

# UNDERSTANDING SENSE OF PLACE AMONG ROOTED COSMOPOLITANS: THE CASE OF THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

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**Abstract:** Previous research has provided compelling accounts of how the alter-globalization movement develops alternative visions of globalization that are firmly rooted in local struggles and place-based politics, celebrating cultural distinctions and local idiosyncrasies, while at the same time embracing global movement building and place-based globalism and expressing both local and cosmopolitan identities and values. Given these findings of previous research, how do alter-globalization movement participants think about place identity, place meaning, and place attachment? What is their sense of place? We explore these questions in the context of the Slow Food movement, a global network that brings together many locally-oriented activists to transform the food system. Our semi-structured interviews with Slow Food movement participants provide evidence and examples that are indicative of the presence of place-based politics and place-based globalism in the Slow Food movement. This research contributes to the literature in two ways: It synthesizes and applies place-based concepts to the study of highly diverse transnational movement spaces to generate a deeper understanding of transnational social movement participants' sense of place and of the solidarities and shared identities that they develop, and it highlights the voices and personal stories transnational food movement participants shared during interviews as they reflected on issues of place.

**Keywords:** Slow Food, sense of place, transnational social movements, place-based globalism, rooted cosmopolitans.

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## INTRODUCTION

Slow Food (SF) is a global movement that seeks “to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions, counteract the rise of fast life and combat people’s dwindling interest in the food they eat, where it comes from and how our food choices affect the world around us” (Slow Food 2023a). In seeking to transform local food systems (and the global food system), SF aspires to make the food system “good, clean, and fair:” a food system that makes available high quality, healthy, flavorful and delicious food (good); produces food using environmentally sustainable practices (clean); and is socially just (fair) to consumers and producers (Slow Food 2023b).

As this brief overview of the SF movement implies, much of the work done by those involved in SF worldwide is local and focused on small-scale production and family farming and on preserving biodiversity in food systems. For example, the Slow Food Presidium project, which is a Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity project that began in 2000, creates communities of producers, or presidia, across the world to protect an at-risk product, processing practice and/or a landscape or ecosystem in socially and environmentally sustainable ways: “The Presidia are Slow Food Communities that work every day to save native livestock breeds, local fruit and vegetable varieties, bread, cheeses, cured meats, sweets, and more. They are committed to passing on traditional production techniques and crafts, they care for the environment and they add value to landscapes, places, and cultures” (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2023a). Similarly, the Ark of Taste, another project of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, is a catalog of foods at risk of disappearing: “The Ark of Taste travels the world collecting small-scale quality productions that belong to the cultures, history and traditions of the entire planet: an extraordinary heritage of fruits, vegetables, animal breeds, cheeses, breads, sweets and cured meats...” (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2023b). Other Slow Food activities and programs, many of which are described below, are similarly designed to promote good, clean, and fair food, protect agrobiodiversity, foster agroecology, empower small

producers, and safeguard local and small-scale food production as well as local traditions and foodways.

At the same time, this locally rooted work is part of a global movement, and those who are involved in SF work at the local level are embedded in national and transnational networks of producers, SF communities, and individuals seeking to transform the global food system. They may attend global gatherings of the SF movement (e.g., Terra Madre, an event that takes place every other year), and they may participate in national and regional SF activities and meetings.

One might argue that it would be reasonable to assume that those most involved in SF have a strong sense of place. At the same time, it might also be equally reasonable to assume that those who actively participate in transnational network activities have identities that transcend place and feel a sense of belonging to a transnational social movement space. This would be consistent with arguments made in previous research that has demonstrated that different segments of the global justice movement “ground globalization in place” and “simultaneously valorize the local and connections to the physical environment while also valuing global connections and dialogue” (Smith 2020: 120).

Assuming those involved in SF locally have a strong sense of place, do they feel also attached to and do they find meaning in faraway places that are embedded in the same transnational networks? To what extent do they have strong connections to place, and to what extent do they also have cosmopolitan identities as participants in a global movement? What does sense of place mean in the context of participation in a transnational social movement that connects people from around the world towards a joint vision that centers on local food cultures and foodways? To what extent is SF movement participants’ sense of place shaped by their involvement in a transnational movement that connects them to distant places? These are the questions we seek to answer. Our exploratory case study centers mostly on interviews with individuals who are involved in SF work locally but have also attended the global gathering of the SF movement: Terra Madre. The interviews we conducted with them included questions that were informed by the literature on place and on sense of place and

place attachment and place meaning in an increasingly globalized, interconnected world that is characterized by higher levels of mobility and communication across different regions. Our purpose is to provide an initial glimpse into how active SF movement participants think and feel about place.

## SLOW FOOD AND THE NOTION OF PLACE

### *Place*

Place and place-related concepts are the center of a vast and interdisciplinary literature. Place can be understood in terms of three dimensions that together make a place: geographic location, material form, and infusion with meaning (Gieryn 2000). As Gieryn (2000) explains, “A place is a unique spot in the universe” (a geographic location) (Gieryn 2000: 464), “a compilation of things or objects” (material form) (Gieryn 2000: 465), and is “also interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood, and imagined” (i.e., imbued with meaning) (Gieryn 2000: 465). And place matters in many different ways, including by giving rise to place attachment, place dependence, and place identity (Trentelman 2009: 200-201).

A helpful way to think about the literature on place is to consider place as a locus of attachment, i.e., the bonds that people have to place and the strength of these bonds, and place as center of meaning, i.e., the meaning that place represents to people (Williams 2013). Place attachment has a functional dimension that refers to the functions of places and the extent to which they meet one’s needs or goals and corresponds in many ways to the concept of place dependence, and an expressive or symbolic dimension that refers to how place defines identity and corresponds to the concept of place identity (Williams 2013: 92; see also Raymond et al. 2010). Place as a center of meaning refers to the meanings that individuals may impute to a place and to processes of meaning making (Williams 2013: 91, 95). Sense of place refers to the relationship people have with places, and it encompasses both place meaning and place attachment (Raymond et al. 2017: 1-2). It is a broader concept that subsumes



place meaning and place attachment. Similarly, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) approach sense of place as a broader concept that encompasses other (somewhat overlapping) place concepts: place attachment, place identity and place dependence.

