Course Outline

Food Sociology: Emerging Theories and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code:</th>
<th>RSO 55806</th>
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<tr>
<td>Credits:</td>
<td>6 ECTS</td>
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</table>
| Lecturers:    | Simona d'Amico MSc  
                Agnese Cretella MSc  
                Esther Veen MSc  
                Georgina Villarreal MSc  
                Prof.dr.ir. Han Wiskerke |
| Examiners:    | Prof.dr.ir. Han Wiskerke |
| Coordinator:  | Prof.dr.ir. Han Wiskerke  
                han.wiskerke@wur.nl  
                Leeuwenborch, room 3029 |
| Period:       | 6, starting Monday 6 May 2013 |
| Lectures:     | Monday (08.30 – 10.15)  
                Wednesday (10.30 – 12.15)  
                Friday (10.30 – 12.15) |
| Venue:        | C81       |
Language of instruction: English

Assumed knowledge on:
RSO-10306 and RSO-20806 or a sociology of food course such as Origin Food (RSO-21806), Food Culture and Customs (RSO-22306), Globalisation and Sustainability of Food Production and Consumption (ENP-31806).

*Important is that students are somewhat familiar with a sociological approach to food and have a basic understanding of key sociological concepts.*

General contents:
This course addresses the dynamics of food provisioning - i.e. the range of activities from the production, acquisition and preparation to the consumption and disposal of food - from a sociological perspective. These activities are examined in their sociocultural, political and physical context by specifying and clarifying which activities are carried out, how, why and by whom. Specifically this course focuses on newly emerging food provisioning practices and the networks and institutions shaping these practices as well as on the social theories to reflect on these dynamics, networks and institutions. The specific contents of the course will differ from year to year as it based upon current international scientific collaborative research programmes and PhD projects.

Specific course content and themes in 6th period of academic year 2012/2013:
Most of the lectures will be given by PhD students of the Rural Sociology Group. They will discuss the theoretical perspectives that have inspired their empirical research. In addition they will present their research approach and their (provisional) results of empirical work. Four PhD students will each take care of one week of lecturing, tutorial and supervision of a group assignment. In addition several other PhD students and junior researchers will give a guest lecture about (a specific aspect of) their project.

The main themes of the course are:
- Food sociology: an introduction to the discipline and overview of research programs
- Social food movements and urban food strategies.
- Transition dynamics in the food system.
- Civic food networks.
- Urban agriculture and patterns of urban food provisioning

Additional specific topics that will be presented through guest lectures are:
- Dynamics and diversity of food provisioning in Dar es Salaam
- Retail food co-operatives in the UK and USA
- Local food for low income urban residents
- Transformation of street food networks in Ghana
- The emergence of fast food cuisines in Ghana
Learning outcomes:

After successful completion of the course students are expected to:

- understand the dynamics and diversity of emerging food provisioning activities;
- to be able to assess the influence of the sociocultural, political and physical context on food provisioning;
- to be able to apply and compare different sociological concepts to reflect on food provisioning activities.

Specific learning outcomes per course theme are mentioned in the detailed course schedule.

Activities:

Lectures, Workshops, Self-Study, Group Assignments.

Examination:

Group Assignments (40%); Individual essay-like exam (60%).

Literature:

Articles and book chapters available through EduWeb.

Learning materials and resources

- Scientific articles, working papers, conference proceedings, book chapters, videos and other study material available through EduWeb.
- Lecture slides and notes
Assessment strategy

The course will be concluded with two forms of final assessment:
1. A written exam (60% of the final mark), which consists of essay like questions about the literature, lectures and workshops. The exam consists of several open questions, which are divided in weighed sub-questions.
2. Weekly group assignments that will be introduced at the beginning of the week (Monday lecture) and discussed during the Friday workshop. The group assignments focus on the first two general learning outcomes as well as on the specific learning outcomes specified for each course theme.

In the table below a detailed assessment strategy is presented, specifying what is being assessed, how and by whom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Form of assessment</th>
<th>Examiners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Group assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>To understand the dynamics and diversity of emerging food provisioning activities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>To assess the influence of the sociocultural, political and physical context on food provisioning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>To apply and compare different sociological concepts to reflect on food provisioning activities</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contribution to final mark</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Threshold mark to pass the course</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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HW = Han Wiskerke;  
** Dictionaries are allowed at the exam but no course texts, lecture slides or lecture notes. The mark for the exam will remain valid for 1 year  
*** The mark for the group assignments will remain valid for 1 year.
Course Schedule

Week 1 (May 6-10th): Food sociology – an introduction to the discipline and overview of research
In the first week of the course, the schedule, contents and aims of the course are presented. This is followed by an exploration of the emergence and development of food sociology as a specific scientific (sub)discipline within social sciences. This exploration will conclude with an overview of current research themes and scientific challenges. This will enable students to understand the themes and theories of this course within the broader framework of food sociology.

