

7th SSRC International Conference Workshop
2011
NUI, Galway

Society, Culture and the Environment (VII)

Date: 25-26th March 2011

Venue: School of Political Science and Sociology (Áras Moyola), NUI, Galway, Galway, Ireland

Workshop Title:

**'We Are What We (Do Not) Eat':
Linking Food Production and Consumption**

The **production and consumption of food** represents a key area of human activity that is inextricably linked to wider socio-political, environmental and economic conditions. Transformations in agricultural practices associated with the rise of productionism and technological advancements have been, and continue to be, central to social and political change in many parts of the world today. At the same time, the impact of climate change on the availability of arable land serves to highlight humankind's reliance on natural resources, notwithstanding current efforts in biotechnology to reduce dependence on favourable environmental conditions and to create conditions for lab-based food production.

The consumption of food remains an important source of individual and collective identity in an increasingly globalised world. Decisions on what (not) to eat remain central to people's everyday cultural and social practices and form an integral part of family and community life. Efforts to make the consumption of food more sustainable, including labelling and the promotion of local, ethically sourced, meat-free and organic foods, need to address the cultural rootedness and social relevance of people's food choices. At the same time, people's resistance to dominant social, political and economic conditions can manifest itself in alternative forms of food consumption such as Slow Food and vegetarianism, all of which raises interesting questions about the meaning of 'sustainable food'.



Questions of food production and distribution remain central to current development debates. For example, food security remains a key area of concern in the context of international efforts to tackle hunger and poverty and to achieve greater sustainability on a global scale. The negative impacts of recent first generation biofuel policies in the West on food prices and the availability of staples in developing countries made visible the interconnectedness of international food and energy markets. Similarly, the destructive effects of neo-colonial 'land grabs' by states and corporations on many local food economies and subsistence farming practices serves to highlight the increasingly globalised nature of food production and consumption.

This interdisciplinary workshop will focus on social, cultural and (geo)political aspects of current trends in food production and consumption. Presentations are invited on topics such as the politics of food production, food labelling and food policy, social and cultural dimensions of food consumption, local and global food chains, the use of (bio)technology in food production and alternative food cultures.

The two-day workshop will be the seventh in the SSRC-funded workshop series *Society, Culture and the Environment*. The event will start off with a series of plenary sessions on Friday, 25th March 2011, 2-6pm in Áras Moyola, NUI, Galway. These presentations will be open to academics, students, members of the public, NGO representatives and activists. The academic workshop session on Saturday, 26th March 2011, will facilitate 'slow papers' (30 minutes presentation time) by a small number of presenters and complementary roundtable discussions. **Attendance is free of charge.**

Contact:

Dr. Henrike Rau
School of Political Science and Sociology
NUI, Galway
Galway
Ireland

e-mail: henrike.rau@nuigalway.ie

Tel: +353-91-495104