*Place, globalization and mobility*

A full review of the literature on place is well beyond the scope of this article. We focus here on sense of place and place attachment in the context of globalization and the higher levels of communication and mobility that globalization and time-space compression have brought about. Earlier research about sense of place and the place concepts it subsumes has assumed that rootedness in a particular place (and its natural environment, people and social relationships, and culture) contributes to place attachment, community, and well-being, while mobility entails uprootedness and undermines place attachment (Gustafson 2001a: 668-670; Di Masso et al. 2019: 126-127). More recent research, however, has questioned this notion and the juxtaposition of place attachment and mobility (Gustafson 2001a). This more recent research also raises the possibility that “the relationship between the local and the distant - and possibly also between local and cosmopolitan orientations and practices – is becoming more complex” (Gustafson 2009: 32).

The concept of translocalism is also relevant in the context of this paper, a concept that encompasses both mobility and place (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 373) and moves beyond transnationalism’s preoccupation with nation states, highlighting instead local-to-local connections and processes (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 380). Translocalism is concerned with process and activities that transcend borders on different scales and with developing understandings of these processes and activities that combine and incorporate both mobility on the one hand and locality, groundedness and situatedness on the other hand (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 376, 380) to understand a variety of different phenomena, mostly connected to human migration, but also including material (e.g., remittances) and non-

material (e.g., ideas and knowledge) translocal flows (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 376-377, 380). Translocalism recognizes the significance of place, while also recognizing that place-based activities and processes can transcend place (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 378). Translocalism has helped scholars better elucidate processes and phenomena that cannot be well understood when there is strong focus on nation states. For example, Halperin (2007) has shown that industrial capitalist expansion until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century can best be understood as a translocal process that connected not entire nation-states, but rather regions, sectors, and groups around the world. Banerjee (2011) provides a compelling account of how indigenous and rural communities in post-colonial countries grappling with patterns of exploitation that mirror colonial conditions and with violations of human rights and sovereignty adopt ecological nationalisms that are rooted in the connections their identities have to land, place, and nature. Indigenous and rural communities around the world have developed ecological nationalisms and engage in translocal forms of resistance, which entail horizontal networks and spaces involving place-based movements that are connected at different geographical scales and that create place-based (as opposed to state-based) political identities and organize and activate exchanges, resources, and ideas across local places to foster new identities among diverse groups of people (Banerjee 2011).

Banerjee (2011) and Banerjee et al. (2023) explain that translocal connections go well beyond local places and also change the local places that give rise to them (Banerjee 2011: 331, 334; Banerjee et al. 2023: 4). They express shared identities that diverse groups of people from different countries hold based on their distinct and overlapping ecological worldviews and relationships with and valuations of their natural environments (Banerjee et al. 2023: 4, 6). These shared political ecologies and political identities are key features of translocal movements of resistance (Banerjee et al. 2023: 6). Desai explains that a translocal field of protest can be understood in terms of relationships based on solidarity and a sense of common purpose among different actors involved in social movements in different local places (Desai 2016: 11). These relationships between local fields of protest create a translocal field of protest when

different local struggles in different local places are understood as a shared struggle against the same forces or threats, in Desai's research the threats of neoliberal development projects (and the neoliberal development model) to people's livelihoods and to their access to land as well as threats to natural resources (Desai 2016: 3-4). Translocality highlights the significance of place to people's identities and political outlooks, while also acknowledging that place is not a bounded entity (Desai 2016: 11). The exchanges of material and non-material resources across places can be empowering and enabling for social movements seeking to challenge dominant development paradigms that are socially unsustainable and result in unjust outcomes (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013: 379-380). Translocal fields of protest connect various local struggles in which some of the same individuals are involved (Desai 2016: 3). The food sovereignty movement is very much a translocal movement that shares many of the hallmarks of translocal mobilization described in the literature. More specifically, the food sovereignty movement in general, and La Via Campesina in particular, has mobilized peasants translocally to connect their shared struggles, build solidarity, articulate a shared vision for a more just and sustainable food system, and influence the policy process at all levels to resist their dispossession and their marginalization that result from neoliberal globalization and the neoliberal paradigm for economic development (Ferrando, Mpofo 2022).

We view the SF movement as a translocal movement, which is also consistent with recent research (Amo 2023; 2024). We also argue that as a translocal movement, SF is a segmentary, polycentric, and integrated network (SPIN) (Gerlach 1971; 2001). The SPIN organizational structure of Slow Food allows for the exchange and spread of ideas and practices within the movement. Segmentary movements are decentralized, include distinct and diverse groups, sometimes with overlapping membership or participation, whose trajectories are not linear and whose boundaries change over time as their fortunes wax and wane. Polycentric movements have dispersed, situational, non-hierarchical, and less formal leadership. Despite their polycentricity and segmented nature, movements with a SPIN structure are still well-integrated because the diverse groups that are involved in them share values, identities,

ideological orientations, commitments and goals, and members/participants, as well as opponents or targets of activism. Other integrative forces that also allow those who participate in movements with a SPIN structure to form ties and bonds, learn with and from one another, and exchange ideas and practices are large gatherings that bring together various groups, and travel by movement leaders as well as movement participants to meet and share experiences and ideas with other movement participants (e.g., at Terra Madre and other SF events). These integrative forces also include joint activities and programs. Our interpretation of the Slow Food movement as a translocal movement with a SPIN structure is consistent with recent research which has described Slow Food as a movement characterized by “fluid, conflicting and dynamic relations connecting a multitude of actors and localities all over the world,” as well as by “multiplicity, hybridity, dynamicity and conflict” (Amo 2023: 646; see also Amo 2024).