In the second lecture in the first week developments during the past 15 years in food research at the Rural Sociology Group will be presented and discussed. This will mainly be done by showing the contents, research approaches and empirical and theoretical results of international (predominantly European) research projects. As a result, students will come to understand that food sociology at the Rural Sociology Group has evolved from a rural production-based focus to a much broader research program that currently also includes an urban consumption perspective.

Monday 6 May 2013 (C81) – Han Wiskerke (lecture)
08.30 – 10.15  Introduction to the course and to food sociology

Literature:

Wednesday 8 May 2013 (C81) – Han Wiskerke (lecture)
10.30 – 12.15  Food sociology research: an overview of RSO food research projects

Background information:
- IMPACT: [www.rural-impact.net](http://www.rural-impact.net)
- SUS-CHAIN: [www.sus-chain.org](http://www.sus-chain.org)
- COFAMI: [www.cofami.org](http://www.cofami.org)
- SINER-GI: [www.origin-food.org](http://www.origin-food.org)
- FOODLINKS: [www.foodlinkscommunity.net](http://www.foodlinkscommunity.net)
- PUREFOOD: [http://purefood.eu](http://purefood.eu)
- SUPURBFOOD: [www.supurbfood.eu](http://www.supurbfood.eu)

Friday 10 May 2013 – no lecture or tutorial
Week 2 (May 13-17th): Exploring alternative urban food initiatives

The first part of the lecture will have a historical/chronological approach to introduce and explain some key food sociology themes such as the commodification of the food system and the rise of opposition movements. Friedmann’s article about social movements and food regimes will be key to understand how the commoditization of food evolved. It will also give an insight on the current debate on the tensions between Global/Local, Conventional/alternative, Urban/Rural. Next, drawing on Steel’s book, the relation between food and the cities will be examined through a historical constructed lens. The introductory chapter of the book will reinforce the understanding on how global developments directly affect localities.

In the second part of the lecture the theme of alternative food movements will be introduced by presenting some examples of those active in cities (e.g. alternative food networks (AFN), Food co-op, guerrilla gardening). The creation process of a new food aesthetic fostered by food social movements will be key to introduce the newest “official”/ “institutionalized” initiatives in cities: Urban food strategies and Food Policy Councils. A reading on the case of London will then start a discussion on how and why local institutions are taking up the lead in tuning their agenda closer to alternative food movements’ concerns.

Learning outcomes:
- To understand how food global processes have a direct influence on localities and on people everyday life.
- To understand the actual and potential role of cities in creating alternatives.
- To be aware of the role of food social movements as drivers of change.
- To be able to distinguish between different types of urban food policies and to analyze them.

Monday 13 May 2013 (C81) – Agnese Cretella (lecture)
08.30 – 09.15 Problematizing the food system and the urban food provisioning
09.30 – 10.15 Food social movements and urban food policies

Literature:

Wednesday 15 May 2013 (C81) – Agnese Cretella (tutorial) & guest lecture
10.30 – 12.15 Short documentaries on various urban food policies initiatives, followed by a guest lecture by a representative of the Youth food movement: [http://youthfoodmovement.nl/](http://youthfoodmovement.nl/)

Friday 17 May 2013 (C81) – Agnese Cretella (workshop)
10.30 – 12.15 Reflection on lecture and literature, group assignment and discussion
**Week 3 (May 20-24) - Food sociology research in progress**
This week, several PhD students of the Rural Sociology Group will present their research project. This enables the students attending this course to gain insight into the diversity of research topics, methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks and geographical contexts of sociological food studies carried out by the Rural Sociology Group.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday 20 May 2013 – No lectures</th>
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<th>Wednesday 22 May 2013 (C81) – Guest lectures</th>
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<td>10.30 – 11.15</td>
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<th>Friday 24 May 2013 (C81) – Guest lectures</th>
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Week 4 (May 27th – 31st): Transition dynamics in the food system

This week will start with an overview of the food sector as a complex and evolving system. A focused exploration will follow allowing for the identification of nodes and actors in the food supply chain with key potential for leveraging change. After this initial analysis a look at the basics of Transition Theory will provide a framework to discuss current change dynamics in the food system. This discussion will connect the reviewed concepts and analysis with examples of sustainability efforts coming from the food industry. A reflection on the transformative potential of such initiatives will serve as conclusion for this week.

