CHAPTER 11

THE EMERGENCE OF SLOW FOOD

Social entrepreneurship, local foods, and the Piedmont gastronomy cluster

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INTRODUCTION

Slow Food has developed from a group of culturally engaged youngsters in the Langhe area of Piedmont, Italy, into an international movement for the enjoyment of 'good, clean and fair' food. Over the past three decades, the movement's agenda has shifted from local quality wines toward the broader matters of food education, the protection of traditional local foods, and the sustainability of global food chains. Its impact has been greater than the actual number of members (80,000) may suggest. Its force is in the dedication and intelligence of the leaders, in the mobilization of their civic home-base, and in the many local volunteers whom they have inspired. The Slow Food events and publications propose eye-catching alternatives to the mainstream agri-food sector, and manage to involve people and organizations from very different backgrounds. This chapter begins with a description of the movement's development form the start, after which three major 'business' dilemmas of Slow Food are discussed: the strategy of developing local food networks to fight global bulk-food producers, the desire to create a Piedmont gastronomy cluster versus the movement's international ambitions, and the collaboration with private entrepreneurs and sponsors versus the pursuit of social goals.

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COMMUNITY AND COMMUNISTS: 1975-1990

Slow Food started in the 1970s with cultural activities organized by a couple of friends in the town of Bra, among them Carlo Petrini, visionary food writer and now the international president of Slow Food, Piero Sardo, now president of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, and Alberto Capatti, now dean of the University of Gastronomic Science.

Without the idealism, complete dedication, and intelligence of a few people, Slow Food would just not have existed today.

The essays Petrini wrote a few years ago provide an interesting retrospect on the emergence of the movement from a local community. Remarkable are his references to the old local associations and political networks on which he and his colleagues have capitalized, to gradually set in motion a social movement and build an entirely set of new organizations. This use of 'social capital' appears throughout the activities described below.

Petrini starts off to describe the rise and fall of the leather-tanning factories that developed in the 19th century because of cattle breeding in the nearby plains of Cuneo, in combination with a longstanding tradition of clog and slipper makers in Bra. After World War II, the market declined and in response the production of tan, one of the ingredients of the leather industry, was set up; as appropriately observed by Petrini (2004, p. 32-38, (translated HvdM)): "The penetrating smell sticks in the nose and makes the breath heavy with the stench of rot. […] But the air of Bra contained more flavours, since every year in October the main street of Bra is full of the strong smell of must that rises from the deepest of every patio and cuts through swarms of flies. The people of Bra are making their wine. They all pick a few thousand grapes, drag them down from their tiny vineyards on top of a steep slope or hidden in a chasm in the clay hills, and turn them into wine at their homes. […] An agrarian economy divided over many parcels, in a village that stumbles through a stage of a still artisan and paternalistic industry."[1]

According to Petrini this marked the situation in the early 1970s. He points out that, in addition to the industrial architecture, another cultural element was left behind: a large number of cooperatives and associations of farmers, labourers, merchants and soldiers, which had developed since 1900. Some of them still exist today, like the Società di San Crispino e Crispiniano (clog and slipper makers), and the Società dei Contadini (vegetable growers). "Seasonal guests and Sunday tourists are already there, but the atmosphere is that of a half-sleeping and half-hearted province town, a mix of cultures from the Alps and the Po valley. Who is born here, does not have Barolo [local wine] in his blood (rather the country wine from the inner courts of the town), but does possess the necessary sensitiveness to understand how precious the heritage of wine, agriculture and commerce is […] in a period when most people thought the industry of Lombardy and Piedmont could be the only motor of modern development. […]." Thus, in 1980 Petrini and his friends decided to found the Libera e Benemerita Associazione Amici del Barolo (Friends of Barolo Association).

At that time the promotion of wine and gastronomy was not common in Piedmont, so they started to organize wine tastings and group meals. “The gathering at the Palazzo dei Dogi in Mira was exemplary. […] Massimo Martinelli, from the Cantine Ratti wine house, told about his wines and guided the tasting, while the Brezza family, of the restaurant in Barolo with the same name, served the local cuisine. […] Or the beginner wine courses to students of the technical high-school Amedeo Avogadro in Turin. Or the Week of the Barolo and the Barbaresca, held in Bra after the courses we had just followed in the Bourgogne.” For many curious gourmands in search of their cultural background and reliable information, the new association was a revelation. Within three years membership grew from 3,000 to 8,000.

In Bra, after the foundation of Friends of the Barolo, a cooperative was created to promote tourism and to distribute wines and other products. As a result of this, the Osteria del Boccondivino was opened, a restaurant around which Slow Food

headquarters would develop. The name Slow Food had been evoked by a protest demonstration at the opening of the first McDonald's close to the Spanish Stairs in Rome in 1985. "But the real reason behind the name was a critical attitude towards the emerging globalisation", as Petrini emphasizes. In December 1989, the international Slow Food movement was founded in Paris, in the Opéra Comique.

In 1990 Slow Food Editore (editor) launched the movement's new name in its first publication: Osterie d'Italia. This guide revolutionized the restaurant world with concepts like region, tradition, simplicity, hospitality and reasonable prices. It meant the survival of hundreds of small, traditional restaurants and their suppliers. "We want to defend the richness in agricultural food products against the deterioration of the environment, protect consumers and high-quality products, stimulate research and promote gastronomic pleasure and eating together." So far the quotes from the Petrini essays (2001).

What is perhaps surprising is that the organization that stood at the basis of Slow Food, ARCI, was a volunteers association of the Italian Communist Party. The party is strongly embedded in the society of northern and central Italy, as a result of uprisings of agricultural and industrial labourers about a century ago. According to Putnam (1993) its participation in a number of regional governments in the 1970s and '80s, in particular in the northern part of Italy, has led to higher institutional performance and civic attitude. "Communists themselves attribute their «business-like» successes to a systematic effort to recruit competent cadres [from less privileged layers of society]" (p. 118). The popular character of the Slow Food movement is manifest in its grassroots structure. As long as it follows the main philosophy, every group of local members can start a so-called *convivium*, choose its board members, and decide which activities it likes to organize: charity dinners, fairs, excursions, courses, informative websites, protection of local food specialties, etc.

