

EXPO 2015.

FOOD AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES: TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF NUTRITION, PLANET EARTH AND THE HUMAN BEING

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Abstract: *The relationship with food has always structured the relationship of man with the world. Food is the mediator of relationships, intertwining traditions, culture of dialogue; it is a factor that calls for occasions of brotherhood and solidarity, powers of human sustainability and of the planet. To promote paths and moments of dialogue among peoples in view of a shared food culture and to be attentive to the values of nature and sustainability may allow you to successfully address the food crises of our century. The Universal Exposition of Milan represents a unique opportunity to reflect and build intercultural and interdisciplinary training programs which can generate a human community where sustainable lifestyles, economy, infrastructure and technologies do not interfere with the inherent ability of nature to sustain life.*

Keywords: *nutritional education, universal exposition, intercultural, sustainability*

1. INTRODUCTION

The capacity of the future of all living beings is deeply linked to the culture of existing life, built and transmitted through the educational processes. Educational commitment requires, more than ever, particular widespread attention for food, intended both as education and how to eat properly to avoid waste. In a world in which the plight of hunger is increasingly present, reflecting on food becomes important for pedagogy and educational sciences, calling for the challenges of sustainability and complexity, as well as an unwavering commitment to building a collective consciousness based on the principles of justice and equity. The event of EXPO, from the title *Nourish the Planet, Energy for Life*, invites us to think precisely about these big issues. The possibility that these problems are faced depends on the interest of global society to ensure that every man can fully fulfill himself, only in this case, by rediscovering the central role of the person, can we make sure that sustainable development, and its food issues, become part of integral human development.

2. FOOD AND CULTURE: BETWEEN DIALOGUE AND POWER

Food is the only daily thing which man cannot possibly do without: without food man cannot survive. It is also an instrument of social and

cultural identity and, therefore, an opportunity for dialogue and peace in festivities, when different civilizations and cultures have occasion of being together. Power is seen as one of the most important elements to define ideological barriers, policies or to create connections, to build intercultural dynamics: food is, not surprisingly, a mechanism that reveals ethnic, cultural, and social identities (Scholliers, 2001). It is a vehicle for self-representation (Neresini, Rettore, 2008:114) and cultural exchange: the food system feeds on tradition and represents the most immediate way to get in touch with other cultures. One example is the

contamination between different cultures which took place during the European Middle Ages. At that time, in fact, contamination between Roman culture and the barbaric combines the consumption of bread, wine and oil with meat and animal fats (Barilla Center Food and Nutrition, 2012 :18).

The discovery of fire and with it the ability to transform nature resulted in enormous progressive cultural developments, especially in the field of nutrition, so much so that Levi Strauss states that cooking food with fire was the invention that made humans more human (Levi Strauss, 2008). The shift from food eaten raw to cooked food was a starting point for the development of human society and, within it, of the many cultures that characterize it.

Over time and with the prevalence of the processes and needs related to the markets, the relationship that man has established with food has changed considerably, from good food (Levi Strauss, 2008) to eat (rich in nutritive principles), to thinking (attractive for a date culture) and to cultivate (able to take into account the limits of the earth and its ability to reproduce) to good food to sell (Birbes, 2012:19-20), which is merchandise, undermining the local equilibrium since it is no longer fresh, seasonal, linked to the territory, to its culture or linked to economic interests: the

good food to sell eventually affects the good thoughts, that is [...] about our value system. Since such ambiguity must move towards an education in food (Birbes, 2012:20).

Today we are aware of a need for more and more widespread authenticity which binds to the discovery of sustainability in all its forms (environmental, social, economic, institutional) and that calls into question the food industry to assume new responsibilities. Precisely for this reason it is necessary to redirect the future of food (Barilla Center Food and Nutrition, 2012:31):

- Valuing conviviality. Ours is a time of poor relations, where food can become an opportunity to meet. It is therefore appropriate to enhance the social dimension that characterizes the moments in which it is consumed.