Learning outcomes:
- To recognise and understand the complex nature of the food system and its co-evolutionary development trajectory.
- To understand the basic concepts of Transition Theory
- To understand and analyse current sustainability efforts coming from the food industry in the context of a larger transition in the food system.
- To identify and analyse examples of changes in the food system and how they relate to the larger context.

Monday 27 May 2013 (C81) – Gina Villarreal (lecture)
08.30 – 10.15  Transition dynamics in the food system

Literature:

Wednesday 29 May 2013 (C81) – Gina Villarreal (tutorial)
10.30 – 12.15  Tutorial

Friday 31 May 2013 (C81) – Gina Villarreal (workshop)
10.30 – 12.15  Workshop and reflection on literature, lectures and group assignment
Week 5 (May June 3rd – 7th): Civic food networks

This week begins with an introduction to the concept of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). Different definitions and typologies of AFNs will be presented and explained. Specific attention will be paid to the distinction in AFN definitions and typologies between the US and the EU. This introduction is followed by an exploration of two emerging theories – Actor Network Theory (ANT) and Conventions Theory (CT) – in food sociology. Through the exploration of the use of ANT and CT in food sociology, current debates about embeddedness, localness, quality and opposition/conformity will be reviewed. This exploration will also highlight the importance of studying interactions in AFNs as a means to better understand AFN dynamics. Hence the lecture on Monday ends with an empirical (case study of civic food networks in Calabria) and theoretical (Interaction Ritual Theory) exploration of interactions in AFNs.

Learning outcomes:
- To identify the main themes emerging from the past and present academic debates on and empirical dynamics in AFNs.
- To understand the theoretical perspectives mostly used in the sociological domain to make sense of the complexity of European AFNs.
- To use the studied theoretical perspectives for the analysis of a case of AFNs.
- To outline the specific contribution of each of the used theoretical approaches in unveiling CFNs meanings as well as to appreciate if and how those approaches might contribute to the forefront of the academic debate on AFNs in the light of the most recent themes.

Monday 3 June 2013 (C81) – Simona d’Amico (lecture)
08.30 – 10.15 Exploring and theorizing alternative food networks

Literature:

Wednesday 5 June 2013 (C81) – Simona d’Amico (tutorial)
10.30 – 12.15 Tutorial

Friday 7 June 2013 (C81) – Simona d’Amico (workshop)
10.30 – 12.15 Workshop and reflection on literature, lectures and group assignment
**Week 6 (June 10-14th): Urban agriculture**

This week the focus is on the concept of urban agriculture. Urban agriculture is ‘hip and happening’ and the concept is therefore used to include various different activities. By looking into the concept, students will better understand what it really means and what broad range of activities it entails. This broad overview is followed by placing neighbourhood gardens within this range of activities. As neighbourhood gardens are often associated with various benefits for the urban population, attention is given to literature that describes the relation between public (green) space and behaviour. That way students will better understand the potential social benefits of neighbourhood gardens and why and under what circumstances they can be expected to take place. Special focus will be given to the concept of social cohesion; what does it mean and why is it expected to increase by gardening? In order to understand these effects better and in practice, this knowledge will be applied to a case of an urban garden in the Netherlands. Students will come to understand the nuances of social cohesion in practice, its major drawbacks and difficulties, and its benefits. This week students will also visit a neighbourhood garden, applying and increasing their knowledge.

**Learning outcomes:**
- To understand the place of neighbourhood gardens within the wider concept of urban agriculture, based on a Dutch context.
- To have learned about the potential (social) benefits of neighbourhood gardens, and to understand whether and how these can strengthen social cohesion.
- To be able to discuss the role of food in neighbourhood gardens in relation to their perceived benefits.
- To be able to discuss the drawbacks and difficulties regarding neighbourhood gardens and social cohesion, thereby nuancing the relation between these two concepts.

**Monday 10 June 2013 (C81) – Esther Veen (lecture)**

08.30 – 10.15  Urban agriculture – neighbourhood gardens and ‘social cohesion’ in the Netherlands

**Literature:**

**Wednesday 12 June 2013 (C81) – Guest lectures**

10.30 – 11.15  Local food for low income urban residents – Femke Hoekstra
11.30 – 12.15  Patterns of food provisioning in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) – Marc Wegerif

**Friday 14 June 2013 (C81) – Esther Veen (Workshop)**

10.30 – 12.15  Workshop and reflection on literature, lectures and group assignment