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## Food in Society and Culture Conference Research across the Social Sciences and the Humanities<sup>\*</sup>

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### Conference Notes

**F**ood in Society and Culture<sup>†</sup> Conference was held at the University of Helsinki City Centre campus by University of Helsinki, Finland on 4-6 May 2015. The symposium is funded by The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV- Tieteellisten Seurain Valtuuskunta) and The Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki. The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, established in 1899, is a national co-operative body for learned societies in Finland. It issues statements, launches initiatives and makes recommendations relating to academic research, especially when it serves to promote the interests of the member societies. The Federation has a membership of 260 societies from all branches of arts and sciences, in total 250,000 individual members. Every year these learned societies arrange hundreds of meetings and conferences, attended by the academic community and the general public. As mentioned above, 'Food in Society and Culture' Conference is one of the conferences funded by TSV.


The symposium has an objective to promote new analytical approaches to the study of food in the Humanities, Economics, and the Social Sciences with attention to topics of food production, consumption, and food cultures in modern society. There are some concerns related to food and classified as economic, social and cultural; which have given rise to intense disputes among experts, policymakers and consumers.


The conference examined these topics while taking into account the whole food chain from primary production point to the final consumer. The conference seeks to make new theoretical and empirical breakthroughs on the role of food in modern society and culture. At the same time, the symposium has also a consideration about how research methods used in different academic disciplines could benefit each other and what kind of inter-disciplinary studies might be done in the process.

The Organization Committee was formed by Dr. Leena Kaunonen, (Chair), Docent (Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki), Dr. Minna Autio, Senior lecturer, Docent (Department of Economics and Management, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Helsinki) and Johanna Mäkelä, Professor in Food Culture (Department of Teacher Education, Faculty of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki).

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The symposium was mainly addressed research papers about theories and applications as a technique for analyzing consumer politics eating patterns and food consumption, instances of cultural and culinary contacts by observing models through the linguistic contact and interaction, social/printed media and lastly analyses of representations of food such as books and blogs that focus on the affiliation between words and images and/or food literature as a type of literature that applies traditional genres (recipes, journals, memoir and travelogue, etc.).

The conference venue was Unioninkadun Juhlhuoneistot Conference Centre that has 160 years of experience and a great heritage of service in hospitality sector. The symposium lasted three days and there were ten sessions had taken place and almost 40 papers were presented in total at the conference. Sessions were started at 10.00 am each day and lasted until 5.00 pm according to the intensity of the day's programme. Sessions were designed for researches under some topics including but not limited to: food traditions and national identities; food festivals, happenings and restaurants; patterns of consumption; food, risks and trust; food learning and adolescence; media, design, urban space; written culinary knowledge; animal welfare, meat and pets; sustainability, alternative movements and food waste; food, gender and identity.

Each day, one keynote speaker presented his/her study between designated sessions. On the first day, the keynote speaker was Professor Alan Warde (University of Manchester) who a sociology professor well-known with his studies about sociology of consumption, sociology of culture, sociology of food and eating, and social stratification. His lecture was about theories of practice, consumption and eating habits. On the second day, the keynote lecture's title was '*Seeing through Food: Cuisine, Culture and Visual Arts*' presented by Professor Darra Goldstein (Williams College) who is the editor in chief of the '*Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* (published by University of California Press)'. On the last day, the keynote speaker was Professor Johanna Mäkelä (University of Helsinki) who is the first professor of food culture at the University of Helsinki and in the whole of Finland with a lecture on '*Pure Food: From Personal Wellbeing to National Identity*'.

Our presentation was in the 10<sup>th</sup> and last session of the conference which took place on 6 May 2015 between 10.00-12.00 am. We presented our study about food gender which has a title 'Can Foods Be Masculine or Feminine? A Research on Food preferences, Gender, and Desired Identity' and also had the chance to attend other presentations to discuss my colleagues' researches which are related to my field of study and to hear new approaches to the field of food studies. In my point of view, Martin Bruegel's study about food gender that focuses Paris in the Belle Époque, an era which is conventionally dated from the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, was remarkably interesting and similarly Aysegul Kesimoglu's (City University, London) study titled as '*Gastronomy and Distinction: A Case Study Of Crosscutting Value Systems in The Formation of Taste Hierarchy in Istanbul, Turkey*' was drew my attention that was presented in the 6<sup>th</sup> session called 'Media, Design and Urban Space'.

Eventually, '*Food in Society and Culture*' Conference was a great opportunity for researchers around the world on food studies to have the knowledge of the latest theories and applications offered in the field and moreover the conference offers a great opportunity for networking and forming contacts among academicians. It was also excellent to see how different scientific disciplines may work together to explain the food phenomena and the possibilities of new multi-disciplined researches might be done in this field of study.



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