Also relevant in the context of this research is the concept of the rooted cosmopolitan, as Edelman has demonstrated in a discussion of the transnational agrarian movement (Edelman 2024: 86-102). Tarrow describes rooted cosmopolitans as “people and groups whose relations place them beyond their local or national settings without detaching them from locality” (Tarrow 2005: 42), and Edelman explains that rooted cosmopolitans have strong ties to local places, feel connected to larger geographical or political entities, and show solidarity with communities of people across vast areas (Edelman 2024: 101).

This notion of rooted cosmopolitans dovetails with the notion of meshworks, place-based politics, and Massey’s elucidation of the concept of global sense of place, which is discussed below. It also echoes Mitchell Cohen’s discussion of rooted cosmopolitanism as an approach that embraces universalism, a universal culture, and universalist outlooks, while acknowledging the particularism of individuals’ overlapping and pluralist identities (Cohen 1992). This is consistent with Appiah’s view that localism is an avenue to advance global values and ambitions and through which global citizens can bring about sweeping positive change at the global level by making a difference at the local level (Appiah 2007: 241).



*Place-based politics and a global sense of place*

In some ways, those involved in the Slow Food movement are participating in a form of place-based globalism or place-based politics, a term that has been used to analyze the global justice (or the alter-globalization) movement that is challenging neoliberal globalization (Osterweil 2005), of which we consider the SF movement to be part. Place-based globalism is an approach that argues that “by re-orienting and reinventing political practices to focus on the local, the present, the cultural, and other places ‘closest-in’ throughout the world” participants in the alter-globalization movement “are in fact pursuing a more thoroughly and effectively *global* and transformative politics” (Osterweil 2005: 24). Place-based globalism puts forward the idea that place-based change and place-based politics have a truly transformative potential if they unfold across the world (Gibson-Graham 2008: 662) and embraces the “role of place as a site of becoming and as the ground of a global politics of local transformations” (Gibson-Graham 2008: 662). Much like the movements that Harcourt and Escobar describe, the SF movement can be thought of as a meshwork of self-organizing and diverse sites or places. A meshwork is non-hierarchically organized and its sites are both localized, making each one of them distinct from the other sites, and interwoven, i.e., linked together based on their similarities and shared experiences, thus creating glocal spaces with potential for transformative politics (Harcourt, Escobar 2002: 12-13).

Some of this literature questions the argument that homogenizing forces of globalization represent overwhelming influences on places and that globalization is making our world placeless as places disappear (Harcourt, Escobar 2002: 7-8). It challenges the juxtaposition of “local” and “global” to argue that, rather than globalization overwhelming and displacing the local, all global trends have local roots and that the local and the global are mutually constituted (Massey 2004b: 7). This represents a relational way of thinking about the local and the global, and the identities connected to them (Massey 2004b: 5). This relational view of the local and the global allows us to recognize place as unique and distinct and at the same time reject a reactionary sense of place that entails exclusionary, parochial,



essentialist, and nationalist notions of the local that create in-groups and out-groups (Massey 2004b: 6) in favor of what Massey describes as a progressive and outward-looking sense of place that does not equate place with community (Massey 1991). This view of place challenges the notion that “posits local place as the seat of genuine meaning and global space as in consequence without meaning” (Massey 2004b: 9).

### *Slow Food*

SF was established in Italy in the 1980s to preserve local foods and food traditions, address the cultural and environmental impacts of fast food, and promote the pleasures of excellent food, highlighting “sensual gourmandise pleasures, to be taken with slow and prolonged enjoyment” and expressing concern about the “fast life” as a threat to the environment and to landscapes and cityscapes (Slow Food 1989). Its intellectual and political origins are to be found in the Italian Communist Party and in a specific view of consumer rights (Chrzan 2004: 118-119). SF’s different activities and programs were added over the years (for a historical timeline that highlights milestones in the development of the SF movement, see Slow Food 2023c). These additions reflect the evolution of the SF movement. As the movement evolved, it expanded its focus to include environmental, political, and social issues that were initially not as central to the movement (Slow Food 2023c). While the movement has always had political roots, it has over time evolved to be more explicitly political, and this evolution is perhaps reflected in the fact that while SF has been described as a lifestyle movement (Haenfler et al. 2012) and categorized as mostly part of the reformist food security or progressive food justice movement (Holt Giménez, Shattuck 2011), more recent research has provided evidence and developed arguments that show that SF is now part of the more radical food sovereignty movement (Shawki, Hunter 2022) and demonstrate what food sovereignty means in the Slow Food movement (Amo 2023).

As noted in the introduction, SF’s philosophy and goals are centered around bringing about a good, clean, and fair food system that is rooted in agroecological principals, protects



biodiversity and human rights, and preserves local food traditions and cultures and the biodiversity and local and traditional knowledge connected to them. Additionally, SF is working towards a food system that is not dominated by corporations and is instead more democratic and aligned with the rights of producers and consumers. Different activities and programs that take place at different levels all contribute to translating SF's philosophy into practice (for an overview of many of the main activities and programs, see tab. 1).

In addition, the thematic areas of focus and the constituencies mentioned above are also central to SF's work. A number of thematic networks focus their efforts on specific crops or foods. These thematic networks include the Slow Food Coffee Coalition, the Slow Wine Coalition, Slow Fish, and Slow Beans. Networks that engage or focus on the role of specific constituencies include the Slow Food Youth Network, the Indigenous Peoples' Network, and the Migrant Network.