However much inspired by social motives, the activities of Slow Food have been contested by both left-wing colleagues and conservatives. The former accused the movement of hedonism and a lack of attention to political matters, while the established gastronomes of the Academia Italiana della Cucina refused to be involved because they feared to lose their monopoly on gastronomic knowledge and corresponding social status. So, after the initial influx of "disillusioned lefties" (Petrini 2004, p. 36), people from varying backgrounds started to join in, all having one interest in common: good food, in a multiple sense.

DIVERSIFICATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION: 1990 – 2005

After guiding the Langhe economy towards 'the other tan' (from leather to wine), Slow Food has initiated many other activities, from the above-mentioned publications to education programmes and international events. In the early 1990s, the first *convivia* outside Italy were set up, in Germany and Switzerland. At the 1994 congress in Palermo Slow Food decided to invest money in the international development of the movement, which it continues to do. Today, Slow Food has almost 1,000 *convivia* in over 60 countries (Annex 1), which constitute the basis of

virtually every event. In 1993, the 'Week of Taste' was organized at Italian primary schools.

In 1994, member education was started, which later evolved into the Master of Food programme (in 2006 involving 9,500 participants in 400 courses). 'Education through taste' workshops, starting at the Vinitaly in 1994, have become an integral part of many Slow Food events[2]. In 2002, several projects with students from the hotel management school were started.

The year 1996 was decisive to Slow Food's image and visibility. The first Slow Food magazine (The International Herald of Tastes) was sent to the members, and the first *Salone del Gusto* (Saloon of Taste) was held, a bi-annual fair in the Lingotto halls in Turin. Today this fair is the largest of its kind in the world, focusing on traditional and other exclusive high-quality food products. It attracts 130,000 visitors in the course of four days, including consumers as well as many food writers, scientists and representatives of NGOs and public institutions. Besides the fair, hundreds of workshops, dozens of dinner dates and a number of 'taste theatres' are offered, with an increasingly international character.

At the first *Salone* the 'Ark of Taste' programme was launched, demonstrating the idealism behind the hedonism. Starting in Italy, dozens of almost extinct, traditional local food products – cheeses, meat products, rare breeds, indigenous vegetable and fruit varieties – had been identified and described and were now presented to the public.

Since these products are neither backed by strong companies or consortia, nor legally protected as geographical indications, a new protection structure was designed, the so called Presidium. A Presidium is a group of local producers who agree with coordinators of Slow Food on a stringent code of practice, defining aspects like husbandry system, type of feed, minimum age of slaughtering, sustainability, etc. Presidia are often supported by local governments, area management boards, etc.

Today, there are over 250 presidia around the world, almost 200 of which are located in Italy (Annex 1). They are at the centre of attention at both local and international events, like Cheese, a bi-annual fair in Bra that attracts about 180,000 visitors, which was started in 1997. In 2002, the first 30 'international' (non-Italian) Presidia were presented at the fourth *Salone del Gusto*. The Ark & Presidia programme has changed the image of Slow Food members from hedonists to heroes, saving cultural heritage, genetic patrimony and vulnerable ecosystems. Still, the combination of pleasure and good company with rescue and education, constitutes the movement's appeal and strength.

In 2000, the international focus of Slow Food became clear at the first Slow Food Award for Biodiversity event, held in Bologna. A jury of hundreds of food journalists and other experts from countries around the world had nominated an equal number of persons who had dedicated their lives to preserving traditional local food stuffs or rare breeds, but never received due recognition, like the women of the Moroccan Amal cooperative, which produces the delicate Argan oil, saving an excellent food and a unique tree species. The media attention that went along with these recognitions triggered awareness in countries where Slow Food was unknown before.

The 'No GMO wine' campaign and the 'manifesto for the defence of raw-milk cheese' were launched in 2001 in all countries where there are Slow Food members. It increased consumer awareness about food policy, as did the USA school gardens project, also launched in 2001. In 2003, the bi-annual fair *Aux Origines du Goût* (to the origins of taste) was started by Slow Food members in the south of Italy's jealous neighbouring country, France. In 2004, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity was created, with financial support from the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and the Tuscan Regional Government. The foundation manages the Ark & Presidia programme and has a leading role in *Terra Madre*, which is a huge event parallel to the *Salone del Gusto*, in which representatives of thousands of 'food communities' (local specialty producers) in the world gather in Turin to share their experiences. In 2006, a thousand cooks and hundreds of scientists from sympathizing universities were added to the programme. In 2004, 75 bachelor students from 10 countries started the bachelor programme at the University of Gastronomic Sciences (UGS), housed in the *Agenzia di Pollenzo*, near Bra.

Finally, in 2004, the first Slow Fish fair (annual) was held at Genoa, featuring endangered and undervalued species, like the Oosterschelde lobster (Dutch) and Cornwall pilchards (UK).

BUSINESS DILEMMAS TO SLOW FOOD

The internationalization of the Slow Food movement has created at least two major dilemmas. The first is whether small-scale local food production systems can solve global problems at hand. The second dilemma is the friction that Slow Food's origins in the Langhe area causes between the emerging local gastronomy cluster, which it helped to develop, and the movement's drive to proliferate such competitive advantages throughout the world (see also Parkins and Craig 2006, chapter 4).

A third business dilemma, less linked to internationalization, is the continuous tension between the social goals of the movement on the one hand, and the private interests of small entrepreneurs and large companies with which it needs to collaborate on the other hand.

Local foods versus global problems

Some of the global problems that the leaders of Slow Food have identified as relevant to their objectives are the decrease in agro-biodiversity[3], loss of cultural heritage, damage to the environment, degradation of rural areas, an increase in obesity, and persisting hunger.

These problems have been addressed at press conferences, events and political lobbies. But first of all the concerns have been translated into concrete local activities, many of which pivot around local foods; in taste lessons at primary schools, Master of Food courses, fairs, excursions for the students at the UGS, etc. Thus, local foods appear as a panacea to many generic and global problems.

