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The Slow Food Movement: A 'Big Tent' Ideology

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Abstract

The Slow Food Movement (SFM) has been characterized as a reminder of the centrality of the kitchen in the “good old days”. It has also been referred to as a poor use of science posing as a rallying point for the beleaguered middle class trying to reclaim psychological territory lost to the fast-paced commercialization of what was once private or leisure time. This paper argues that both these criticisms contain more than a kernel of truth. However, each misses the mark when it comes to explaining the relative successes of SFM. In this paper, we explore SFM’s basic ideological premises. It is neither a simple return to a traditional society nor a poorly formulated anti-consumerist position. Rather, from an ideological framing, SFM employs a “big tent” strategy drawing upon the positions of other lifestyle movements such as voluntary simplicity, localism, green consumption and communitarian social capital movements. This “big tent” of overlapping ideological positions is helpful in creating a credible set of alliances and a mass following. Moreover, SFM insists that a small but basic lifestyle change, namely, investing more quality time in the acquisition, preparation and sharing of fresh food - can ripple outwards and offer benefits to individuals, but also via selective consumption, put pressure on transnational firms, agri-business and banks to heed the demands of those in the “movement”. This paper concludes with a discussion of both the costs and complications of the “big tent” ideology and how SFM has attempted to keep each of these within its reach.

Key Terms: Slow Food; Social Movement; Ideology; Voluntary Simplicity; Glocalization;
Social Capital

Introduction

With a healthy-looking snail as its logo, the Slow Food Movement (SFM), initially conceived in 1986 in Bra, Italy by Carlo Petrini (2003; 2013), has grown and inspired what is being called the “Slow Movement,” (Honore, 2004). Slow cities (Miele, 2008), slow tourism (Fullagar, et al., 2012) slow money (Ashta, 2014), slow journalism (Le Masueier, 2015), slow travel (Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010) and slow fashion (Fletcher, 2010) to name but a few, draw their inspiration from the SFM. From its humble origins in a protest march (Andrews, 2008) targeting the advent of the first McDonald’s in Italy at the Piazza di Spagna, at the base of the Spanish Steps in Rome, the “International Slow Food” organization, as made clear on its website, can now be found in 160 countries with more than 100,000 members in over 1,500 “convivia” or local chapters. Those studying the growth and spread of the slow movement (Gane, 2006) point towards the SFM as both the originator of the contemporary stress upon the virtues of “slow,” and the site of the movement’s most important ideological positioning. In their own words, the Slow Food Movement, “has evolved to embrace a comprehensive approach to food that recognizes the strong connections between plate, planet, people, politics and culture.”

The SFM is ideologically positioned to counter the hyper-paced nature of contemporary social life (Tomlinson, 2007), sometimes called social acceleration (Rosa, 2013) or read more politically, accelerationism (Noys, 2014). In Aesop’s fable, “The Tortoise and the Hare”, (Jacobs, 1889/1970), the slow-moving tortoise, seen through a contemporary business strategy lens (Short and Ketchen, 2005), defeats the overconfident hare through persistence, hard work and dogged determinism (Dorfman and Brewer, 1994). In fact, the healthy snail replaces the tortoise in representing the virtues of “slowness” and the virtue of “slow” in Aesop’s fable suits the tone and tenor of the Protestant work ethic. The healthy snail version of the virtue of slowness speaks neither

to persistence nor the dogged determination to get results; the new tale of slowness (Panagia, 2007) speaks to the mindfulness of attending to what is basic - food, friends and community (Germov et al., 2010). Winning, under the banner of the healthy snail, rests in developing a lifestyle which not only steers clear of “busyness” as an indicator of success (Petrini, 2006), but addresses wealth by measuring how well one provides and makes time for these basics.

The basics in the ideology of the SFM focuses upon lifestyle and leisure education (Dunlap, 2012) via an elaborated or embroidered trope- the healthy and convivial (Nowicka and Vertovec, 2013) table simply set with health conferring locally (Miele et al., 2003) grown fresh food consumed in a context of the loving kindness resulting from genuine and closely felt interactions with family, friends and community (Labelle, 2004). In this paper, we outline, evaluate and point towards the SFM as successful because it integrates principles espoused by other ideologically rooted lifestyle movements. This “big tent” appeal draws adherents from different but interrelated worldviews, all with an interest in developing a lifestyle that walks the “slow food” talk. For this reason, the paper is divided into four sections each of which discusses how the SFM situates its ideological position as a lifestyle movement which draws upon other positions advocated by other lifestyle movements.