Other activities, programs, and networks that advance SF's good, clean, and fair philosophy include various programs of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, a joint initiative of Slow Food International and Slow Food Italy, and include the Slow Food Cooks' Alliance, Slow Food Gardens in Africa, Earth Markets, as well as the presidia and Ark of Taste programs mentioned in the introduction (for an overview, see tab. 1). All of these Foundation programs are connected and designed "to promote a model of agriculture that is based on local biodiversity and respect for the land and the local culture, is in harmony with the environment and aims to provide food sovereignty and access to good, clean and fair food for all communities" (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2023c). Biodiversity in the food system is considered by Slow Food to be essential for the environmental and climate resilience of the food system, for the provision of critical ecosystem services (e.g., pollination), and for the production of food using fewer inputs and with limited negative impacts on the natural environment (Slow Food 2020: 1).



Tab. 1. *Slow Food programmes and initiatives*

Name	Overview
Convivia	Local Slow Food groups/chapters comprised of dues-paying members who are committed to a good, clean, and fair food system.
Communities	Local groups of at least 10 people each pursuing a specific objective in a specific geographic area in support of good, clean, and fair food.
Presidia	Local groups of producers of local varieties, breeds, and foods that work to preserve them and the landscapes, cultures and traditional food production methods associated with them.
Ark of Taste	Catalogue of foods, crop varieties, and breeds, produced at small scales, that are at risk of disappearing.
Gardens in Africa	A network of community-based gardens across Africa that produce good, clean, and fair food using agroecological methods and local seeds/varieties.
Cooks' Alliance	A network of chefs who work in different settings and are committed to sourcing good, clean, and fair ingredients, potentially including presidia and Ark of Taste ingredients.
Earth Markets	A network of markets where local good, clean, and fair foods produced by small-scale producers are sold.
Thematic Networks	Networks within the broader Slow Food movement, focusing on a specific product (e.g., coffee, wine, seafood, beans) or the needs/situation of specific groups (e.g., indigenous peoples, migrants, youth).
Terra Madre	A network of Slow Food movement participants and stakeholders that hosts a global gathering every other year, bringing together people from around the world for several days of activities, events, and workshops focused on good, clean, and fair food.
Slow Food Farms	A new Slow Food initiative that creates a global network of farms that produce good, clean, and fair food agroecologically.

*Source:* Websites of Slow Food International (2023a) and the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity (2015); Amo (2024: 3) includes a table that also provides an overview of many, but not all, of these programs and initiatives.



Data about the number and geographical distribution of local groups and initiatives (e.g., *convivia*, communities, earth markets, or *presidia*) are available on the website of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity (Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity 2015) and in the annual report of Slow Food International (Slow Food 2024).

As the quote above suggests, SF is part of (or at least overlaps with) the food sovereignty movement. Slow Food activities and programs are aligned with food sovereignty, which is defined as “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through socially just and ecologically sensitive methods,” and which stresses “peoples’ right to participate in decision making and define their own food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries systems” (Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007: 1). Food sovereignty, generally considered one of the more radical approaches to food and agriculture, is considered by its proponents to be a paradigm for food and agriculture that has the potential to address the environmental and social crises stemming from the dominant food system, which is grounded in neoliberal policies (Bello 2008; Holt Giménez, Shattuck 2011; Martínez-Torres, Rosset 2010; Rosset 2008; Shattuck, Holt Giménez 2010). SF’s activities and programs are aligned with the six pillars of food sovereignty, which envision a human rights-based food system that is localized and grounded in agroecology and that centers and values food producers, protects their rights and their access to natural resources, and valorizes their local and traditional knowledge (Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007: 1). In its commitment to agroecology and human rights, and in its efforts to give small producers a key role in the fight against corporate control of the food system, SF’s philosophy and ideology is very much aligned with food sovereignty, a term that is used repeatedly at SF events and SF publications.

We believe that the different strands of the literature discussed above are very relevant to the Slow Food movement. The movement in many ways has strong and pronounced local orientations, with a strong focus on local self-organizing, local food cultures, and local heritages. Counihan’s research has shown how important local places, with their food traditions, agricultural lands, landscapes, cultures, as well as the memories, relationships, and personal experiences connected to them are to the SF



movement participants she interviewed in Italy (Counihan 2018: 9-23). Similarly, previous research has shown that SF presidia, which we describe briefly above, are as much about preserving biodiversity and protecting the natural environment as they are about preserving the place-based history, knowledge and food production practices, and cultural identities of the geographical areas in which they are located (Siniscalchi 2013: 298-299). Recent research on presidia also considers the “the active role of individuals and groups in shaping the geographies they inhabit, thus further challenging the notion of territory as a predefined and neutral entity, emphasizing its constructed nature” (Amo 2024: 9).

Overall, the bonds and ties that SF movement participants have to local places and the knowledge, cultures, and identities of those places are evident. SF affirms and in many ways celebrates diversity and difference, and values autonomous self-organizing. At the same time, these diverse local places come together to form a global social movement space (Nicholls 2009), and the SF movement has made concerted and intentional efforts to make that space truly inclusive and to build solidarity between the many local places that are part of that global space (Shawki, Hunter 2022) in ways that could overcome the obstacles (e.g., the lack of access to economic resources and cultural capital) that some resource-poor local places might encounter in their effort to shape the work, direction, and governance of the broader movement (Nicholls 2009).

