

THE REVEAL FESTIVAL – ‘FOOD JUNCTIONS’

Overview and Context

Reveal was a ten-day festival from 22nd April to 2nd May 2010, at Kings Cross. The festival was organised by ‘Creative KX’ – the King’s Cross creative and cultural development agency.

‘Food Junctions’ was a part of the Reveal Festival, it was student-led project that involved a range of people including UCL staff and students, members of the local community, creative organisations, local businesses and food enthusiasts.



Facts and Figures

- Food Junction was a part of the Reveal Festival, taking place 22nd April to 2nd May 2010
- Food Junctions was a series of **60** events and activities
- Around **2000** people attended the Food Junctions Festival
- **150** UCL staff and students, from **27** different departments, participated in delivering Food Junctions
- Over **20** different external stakeholders were involved in the project, including Camley Street Natural Park, Bompas and Parr, Calthorpe Project, Food Cycle.

Background:

The UCL Public Engagement Unit collaborated with Create KX to organise a ‘REVEAL competition,’ providing funding to UCL staff and/or students to deliver a public engagement project at the festival. The result was ‘Food Junctions.’

Project aims:

Food Junctions aimed to:

- Raise awareness of the significance of food and empower people to take action;
- Reinforce artistic practice as a public forum;
- Develop researchers’ skills, enhance knowledge and increase understanding of public engagement;
- Exchange information and share learning between UCL departments;
- Develop recommendations for the policy agenda and implementation towards sustainable food practice.

What happened?

- Food Junctions project was an ambitious undertaking created by a multi-disciplinary team of students at all levels of university life.
- Food junctions was a series of 60 events and activities
- Activities included art workshops, discussions, wine tasting, films, tours, readings, performance, art installations.
- The project targeted a range of audiences (such as local residents, community groups, festival attendees, local organisations).
- These activities were organised with the Camley Street Natural Park, the Calthorpe Project and surrounding organisations in Kings Cross.
- Between 1800 - 2000 people attended Food Junctions events.

Emerging themes from the evaluation

The original Food Junctions project proposal 'came out of a frustration that we as students often feel our studies do not directly impact upon society and of our yearning for actually doing something to transform this reality' (Marina Chang, Food Junctions Project Co-ordinator). The resulting project became less an academic intervention and more a series of creative conversations, seeking greater learning opportunities, application and understanding of their disciplines.

Key learning from the project included:

1) There was a huge amount of interest from UCL researchers to get involved. Although it was originally proposed to deliver 16 events for the Food Junctions festival, due to the enthusiasm and dedication towards this project across UCL, there were a staggering 60 events delivered. The mushroom effect of this activity meant that Food Junctions was described as a 'festival within a festival.'

2) Diversity of UCL project staff. 150 UCL staff and students, from 27 different departments, participated in delivering Food Junctions. Coming from a variety of different academic disciplines in UCL and also at different stages of their academic career, these factors enabled learning to begin to be shared at the moment the group was formed. Project leader, Marina Chang comments that 'one of the ideas was to cross borders, to try to include as diverse a community as possible from undergraduates, postgraduates and PhD students. We also wanted to cover different disciplines because we think the university plays a critical role in bringing people together in terms of public engagement' (Marina Chang, Food Junctions Project Co-ordinator). Additionally, there were a further 100 contributors that were external to UCL.

3) Over 20 different stakeholders were involved in Food Junctions: The value of networks across UCL and beyond is clearly a key success factor of the scope and imagination of Food Junctions. 'What is fascinating is the networks that have been established, and the sharing through the project, and that's really hard to capture, yet ultimately has more of an impact on the things that are actually achieved' (Gemma Moore, Evaluation Officer, UCL Public Engagement Unit).

Lots of positive feedback was received from those attending the festival. Although there were a variety of comments from participants at the festival, below are a few examples:

- 'the interaction, you get to meet people at festivals' (male 25-34)
- 'excellent panel discussion' (55-64 male)
- 'food growing and gardening tips' (65-74 female)
- 'the indoor-outdoor element' (25-34 male)
- 'informative presentations and talks' (45-54 female)

Further information is available at:

Food Junctions website:
www.food-junctions.org.uk

Learning from the Process

What worked well?

- The topic of "Food" drew in a lot of interest from UCL and externally - from a range of disciplines and perspectives.

- The partnerships created by this opportunity, which has led to new activity. A new project entitled 'Foodpaths' has been delivered as a follow-on to Food Junctions. Foodpaths included a series of events that aimed to facilitate sustainable university-public engagement in the Kings Cross area.

- The Food Junctions project also led to the creation of a Food Junctions Recipe Book. This is an amalgamation of everything learnt from the Food Junctions project and is available at: <http://www.casa.ucl.ac.uk/fj/>.

What could be done differently?

- Food Junctions was an ambitious programme, and was led by a core team of students. A lot of time and effort was put into this programme, but at times it was all consuming for the students running it.

- A lot of interest was generated by the project, particularly from community groups in the area - many of which wanted to continue relationships with UCL and the organisers. Although follow up project is being undertaken it was not possible to follow up on all the interest. Sustainability needs to be considered in any engagement project.