The first differentiates between protest and lifestyle movements and discusses the big tent strategy employed by SFM to make itself heard. The second focuses on the SFM’s tie to “voluntary simplicity,” with the economic and green logic of material downshifting, thereby reducing one’s economic expenditures and simultaneously one’s resource (ecological) footprint. The third section picks up on these green aspects of localism and battles with that form of globalization which fails to respect the bio-region. The last section focuses on how bolstering one’s off work identity by making time to share fresh local food around a convivial table with significant others, builds an

important and genuine community. The paper concludes with a discussion of the merits and problems in the SFM's adaption of a big tent ideology.

Lifestyle Movements

The SFM has positioned itself ideologically as a soft or lifestyle social movement (Haenfler, et al., 2012) rather than as a hard-edged protest group (Snow and Benford, 1992). Despite its origins in a protest march and demonstration against the opening of a McDonald's quick food restaurant in an ancient and much revered part of Rome (Andrews, 2008), the SFM and its leaders soon realized that reducing the strong draw of fast foods required a re-education of the public (Wilk, 2005). Rather than focus on stopping others by embarrassing those in the problematic fast lane, the SFM focuses on demonstrating the pleasure and healthy developments, both personal and planetary, of those who elect to travel and in time join in the celebration of life in becoming part of the slow food movement (Sassatelli and Davalio, 2010). In lieu of directly demonizing the fast life, SFM loads a set of virtues onto the idea of slow. Just as in Aesop's fable, the tortoise and what it stands for, does not malign the hare but points to the virtues of persistence, hard work and a steady pace (Sosniak, 1990); so too, the healthy snail speaks to the virtues of winding down the pace. The task SFM insists on starts in the kitchen with the basic staff of life—food—and it then works outward embracing a healthy green lifestyle.

Protest groups and the social movements that grow out of them typically target an institutionalized entity—be this a group, organization, or government agency—as a negative exemplar (Walker et al., 2008). Protest groups seek to curtail or diminish the power, influence and reach of the negative exemplar. Protest groups targeting private sector firms like Monsanto, are selected a negative exemplar—seen through the eyes of those interested in reducing the impact and

possible insecurities in both the developed and third world (Glover, 2007) resulting from the escalating spread of genetically modified foods (Cook et al., 2006). On the other hand, protest groups targeting public sector agencies may, for instance, target an agency such as a police force, educational system or healthcare institutions, which are credibly portrayed by highlighting particular “instances” that violate the public’s trust (Mitchell, 1999) even at times covering up the transgressions with a symbolic veneer of public commissions or inquiries (Katz, 1977).

Protest groups like those engaging in global activism (Bennet, 2003) typically employ a call to “urgency” (Polletta, 1998). This is due to the negative exemplar’s wanton disregard for the outcomes and behavior sought by the protestors. The protest movement which argues for going “slow” as a virtue violates this urgency premise. Indeed, those who identify as protest group members see themselves and their group as taking on or stimulating others into the activists’ role (Reed, 2005). The activists’ role is neither a self-change oriented mission nor one which focuses upon adopting a new virtuous lifestyle. Rather it is a strident call to curb the consequences of the protest group’s negative exemplar. Protests highlight what ought to be stopped or curtailed by drawing public attention to the transgressions of the negative exemplar (Boyle et al., 2012); on the other hand, lifestyle movements speak to an imagined positive exemplar one typically found within reach of those who make the right lifestyle choices. In this manner, veganism is a cultural or lifestyle movement (Cherry, 2006) aimed less at the targeting of meat and its consumption than in promoting the healthy, and indeed, planet changing possibilities of vegetarians (Dietz et al., 1995).

