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Episode Information

Topic: Food Sharing

Hosts: Ian M. Cook, Kate McGinn, and Romane Joly

Guests: Kaja Zimmermann and David Bachmann of Foodsharing Freiburg

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Transcript

[Music]

Episode Introduction (0:20 – 1:34)

Kate: Ian, what are you doing turning up in my London flat?

Ian: What are you doing in my country, Kate? Ask yourself that. Also, where's your fridge? [Sound of rummaging in the fridge]. Aha! That's it. I found it. I found what I'm looking for.

Kate: You found out of date food. Well done Ian. But just for the record, it's not to mine. Typical London house share situation. You should be happy. There's not a dead body in the freezer.

Ian: I've come to share your food, Kate. You should be happy. I'm turning your waste into someone's breakfast.

Kate: Well, actually, it's my housemate's waste and the someone is you.

Ian: Details, details. Listen, imagine if there were people like me saving food from waste but on a bigger scale, not just bothering your fridge, but tapping into all the waste from circuits of food distribution and sharing it.

Kate: Hmm. I'm imagining it.

Ian: Actually, there's no need to imagine our colleague or I mean, Joly went to speak to two food savers in Freiburg, Germany.

Kate: She did?

Ian: Yeah, and more precisely, she spoke to Kaja Zimmermann and David Bachmann, veterans of the food-sharing scene. I've had my breakfast and I've got to go now, but I'll leave you the interview to listen to while you're doing the dishes. Speak soon.

[Music]

Introducing Foodsharing (1:35 – 14:33)

Joly: Welcome, Kaja and David. Thank you very much for joining us on this UrbanA Podcast series about sustainability and justice in cities. We are excited to have you today to get some insights on the Foodsharing initiative you're running in Freiburg, Germany. And just before we get into the topic, I'd like to let the listeners know that today we will talk about the food sharing organisation. So, what it does, the way it works from a governance perspective. So we've been dealing a lot recently with the notion of

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governance, in particular at the Urban Arena early in March this year, and in a previous episode of his podcast series, where we had the chance to learn about the Changing City initiative in Berlin. So let's get started. Could you, could you please, in a few words, let us know what Foodsharing is about.

David: Yeah, sure, yeah. Thanks, for the, for the introduction. Yeah, food sharing is mainly an internet platform to organise together to pick up leftover foods from different companies, restaurants and even private households. So we are basically looking, or aiming to be the last link in this long chain of food processing. Just before food would have been discarded, we step into, into that game and prevent actually that the food actually ends up in the bin.

Kaja: Yeah, so maybe to sum it up, we're a group of volunteers that saves food from the bin, and we do so in agreements with the supermarkets themselves or the private households.

Joly: Could you explain us a bit which type of cooperation it is?

David: We fix basically an agreement that every day or once a week, whatever's suitable for, for the retailer, so basically he sets the boundary conditions, and he can also vary them as much as he likes. So, so we will just adapt to whatever they, they in a sense, request and then we just ensure that for the given time that we appointed there's people from Foodsharing to pick up there then leftover food and we will take care, in a sense, of everything.

Kaja: And as David mentioned, it's a bit different in each corporation. And then on our shared webpage, we can always read up on these rules so that if I have, yeah, if I go somewhere and I pick up food and it's first time I would read the rules before and say, okay, at this and this time I wait there. This is how it works there so that it's really transparent for everyone.

David: Yeah, and there's like, as an individual food sha- saver, you're basically, um, you have like within that internet platform, a calendar where you come to us, pick out a slot, and once you pick your slot, then you're responsible for that very time. And we, also, Foodsharing internally, make sure that you take that responsibility serious.

Joly: Could you tell us a bit more about the structure of Foodsharing?

David: So we are organi- setting ourselves over this internet platform and in local groups that are usually situated in cities. And here we are talking about Foodsharing Freiburg, where we have about 400 active food savers that pick up over 500 kilograms of food every day. The basic idea is that so when Foodsharing started a couple of years ago and in 2012 actually, the initiative set out in Berlin and fix basically this internet platform, and they were thinking about like a set of rules or some common structure such that other local, local groups could form and adhere to these rules, but still had enough freedom to act locally as they might need for the, the corresponding specific case.

