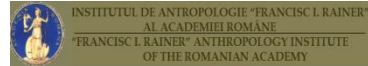




EURAL



Conference announcement

Marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall:

Farmland, Food and Forests in Transition: The Eurasian countryside 25 years after (7 November 2014)

Venue: Romanian Academy of Sciences, Bucharest

This conference investigates the rural transformation in the post-socialist Eurasian countryside.

The revolutions in the capitals became iconic for the 1989/1991 watershed: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the storming of the Palace of the People in Bucharest or the siege of Moscow's White House. Regarding the post-socialist revolutions and protests again the main cities were in the spotlight; with Kiev's Maidan square, and the tulip revolution in Tbilisi, Georgia. However, what happened in the countryside during these historical changes?

Initial studies on rural transformation in Eurasia¹ focused mostly on agrarian reforms, de-collectivisation, farm restructuring, and for those countries that entered in the EU, the introduction and impact of the common agricultural policy on the countryside. This conference aims to go beyond these phenomena giving explicit attention to: firstly, new global developments impacting on the Eurasian countryside (such as rising food prices and increasing volatility, the rise of large-scale land acquisitions of farmland and forests); secondly, responses of the rural population to these global changes (as well as to national/EU policies); thirdly, initiatives emerging from the countryside itself (such as food sovereignty initiatives and local seed banks); fourthly, the study of those topics with a view on the how changing borders and trade blocks have affected them.

¹ Which includes Central, South and Eastern Europe, and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

The first main theme of the conference is the rise of large-scale land investment and land accumulation in farmland and forests. Since the 2007-2008 food crisis, global interest in large-scale land investment has risen, and in Eurasia this has often reinforced the tendency of rebuilding, maintaining and/or expanding of the large-scale heirs of the state and collective farms. The conference will study the actors, farm models, techniques and finance models involved as well as the differences and similarities within the Eurasian region. Further it will look at the benefits and risks of this phenomenon, as well as responses by the rural population.

The second major theme concerns small-scale farmers and their socio-economic arrangements (such as associations, movements). With the landslide changes and the iconic images of large mobilizations and changes in the cities the question arises; have rural dwellers been largely passive or engaged in more hidden actions or protests? To what extent have they initiated social movements to promote their views and interests? Here also, the influence of global developments, such as the emergence of transnational movements and global food security and sovereignty debates is studied. Furthermore, we will look at the benefits and limitations of old and new small-scale farming variants within Eurasia in terms of sustainability and rural development.

The focus on the countryside, apart from a new spatial angle, also brings to the fore new thematic angles and methodologies to understand the redrawing of physical and cognitive borders (in Eastern Europe). Instead of looking at politics in the capitals, this conference looks at the more hidden, but 'everyday politics' of farmland, food and forests. This conference aims to present cutting edge insights on the changing face of the countryside and the effects of shifting borders in the countryside, drawing on research varying from in-depth case studies to presentations taking a comparative, regional view on Eurasia, and broad analyses linking present developments to socialist and pre-socialist histories. It aims to bring together people working on farmland, food, forests in national and cross-border contexts, and invites research that looks at those issues from new angles and critical perspectives. This academic conference also aims to bring in voices from outside academia (e.g. policy, agriculture, rural movements).

The conference starts with plenary presentations, followed by thematic panels with e.g. one focusing on large-scale farmland investment and one on small-scale farming and food.

Participants of the conference are requested to send a brief 300-words abstract. A short biography is also required.

Presenters are expected to hand in a conference paper 10 days before the conference, which will be made available on the conference website, in order to stimulate an active debate during the conference, also looking forward to a planned special issue and/or edited volume with a selection of the conference papers.

The conference is free of cost (including coffee, tea, lunch and drinks in the evening). There is limited funding available to cover travel costs. A request for funding can be send to the e-mail below (preference will be given to young researchers from the region). Paper abstracts (and bio) can be sent to euralinitiative@gmail.nl

During the conference the *Eurasian Agrofood and Land initiative* (EURAL) will be officially launched. This initiative aims to stimulate research on food and land issues that offers new angles, and bridges

divides between academia, policy, practitioners and civil society, as well spatial distinctions such as between Europe and Asia and EU and other Eurasian countries. It aims to provide a platform with open exchange on the benefits and limitations of current agricultural forms and newly emerging agrarian pathways.

An excursion to the countryside is planned for the day after the conference. More information about this will follow.

The organising committee,

Oane Visser (ISS)

Stefan Dorondel (F. I. Rainer Institute)

Max Spoor (ISS)

Organizing institutes:

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, NL,

Fransisc I. Rainer Institute of Anthropology, Bucharest,

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