

CALL FOR PAPERS AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS: **Alternative food supply networks in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards new grounds for interpretation and collaboration**

When: October 13-14, 2017

Where: Riga, Latvia

Deadline for abstract submission: July 5, 2017

The Baltic Studies Centre, in cooperation with the Latvian Academy of Culture, is organising the scientific and practical conference “Alternative food supply networks in Central and Eastern Europe: Towards new grounds for interpretation and collaboration”. The conference will be held in Riga, Latvia, on 13-14 October 2017. The organisers invite researchers and practitioners to submit papers exploring the diversity of food practices in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

During the last couple of decades, food systems across CEE in particular, and in Europe in general, have faced a diverse set of challenges: the global economic crisis and the associated drop in household income; the Russian ban on food trade with the EU; food quality scandals; growing environmental unpredictability; outbreaks of animal diseases; and the evolving food system regulations, to name a few. However, so far the impacts of food system changes taking place in CEE countries have been studied mainly from a conventional perspective, that is, an intensification-oriented approach that focuses on the global market performance. Furthermore, studies have tended to rely on conceptual and theoretical frameworks developed in Western contexts. This hampers the development of comprehensive understanding of the food systems in CEE and limits opportunities to learn from the rich pool of food practices present in the region.

Global challenges have facilitated a broad spectrum of changes in CEE food systems: reinterpretations of social, political, economic, ethical and cultural characteristics of food and food systems; the rediscovery of culturally-rooted food supply models; the adoption of new, more responsible and self-reflexive relations with food. Emerging food interpretations do not cast food as solely market-oriented, but reveal its socio-cultural aspects, manifested through solidarity with local producers or consumers, establishing linkages between food and local identity, maintaining local traditions of food production and consumption. They also express environmental concerns through the focus on environmentally friendly food production, distribution and consumption. While some of these food supply models have been only recently rediscovered, they may have a long history and can hold strong cultural roots – such as informal food flows from rural to urban areas, *dacha* and allotment-based individual cultivation practices, food preserving, extensive wild product foraging, a rich history of open markets and food sharing. Recently, CEE food activists have also discovered and adapted some of the diverse alternative food supply models common elsewhere in Europe. Examples of these new alternative food networks include food boxes, urban agriculture, green public procurement, etc.

Despite the growing presence of alternative food supply models in CEE, there is no well systematised knowledge on the development of these alternative food/ supply networks, their driving forces and influencing factors, their adaptability to dynamic environments/challenges, and their outcomes/ impact on regional food systems. There have also been few attempts to conceptualise these networks in CEE contexts.

The conference aims to facilitate a systematic reflection of how alternative food networks in CEE are developed, practiced and theorised. The conference invites **researchers** from various disciplines (including but not limited to sociology, anthropology, cultural studies and humanities, geography, economics, creative industries and entrepreneurship, environmental studies) and **practitioners** engaged in alternative food initiatives to share insights on the evolving alternative food practices in CEE. The

conference particularly – but not exclusively – encourages discussions on the following issues from theoretical, empirical, methodological, practical and policy perspectives:

- **Diversity of alternative food networks (AFNs):** responses of alternative food supply networks to societal demands and challenges, as well as dynamic food system contexts in CEE;
- **Cultural embeddedness:** the role of culture, tradition and retro-innovation in maintaining and re-discovering the alternatives to conventional food supply chains; food as a symbol of national/ regional/ ethnic identity; food supply and consumption as experience;
- **Organisation of AFNs:** actors of alternative food networks, their motivations, values, business models and organisational/legal incorporation, and capabilities;
- **Theoretical approaches towards AFNs:** strengths and weaknesses of the existing theoretical approaches and conceptualisations; the extent to which theories developed in one context may capture the peculiarities and role of AFNs in different contexts; theory development based on practical examples;
- **Forms of collaboration in AFNs:** bottom-up initiatives, horizontal and vertical collaborations, emerging partnerships and institutional arrangements; forms of creative, social entrepreneurship in AFNs;
- **Governance and policy:** governance of AFNs, including political recognition and emerging policy frameworks and instruments;
- **Food discourses:** shifts in food interpretation discourses and the role of alternative food initiatives in these transformations;

The conference welcomes wide range of contributions – scientific papers, practitioner stories, video-presentations about AFNs, and other “alternative” formats. To apply, please send your abstract of 200-300 words to the following e-mail address: kristine.bramberga@lka.edu.lv. Submission deadline: 5 July 2017. Each submission should include the following information: your name, institutional affiliation and email address; presentation title, keywords and abstract. All proposals will be reviewed by the conference organising committee, and decision will be made by 15 July 2017. The accepted contributors will have the opportunity to publish extended abstracts in the conference proceedings. Participation in the conference is free of charge.

Additional information about the conference: <https://lka.edu.lv/en/featured/news/call-papers-and-practical-contributions/>.

If you have any questions, please contact kristine.bramberga@lka.edu.lv or mikelis.grivins@gmail.com.