Call for Papers

Economia Agro-Alimentare / Food Economy

# Revisiting the Slow Food Movement: Heritage, Innovation, and Sustainability in Alternative Food Networks

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The Slow Food Movement has become an important grassroots organisation that emphasizes good, clean, and fair food. This movement's principles can serve as a framework for addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing our food systems today, including sustainability, the preservation of biodiversity, and the preservation of cultural heritage (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2022).

The Italian Slow Food Movement was founded in 1986 as a response to the opening of a McDonald's near the Spanish Steps in Rome. The movement sought to promote traditional, local, and sustainable food systems as an alternative to the globalised fast-food industry, a return to the 'un-brutalised nature' (Hsu, 2015). Over time, the movement has grown into a global network of food activists and advocates, with chapters (*convivia* and *presidia*) in more than 160 countries (Hayes-Conroy & Martin, 2010).). One of the key initiatives of the Slow Food Movement is Terra Madre, inspired by the Indios' concept of Pachamama, which was created in 2004 to bring together small-scale farmers, food producers, and consumers from around the world. The biennial Terra Madre Salone del Gusto event in Turin, Italy, brings delegates from all over the world to share their experiences, ideas, and knowledge about sustainable food systems. Through the Slow Food Movement and Terra Madre, activists and advocates have worked to promote a philosophy for sustainable agriculture (Rosa et al., 2022) based on the preservation of biodiversity, and the support of local food cultures and traditions. However, the Slow Food Movement is one successful experiment among many Alternative Food Networks (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2019).

Alternative food networks are redefining the way we produce, distribute, and consume food by embracing both innovativeness and sustainability. These networks prioritise local and organic food systems, reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation and conventional agriculture (Renting, Marsden, & Banks, 2003). They foster direct relationships between producers and consumers, enabling a transparent and traceable food supply chain. Furthermore, alternative food networks encourage novel approaches such as urban farming, community-supported agriculture, and vertical farming, harnessing technology to maximise efficiency and minimise resource use. By promoting ecological resilience, social equity, and regenerative practices, these networks present a promising path towards a more sustainable and inclusive food future.

Cultural heritage plays a significant role in shaping food systems worldwide. Through food, people express their identities, values, and traditions (Brulotte & Di Giovine, 2016). Food is often associated with certain cultural practices, such as holiday celebrations and traditional festivals, that can bring people together, creating a sense of community and social cohesion (Canavari et al., 2016). Food can also be a way to preserve cultural heritage and transmit it from one generation to another (Caputo et al., 2018), safeguarding culinary traditions that are at risk of disappearing due to the homogenization of food culture (Cacciolatti et al., 2015). The Slow Food Movement has placed significant emphasis on preserving cultural heritage through food. By promoting traditional, local, and sustainable food systems, the movement aims to protect biodiversity and support local food cultures and traditions (Peano et al., 2014). The movement has been successful in creating a global network of food activists and advocates, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural heritage in food systems.

Sustainable food systems can be defined as those that provide healthy, nutritious, and affordable food for all while preserving the environment and supporting local communities (Maye & Duncan, 2017). Innovation plays a crucial role in fostering resilient and sustainable food systems by introducing new technologies, processes, and practices that reduce the negative environmental impacts of food production, enhance the efficiency and productivity of food systems, and increase their resilience to shocks and stresses (Herrero et al., 2020).

Innovation advances sustainable food systems, whether it be technological, social, or organizational innovation. Technological innovation can help reduce the negative environmental impact of food production and enhance the efficiency and productivity of food systems (Han et al., 2018). Social innovation can help foster collaboration and cooperation among various actors involved in the food system, from small-scale farmers to retailers, consumers, and policymakers. Organizational innovation can help establish new business

models that support sustainable food production and distribution while ensuring fair wages and working conditions for food workers (Knickel et al., 20. The Slow Food Movement and Terra Madre have been significant examples of social innovation, creating a platform for small-scale farmers, food producers, and consumers to come together and exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences on sustainable food systems.

