Contestation of the existing food system and the need to establish some alternative solutions have been key drivers for the creation of various forms of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). This term covers different types of formal and informal institutions, which aim to propose changes to the system of food provision. One way to achieve change is through a new model of governance explored by the polycentric systems of AFNs. Shift in governance is aided by the reciprocal process of building agency in actors involved in the food networks. Individual and collective agency is, in turn, linked to the concept of food citizenship.

Based on extensive qualitative research done in 2019, I attempt to assess whether AFN’s – operating in the specific conditions of Central and Eastern Europe Countries (CEE) – aim for essential change in the food system through change of governance model, or they rather respond to individual needs that corporate-based food markets fail to satisfy.

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