In order to properly address the question how much local foods can contribute to the solution of large-scale problems, first a distinction must be made between the various categories of origin food[4]. In Anglo-Saxon countries 'local food' usually refers to unprocessed, organically grown foodstuffs sourced by restaurants, box schemes and sometimes private consumers among farmers in their own area (Hinrichs 2003; Weatherell et al. 2003; Ilbery et al. 2005; Selfa and Qazi 2005; Delind 2006). Such examples of 'co-production', i.e. involving consumers in primary production, have recently been advocated more by Slow Food (Olsson 2005, p. 11-13; Petrini 2005, p. 78; Davenport 2005), in part caused by the fast increase of members in Anglo-Saxon countries. Local distribution channels offer farmers opportunities to escape the price squeeze in the bulk market by adding unique experiences to the food: personal attention, farm life, countryside, etc. Increasingly, newly invented processed farmhouse products are also offered, in farm shops, delicatessen stores, tourist shops and to distributors for Christmas baskets. These initiatives are believed to be, and promoted as more environmentally and economically sustainable (Allen 2005).

In Latin-European countries, by contrast, local food usually refers to traditional food stuffs with special characteristics that are linked to a well-defined area or town of origin (Barham 2003; Pacciani 2006), which will be referred to here as 'regional typical'. Some of them are embedded in strong organizations and legally protected, but many minor regional typical food products are still unprotected, like the ones in the Ark of Taste programme of Slow Food. A third category of local foods can be called 'indigenous': crops and animals which are still traditionally produced, processed and consumed by many people in poorer countries, in particular in rural areas, but which lack the wider reputation and degree of organization of the Latin-European regional typical products. This category of indigenous local foods can be divided into common, daily food stuffs (for instance the Gari from Benin) and rare specialties (for instance Moroccan Argan oil and highland coffees). The latter are usually more processed and have the potential to develop into premium regional typical products.

Table 1 presents an overview of the characteristics of the local-food categories mentioned above, of their assumed (by the author) growth prospects and potential socio-economic impacts, and a subsequent explanation to these assumptions. The assumptions still need to be underpinned with more scientific research, but the direct positive impacts anyhow appear to be less than the Slow Food movement rhetoric suggest.

Table 1. *Assumed prospects and impacts of local food, per category (tentative)*

category / **feature**	**1. Regional Typical (RT)**		**2. Locally Sourced (LS)**		**3. Indigenous (I)**	
	Established (RTE)	**Small (RTS)**	**Fresh (LSF)**	**Processed (LSP)**	**Common (IC)**	**Rare (IR)**
Unique selling propositions	Traditional, Terroir properties, Exclusive, Collective		Producer known, Fresh, Support local farmers	Area known, Farm-made, Original, Gift	Familiar, Producer known, Artisanal, Auto-consumption, Own culture	
Main countries	Latin Europe	Europe	Anglo-Saxon countries	Europe	Poor and tribal DCs*	Richer DCs*
1. Prospects for multiplication	-	+	±	±	-	-
2. Prospects for scaling up	-	±	±	±	±	+
3. Biodiversity	+	++	+	±	±	++
4. Cultural heritage	+	+	-	±	+	+
5. Environment	±	-	-	-	±	±
6. Rural development	±	++	+	++	+	++
7. Hunger	-	-	-	-	+	+
8. Obesity	+	+	+	+	+	+

* IRs are linked to richer DCs because, on average, these have more developed and more varied (artisanal) food-processing techniques and markets for luxury-food markets, historically

Explanation of the assumptions in Table 1

1. Prospects for the multiplication are limited for RTE and RTSs in countries where they are already abundant (Latin Europe), because an average consumer can 'absorb' and identify with only a limited number of RTs. Moreover, North-European consumers are expected to substitute partly Latin-European RTEs for upcoming local RTSs and RSPs. In general, the growing 'experience economy' (Pine II and Gilmore 1999) and the search for authenticity among consumers (Lewis and Bridger 2000) create space for more RTs, and also LSs, beyond mere 'variety seeking' (Van Trijp 1995). In developing countries (DCs) artisanal IRs may develop into RTEs, if collective entrepreneurship (Van der Meulen 1998) and legal protection are properly organized (Rangnekar 2004). Their sales in emergent economies are expected to increase with the growing number of people with middle- and high-class incomes who are looking for status symbols. Moreover, globalization and nation-state building will stimulate nationalist and regionalist (buying) behaviours. After a phase of imports of Western luxury products, a return to local food products may be expected. LSFs profit from recurring food scares and from 'defensive localism' (Winter 2003), encouraging consumers to buy local (again). However, this requires a high consumer

involvement, which may be too optimistic, considering the 'law of decreasing involvement' of actors down the supply chain (Van der Meulen 2000, p. 36) and growing individualism. Therefore, the number of CSA initiatives will remain low (Cooley and Lass 1998). Furthermore, consumers are hardly willing to pay on an individual basis for collective goods like environment embodied in LSFs. LSPs, which are usually processed and carefully designed, lack the moral connotation. They are meant for special occasions: parties, gift baskets, 'experience shopping', etc. The number of initiatives still increases throughout Europe, eventually making them common to every region and thus perhaps less attractive to consumers.

