

Youth Food Futures: Appetites and Aspirations of Adolescents in Vietnam

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Young generations have a considerable stake in present and future trajectories of food system transformations. For inclusive and effective food systems governance, it is crucial to understand the practices and the visions of adolescents as both current and future stakeholders.

As food consumers, they are predominantly portrayed as either victims or agents of change.

However, this binary does not do justice to the more complex and versatile interrelations between adolescent lifestyles and dynamic food environments. Adolescence is a period in the life course in which key habits, preferences and values are shaped as individuals acquire new abilities and capacities and increasingly gain agency (Fox & Timmer, 2020). The interactions between the unique features of this life stage and dynamic and diverse food environments have been understudied (Neufeld et al., 2022). Growing up in times of rapid change, adolescents could be seen as a generation of practitioners that can adopt, reproduce, reshape, de-routinize, or abandon food practices, thereby shifting the ways of shopping, preparing and eating over time that older generations have shaped and taken for granted.

Moreover, how young people experience food in their everyday lives today may shape their visions, expectations and aspirations for the future of food and their own food consumption. In turn, anticipated futures can be performative, shaping practices in the present (Oomen et al., 2021).

Building on an ongoing study on current differentiated daily food practices between adults and adolescents in urban, peri-urban, and rural Northern Vietnam, this research aims to explore how adolescents engage with near and distant food futures in terms of their aspirations and their capabilities in shaping sustainable and healthy food futures within their everyday lives. Shifting the focus from present to future practices we reflect on the design of a participatory futuring methodology suitable for adolescents in these contexts. This research may offer entry points for inclusive and transformative food system interventions benefiting young and future generations.

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