This networked feature of SF’s engagement with local communities is highlighted not only by social scientists, but also by other food system stakeholders. A comparison of the Food and Agriculture Organization’s Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems Programme, Geographical Indications, and SF presidia, which are three different approaches and programs that seek to safeguard heritage foods and traditional food systems and the knowledge, cultures, and identities connected to them, highlights the integrated global network of presidia established by SF as one of the features that distinguish the presidia from the other two approaches (FAO 2020). Since SF is a global movement, it has created opportunities for meetings, exchanges, and movement building for small presidia producers (FAO 2020). In doing so the SF movement may be well-positioned to foster rooted



cosmopolitanism, a politics of place, and the global sense of place that Massey describes in ways that could shape SF movement participants' place meaning and place attachment (i.e., their sense of place). We try to capture SF movement participants' sense of place, the most general and overarching of the concepts discussed above, using some of the other concepts and terms introduced in the discussion above to describe and organize or categorize what our respondents have shared with us.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### *Exploratory case study*

Our research design is an exploratory case study, which we use to develop an understanding of how those involved in the global SF movement consider their own sense of place. Exploratory case studies are not aimed at testing a specific hypothesis, but rather focus on discovery for the purpose of providing an empirically-based introduction to the dynamics and context of the subject matter under investigation (Seawright, Gerring 2008) and thus allow for an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon or topic.

Although exploratory case studies probe the unknown on a single dimension (Seawright, Gerring 2008: 26) (in this case, translocal identities), they are nonetheless guided by a specific purpose or set of theoretical propositions that provide a framework for the inquiry (Seawright, Gerring 2008). This suggests that an exploratory case study is useful in situations where the case can be assessed using an established body of theory (Schrank 2006b). Drawing on previous research on place, globalization, and mobility discussed earlier, we incorporate specific theoretical concepts such as translocalism and rooted cosmopolitanism to create a framework, or theoretical lens, to frame the analysis. Ultimately, an exploratory inquiry such as this can help generate new and novel research questions that can be tested in subsequent research (Priya 2021). Consistent with the discussion of case study research in Schrank (2006a), we let the questions guiding our inquiry drive the data collection and analysis procedures, to which we turn next.



*Participant selection and recruitment*

We identified the first wave of participants for this research at Terra Madre Salone del Gusto, the SF movement's flagship biennial international event that in 2022 took place in Turin, Italy, from 22-26 September. Salone del Gusto first took place in 1996, and starting in 2004 Terra Madre was held in conjunction with Salone del Gusto. Terra Madre is a global event attended by thousands of farmers, chefs, and food activists representing well over 100 countries. As such, Terra Madre is the largest international gathering focused on good, clean, and fair food, as well as on aspects of food politics and the environment (Slow Food USA 2024). The event showcases artisan and small-scale producers, providing a forum where producers and consumers from around the world can engage. Potential participants from a range of countries were identified based on the schedule of events. In addition to those identified at Terra Madre, other participants were identified using publicly available information online, including Slow Food's presidia directory, and some of our interviewees connected us to other respondents in their networks.

Those who were approached at the event were speakers at specific panels or had a booth at the conference. All those who were identified and approached at Terra Madre are small-scale producers, artisans, chefs, and/or food activists whose work is locally-focused on the preservation of a specific food culture and/or of local food varieties and traditions yet, at the same time, their attendance at the conference could be suggestive of some degree of global orientation.

We then followed up with these potential respondents after the event to provide information about our study and to invite them to participate in a research interview. Employing a purposeful interviewee selection procedure, we recruited participants with the aim of providing representation across countries and world regions. As our research objective centers on providing an initial look into how SF movement participants think about place, it was important to obtain a diverse sample in order to capture a range of experiences and perspectives from those involved in the movement. That is, we wanted the experiences and perspectives of those living in different countries



and different areas of the world to be represented in our research findings and to inform the research conclusions. Including participants from diverse sources can be considered a methodological strength of a qualitative research study in which the researchers' interests are broader than, and thus extend beyond, a single source (Patten, Newhart 2017). In the case that we examine, by studying data from a diverse group of people, we can potentially learn more about how those involved in the movement writ large consider their sense of place.

We conducted semi-structured interviews after the event from October 2022 through January 2023. Study participants could choose to remain anonymous or consent to reveal their identities. During these interviews, we asked interviewees to put us in touch with other SF participants in their networks, allowing us to recruit another wave of participants. This snowball technique allowed us to extend our geographical reach and interview a total of 21 participants from 18 countries (see appendix). This technique also makes the final set of interviewees more likely to know one another than would be the case had they been selected at random and, as a result, they are more likely to comprise a social network (Small 2009). In conducting interviews, we relied on case study logic and proceeded sequentially, such that each respondent provided an increasingly accurate understanding of the research questions (Small 2009).

Included in our sample are farmers, chefs, food activists, food scientists, community leaders, social entrepreneurs, teachers and educators, and researchers and academics. SF participants tend to wear many hats; consistent with this, the vast majority of our participants have multiple, overlapping roles in the movement, making them difficult to neatly classify. Most of our interviewees have an official role in the movement in some capacity. This includes serving on national SF committees, as well as occupying leadership roles on regional committees, national chapters, and the Slow Food Youth Network. Additionally, our participants lead and are involved in national Ark of Taste projects, the Slow Fish network, the International Women's Coffee Alliance, Slow Food Coffee Coalition, Slow Food International Seed Work Group, school gardens, and are convivium leaders and presidium coordinators. Some have served as International Councilors and have been selected as delegates to Terra Madre.

They are members of their local SF chapters, and many help coordinate local SF projects in their communities.

Our sample captures a diversity of perspectives across places, allowing us to gain insight into how participants across various regions consider their sense of place. However, as individuals with a leadership role in the movement are most likely to attend and speak at Terra Madre, they are over-represented in our recruitment and thus in our sample. Thus, although our sample is diverse geographically, it is not necessarily representative of all participants in the Slow Food movement. Greater representation can be achieved via the proliferation of similar studies and follow-on research (Allmark 2004). That said, consistent with case study logic, our goal was saturation (when each additional interview yields little or no new information) (Small 2009), and our sample size does fall within the range suggested for qualitative research (Patten, Newhart 2017).