2. Prospects for scaling-up RTEs are linked to extra-regional and extra-national sales, but there are limits; parmigiano-reggiano cheese still needs its large regional home market to stay 'rooted' and credible (De Roest 2000, p. 104-113). RTSs initially have more room for growth, but as they grow to maturity, producer groups tend to apply internal quota to avoid overproduction. RTs will remain niche products, per definition. LSF initiatives may grow if distribution to local consumers is rationalized, reducing price difference with the main stream (as happened for organic food). Large retailers, like Tesco's ASDA in England, are already picking up the trend. Another boost may come from the procurement of local elderly homes and public canteens. However, in both cases value-adding features, like personal contact and freshness, may be lost. IR initiatives may grow if they leave the protected spaces of habit and auto-consumption, and claim their place in the larger market. Indian mustard oil, Andean potatoes, etc. will at first suffer from modernization and globalization, but eventually survive by changing from 'backward' poor man's foods into luxury items, as happened to the *farro* cereal in Central Italy (Van der Meulen 1994 on Orvieto wine; Bowen and Valenzuela-Zapata 2006 on Tequila). Many IRs have the potential to be exported to rich Western countries, following the trail of Assam tea and vintage Tequila. Political interest in promoting and protecting geographical indications is growing outside the EU (Thevenod-Mottet 2006). The same holds for ICs, but they run greater risk of being mainstreamed by mechanization of manual work and lose special local characteristics.
3. Contribution to biodiversity is relevant to local foods based on rare breeds, in particular frequent in recent RTS initiatives and IRs. However, formalization of the use of specific breeds and varieties in codes of practices may lead to uniformity within these species (Van der Meulen 1993; Bowen and Valenzuela-Zapata 2006). LSF initiatives increasingly adopt rare vegetables in order to distinguish their offer from that of followers.
4. Cultural heritage is typically covered by the tradition-based local foods: RTs and IRs. However, there is a danger that formalization of production practices and orientation towards tourists take out the dynamic aspect of culture, throwing out the baby with the bath water.
5. Although damage to soil, nature and landscape by primary producers is expected to be low for most local-food categories, the environmentally friendliness of local foods can easily be overestimated (as by Pretty et al. 2005) when energy balance and overall supply-chain efficiencies per weight unit of produce are not

properly taken into account. Petrini warns for the attraction of too many tourists to the places of origin, since it damages local culture (Pertini 2001, p. 98-99) and the environment (fuel). In DCs much of the processing and part of the transport are still carried out manually.

6. Established RTs have become more vertically (chain-) oriented; when they started (as RTSs) firms were smaller and more numerous, inputs more locally sourced and buyers closer, corresponding to the model of endogenous rural development (Van der Ploeg and Long 1994). Nevertheless, the emphasis on quality of primary matter allows farmers to add value and profit. In some cases net contributions to landscape and tourism are evident and substantial (Dupont 2003, on Comté cheese).
7. Fresco (2005) warns Slow Food against adopting an elitist approach to origin-based food products and autarchy, because it would not solve the problem of low productivity. However, hunger usually does not result from a lack of food, but from a lack of purchasing power among poor people. Labour-intensive foods with RT potential can create incomes for more people. Incidentally, today more people in DCs die from diseases caused by over-consumption than from hunger (Lang and Heasman 2004).
8. Kees de Graaf, a Wageningen expert on eating behaviour, has offered the hypothesis that the consumption of local and special foods in Western countries helps to avoid obesity because they demand more attention (complex taste and the story behind the product), slowing down eating pace and thus overeating (contribution to presentation of the University of Gastronomic Sciences at Wageningen University, February 17, 2005).

The above-mentioned explanation provides ample reason to be sceptical about the problem-solving capacity of local food initiatives. However, the main argument to counter the criticism of marginality is that local food networks serve as an important signal and example to the mainstream, reflecting where society is going and where the new opportunities lie. “The actual practices do not represent a simple re-proposing of old traditional productions, rather they derive from a new reading of the internal and external environment based on the needs and characters of the modern consumer” (Nosi and Zanni 2004, p. 789). Therefore, probably the largest gains are going to be realized by actors outside the initial networks. In the same vein, conspicuous consumption of local specialty food products by upper-class people will turn local foods into ‘culture goods’ (Bourdieu 1979), making them desirable to the middle and lower classes. Thus, the largest gains will be realized by the mass of second-instance buyers.

The trend-setting potential of local-food initiatives emphasizes their emancipating role. Local, indigenous products and know-how are upgraded by the Western cultural elite, and local producers acquire greater bargaining power in the market.

This argument refutes the frequently heard criticism that ‘slow food’ is created by an elite that is “fetishizing cultural diversity and sentimentalizing struggles for cultural or economic survival” (Donati 2005, p. 227). To neutralize the criticism, Petrini prefers to call Slow Food members an ‘inclusive elite’.

A further argument in favour of the local-food movement is that generic solutions to large-scale problems are usually sub-optimal. In a sense, the industrialization of the agri-food sector and the accompanying standardization of flavours have produced a vacuum in which small-scale newcomers can find 'ecological' niches by exploiting neglected resources: consumer preferences for personal proximity, local identity and different tastes (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000).

Although local foods will never serve the masses, by definition, they do serve people in specific market segments (craft, local) and specific areas (mountains) very much. In such areas, the impact of local-food initiatives is often higher than their direct net added value, because of synergies with other economic activities, notably tourism and landscape management (Van der Ploeg et al. 2002).

Regional cluster versus international movement

Since the roots of Slow Food lie in the Piedmont town of Bra, from where it still coordinates its many activities, the relatively strong concentration of its spin-offs in the Langhe area and Piedmont region should not come as a surprise. Considering further the quality-food potential of the area, all ingredients are there for the development of an economic cluster of the 'historic know-how' type (as opposed to a 'techno-cluster'; Porter 1998), specialized in gastronomy. Figure 1 shows the main relationships within the cluster, with emphasis on the role of Slow Food.

The development of the cluster started with wine. "Arcigola was born in an area with ancient agricultural traditions, a splendid landscape and a treasure of typical products (like the Barolo and the truffle)[…]" (Petrini 2004, p. 74). "On the 4th of July 1988, all leading persons of Langhe enogastronomy gathered in Alba: hundreds of wine producers, restaurant owners, wine tasters and journalists discussed the theme: Can the Langhe get the same function for Piedmont that the Côte d'Or has for Burgundy?" […] It was not until much later that publications like the '*Guida Enogastronomica e Turistica delle Langhe e del Roero*' and the '*Atlante delle Grandi Vigne di Langa*' [1992] would appear. A group of enthusiasts had worked for years on this atlas […]. The subdivision in cru's they laid down has not changed since" (Petrini 2004, p. 175). Inspiring many other producers, the founders materialized their dream of a quality-oriented agriculture in their home area. Today, Slow Food supports lesser-known winegrowers in the Roero area (close to Bra!) by taking them on promotional tours abroad where their best wines are tasted in combination with cheeses and cured meats from the Italian Ark of Taste.

