What are the design implications?
Core: Amplifying existing model of farmer’s market into low-income residents’ everyday life
• Promote the action of eating and living sustainably, but not to impose certain values into the community
• Support and celebrate cultural difference
• Stimulate people’s participation in healthy food practice
Making-Experiencing Method Cards

FINAL DESIGN
Sue, 35 years old, lives in Williamsburg at North Brooklyn, NY
She gets a set of *Making-Experiencing Method Cards*
Sue opens the package, and picks up a card
What to do:
Count your food

How to do:
1. Put all the food you or your family plan to eat today
2. Place them on an even surface, e.g., a dinner table, floor
3. Take a picture of the food with a device that has a camera
4. Look at the photo, look at the food

Really, how much you/your family eat?
She follows the task, and after half an hour...
Amplify the model of farmer's market into people's everyday life.
Sue looks at the photo, realizes that those are what she wants to eat...
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories
Sugar, Fat, Calories

Fresh produce: only 2 kinds
Sugar, Fat, Calories

Fresh produce: only 2 kinds

And, where are the vegetables?
The Making-Experiencing Method Cards
[Advantages]
Amplify the model of farmer’s market into people’s everyday life
Small, lightweight, and engaging tasks:

Easy to use, low-barrier in learning
Appreciate healthy food by engaging the senses of taste and touch
Support imaginations
Make people aware of their daily food consumption
Accessible to low-income families
Informational
Support different languages

(Current languages: English and Chinese)
THANK YOU!
References

- Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project Local Development Corporation 2011 Community Food Assessment. (2011). *Get Fresh! Food access, food justice and collective action in Fort Greene & Clinton Hill, Brooklyn*. Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC.
- Amplifying Creative Communities: [http://amplifyingcreativecommunities.net/](http://amplifyingcreativecommunities.net/).