- Protecting the variety of local regions. Since expression of the identity of a community, food is the possibility of both continuous rediscovery of traditions and of relationships with other cultures. For this to happen it is necessary to preserve the richness of identity, without the sacrifice of taste contamination.

- By transferring knowledge and know-how in the fields of cultural wealth. This wealth is given both at the moment in which food is prepared and at the time when it is consumed and requires good skills which they are passed on and transferred in time.

- Focusing on the ingredients. The relationship between food quality and quality of the cultural experience is very strong. We can really promote the excellence of the ingredients, especially in their relationship with the region.

- Recuperating the value of food as a means of fruitful relationships between the generations. Across the table and by sharing food it is possible to educate the sharing of goods and affections. This is one of the aspects that must be recovered as part of the reconstruction of a social fabric that modernity has weakened.

- Recovering ancient flavours that can be reinvented with contemporary taste. This is one of the main ways of communicating the phenomena of a cultural nature.

- Spreading the culture of taste and the art of living through authentic food. Food does not only refer to protein, carbohydrates and other nutrients, but to all those values, those symbols, those situations that allow, through it, to know the world and to experience other cultures.

Eating habits reveal characters and cultural values: the man is what he eats, but it is also conceivable that which we eat is, that is, we are nourished by foods filled with culture. It is the food itself that speaks: of beliefs, history, geography, traditions and exchanges between the peoples of the world, of social rank. The food "speaks" which communicates customs and people (Birbes, 2012:33).

3. FOOD AND CULTURE: REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

Nutrition education, with its attention to biodiversity, to the rhythms of nature and seasonality, involves and implicates different educational agencies (from the family to school, from health care to all those institutions that deal with environmental education) and looks at social issues such as citizenship and citizen solidarity. It takes a multidisciplinary perspective, it cuts across the school curriculum and promotes, through direct experience, with the assumption of conscious behaviour and responsibility towards the environment, the community and of each person:

sustaining a culture of hope, consistency and commitment, care and creativity will be the educational challenge for a renewed moderation of the use and consumption of goods, for true sustainability as a responsibility within and between generations (Birbes, 2012:33).

The recorded spread of eating disorders invites schools to build pathways to nutrition education which can promote a healthy relationship with food. The 'Guidelines for nutrition education in the Italian schools' (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2011) represents a clear framework for the practice of nutrition education in the classroom, to be structured in partnership with families and local agencies, it calls to "establish an educational system that has the promotion of the common welfare as its objective." (Donegani, 2013:33-34).

EXPO 2015. FOOD AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES: TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF NUTRITION, PLANET EARTH AND THE HUMAN BEING

Issued by the Ministry of Education in 2011, these guidelines indicate methodological aspects for the organization of curriculum and teaching activities and recognize five areas of key content:

1. The senses are essential for the assessment of food both in taste, in quality and safety;
2. Nutrition, understood as attention to nutritional values and needs and lifestyles;
3. The food product sector, or knowledge of food, which raw materials they contain, how they are processed and how the food is prepared and distributed for a greater awareness.
4. Hygiene and safety, giving importance to proper food handling and correct storage.
5. The culture of food, which coincides with the gastronomic traditions, the ways in which foods are consumed, eating habits, rituals, regional management, catering, intercultural.

The Guidelines give four focuses, a hypothetical path of nutrition education to be implemented in schools, in line with the psychological and experiential development pace of the individual:

- Me, the food on my plate and my body, that is the food that I am eating;
- Me, the food in my day, school and family, or the time, the rules and moments of eating, socializing;
- Me, the food, the season the friends and the area I live in, or the moments and times of consumption, places of food and eating habits, behavior and ethics;
- Me, the food and the company, in the world and in time, i.e. the intercultural dimension linked to food.

The achievement of the desired educational goals is dependent on the support of school leaders sensitive to the issue of trained and motivated teachers, with joint efforts from the educational institution, the healthcare sector and households in view of an integrated training system (Frabboni, 1991).