After wine, other traditional food products in the region have been developed and promoted, notably after 1996, when the Ark of Taste & Presidia programme took off, with products like Sambucano lamb, Carbagna cherries, Val d'Ossola mortadella, Monregalese cookies, and many others (Milano et al. 2004). Naturally, the Piedmont presidia enjoy proximity advantages over their 'competitors' from other parts of Italy and the world: early foundation, short distance to major fairs, ready access to Slow Food headquarters, access to the Banca del Vino (at the UGS, near Bra).

In the future, local wine and food producers are likely to become more and more involved in the educational activities of Slow Food, through excursions and on-farm studies. Others may become involved in experiments with new artisan food production techniques, in try-outs for legal cases against the implementation of 'industrial-type' hygiene regulations, in the development of a bottom-up certification system for regional typical foods, etc. Thus, small producers in the area can profit from the specific synergies that the emerging Piedmont gastronomy cluster offers.

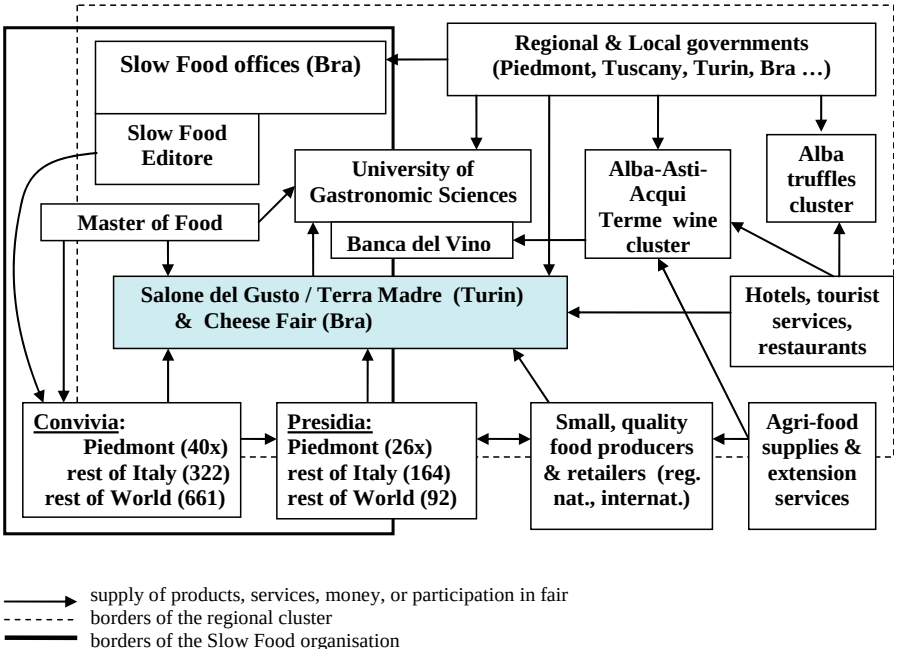

Figure 1. *The Piedmont Gastronomy Cluster*

Explanation of the interrelations in Figure 1

- The many local, regional and national associations and private companies that work with or sponsor Slow Food, have been left out of the figure!
- Slow Food offices are located all over Bra. They employ some 130 persons, many on a project basis and many under the age of 30.
- Slow Food Editore sends the Slow magazine to all members, here aggregated under Convivia. It also issues dozens of guides on regional food stuffs and wines, and cities.
- Master of Food courses (members only) are coordinated from Bra and executed by local convivia.
- Master of Food knowledge is used in workshops at the Salone.

- Non-local Slow Food members visit the biannual Salone and cheese fairs, accompanying their Presidia producers.
- Students of the University of Gastronomic Sciences use Slow Food fairs and regional producers as sources of knowledge.
- The University campus at Pollenzo (Bra) houses the Banca del Vino, which collects major Piedmont and Italian wines and offers vertical tastings.
- Small quality-food producers in Piedmont yield new Presidia. Specialized retailers support them, like Occelli in Milan. This cheese shop annex store also supplies cheeses to workshops at the Salone and the Master of Food. Presidia producers, like those of the Morozzo Capon (first Presidium, near Bra), supply regional butchers and restaurants, including the famous Boccondivino.
- The regional and some local governments of Piedmont are strong supporters of Slow Food events. They realize that the many visitors generate income to the area, also in the future. Moreover, many public officials share Slow Food's belief in quality as an economic guiding principle.
- Hotels and restaurants in Turin and Bra receive the hundreds of thousands of international gastro-tourists who come to the area. Some restaurants receive special attention through the thematic 'dinner dates' that Slow Food organizes during the Salone.
- Many visitors to the Salone spend their holidays in the region, doing wine trips, visiting the Alba truffles market, sight-seeing in Turin, etc., using the guides published by Slow Food for these purposes

Slow Food has an important unifying function in this process since "for clusters consisting of many small and midsize companies – such as tourism, apparel and agriculture – the need is particularly great for collective bodies to assume scale-sensitive functions" (Porter 1998). As such, it brings together wine and food producers, public officials and representatives of all kinds of associations, which become each other's sponsors. Moreover, Slow Food acts as the supplier of an important ingredient to the cluster: visitors.

However impressive the activities and however important the role of Slow Food, the concept of cluster is a bit problematic is the case of Piedmont gastronomy: it is not yet fully grown in terms of critical mass, integration of activities, and specialization, and therefore seems to lack competitive advantage. This is partly due to the ambiguous role of Slow Food: it functions as a collective body unifying economic interests of the constituent parts, and at the same time engages in activities that distract from the core business of the cluster. In fact, from the outset, its vision was not limited to economic development, and its ambitions transcended Bra, the Langhe area and the Piedmont region at an early stage. "Even though in the first instance, Italy [and Piedmont in particular] reaps the fruits of this initiative [*Salone del Gusto*], we receive encouraging signals from abroad. Cooks, craftsmen, wine makers and food technologists from all over the world take active part in the event. […] "Of course the preference for Italian products in the gastronomic sector is an important reason for the international success of our formula. But more still, the conviction that the *Salone* responds to the new market demands for agri-food products, which must reinvent themselves, widely prevails" (Petrini 2004, p. 104).