Lifestyle movements like those developed by the SFM are not new. The model implicit in lifestyle movements borrows from the thinking of religious conversion (Lamine and Bellon, 2009) and in this secular postmodern application, it is tied to public education and community development (Leitch, 2003). In the case of SFM, self-development and/or community-

improvement rather than otherworldly rewards serve as the motivator. Within the social movement literature, SFM's position is that the dominant ideology, speed and busyness, are undesirable and dependent on one's view either sacrilegious or in the educational sense, dysfunctional (Tam, 2008). Others certainly do not agree (von Bommel and Spicer, 2011). Nevertheless, the SFM seeks to convert/ teach social movement adherents that speed and busyness as indicators of personal success are both delusionary and ultimately costly; in lieu, mindful and deliberate attention to the basics, particularly as tied to food, are desirable (Petrini, 2006). The base of this pedagogical narrative puts a simple, powerful, slow moving but basic social indicator at its core—the time and interest taken in honoring the staff of life, fresh food, shared with friends (Sassatelli, 2004)

Others who have looked at the ideology of the SFM point to its successes as a result of its call, which is right wing in nature to traditional (family) values (Jones et al., 2003) or as Simonetti (2012) argues, its anti-consumerism gives the increasingly struggling middle class a new justification for their diminishing purchasing power and attractive role as the advance guard of a lifestyle revolution. The SFM has carved out an ideological position which appears to oppose the dominant ideology, i.e. to be quick is to be smart and successful, yet within the ideology knowing where, when and how to slow down is smart. However, in this paper we posit that the SFM both sidesteps a shrill call to protest, opposes accelerationism, and yet addresses selective and informed consumerism as a powerful or even global force for change. From an ideological framing, the SFM employs a “big tent” strategy drawing upon the positions of other lifestyle movements which highlight the vital role of recognizing how to live in a society marked by social acceleration. The SFM borrows from other lifestyle movements' ideological positions. Its fellow travelers are voluntary simplifiers, green locavores and communitarians advocating for an increased investment

in social capital. These others, whether they agree totally with the SFM or not, create a bandwagon effect (Henshel and Johnson, 1987). This is similar to the powerful momentum that draws new users to join in and use (consume) a new high of technology because of its adoption by others whom one respects (Rohfls, 2003). In the case of the SFM, the big tent not only draws potential members to see what others of their acquaintance are taking seriously, but also creates a potential market for firms eager to serve this selective consumer lifestyle (Pietrykowski, 2004).

Voluntary Simplicity

The successful growth and diffusion of the SFM rests less with its focus upon “slow” than the manner in which it ties the virtues of a slow down or more relaxed pace with the health conferring relationship with freshly prepared locally purchased food (Chrzan, 2004). The metronome at the center of one’s life is, the SFM adherents suggest, gyrating at a stressful, time compressed, beat (Honore, 2004). This is indicated not merely by the inherent pull and attractiveness of being rewarded by others for one’s “busyness” (Gershuny, 2005) but is as well accompanied by one’s investment in quick, processed, pesticide laden food either eaten on the run or at a business/work meeting (O’Connor et al., 2008). In this context, one treats food as instant fuel and in the quest for greater busyness (and subsequent rewards) sets aside less and less time to enjoy the fruits of one’s labor in the company of loved ones and friends (Southerton, 2003). In the ideological position adapted by SFM, one’s relationship with food—its acquisition, preparation, consumption and security—is an indicator of the depth, reach and health of one’s lifestyle (Parkins, 2004). The logic of SFM advocates focuses not on the complex pursuit of success, but its more basic and simple manifestation – in the quality of life, measured by the time and care one gives to the selection, preparation and sharing of fresh healthy food. In this version of “simplicity,” trading

off money and the encumbrance of material goods for quality time (Aaker et al, 2011) with food, family and friends suggests that one can, with a bit of effort, take more control over what is important.