#### *Interview protocol and data*

Our interview questions focused on several themes. First, we asked participants to describe places that are important to them or places where they had lived in the past. The places mentioned served as the basis for follow-up questions about what these places mean to the respondent and why they are considered important. Similarly, we asked participants to elaborate on why the place where they do their SF work is important to them. Secondly, we asked participants to assess their degree of attachment to four spatial levels: their local community, country (either of origin, or both of origin and current country if the respondent had moved abroad), region (to include North, Central, and South America; Europe; sub-Saharan Africa, West Africa; South, Southeast, and Southwest Asia; Oceania), and global Slow Food community. From here, we asked participants to consider the ways in which the global Slow Food community matters to them, and why it is important to participate in and to support the global movement. We also asked participants to reflect on what participation in a global movement means for how they think about their local community and how it impacts their local SF work. Finally, we asked participants to



elaborate on the extent to which they feel that they have a lot in common with people in their own country who are not involved in SF, as well as with SF movement participants in other countries, and how their local SF work and participation in the global movement reflect who they are as a person. Although our questions were largely informed by prior research (Gustafson 2001b), they were tailored to the Slow Food case and context that represents the focus of our research.

We mainly analyzed the data qualitatively via a combination of thematic analysis and narrative analysis. We first analyzed our interview notes to detect different themes in relation to our question set, which allowed us to identify patterns (Gaskell, Bauer 2000). We then utilized narrative analysis to investigate participants' examples and stories that shed light on meanings attributed to places and to spatial levels (Cortazzi 2014).

## RESULTS: SENSE OF PLACE AMONG SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT PARTICIPANTS

Our research aim is to shed light on how those who are heavily involved in local SF work and strongly connected to the global movement think about place. Accordingly, we asked SF movement participants to assess how attached they feel to different locales, including their community, country of origin and current country (if different), region, and, finally, the global SF community.

On the whole, SF movement participants in our sample feel most strongly attached to the global SF community, followed closely by their region and local community. Conversely, our interviewees feel least attached to their country (both country of origin and current country, if different). Interestingly, although the majority of our interviewees are predominantly involved in SF activities at the local community level, they report feeling about as strongly attached to the global-level SF network. In other words, they identify as both local and global at the same time. This dual identity lies at the heart of rooted cosmopolitanism, illustrating Tarrow's (2005) argument that rooted cosmopolitans are attached to a specific locality, yet at the same time, their relations take them beyond



their local and national contexts. As one of our participants explained, “Mexico City Valley is the place where I am rooted,” but at the same time, “I’m committed to the people involved in the [SF] movement...this community backs you up” (Interview 20). In other words, the simultaneous connection to both local places and global communities reflects both the strong ties that rooted cosmopolitans feel to local places as well as the connections and solidarity they have to communities of people across great distances (Edelman 2024), underscoring a feature of translocalism which emphasizes how place-based activities can transcend place (Greiner, Sakdapolrak 2013). Applied to the SF movement, “it’s a form of global resistance...we [SF activists] are all part of the same movement of resistance” (Interview 20), reflecting the type of shared political identity that the literature notes is an important feature of translocal resistance movements (Banerjee et al. 2023). This finding is consistent with Gustafson’s argument that the way individuals relate to the local and the global is becoming more complex (2009), and underscores how local and cosmopolitan orientations are not necessarily to be thought of as opposites, but rather as complementary identities. Some participants described the nature of this complexity and complementarity in the SF context as being connected to our common Earth: “It’s the Earth that’s feeding us; the Earth is everything” (Interview 14), because “We are all part of the Earth” (Interview 15). Others echoed this idea in recounting how “We are just one Earth,” (Interview 13) so we need to “protect it from threats” (Interview 6).

In exploring sense of place at the local level, the interview results highlight how for many SF activists local place meaning is tied to heritage and identity, which represent aspects of the non-physical value of place. In terms of heritage, for example, a participant from the United States spoke about his 30-acre farm and how it has been tied to his family since approximately 1800, when his ancestors were brought from Virginia to Kentucky in an enslaved condition (Interview 1). Recalling how he grew up with a sense of “closeness to land,” he described the large flower and vegetable gardens on the land, and how he would gather wild greens and medicinal herbs in the fall. He also discussed how in the 1850s during

enslavement his family was allowed to practice religion on the farm, which led to the establishment of a church across from the farm (Interview 1). The church and the farm are both places that are tied to this SF activist's family history, but also hold great historical importance for the community. Similarly, another SF activist in Greece spoke of places that hold historical importance. To him, important places are those that are connected to the ancient Greek heritage, such as "the ruins of an old castle, or the archeological museum" (Interview 11), next to which he organizes dinners to promote the food cultures of Greece. These local places, which are relevant from a historical point of view, allow him the opportunity to spread knowledge and awareness about local cuisine and traditional foods.

Local places also possess non-physical value in terms of their link to personal identity. A participant from Denmark illustrated this connection to identity in speaking about her "Nordic perspective" (Interview 7). She discussed the importance of places such as Finland, where she lived for 12 years. "I'm a true Nordic person...I have a Nordic soul. When I feel at home [in a place] it's because of the Nordic food culture" (Interview 7). A participant from the UK echoed this sentiment. Having spent his childhood in a rural area in Cornwall, he discussed the county's distinct regional cuisine and how it helps showcase the cultural aspects of food, which are often tied to place and impact identity. Moreover, his connection to Cornwall impacts his perspective on the importance of protecting its natural landscapes; "I see the protection of these landscapes as a cultural matter and a matter of identity" (Interview 15). Beyond Europe, the ways in which a particular place can hold relevance to the development of one's identity and personal values was a theme mentioned by participants across many areas of the world. For example, one SF activist in Uganda discussed an area in the Buikwe district. Bordered by a lake, it has the largest forest in the country. The participant discussed how he had spent many years in this area, which became central to his own identity formation (Interview 14). The area represents an important site of his SF work, as he works to ensure that communities there can continue to produce a diverse selection of food and fight against

monoculture (Interview 14). As an expression of his identity, it has been important to him to have relationships with the people in the communities of this region and to teach about the importance of preserving biodiversity, which he hopes will help counteract the destruction of the land (Interview 14). These examples illustrate the strong ties to local places that are one component of rooted cosmopolitanism (Edelman 2024). Places often have highly personal meanings as participants often refer to a particular place as a way of telling others who they are.