So in practise, this is organised by having this internet platform together with a Wiki which provides the, the set of rules that is also democratically decided on. And there's people organasating this in- on a national level on the global scale so to say, whereas now specifically in Freiburg, we have this rules that tell us guidelines basically, but we still have to figure out how we do things in detail.

Joly: Okay. So if I understand well, this flexibility allows to adapt to local context, right?

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David: Exactly. So this is- on the one hand, this, um, the, the strict guidelines help us to, to focus and, to not lose basically the actual aim or goal of Foodsharing to, let's just say, save food, as the name suggests, while we have enough freedom to specifically act on whatever contexts a certain city provides.

Kaja: Foodsharing is actually an environmental organisation, so we want to value the food and all the resources that went into the production of the food because, yeah, it's just incredible that something so precious just goes to the bin. And that is our main purpose to save it actually from the bin. And that, that, I think, is, yeah, also the funny thing that in the end, we want to be superfluous. We're more like treating the symptoms. We're working in a system that, that is not working anymore because there's all this food waste and we do something with it. But in an ideal world, of course, there wouldn't be any food waste anymore. But until we get there, we are there to at least save it from the bin and then distribute it with whoever, because our, yeah, number one priority is that it really gets eaten and used in a way.

Joly: To who do you distribute the food? Because I guess there is a strong issue of justice. And it's interesting to see how we can link justice and sustainability.

Kaja: We are, we're not a charitable organisation in a way that we have conditions to whom we can give the food, we just distribute the food kind of unconditionally. I think one thing that also many people know about Foodsharing are these public pick-up points, I think we have around 13, which are all over Freiburg, different districts, and this can be anything from just a shelf in a public place, or sometimes it also has a fridge. And these are places that are accessible for everyone. Ideally, people know where they are, and it's easy to, to see them and to get there. And then people who pick up food, us food savers, we would bring the food that we have picked up there and then whoever can come and pick it up from there.

But of course, for example, I live in a shared flat with eight other students, so I can also bring a lot of food in my shared flat and a lot will be eaten there or just in the dorm, we also have a pickup point. So, yeah, I think these pick-up points are really cool because they're so, they have such an open access. It's not, not so much of a giving and receiving, but really a public point where everyone can meet and everyone can bring food and take food.

Joly: Was that a wish to make something different from others, food banks or other organisation which distribute food on social criterias?

David: So, so the, the main point, why we are doing it in the sense in this by design in this very public and open way is that usually we have to act really quickly. The food that we pick up is really turning bad within hours or days, very soon. So we have to make sure that we reach people, and in this limited timescale, just to have the food actually being eaten.

And on the other hand, as Kaja just explained, it's- these pick-up points or sharing stations such that anyone without any certificate or whatever, can pick up the food because we think we are not the ones to judge who is the centre need. And I think there's many people that are grateful for this kind of infrastructure, that they do not have to provide any paperwork, there's no conditions, no questions asked at all. You just can go there and pick it up. We try to, in a sense, keep it as simple as possible, and this is just, yeah, the way it works then.

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Kaja: I mean, we also originated a bit from the dumpster diving movement, and that was also the idea that why is food that is still edible and then thrown away private property and why is it illegal to, to still use that. And we found a way out of this illegality because we have agreements with the shops and we think that if they don't want to sell it anymore, that this food this yeah, what would they have to consider waste in a way, then it's rather a common good. And yeah, we, we don't have any money involved in all of this, so, yeah.

David: well, maybe I can add on top of that, like from, from a legal perspective, basically Foodsharing managed as Kaja just explained to, to evade this legal grey zone to real legal zone, where dumpster diving comes in, we're still on, on the go, basically, we're still fighting to get out of this grey zone in a sense, not with our cooperation spot, actually with our sharing stations or pick up points, because oftentimes, there are government regulations that prevent actually this kind of conditioness sharing of food.