Innovation also contributes to the success of regional innovation systems through multi-stakeholder collaboration and to constructing the supporting narrative to legitimise social movements (Van Bommel et al., 2011), with the creation of artefacts supporting a specific narrative (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2022). Innovation can also help to create new markets for sustainable food products, promote sustainable agriculture (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2020), and enhance food security by reducing waste, improving supply chain efficiency, and increasing access to nutritious foods. Thus, the institutional setup of a country or region and the institutional processes that support food systems are critically important for their sustainability (Ericksen, 2008). Furthermore, innovation can support the empowerment of small-scale farmers and marginalised communities (Medici et al., 2021), create new job opportunities through upskilling, and branding and protected denominations of origin (PDO), and foster the development of more equitable and inclusive food systems that benefit all participants (Cañada & Vázquez, 2005). Overall, innovation is essential for creating a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient food system that meets the needs of present and future generations.

Technology has played a significant role in advancing sustainable food systems in recent years. One key area of advancement has been in precision agriculture, which uses sensors, data analytics, and automation to optimize crop yields, reduce waste, and minimize the use of inputs like water and fertilizer (Pierpaoli et al., 2013). Another area of technological advancement has been in alternative protein sources, such as plant-based meat and cellular agriculture, which offer more sustainable and environmentally-friendly alternatives to traditional animal agriculture. Additionally, blockchain technology has the potential to increase transparency and traceability in food supply chains, allowing consumers to make more informed decisions about the sustainability and ethicality of their food choices. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also playing an increasingly important role in advancing sustainable food systems (Herrero et al., 2021), particularly in precision agriculture where AI-powered sensors, machine learning, and predictive analytics can provide real-time insights and recommendations for optimizing crop yields, minimizing resource use, and reducing waste. Finally, new technologies like vertical farming and aquaponics offer innovative solutions for urban food production, reducing the need for long-distance transportation and creating more local and sustainable food systems.

Sustainability is a critical aspect of food systems that has far-reaching implications for the environment, economy, and society. Sustainable food systems promote healthy, nutritious, and affordable food for all while preserving the environment and supporting local communities (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). Sustainable food systems can improve people's well-being, create employment opportunities, reduce poverty and inequality, and contribute to the resilience of communities in the face of shocks and stresses. However, achieving sustainable food systems is a complex challenge that requires the integration of various factors, such as social, economic, and environmental dimensions (De Schutter et al., 2020). Sustainable food systems must address issues such as food waste reduction, responsible use of resources, animal welfare, fair labour practices, and social justice. Therefore, food systems' sustainability is essential for the good life and happy communities, as it addresses people's basic needs for healthy and nutritious food while preserving the environment and promoting social and economic equity. The Slow Food Movement has been a critical advocate of sustainability in food systems, promoting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation while raising awareness of the impact of food production and consumption on the environment and society.

We invite proposals for a special issue that explores the relationship among food, heritage, innovation, and sustainability. We encourage papers that examine the Slow Food Movement's principles and how they can be applied to promote sustainable and equitable food systems globally. We welcome papers on the themes indicated as follows, although this list is non-exhaustive.

Main topic 1: the supply side

- Innovative technologies and practices that promote sustainable food production and reduce environmental degradation
- The role of biodiversity in sustainable food systems and the use of locally adapted crops and livestock breeds
- The potential of new technologies like blockchain and AI to enhance food traceability, transparency, and sustainability
- Distribution and shorter food chains

Main topic 2: the demand side

- Traditional food preparation techniques and culinary use of local ingredients, and their role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting sustainable food systems
- The impact of fair labour practices on small-scale food producers and the creation of a more equitable food system
- The role of food branding, restaurants, and food retail in promoting sustainable and equitable food systems

Main topic 3: the role of innovation in sustainable food systems

- The role of innovation in fostering resilient and sustainable food systems
- How innovation can contribute to the success of regional innovation systems through multi-stakeholder collaboration, the creation of supporting narratives and artefacts, and the development of more equitable and inclusive food systems
- Education and advocacy in promoting sustainable food systems and reducing food waste.
- Food co-creation and innovative business models
- Organisational dynamics in sustainable food systems and the triple bottom line
- Sustainable food systems and entrepreneurialism
- Institutional mechanisms underpinning innovation in social movements
- Innovation and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and/or Net0
- Technology has played a significant role in advancing sustainable food systems in recent years, with precision agriculture, alternative protein sources, and blockchain technology being key areas of advancement.