On 28 April 2015, on the eve of the inauguration of the Universal Exhibition in Milan, members of the research community, civil society, food production approved the 'Charter of Milan' (Carta di Milano, 2015) considered the most important intangible legacy of EXPO 2015. That document emphasizes the importance of proper nutrition education from childhood, as essential for the acquisition of a healthy lifestyle and to help improve the quality of life. The paper proposes a number of commitments which as citizens, civil society, the business world and politics it is necessary to make.

As regards the field of education, in particular, it stresses the need to:

- Promote food and environmental education in the family environment for the growth of awareness of new generations;
- Support and promote a culture of healthy eating as an instrument of global health;
- Increase resources for research, the transfer of its results, training and communication;
- Introduce or reinforce, nutrition education, physical and environmental health in schools and school lunch programs and as instruments of prevention, emphasizing in particular the knowledge and exchange of different food cultures.

Nutrition education is an educational crisis today especially when you consider that more than eight hundred million people worldwide suffer from hunger: this is an emergency that calls into question not the amount of food produced (definitely enough to feed the population of the planet) but consumer choices, the buying behaviour and daily food consumption.

Amongst ecological expertise today it appears ever more urgent to develop the food industry not only as a choice of food, but also as the ability to grasp the meaning of social ethics. It assumes a more pronounced value to the extent that they offer an educational path designed, shared and communicated to network with organizations in the area, including through the use of new technologies and multimedia, with the view of a correct and successful integration of formal, non-formal and informal education.

4. EXPO 2015, THE PROTOCOL AND THE CHARTER OF MILAN FOR A RENEWED IDEA OF EATING, FOOD AND EDUCATION

The EXPO is a global event, the largest meeting place in the world to meet and invites us to reflect on the country, the private sector, civil society and public opinion worldwide. According to the provisions of Art. 1 of the Paris Convention of 1928 of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), an exhibition is an event that has any capacity, which has as its main purpose to educate the public. The theme that accompanies the Universal Exhibition of Milan is human nutrition through an interdisciplinary course that involves the economy, education, history, environmental science, cultural heritage and food and wine, anthropology, agricultural science, medicine, technology, and focuses on: science and technology for food security; science and

technology for agriculture and biodiversity; innovation in the food industry; nutrition education; nutrition and lifestyles; food and culture; co-operation and development in nutrition.

The programmatic theme of Expo, Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life, invites the education to activate thought processes surrounding areas of specific interest, which arise, now more than ever, as essential issues: in addition to food and human nutrition, looking at energy and sustainability, the common good and solidarity, lifestyles, quality and food safety. These are

perspectives of discussion where guidance and training are of great importance, which represent the real wealth of nations. (Malavasi, 2013:86)

The Universal Exposition of Milan can represent, then, an opportunity to offer the pedagogical world to question and build educational programs around sustainability, in view of the construction of the fertile city,

which is a brand new way of understanding cooperation at local and international, development policies and sustainability, the sign of a virtuous relationship between the people and the resources of creation (Malavasi, 2013:105),

where the joint effort aims to create goods and services have the capacity to focus on the person and the environment, respect for legality and the characteristics of the region.

This event can also be the source of educational courses in politics, in lifelong and lifewide perspectives, through the considerable opportunities of participatory planning that will accompany the World Expo since its opening to its closing (May 1, 2015 - October 31, 2015): Expo is an opportunity, finally, to educate the exercise of the right of world citizenship, inviting each person to rediscover the sense and meaning of their personal and collective responsibility, to understand what contribution each can give to the integrated management of natural resources, to pay attention to the living conditions and nutrition of other living beings (humans but not exclusively), to recognize virtues and vices of development, technology, innovation.