And yeah, so depending, this is actu- exactly a good example for this, this local context that we touched up on earlier, depending on what city, depending on what local government acts there, there might be even different or stricter regulations or rules, whatever, and yeah Foodsharing needs to adapt that. And this is actually like if you look at the history, a timeline of food sharing, so it originated somewhat from dumpster diving, then evaded this illegal zone into the grey zone, and we are looking forward now to make also the sharing stations clear on a legal perspective and persistent in that way. And finally, the, the ultimate goal for the far future would be something that Foodhsaring itself becomes redundant, that the Foodsharing is not necessary anymore, that, um, we can prevent this food waste because we are just fighting the symptoms and not the actual disease, if you wish.

Joly: Yeah, I understand. It's interesting, actually, because you're fighting on the, on the mean of production of the big distribution companies, [inaudible] that actually enforced the broken system rather than transforms it?

Kaja: I think what I always liked about Foodharing is that we are very aware that we are not the solution, but that we are treating the system, as we said several times. And I would actually say that just the act of making food that would be wasted visible by putting it into the pickup point is already politicising that issue. And again, that's my personal experience in my shared flat. We often talk about this and everyone in the dorm who sees the food in the pickup point it's really regularly a topic that we are surprised what ends up there, how much, what good quality, how much food. And I think it's actually raising a lot of awareness and bringing this issue in to people's eyes. And just we, we talk about it, and we discuss why this is a problem and why this food would even be thrown away.

David: Yeah. And I can also emphasise, I don't know, on a personal level. So I cannot just sit here sitting here watching if I know, like that on the other side of the planet, people are starving literally like there's not enough food for them. And I know that this food is discarded, so it's, it's better to act as we do in the moment. And besides that, of course, we want to push the political disc- discussion when we want to transform the system. Also, as Kaja just said, I think this, this Foodsharing can transist then like from fighting symptoms towards more, this prevention perspective continuously, right? We like- this is actually one of the main goals that Foodsharing Freiburg has at the moment.

We want to have like a better cooperation and better tie-in with the city of Freiburg that we start shared protects. There's actually some, some projects in planning, and maybe we can even go to schools, give some workshops, maybe online seminars, whatever some

information. Anything would help actually, and just to arise this awareness. And then we hope that even more people would join and also push towards a change of politics.

Food Waste and Foodsharing Regulations (14:34 – 23:08)

Joly: Okay, yeah, thank you very much for this really compelling answer, actually. I think it would be interesting for our listeners to know a bit about the regulation, which are commanding food waste to understand how, what is the position of Foodsharing within that and what you are advocating for?

Kaja: Um yeah, I think that generally it's important to know that the governments and we actually have the same goal. The, I mean, in the SDG 12, I think sub-goal three is to, to half food waste until 2030, and that's a very ambitious goal until then. So the governments also know that they need to take action. And I think Foodsharing is already having a positive impact. So, in fact, they also want to reach out to us and cooperate with us and further build on this because we have the same goal, we want the same thing.

Just the problem is that then there's sometimes a misfit between theory and practise; that in theory, we're totally on the same page. And we- I think nobody would say that food waste is a great thing, that's absolutely clear for everyone. But then maybe it's, maybe it's because of miscommunication or not, because we don't cooperate enough yet, that there are some regulations, for example, regarding the traceability of food.

So there's actually regulation that wants all the food that is put to a pickup point to be traceable so that it's always known from where what food comes from. And that is just actually impossible from- because of this public nature of pick-up points. It's not only us, certified food savers, who bring food, there can also be private people, and that's just impossible to- I mean, you would have to employ people who sit next to the point all the time and just write lists where what comes from. So that's kind of impossible. And yeah, we kind of understand that hygiene and traceability are important goals and that food safety is also important, especially when yeah, some, some food things are at the end of their lifecycle, let's say. But we also see that this is simply not doable and yeah we need to work together on solutions I think for these practical matters.

David: Yeah, well, even like some of the cooperations that we have, some supermarkets or restaurants put into conditions that we do not document or do not trace, basically where the food comes from, they don't want to be named in public. This might have different reasons. So this actually contradicts what the proposed maybe well-intended food regulations from, from gov- government side. And yeah this, in a sense, makes it hard for us to, yeah, adapt these rules or to obey these rules. But as Kaja said we are looking forward to, to phrase a dia- dialogue between government and activists, in a sense, and we will find hopefully some, some solution that fits on both ends.