As far as wine is concerned, there is a good concentration of activities. An impressive number of DOC and DOCG wines in Piedmont[5] (the highest in Italy) are concentrated between the towns of Turin, Allesandria and Cuneo. Moreover, the wines are produced by many relatively small winegrowers (whereas the nearest competitor, Tuscany, is dominated by large wine estates) and this mass of specialized, competing entrepreneurs spurs cluster-building. The fact that wine is omnipresent in Italy, also in the North, seemingly undermines the uniqueness of the Piedmont wine cluster, since it obscures the physical boundaries and identity of the area. The same is true for the production of typical cheeses, salamis, etc. On the other hand, if there is still a relatively high concentration in Piedmont in numbers and in quality, one could see all competing winegrowers and food producers located around the core area as constituting a *cordon facilitaire* that acts as a cultural and economic buffer, rather than competition, much like a generic *appellation contrôlée* buffers the *grands crus* within its confines. In that case, Slow Food's gastronomic efforts outside Piedmont may not be to the detriment of its cradle all that much, and in fact they may emphasize the position of Piedmont as a centre of gastronomic gravity, which can afford to help less endowed regions. Maybe the traditional (Porterian) question of how to develop a unique economic conglomerate should be replaced by the modern question of how the Piedmont gastronomy cluster can develop into an important centre in a worldwide network of gastronomic 'hubs and nodes' (NES 2005).

Next to the promotion of regional typical wine and food products, Slow Food has introduced a somewhat exotic product into the cluster: gastronomic knowledge, 'sold' in the form of academic courses, workshops and publications. Only part of this knowledge relates directly to the cluster's wines and foods, and it is different from the implicit knowledge that gears productive processes in a cluster anyway. In fact, the knowledge on food history, agro-ecology, food processing, typical foods, etc., could just as well be disseminated by universities other than the UGS, which is actually happening. In particular Anglo-Saxon universities could outperform the Slow Food university at the didactical level. However, they lack a 'back-yard' that allows for student excursions to special producers, and they lack the international contacts and the engagement that Slow Food contributes. This last point is more important than it may seem: the Piedmont gastronomy cluster will be hard to replicate because it is basically a 'culture economy', which relies not only on physical qualities but also moral elements (Ray 1998). The input of Slow Food relates to the conclusion of Porter (1998) that the competitive advantage of a cluster depends on its ability to increase the productivity of its assets through the use of local "knowledge, relationships and motivation". It may be just a matter of time for the different components of the Piedmont high-end gastronomy to further integrate and create the synergies typical of a full-fledged cluster.

Social goals versus private business

This third business dilemma is caused by Slow Food's internationalization to a lesser extent than the preceding two are. It stems from the social entrepreneurship that the founders radiated from the outset and determined the movement's 'business' culture: a strong belief in the innate capacity of individual people to contribute to wider social and economic interests, a practical and innovative approach to social problems and an impatient drive to change things[6]. The dilemma, then, arises from the practical need to generate extra income for a specific segment of agri-food producers in order to achieve some wider social goals: the production and consumption of 'good, clean and fair' food in a setting where life is 'slow' and culture dignified. In sum, it is hard to separate strictly the interests and activities of private entrepreneurs, volunteers, Slow Food activists and sponsors. The four roles often overlap and change over time. In fact, Slow Food's social entrepreneurship might not work if the roles were strictly separated.

The main challenge for Slow Food is to maintain its credibility as an independent and critical movement and at the same time keep up activities with partners who have commercial interests to begin with. One of the strategies for escaping the trap of commercial compromise has been joint-venturing, which makes it possible to outsource the most commercial and least core activities to partners. Slow Food has started a range of small, innovative, (semi-)commercial activities which over time have grown, found partners, and were (partly) outsourced: distributing local foods, editing books, organizing courses, etc. In the process, many individuals have also been inspired to start up or convert their business according to the 'slow food' philosophy, some of them former volunteers.

Supporting suppliers

Safeguarding cultural heritage, environment, rare breeds and nutrition are not the first concerns of small-scale winegrowers, horticulturists, butchers and restaurant owners who are struggling to survive in a competitive market. Neither does support from Slow Food turn them into such philanthropic guardians. What happens is a delicate trade-off between money and mission. Of course, there is some idealism among entrepreneurs as well, in particularly those of the first generation, but the trend is well past the idealist stage now. However, entrepreneurs who do something extra in terms of heritage preservation, taste education, etc. are offered exposure – names in folders, preferential access to events, free publicity in the media, etc. Fortunately, food lends itself well to the creation of social settings in which friendship, ideals, pleasure and earning money go well together, keeping the trade-off implicit and diffuse. Over time, small entrepreneurs develop sympathy for the unselfish volunteers of Slow Food, and may donate produce for fund-raising events every now and then, or charge nothing for the use of their buildings. On the other hand, there are entrepreneurs who just jump on the bandwagon without bothering too much about the message, even abusing the name Slow Food.

In this context, the 'no logo' policy of Slow Food is remarkable: names and logos that relate to Slow Food, Ark of Taste, Presidia may not be put on windowsills, products, brochures, or websites of private food suppliers, no matter how 'slow' they are (the only exception being some restaurants in Italy which have been allowed to expose the snail). Otherwise, Slow Food would become a commercial brand, rather than a movement. For the same reason, the initiative by Slow Food Germany to grant the snail logo to 'slow' producers if they paid a double membership fee was halted by the President's Committee of the International Association. The distinction between volunteer and private supplier is not always clear. Next to the volunteers with full-time jobs who dedicate their leisure time and expertise to Slow Food, there are member-volunteers who are involved in the food sector, as semi-professional cooks who cater for special occasions or as food writers who collect information for publications during events. Furthermore, there are volunteers for whom the involvement in Slow Food is a steppingstone (network provider) to a professional carrier in the emerging quality-food sector. Furthermore, some of the more experienced volunteers (in Italy) are now being paid as teachers in the Master of Food programme, thus becoming a kind of suppliers. For these reasons, the balance between selfless contribution to the social goals of Slow Food and private commercial interests remains delicate.