Our results also highlight that SF participants' sense of place is not only reflected in and tied to the local environment, but is also informed by the perceived intersection of the local and the global. Open-ended questions gauging whether and how being part of the global SF community complements participants' local SF work, and the extent to which their involvement in SF has changed the way they think about their own local community, reinforce the idea that those who are heavily involved in the Slow Food movement can be considered rooted cosmopolitans (Tarrow 2005) who adopt plural loyalties and identities. A theme that emerged from our discussions, for example, is how many Slow Food participants perceive both levels to be intimately interconnected and mutually constructed – so much so that several participants noted how the local and global levels simply cannot be separated as the lines between the two are blurred (Interviews 2, 5, 11, 16, 19). Participants report that “I find time for work at both levels, they're both so interconnected. I have not really separated them” (Interview 2), and that “I don't see them [local and global] as different. It's all connected, it's all the same kind of work” (Interview 16).

Some of the ways in which these levels are interconnected can be gleaned from participants' reflections of how their global involvement has impacted how they view and interact with their local community, reflecting ways in which translocal actions influence different localities at the same time (Banerjee 2011). For some, their global SF involvement has helped them better “connect to people locally” because “through connecting with the international Slow Food movement you connect back with your country and different communities within it”

(Interview 2). This happens by instilling a greater awareness of common problems that facilitate better listening and understanding of the local situation (Interviews 2, 9), and by facilitating greater local impact through “bringing knowledge gained from global participation back to the local level” (Interview 3; this idea was also mentioned in interview 6). This can take the form of new ideas gleaned from Terra Madre (Interview 20) that “help us consider other paths to reach our objectives” (Interview 20), or simply gaining fresh perspectives on issues (Interviews 7, 8, 12, 13). As one activist told us, “You can talk to someone from Australia or France, and you have a common denominator. ... You learn a lot, you pick up a lot of ideas. The exchange is enriching, I share that information with locals” (Interview 4). Another recounted how “When you’re working in your community, sometimes you can feel like you’re working in a silo. ... In the global movement we can share best practices. I found out from my friend in Kenya that seed balls are common practice there, whereas here it’s kind of a novelty thing. ... We can bring that knowledge here locally so we can make it more a part of what we do” (Interview 5). Other activists report learning from their global involvement how to “better manage some local issues and how to change the local food system” (Interview 16), as well as how to create new food experiences at the local level (Interview 11). The idea that involvement at the global level provides new knowledge and ideas to SF activists that are useful for addressing in their home communities “similar problems that many around the world are facing” was a very common theme (Interviews 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21), reflecting the notions of translocalism and its emphasis on local-to-local connections. Additionally, these experiences showcase the relational nature of place as dynamic and forged via connections to outside spaces, bringing to light the dynamics through which translocal connections bring change to local level places (Banerjee 2011; Banerjee et al. 2023), and showing how local spaces can be co-produced by interactions at different scales. Participants also frequently mentioned how maintaining a commitment at the global level is important for feeling a sense of solidarity and mutual support that keeps them

motivated in their local work (Interviews 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21).

On the flip side, a few report that their global involvement makes them more aware of how they are different, reinforcing their distinctive local identity. For example, one participant from Canada discussed her heightened awareness “of the uniqueness of Vancouver Island and West Coast Canadian cuisine” (Interview 12), and another participant mentioned a negative impact in that her global involvement has heightened her frustration with the local community for not doing more to make the food system more sustainable (Interview 16).

Furthermore, SF activists’ perceptions of the value of places at different spatial levels highlight how the local and the global are mutually reinforcing and mutually constituted. Many participants feel that they have more in common with individuals who are involved with SF in other countries than with people in their local area who may not share SF’s values (Interviews 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21). Some activists discussed how their support of other SF communities across the world is a form of resistance against the forces of industrialized agriculture, which are also impacting their own local communities (Interviews 20, 21). As one activist put it, “Holding that space that belongs to your identity is a form of resistance” (Interview 21). Others spoke of “standing up to the giants” to change the food system at home and at the global level (Interview 18), and in South America “people defending the land and their resources are making resistance movements against conventional agriculture, and they can be more powerful if [the movement] is global” (Interview 8). These sentiments help illuminate the notion of translocal fields of protest highlighted in the translocalism literature, composed of distinct local nodes of protest that are sustained and connected based on solidarity, creating a sense of shared struggle against common threats (Desai 2016), and illustrate how social relationships in this movement are, at least to some extent, dissociated from place.