Kaja: Yeah, and just to add one more very concrete example, new regulation that came up with the pandemic was that things that couldn't be washed in a way. So for example, um, let's say bread, should always be packed individually and that we just found that in a practical way, this is very hard because from the, from the shops, we sometimes get huge bags, full, full with breads, and then we would have to pack each of them individually in small bags and then people still want to see what they pick up so they would open up each bag. And then in the end, it's counter- counterproductive because the food gets touched even more so we, we kind of struggled with that regulation of it as well, that we understand in a hygienic way that it makes sense to have everything packaged that cannot be washed, but on a practical way, it's again very difficult.

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David: So this new regulation that we just talked about by the state government of Baden-Württemberg, so, yeah, it's in the sense the, the state government that is sitting in Stuttgart. There's also local institutions in in Freiburg, of course, which is like the, call it the community level maybe, or city level that imposes certain regulations, especially now in this corona times. There's this the second regulation that Kaja mentioned, the packaging, that came actually from the city of Freiburg. But I think it's in a sense implemented anyway, and also the stricter rules that actually might, might originate from, from Stuttgart. And I think from like a real national level, there's actually not that much that concerns us directly because it's too indirect and the institutions are not working in a sense that they will control that on the local level, what they decide there.

Kaja: Yeah, it's not, so I mean, the national level also has this goal of reducing food waste, and they also have their own strategy. So I think this is maybe how it affects us on the national level.

David: Exactly.

Joly: I see yeah. And you mentioned several times this grey zone where Foodsharing is, can you explain us a bit then how you building up trust and partnerships?

David: Yes, yeah, maybe I can give like a quick overview of, yeah, how our sharing stations in the city centre evolved over time. So it began that there was a private households that offered to us to have their sharing station in front of the doors, but eventually they were overwhelmed, there were just too many people. Although everything was working fine, it was just constantly busy with people. So had to find a new place and then kindly, well, the university offered us to use one of their entrances, they are like a public building downtown, however there we had then problems that people actually squatted in that entrance and were just in a sense, waiting for the food delivery. So the university also said, okay, no.

So we learnt and in the sense that we have to find a place that is accessible by anyone, which is our desire, which is essential, but which is also not in a sense too inviting that people will just yeah start live there because there is free food. So we came up basically with a creative solution that it took an old bicycle, put on some, some boxes and just chained it to like one of the public bicycle stands, downtown just across the university library. And so this was basically our first foot on public ground. So we, were not tied to some private household, not some university institution, whatever.

And the city in a sense, could not really- because at this point we didn't ask the city, like because we were afraid we, we expect that if we would have asked them but they would have said no, and then it would have been clearly in a sense illegal, and we would have had this huge problem right? We couldn't have shared our food, and eventually the city in a sense, got used to it. And now it's the city has adopted us forward. Like this bicycle has been chained now on, on that very stand for, I think, three or four years and it's becoming more and more an institution. And speaking of now, we have contact with the city and we talk about this issue, and they accept that.

And I think it's a, it's a great solution actually to the problem, and they probably would have not thought of something like that by themselves. And it's just evolved this way. And now we're actually looking forward, this is now the plan for 2022 that we have, like, a sharing station that is a shared project between the city of Freiburg and Foodsharing, which will also be probably on public grounds. The catalogue of ideas is more or less endless and we, we are, we're looking forward to it. To have like a closer connection to the city, and I think this is done, speaking now, zooming a little bit out again, I'm speaking

on this, this global scale again, this will slowly open us doors to the higher levels in hierarchy of state government or even national governments so that just this information is spread across and the, in a sense, get feedback on, on onto their regulations via this path. This is what we wish for, in a sense.

Food Waste on the Production Side (23:09 – 28:45)

Joly: Thank you for your, for your response, and I'm also curious about the beginning of the chain because we talked a lot about the end of the food chain, so what do we do with waste? But the problem, it's also like that we generate like the food system, generate too much food which get into waste.