Involving sponsors

The hands-on approach of Slow Food has yielded a wide range of private sponsors, some semi-permanent, others for single events. Public sponsors are left out here, because they hardly cause commercial dilemmas (Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany regional governments, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Turin government and many local governments all over Italy). Most visible are the recurring advertisements in the international Slow magazine: Lancia, Parmigiano-Reggiano Consortium, Lavazza, and some middle-size Italian quality-wine producers (Castello Banfi, Beni di Batasiolo, Fattoria le Corti, Medici & Figli Ermete). Wine house Berlucchi used to advertise on the former website of Slow Food. Since companies will receiver a lower return than on advertisements in regular (larger) magazines, at least in the short and medium turn, part of their investment can considered to be sponsoring.

Typical of a social entrepreneur, Petrini takes a pragmatic stanch towards sponsoring. "Some people raise their eyebrows if they see that Fiat, not an example of artisanal production, sponsors the *Salone del Gusto*. The Co-op supermarket chain is sponsor the Ark of Taste. The growth of Slow Food has made it attractive for companies, and they like to be associated with it. Petrini rejects the criticisms as snobbism. "It would only hold if we sold our soul to them. Sometimes there are also companies that give money as a way of penance" (Van Dinther 2004, p. 23).

Although Slow Food is reluctant to let food producers sponsor them, as explicated in the official sponsoring code, wine seems to have a different place. In fact, some of today's sponsors have been supported by Slow Food 30 years ago and now have grown large enough to pay tribute.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, the distinction between being a sponsor to or being sponsored by Slow Food often is not clear. Slow (magazine nr. 2, 2006) features the promotion tours that the 'Super Whites' from 100 winegrowers in Friuli make with Slow Food in Italy, Europe and the USA. These producers, in turn, are sponsored by regional firms, both in food (Latterie Friulane, San Daniele and Morgante ham factories) and in non-food. Another example are the 23 Roero winegrowers who are also taken on tours by Slow Food producers, and who in return have adopted the Presidium of Oszipec cheese makers in Poland, providing technical support and paying for their presence at the *Salone del Gusto*. Much of the sponsoring to Slow Food is in kind: free use of buildings for events, free pages in magazines to tell about the movement's activities, reduced prices for stands at fairs, free services of a lawyer who helps to fight the abuse of the name Slow Food by companies. The largest sponsors of Slow Food, of course, remain the thousands of volunteers who charge nothing for their time, travelling expenses and expertise.

Venturing with Slow Food

During its first years, the founders of Slow Food engaged in the trade of food products from the Langhe to restaurants and consumers. Such activities have been abandoned, because they require the capabilities and focus of private entrepreneurs.

Moreover, direct involvement in trade can undermine the integrity of an independent, non-profit organization. The only exception today is the central procurement, through the Bra office, of specific local food products and wines to the Master of Food courses throughout Italy, but this is rather a service than profitable wholesale. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial attitude of the founders has spilled over to the followers and continues to define the movement's culture.

ItalCook is a school for restaurant chefs who want to improve their skills in regional Italian cuisines. It is based in Jesi, in the Marche region, and has grown from the collaboration between a local restaurant and a Slow Food *convivium*. It is promoted through Slow magazine and a special website. The movement's major ventures are Slow Food Editore, the large fairs (*Salone*, Cheese, Fish) and the University of Gastronomic Sciences. Slow Food Editore is a semi-autonomous publisher that issues the member magazine Slow (possibly on a cost-neutral basis) and a number of books, such as 'Recipes of the Italian Osterie'. The latter generate some surplus for the movement. The net returns from the *Salone*, in which the Turin and Piedmont governments participate, are not known, but may come largely from the fees of new members and the sales of books and merchandise.

The Association of Friends of the University of Gastronomic Sciences has been founded by Slow Food to finance the university, involving many public and private sponsors, among which public bodies (local and regional governments), regional savings banks and regional wine producers (mostly from the region). In a first instance it raised the money to restore the monumental *Agenzia di Pollenzo*, which then became a platform for many activities, next to being a campus for bachelor students. It also raised scholarships for less endowed students; since the university is private, students pay about €20,000 per year. A number of companies, private persons and old charity foundations offer scholarships. The *Banca del Vino* at

Pollenzo is run under a separate foundation. The hotel annex restaurant is run by a private family. Of course, it uses regional products from the Ark of Taste.

CONCLUSION

The Slow Food movement emerged from an area where industrialization has brought both prosperity and economic decline, motivating young residents to develop an alternative model to the industrializing food sector by building on the area's natural resources, its culture and the social capital embodied in the many old, local associations. Paradoxically, this locally rooted and slightly chauvinist movement was inspired by a critical view on global trends in society, like the proliferation of fast food restaurants. This paradox poses a few organizational dilemmas to the movement, such as the choice between continuing to dedicate most efforts to the emerging Piedmont gastronomy cluster or rather to similar ('competing') gastronomic initiatives elsewhere in the world. Another dilemma is the choice between favouring local food initiatives and fighting global agribusiness in a more direct way. The question is how large and how enduring the span of control of the leaders and volunteers of Slow Food is. Ideally, the home base remains sufficiently strong in order to sustain the ever-larger events and projects.

Anyway, Beck's notion that "there is no localism without cosmopolitanism" applies very much to Slow Food (Parkins and Craig 2006, p. 62). The ambitious attitude perfectly fits a movement that is not so much a proponent of the 'third Italy' (Bagnasco 1977) of quality-oriented family businesses engaged in artisanal quality production, which it promotes, but of a 'cultural creative' (Ray and Anderson 2000), trendsetting vanguard that emerged from one of the wealthiest regions on earth. As such, the social entrepreneurs of Slow Food have defined a new paradigm for Western society, arguing that the industrial era is over. It tries to prove the point through self-organized projects: local-food initiatives, international fairs, a university of gastronomy, etc. Thus, the movement's impact goes far beyond the projects themselves, as indicated by the attention that Slow Food has received from journalists, policy makers and scientists. The effects of this level of attention on the mainstream agri-food sector must not be underestimated.