The adoption of plural loyalties and identities is also evident in how SF movement participants describe how their work at both the local and global levels reflects who they are as a person. For example, one participant based in New Jersey explained how, on the one hand, his life experiences and

identity are deeply rooted in New Jersey, and are meaningfully connected to the Jersey tomato. He has been able to obtain the seeds necessary to bring this variety back from near extinction for others to grow, mentioning that “I feel it’s destined for me to do this” (Interview 5). Yet at the same time, he feels more connected to the global movement than he does to his country. Describing how he never felt strongly connected to the United States, he explained that places outside of the United States align more with his sense of identity and values, and with the lifestyle that he envisions for himself. He mentioned how “I never felt quite connected to my country,” as those involved in SF globally “share the same mindset and concerns” (Interview 5). Another participant in Indonesia explained how his involvement at the global level allows him to strengthen his own identity, and the identities of the local indigenous groups that he works with in managing the forests. The opportunity to be involved at the global level also reflects his values in the sense that “I can show others our identity, culture, and knowledge...and can share this with others” (Interview 13). Moreover, a participant deeply involved with local school gardens explains how teaching and engaging with the local children “is tied to my sense of identity,” but also how strongly her identity is “connected to those involved in Slow Food in other countries...I recently spoke with a man in Mali about school gardens...it’s the value of Slow Food living that makes me connected to them” (Interview 10). These notions reinforce Cohen’s (1992) position that cosmopolitanism, though based on a universalist outlook grounded in common solidarities, values, and principles, does not suggest rootlessness. These rooted cosmopolitans maintain overlapping and pluralist identities, helping to construct a global sense of place that in many ways illustrates Massey’s (1991) arguments about how place and community are not necessarily one and the same, and how places are constructed spaces based on specific assemblages of social relations. A sense of place based on this notion is “extroverted,” outward looking, integrating the global and the local (Massey 1991: 28).

## CONCLUSION

This research was motivated by an interest in understanding SF movement participants' sense of place. A truly global movement that has developed a global discourse, SF is also very much focused on the preservation of local food systems and products and the local cultures, landscapes, and heritages connected to them. SF movement participants are very much part of a global network, but their day-to-day work is also very much locally grounded. How does a strong local orientation combined with participation in a truly global network shape SF movement participants' sense of place, i.e., their place identities and attachments and the meanings they attribute to place? This is the main question that this study addresses. We find that SF movement participants have a sense of place that connects the local and the global, two spaces that our interviewees for the most part believe are very much linked, which supports the notion that the relationship between localism and cosmopolitanism is complex and that local and cosmopolitan orientations, identities, attachments, and solidarities can be complementary (Gustafson 2009). Additionally, in capturing SF movement participants' sense of place, we find evidence of place-based globalism (Osterweil 2005; Gibson-Graham 2008). SF movement participants have a sense of place that is indicative of their involvement in glocal spaces (Harcourt, Escobar 2002) and of the mutual constitution of local and global spaces of food activism (Massey 2004a; 2004b). More specifically, our interview data show that individual SF movement participants identify quite strongly with a local place as well as with a global community (and less with a national community), providing some initial evidence of the presence of the progressive sense of place Massey describes (Massey 1991; 2004b) and of the related rooted cosmopolitanism that Cohen describes (Cohen 1992). SF movement participants have identities that are strongly connected to local places, and they view their local food movement activism as part of a global movement that connects local struggles around the world towards shared global goals.

Our research contributes to the literature in different ways. Much of the research on place and place-based concepts



has focused on local places, and this study extends this literature to translocal activist spaces that bring together individuals from across the world whose activism is centered on local places. In doing so, this study contributes to the literature on translocal activism and translocal networks, highlighting how translocal social movement participants think about and view place and elucidating their sense of place. Additionally, the interviews we have conducted provide rich empirical material that captures nuances of interviewees' sense of place and some of the voices and personal stories of SF movement activists, and that is an important contribution of our study.

Additionally, the article synthesizes several relevant strands of the literature to develop a framework for studying issues surrounding sense of place among SF movement participants. These strands in the interdisciplinary social science literature are typically not combined into one analytical lens, and combining them can help us develop more nuanced accounts of sense of place.

Finally, the article extends earlier research on sense of place and translocal movements to a movement that is very diverse. While research on translocal movements has focused on the identities and solidarities translocalism fosters between similarly positioned groups and movements, such as movements in Gujarat, India, resisting neoliberal development projects (Desai 2016) or indigenous and rural movements resisting mining operations, displacement, dispossession, and exclusion and or asserting land rights (Banerjee 2011; Banerjee et al. 2021), this article puts the focus on the SF movement, whose membership is highly diverse.

This highly diverse membership straddles the Global North and the Global South and includes individuals from different walks of life who are highly diverse in terms of their identities and their positionality. This article contributes to the literature by extending the discussion to a more diverse movement and examining its members' ties to place. This is important because it would be reasonable to assume that it might be more difficult to develop a global sense of place among movement participants whose life experience and identities are very dissimilar and may not provide a foundation for a sense of solidarity, common purpose, and shared identity

to develop, but as we show in this article, this is not true for the SF movement.

The results and contributions of this study also point to future opportunities for research. One important way to build on the research presented here would be to conduct a survey at Terra Madre that captures Terra Madre attendees' sense of place. While the interviews we conducted provide more nuanced understandings of SF movement participants' sense of place in ways that a survey could not unveil, a survey can be valuable in placing the voices represented here against the background of survey data that provide broader-based knowledge of sense of place among SF movement participants. In addition, expanding this research to include other segments of the food movement and to other movements and translocal spaces that bring together individuals from far-flung local places to work towards shared goals is another opportunity to build on the research presented here to gain a deeper understanding of sense of place among individuals whose work and/or activism embed them in local places and translocal spaces.

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## APPENDIX

### *List of interviews cited*

Interview	Name	Country
1	Jim Embry	USA
2	Melissa de Billot	South Africa
3	Mathew John	India
4	Pacita Juan	Philippines
5	Jeff Quattrone	USA
6	Anonymous	Indonesia
7	Jannie Vestergaard	Denmark
8	Stephany Escamilla	Mexico
9	Anonymous	Turkey
10	Di Seels	Australia
11	Theodore Alexiou	Greece
12	Anonymous	Canada
13	Anonymous	Indonesia
14	John Kiwagalo	Uganda
15	Anonymous	United Kingdom
16	Laura Wyper	Canada
17	Rohit Jain	India
18	Dóra Svavarsdóttir	Iceland
19	Valentina Gritti	The Netherlands
20	Raúl Mondragón Segura	Mexico
21	Anonymous	Switzerland