Kaja: Ideally, yeah, we need to definitely look at the whole chain or the whole. Yeah. And yeah, as you mentioned, it's really from the first step on- if you look at vegetables on the field, like which things are not even picked up and it's, it has so many steps in and each step, some things are lost also, yeah, and which things are not even brought to the supermarkets because they have weird shapes or there are so many reasons why things don't even reach the consumer. And then we have the, yeah, that's, yeah, that's the production level. Then we have the retail level where again, they can't sell certain things.

And then there's again, the consumer level, which we also haven't talked so much about that if I already have food at home, it's still an individual person's choice. Sometimes they see the expiry date or the best before date, and they just throw away things if the, this date is over without checking if the food is actually good. So there are so many levels.

And on this national strategy to reduce food waste, they actually talk about all these different steps and how to take action in all these different steps. And then Foodsharing actually commented on that strategy, and we criticised that, for example, industries and supermarkets are not taken into responsibility, or are not obliged to do something they are just asked to, or they can just do some voluntary agreements. But we would actually like that there are really binding legal agreement, something that it's forbidden to throw away food. And so they have to take action because as we see right now that voluntary agreements are just, yeah, just raising awareness is not really enough because at the moment, it's most times still cheaper for them to throw away the food than to engage Foodsharing and reduce their products or find some different ways. So, yeah, we definitely think that, that also in earlier stages of the chain, some things need to be done and that what is done at the moment is not enough.

Joly: What would you suggest to governing bodies to transform the existing food system and ultimately reduce waste?

David: Yeah, as Kaja just said we need binding regulations that in a sense corporation with food sharing or other organisations to prevent food waste or charity should be binding. So, so for supermarkets there should be not the option at all, in a sense to throw away good food. The, the question is then, however, like if, if you implement this rule, how to actually prevent then or how to share this food in practise. And as like Foodsharing is one example, but there, there- I think there are many ways in the end of the of the day and as we will force in a sense, like make the strict rule, like this clear, strict rule, which has still a lot of freedom.

So similar to the regulations that we set ourselves in food sharing basically we have this strict rule catalogue, and we adapt it then to like some local context. You can apply the same principle to, to such a la- national law. And so, for example, and maybe I can illustrate that like a better example. If we go now, if we want to start a new cooperation

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with a supermarket, then oftentimes a cooperation with Foodsharing is refused because they say they have concerns due to the liability of food.

So in practise, if you pick up food there and somebody gets sick of that food, the supermarket would be afraid that somebody sues the company because he got sick of that food. But actually, this is not, not the real case. We are setting up a legal contract when Foodsharing with the supermarket that excludes this, this from happening. So I think in the end of the day, it's sadly it's, it's more economic motivations that they do not even openly discuss in a sense. So like, they are afraid that if they give away food for free somehow that people will buy less food in the market, which might actually be happening, but, um, that's why I think we, we really need this, this regulation, we cannot just build up on voluntarily cooperating.

Kaja: Yeah, I totally agree with it. And I would just add that also, education is an important point where more could be done. There's already this initiative, which is called *Zu gut für die Tonne!*, something like "too good for the bin", which is trying to educate people that food doesn't always need to look perfect and flawless and, to be still good. And I think there's still lots of kind of, yeah, wrong knowledge out there that people don't know any more so much about what food can be eaten and how to avoid food waste.

David: Basically, it's just teaching people back their instincts; and now people look at the yogurt and they read the date and throw it away instead of just opening, smelling, maybe tasting a little bit, and usually you can immediately tell whether it's enjoyable or not. So this is basically, yeha, a little bit, bac- back to the roots and encouraging people to actually use their senses and also their common sense.

Final Comments (28:46 – 31:09)

Joly: Definitely. And also, I think that the main issue of like this, um, out-of-date things and one is that they have been made by corporations themselves. So in the end of the day, it's like food cooperation who are governing the overall food system. And I think we're getting towards the end of the discussion, and I'd like to maybe let the chance to make a last comment or something that you would like to share with our listeners.

Kaja: Actually, when we were in email contact a bit before about what this Foodsharing podcast could be about, you also asked us how the pandemic changed what we are doing and what we can do. And when David and I talked about it, we actually both thought that not so much changed and we were pretty much able to continue our activities. And I think this really made clear to me that we are resilient in a way and that we are, or that how we work at the moment is something that, yeah, really works well. And because we are so small scale and have many adaptive different cooperations and rules and we are flexible, we can also kind of function in difficult times. And that's, yeah, your question really made me appreciate that our structure works so well under different conditions.