The focus of this book is on food and science clusters. Comparing the Piedmont gastronomy cluster to food clusters elsewhere in the world, a few peculiarities come to the fore. In the first place, it is hard to define the core business: high-quality wines and food stuffs, or gastronomic knowledge? In the future, specialization on a few products may prove profitable, as will further synergies between food and wine producers and those who sell gastronomic knowledge. Secondly, producers in the cluster are brought into contact with a variety of people from all over the world, many of whom without commercial intentions. Economic spin-offs remain mostly indirect, through increased tourism and quality-food reputation. Even though foreign contacts may create valuable commercial insights, they distract from the core business and from the (physical and moral) involvement of the Piedmont consumers themselves.

Both elements, knowledge and international contacts, have not developed naturally from the private entrepreneurial base. They have been boosted by a social movement of highly educated idealists with ambitions beyond the local economy. The question is: will Slow Food be willing to integrate its activities more with the local agri-food sector, creating real competitive advantage?

Meanwhile, the Emilia Romagna and Parma governments have been keen to accept the offer to host and sponsor the master courses of the University of Gastronomic Sciences, bringing Slow Food to the heart of the Parma food cluster. This cluster is based on the semi-industrial producers of a few major specialties – grana, prosciutto, mortadella – and is less dependent on volunteers and governments. On the other hand, the physical production limits to the Parma cluster and the increased development of local food specialities in other regions of the world may hinder its development. Moreover, its lacks the special impetus Slow Food gives to the Piedmont gastronomy cluster through horizontal embedding: a morale typical of the initial, 'idealist' stage of any growth cycle.

NOTES

[1] Quoted from Velso Mucci (1995), *L'Uomo di Torino* (The Man from Turin), Cuneo: Araba Fenice, p. 47; first published in 1967 in Milan, Feltrini

[2] See for instance the Slow Food document 'Food and taste education: one of Slow Food's major objectives', posted at http://content.slowfood.it/upload/3E6E345C0791e2A378Oxs408230D/files/05TasteEducation.pdf; retrieved 23 April 2006.

[3] Since 1900 75% of European food product diversity has been lost (for instance www.slowfoodfoundation.com; retrieved 25 April 2006), and 95% of the world population is now fed with less than 30 plant varieties (Petrini 2004, p. 139).

[4] For more refined categorizations, see Van der Meulen (1999; in press) and Tregear (2003).

[5] Barolo, Barbaresco, Barbera's, Dolcetto's, Grignolino's, Moscato, Sizzano, Ghemme, Freisa, Arneis, etc.

[6] Adapted from http://www.schwabfound.org/index.htm; retrieved 5 March 2006.

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ANNEX 1

Numbers of Slow Food convivia (total numbers, and per million inhabitants) and Presidia (in brackets); per country and continent

Southern Central Europe			
Andorra	1	---	
Austria	10	1.2	
Croatia	1	0.22	(1)
France	39	0.64	(5)
Greece	8	0.74	
Italy	**362**	**6.2**	**(192)**
From North to South: Piedmont 39 (26), Val d'Aosta 1 (1), Lombardy 35 (6), Trentino-Alto Agide 7 (8), Veneto 25 (11), Friuli-Venezia-Giulia 12 (3), Emilia-Romagna 17 (13), Liguria 15 (11), Sardinia 7 (6), Tuscany 35 (23), Umbria 10 (2), Marche 18 (7), Abruzzo 10 (5), Lazio 24 (3), Campania 32 (16), Molise 6 (-), Puglia 23 (8), Basilicata 4 (5), Calabria 12 (4), Sicily 20 (30)			
Monte Carlo	1	---	
Portugal	6	0.56	(1)
Spain	12	0.27	(5)
Slovenia	3	1.5	
Switzerland	16	2.1(2)	
North-western Europe			
Belgium	6	0.57	
Denmark	4	0.74	(1)
Finland	2	0.38	
Germany	49	0.59	
Iceland	1	---	(1)
Luxembourg	2	---	
Netherlands	8	0.50	(4)
Norway	6	1.3	(3)
Sweden	9	1.0	(1)
Eastern Europe			
Belarus	1	0.10	
Bulgaria	1	0.13	
Czech Rep.	2	0.20	
Estonia	1	0.77	
Georgia	1	0.21	
Hungary	2	0.20	(1)

Anglo-Saxon			
Australia	29	1.4	
Canada	26	0.79	(1)
Ireland	11	2.8	(1)
New Zealand	7	1.8	
Un. Kingdom	41	0.84	(5)
United States	147	0.50	(4)
Latin America			((19))
Argentina	6	0.15	(3)
Brasil	6	0.03	(4)
Chili	3	0.19	(5)
Colombia	1	0.02	
Dominican Rep.	1	0.11	
Mexico	4	0.04	(3)
Uruguay	2	0.59	
Venezuela	1	0.04	
Asia			
China	3	0.00	(1)
India	2	0.00	(2)
Japan	33	0.26	
Nepal	1	0.01	
Philippines	1	0.01	
Singapore	1	0.23	
South Korea	3	0.06	
Taiwan	2	0.09	
Thailand	1	0.02	
Else			((8))
Cayman Islands	2	--	
Cyprus	1	--	
Ghana	1	0.05	
Israel	1	16	
Lebanon1	26	(1)	
South Africa	2	0.05	
Turkey	1	0.01	
TOTAL	**993**	**(256)**	

Sources: www.slowfood.com;

Latvia	1	0.43		www.slowfood.de;
Poland	2	0.05	(2)	www.slowfoodusa.org;
Russia	1	0.01		www.slowfoodfoundation.com
Ukraine	1	0.02		(retrieved 15 April 2006)
Uzbekistan	1	0 .04		