Main topic 4: the role of heritage in sustainable food systems

- The promotion of traditional, local, and sustainable food systems as an alternative to the globalized fast-food industry, and how it aims to preserve cultural heritage and biodiversity
- The role of food marketing in promoting local culinary culture
- How food can be used to preserve cultural heritage by expressing identities, values, and traditions, safeguarding culinary traditions at risk of disappearing
- The Slow Food Movement and Terra Madre are significant examples of social innovation, creating a platform for small-scale farmers, food producers, and consumers to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences on sustainable food systems

We encourage submissions of original research papers on the broad areas of Innovation and Sustainability from a range of disciplines, including food science, agriculture, anthropology, sociology, economics, organisation studies, marketing and management, and environmental studies. We welcome all methodologies, review articles and meta-analyses, quantitative studies, and qualitative studies including case studies and ethnography.

We look forward to receiving your proposals and exploring the intersection of heritage, food, innovation, and sustainability in the context of the Slow Food Movement.

## Developmental workshop

This Special Issue will also run a preparatory workshop, where the prospective authors will have the opportunity to develop their paper further for publication. Attendance at the workshop is not a prerequisite to submission, nor it constitutes a guarantee of final acceptance of the manuscript.

Participation in the workshop is open to all parties interested and free of charge. The workshop will take place in London on Saturday the 14th of October 2023, from 10:00 to 16:00 in Fitzrovia.

## Deadlines

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| 25th of May 2023 | 500 words abstract submission period start |
| 31st of August 2023 (Thu) 23:59 GMT+0 | 500 words abstract submission deadline (via Special Issue email address) |
| 29th of September 2023 (Sat) 23:59 GMT+0 | Final attendance registration for the Developmental Workshop (London) |
| 1st of December 2023 (Fri) 23:59 GMT+0 | Paper Submission |
| 9th of February 2024 (Fri) | Reviewers' feedback |
| 29th of March 2024 (Fri) 23:59 GMT+0 | Manuscript submission (via Journal Submission System) |
| August 2024 | Publication |

## How to submit

All abstracts will have to be submitted to the following email address: slowfoodspecialissue@outlook.com. Any enquiry can also be submitted to the same email address.

Finally, all manuscripts will have to be submitted via the Journal's submission system.

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**Guest Editors' Short Biographies**

**Dr Luca Cacciolatti** is a Reader in Marketing at Westminster Business School, University of Westminster, London. His research interests are in the areas of innovation, marketing, and entrepreneurship and the leading conduct of his research focuses on sociological institutionalism. He has published in journals deemed as excellent at the international level and he has served on the editorial board of high-impact factor journals. Luca covers the role of European Expert as evaluator and rapporteur for the European Commission on Horizon2020 calls related to sustainable and healthy food manufacturing value chains. (Luca's Linkedin)

**Prof. Soo Hee Lee** is a Professor in Organization Studies at Kent Business School, University of Kent. He is a vice-president of the Korean Association for Cultural Economics and the Director of the Creative City Forum in Korea. His research focuses on institutional underpinnings and behavioural dynamics of creativity and innovation in a variety of contexts. More recently, he has explored digital transformation in the arts, design and creative industries. He has published over 50 papers in leading journals including the Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Studies, and Research Policy.

**Dr Giovanna Sacchi** is an Assistant Professor at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. She earned her PhD in Agricultural and Food Economics and Policy from the University of Bologna. With extensive postdoctoral experience at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and the University of Florence, she has developed strong expertise in Participatory Guarantee Systems for organics, collective action, consumer behaviour, sustainable consumption, social innovation within Alternative Agri-Food Networks, and sustainable rural tourism.

**Dr Jinha Lee** is an Assistant Professor of Business in the DeVoe Division of Business at Indiana Wesleyan University. She has published works in the Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management, the International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, and so forth. Her research interests are food and wellness research, which more specifically includes topics on dining environment design & experience, multisensory marketing, sustainability, health, wellness, and technology & data analytics.