David: Yeah mayb- maybe I can add in a final, as a final word, that in a sense what Foodsharing taught me, or this whole story is that every small action counts. So if you want to do something good for the environment, if you want to do something good for justice, just do it. And even if it's just some infinitesimal piece of action, whatever, everything helps and every step in the right direction put us closer in the end of the day to the to the final goal. And that's how we started Foodsharing, and that's why we do it, and that's why we keep going.

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Joly: That's a really positive perspective, building blocks on small, local scale initiatives. So I'd like to thank you very much for like letting us know about your action and the huge challenges you're actually strive to address and so on this concluding word, thanks a lot.

David: Yeah, also thanks a lot that we can be here today, and thanks a lot for the invitation of the interview.

Kaja: It was a pleasure. Thank you.

[Music]

Post-Interview Discussion (31:10 – 39:08)

Ian: All right, Kate. Well, I hope you had a nice time doing the dishes and you managed to get them nice and clean. Thanks again for the breakfast. What did you make of the interview?

Kate: Well, certainly an easy way to have time pass when you're doing dishes and listening to a good interview. Yeah, super interesting and very in admiration of these university students who are working to, you know, fight food waste in Freiburg. I had some questions around kind of like scalability of this of this model, but I think, you know, as they rightly put it, this isn't supposed to scale.

This is just the Band-Aid that is in the intermittent phase before we actually come up with a real solution for food waste. So I was very, like, very, I very much like their approach of, you know, they know that this isn't going to be the end all, be it solution, but this is something that they can do now to actually make practical impact happen during these times.

Ian: Exactly, exactly. And they didn't, I mean, and they were totally reflective on this, right? They wanted to make themselves superfluous. They, they knew that they only, I mean, they said that they're doing something on a on a quite local scale, even though it had, you know, why, even though they were part of wider networks. But they want to make themselves, eventually, they want to stop doing that. They want that basically solved the problem of food waste on a wider scale.

But it was interesting, I think, because it does politicise it, as they mentioned. You know, it makes people think about food. It makes, you know, your housemates think about the amount of food that's wasted when you start bringing it home. And I think this is like, super important. Because I think for a lot of people, they probably don't realise the scale of food waste and and even the yeah, the the ideocracy of it, like when very often as it seems like people actually don't need to throw away food.

And that's the other thing I thought was really interesting was that they were really like sort of calling people to use their senses again; like both their common sense, but also, you know, their smell and their taste and their touch to know for themselves whether or not food is edible or not. Because I think there's something really a bit worrying about how dumb we've become, like where we've stopped trusting our own bodies and have started just to trust like labels.

Or we sta- the same way, I think like when we're using Google Maps to go around the city, we've stopped trusting our senses, or a sense of direction or even like, to learn like a city. Instead, we just allow a GPS system to direct us and then we stop actually learning. So I think, whilst of course such things are useful, at the same time, I'm wondering what

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they're doing in terms of just reducing our own body's ability to learn and to know things about what we put in our bodies or about our environment or anything else.

Kate: Mm hmm. It's the same with, with calories. When my mother eats food, she never thinks about kind of this is 200, 300, this can get me to, you know, a thousand or 2000 or whatnot. Like, she just eats what feels right. She knows what's healthy because it's just, you know, it's just something that you learn when you're a child. And then she uses her intuition, you know, and, and tries to eat healthy that way.

And I think that's just being so much more in-tune than when you're just counting things and it makes you feel, you know, have very little agency over your body if you don't even understand it and can't even sense whether you're hungry, not hungry, whether this is, you know, bad food, whether this is good food, whether it's gone, gone rotten or not. I mean, I totally agree. I think it's kind of dangerous that we've maybe made everything so technical that it's kind of losing our ability to even understand ourselves.