The possibility that EXPO can really achieve the goals, especially educationally, pursued is expressed to the extent that participating countries are widely involved through projects, paths, initiatives, events related to the themes of the exhibition in Milan. In particular role of the school is crucial, through which the participation and

involvement of students, teachers and families is possible and who are invited to reflect and face the challenge in order to positively build and improve the Society and the field of reference:

The central position adopted by EXPO 2015 and the nutritional themes urges, even in schools, the promotion of specific professional skills to govern change and manage innovative processes. The decisive factor is the aim of sharing good practice of sustainability by rediscovering the link with food and the proposed initiatives involving the region in adopting lifestyles respectful to the people and the environment. (Bornatici, 2013:86).

EXPO invites promotion of food culture through a systemic approach, attention to products and people, but also to established relationships between one another: the school is

the social institution that can perform the task to drive the process of recovery before anything else and an emotional and cultural exploration of food heritage of our country. (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Universita' e della Ricerca, 2015).

As part of EXPO 2015, the objectives of nutrition education in the school are (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Universita' e della Ricerca, 2015):

- To encourage awareness of the importance of food-health relationship in order to allow the development of a personal and collective consciousness;
- To promote the knowledge of the food system by understanding the relationships between production systems and distribution systems;
- To promote a concept of overall quality of food to complement the ethical issues of food safety, sustainability and seasonality of food, intercultural and regionalism;
- Promote the transversality of nutritional education;
- To promote the adoption of healthy eating habits, through the use of innovative teaching methods and assuring respect for the environment, the law, ethical principles, tradition and culture of the area.

The revolutionary impact of EXPO 2015 is not so much interested becoming memorable for the legacy of new vertical monuments, but for the potential intangible heritage that can result from the Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life theme. This intangible heritage, embodied in the widespread awareness on the subject as a result of implemented educational processes, is guaranteed by the contributions that the participants bring to Milan,

EXPO 2015. FOOD AND DIALOGUE BETWEEN CULTURES: TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF NUTRITION, PLANET EARTH AND THE HUMAN BEING

because it is from this kind of participation - in content and visions of the world - that a message will descend and a meaning that will remain in time. (Comitato per EXPO, 2012).

Clear expression of the commitment to ensure that this legacy is translated into something concrete is the Protocol of Milan which was created with the intention of making it clear and known objective that the world cannot have no respect towards food.

The Exhibition of Milan is one of the most delicious occasions to put at the centre of the politicians and decision makers' agendas the great food challenge of this historical period and that which the Protocol of Milan intends to deal with through the pursuit of three objectives: the fight against hunger and obesity, promoting healthy lifestyles from childhood; promotion of sustainable agriculture and the fight against financial speculation on food commodities; combating food waste, in the North and South of the planet, from the field to the table.

The achievement of the objectives of the Protocol of Milan is possible through the implementation of projects that propose new forms of nutritional education and training and sustainable production of food resources. A major role can be played by digital technologies and the internet

Apps designed to raise awareness of what people eat or to learn how to cook healthily and sustainably. Technologies to interact and make household appliances more efficient, or to collect important data about the land on which it is cultivated. Digital platforms are also assigned the task of gathering knowledge and practices, transforming them into stories and experiences that are capable of changing the patterns of consumption and communication between people. (Barilla Center Food and Nutrition, 2015:12-14)

In the Protocol of Milan education it is considered a fundamental weapon to win the battle against food waste: the chance to fight incorrect lifestyles by structuring training which can promote new forms of management of food and environmental resources, so as to promote the development of sustainable behaviour, desirable and accessible to all.

5. CONCLUSION

To implement measures to limit food waste would mean to commit to the implementation of

political reforms, but also to promote training courses for the development of a social and environmental conscience.

Teaching, responsible for promoting processes of education to change lifelong and lifewide perspectives, we cannot escape from the identification of the tools necessary to understand the here and now and plan for the future.

We must turn to the future without projecting our illusions, create hypotheses to test their validity, learn to gradually and cautiously shift the frontiers of the unknown: this is what science teaches us, that is what every educational program should promote and which should inspire political reflection. (Augè, 2012:106)

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