

# Alternative food networks: the biopolitics of quality and embeddedness

## Organizers

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## Description

Over the last twenty years, alternative food networks (AFNs) have firmly stood at the forefront of the debate in the geographies of rural spaces and of food. AFNs have been perceived as alternative to the modes of production, distribution and consumption of the conventional, capitalistic, globalized food networks. The academic literature on AFNs is now a wide, complex set of theoretical, methodological and empirical analyses within human geography. Yet, we believe that some core assumptions are common to most of the studies in the new geographies of food. The main common assumption concerns the close relationship between embeddedness and quality: being embedded in local (horizontal and vertical) relationships produces quality, and quality, vice versa, strengthens the local embeddedness of AFNs. Simultaneously, this association appears to be largely taken for granted and almost tautological. Moreover, the emphasis on quality-and-embeddedness is also problematic as it entails a clear biopolitical dimension. Despite being connoted as 'alternative' to dominant practices in food production and supply, AFNs often involve an apparatus of biopolitical dispositives: concepts like breed registry, DNA, genetics, race, and certification are commonly used in defining the quality of food in AFNs, both in animal and vegetable production. The social, economic, cultural, and scientific construction of quality and embeddedness is often turned into a narrative of 'blood and soil' that is eminently biopolitical.

For this panel, we invite contributions on the following issues:

- the construction of quality in AFNs;
- variety of embeddedness in AFNs;
- science, technique and AFNs;

- regressive AFNs: the biopolitics of breed and purity;
- AFNs and animal ethics.

[Read the abstracts](#)

Slot 1

Chair: Annalisa Colombino

Presentation n. 1

Title: Re-conceptualizing food markets: Slowfood in Germany and Italy

Author(s): Julia Rosch

Presentation n. 2

Title: Agroecological Fair of Casa Forte Square, Recife, Brazil

Author(s): Igor Fernando Marques de Almeida

Presentation n. 3

Title: Discussing "food community" concept/model in Slow Food discourse and transnational expansion in the Global South

Author(s): Egidio Dansero, Nadia Tecco, Cristiana Peano

Presentation n. 4

Title: AFNs, protected areas and rural-urban integration in metropolitan regions: a case study of the Regional Park of Ticino

Author(s): Valerio Bini, Eleonora Mastropietro

Slot 2

Chair: Egidio Dansero

Discussant: Paolo Giaccaria

Presentation n. 1

Title: The potential of food in sustainable urban development through an increase in organoleptic quality and social cohesion

Author(s): Annamaria Orru Chalmers, Christina Schaffer

Presentation n. 2

Title: The best hazelnut in the world. The biopolitics of PGI certification of Nocciola Tonda Gentile delle Langhe.

Author(s): Matteo Puttilli

Presentation n. 3

Title: More-than-human networks of milk and honey

Author(s): Barbara Schönher

Presentation n. 4

Title: Situating the 'alternative' within the 'conventional', alternative food networks in the East Riding of Yorkshire, UK

Author(s): Kirstie O'Neill

Presentation n. 5

Title: Quality, embeddedness and biopolitics in Alternative Food Networks. Some reflections on the Piedmontese beef.

Author(s): Annalisa Colombino, Paolo Giaccaria

Session code: S01