Ian: Yeah, yeah. no, I totally I totally agree. Also makes a difference, I think, when everything is packaged the way it is inside supermarkets very often, and they all talked about the sort of the need for things to be packaged for, you know, health reasons like, I'm also a little bit sceptical of this. I mean, it's- I mean, like markets have functioned totally fine where you can actually touch and move around food, right? I know they said it was COVID reasons, but most supermarkets, especially in the U.K., I'm not sure about Germany, like, almost everything is it comes in a plastic wrapper, right?

Like in your local supermarket, which is just insane because it basically means even when you're buying the food, you don't even know, like you can't even smell it. You know, you can't even, you know, you pick up a, pick up some fruit, it's already like wrapped in plastic. You can't even, you're not even allowed to touch it, to know whether or not it's fresh or not, or whether or not, you know, it smells decent. And I think that's also pretty worrying in terms of, in terms of our relationship to food, you know, and how it distance- distances us bodily from the things that we actually put inside ourselves.

Kate: Hmm. And I also think that's just like another, as we do that, as we distance ourselves, it's just easier to kind of agree with the food waste that we're doing. If you see the food as kind of this thing wrapped in plastic, which doesn't really smell and you don't see the work behind it, you don't see the soil behind it, it's just very easy to toss it because there's maybe a two percent chance it's gone bad.

Ian: Exactly. Instead of realising what it is, it's an amazing thing that is grown out the ground. It was a living thing, you know, and like all of these things, you forget, like, yeah, when in this sort of, in our way of, yeah, consuming these days.

Kate: Have you ever been on a farm?

Ian: Yes. I worked to a farm for a few months, actually, on an organic farm for about five months.

Kate: How did that change your perception of our food system and food in general?

Ian: Well, yeah, it gives you, it gives you great appreciation, like when you spend four months watering cucumber, because it was an organic farm with no electricity or any mechanic- mechanical anything. And so we did everything by hand. So really, of course, it totally changes how you think about the food that you eat when you have been watering it for four months. Also, everything tastes great, but I think that's because you're doing hard physical labour and, you know, like and so, and so you just, like food taste good, like when, when you do that sort of work right at the end of the day.

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So, um, but yeah, I think of it in terms of like a violence towards the Earth in a sense that like that we, that we, when we have sort of mass farming and produced in this way, I understand that we want cheap food and it's good that we have cheaper foods so that people shouldn't go hungry, but also we have to always, I think, remember the value of food, and what it actually means. I know usually I'm the one who's sounding a bit more sceptical on this podcast, and now I've come across all very hippy, but, but I think it's yeah, but I, but yeah, but really like food is, it's the, it's comes out of the Earth and it's just like, that's certainly something which is, which is something that gives it a special characteristic that's not there in, in other products, you know. Food isn't a product only, you know, it becomes a product, but at some point, it's something which is grown. And I think that's like fundamentally important and something that we need to reconnect with.

Kate: And you were saying food is, food is cheap, but if we were able to use that one third of our food, I think even like the base price of kind of, a more sustainable way of eating and food could also potentially be cheaper or more affordable. So I think there's just so much waste in the supply chain. Totally, totally.

Ian: And for sure, and the thing is we talk about anything that's cheap, there's a reason why it's cheap, probably because it's been made under not particularly nice conditions. I mean, you look at the tomato farms in Spain, they look pretty horrible places to work, you know, and or why are we bringing food across, you know, from one part of the continent to another, just because it's slightly cheaper. So there's loads and loads of problems, but I think we can't get into them all, but I think we should rather, yeah, remain inspired, I think, by these food sharers in Freiburg, which I don't pronounce anywhere near, as well as you, Kate, revealing your third identity, not just Hungarian and American, but also, also a bit German. Tell us, how can how can people get in touch with want to get in touch?

Kate: Yes, they could email us, tweet us, we're on social media and various other forms. Below, you can find all the information to reach out to us. And if you want to be an Urban Arena correspondent, we are very happy to get listeners submissions. So just again, email, tweet and send us your thoughts about what makes for a better, more sustainable, more just future.

Ian: All right, Kate. It's been a pleasure. Sorry for raiding your fridge.

Kate: I forgive.

Ian: Okay, you're too kind. Bye!

Kate: Bye!

[Music]

Disclaimer

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