In this position the SFM aligns itself with the voluntary simplicity movement (Alexander and Ussher, 2012; Elgin, 1993). Like Saint Francis Assisi the contemporary adherents to voluntary simplicity envision the decision to downshift materially (Saltzman, 1991) as freeing one from the complicated fetters of what in the 13th century, Saint Francis, took to be the unnecessary busyness of modern life. In the 21st century the voluntary simplicity movement speaks to those tired of the accelerating treadmill (Rosa, 2003) and with it the stressful search for the elusive pot of gold under the rainbow. The road toward greater voluntary simplicity speaks to the voluntary agreement of individuals to engage in a behavioral change (Etzioni, 1998). This change focuses on the willingness to change one's consumption pattern from the frantic quest for material goods to the selective use of one's time and resources. From the voluntary simplicity movement, the SFM borrows the idea of mindful choice (Burch, 2012). In an applied sense, mindful choice (Johnson and Weber, 2009) entails shifting one's attention portfolio from the complex pursuit of material goods to an heightened attention to how basic experiences, like one's relationship to food (Kristeller, 2003) or, for example sustainability (Amel, et al., 2009), must be mastered before one can expect to realize what Maslow called self-actualization (Maslow, 1959). Seen through the lens of Maslow and Herzberg's classic statement of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow and Herzberg, 1954), SFM argues that the basics, like food, have not been adequately dealt with and yet people expect if they bypass this and focus on money and material goods, they can purchase or outsource food and other basics.

The quality and time spent in one's relationship with food is, SFM insists, a simple but clear litmus test of the genuine success of one's lifestyle. Rather than deal with "simplicity" as a generalized, abstract concept as do the voluntary simplifiers, SFM focuses upon one's relationship to food (Glazer, 2007). The question that follows is: why is food and concern about it so central to so many at this moment in time? The answer at least to the SFM adherents following in the footsteps of the voluntary simplicity movement, is that it is both basic to one's health and identity (Caplan, 2013) and central to global concerns (McMichael, 1994). By altering one's lifestyle one can voluntarily do something about it. SFM is clear on what is not at the centre of a healthy lifestyle: chemically-laden and preserved food tied to agri-business with its investment in monoculture and genetically modified foods. Reducing one's food reliance upon these unhealthy and environmentally questionable sources, is something one can do gradually by shifting one's investment in time towards the acquisition, preparation and sharing of food.

This reliance is intensified when food is purchased on the run, either in fast food outlets or in a "transfusion" package (complete with throw out container). Instead, the consumption pattern and pace espoused by the SFM embraces locally grown (Gaytan, 2004), made from unprocessed, fresh ingredients (Johnston and Baumann, 2014), cooked with loving kindness (Stiles, et al., 2011) and customized to the palettes of those seated at the convivial or hospitable table (Lashley and Morrison, 2013). The term convivial in the vocabulary of the SFM, speaks to the investment of time to create gathering places for friends to break bread in one another's company (Kummer, 2002). The SFM is quick to assure its audience that this is not a romantic form of nostalgia for days of yesteryear but a recognition that in the hyper-connected, secular age there must be an everyday and very palpable sense that some part of the day, within a secular context, should be treated as special. The seriousness with which people turn to create this time during their vacations

(Bloom, et al., 2011) or other breaks in fast moving or stressful times, indicate that this propensity is not a memory but a recognition of the importance of slower paced time as being essential (Cilliers, 2006).

The simple but powerful thought underlying SFM is that in buying and selling time to get ahead in global markets, one overlooks what is essential in one's own backyard. In the rhetoric of SFM it seems that the public's binocular vision is too invested in the distal global perspective with its projection of aggregated capital flows (or their abatement) rather than the more simple and proximate local market with its escalating social, economic and political problems. In outsourcing food to transnational businesses, chemical firms and big box superstores one achieves greater economies of scale, efficiencies and enhanced capital flows. However, at the local level, the family farm is dying (Winter, et al., 2004). The local food market has morphed into the franchised convenience store (Smoyer-Tomic, 2008) and in certain urban areas food deserts (Whelen et al., 2002) flourish and in gathering momentum create problems in neighborhoods which can least afford to buy their way out. Obesity is rampant and impacts not merely sedentary adults but, as well, young children (Cabellero, 2007). Diabetes is escalating at unprecedented rates (Zimmet, et al., 2001) and more and more citizens are concerned with both the security and safety of the global food chain (Godfrey et al., 2010). The assumption that getting the global "just right" will mean that the local is aligned requires, SFM advocates insist, more forethought.

In the approach to the importance of the local or regional (Pratchett, 2004) in lieu of global, SFM recognizes a role for a localized global perspective (Pratt, 2007). In practice, one can call this a hybridization of two positions. Those who see SFM as too "simple," fail to realize that its version of voluntary simplicity differs from both an anti-consumerist position and a straight forward unmitigated anti-globalist position. It is neither. It celebrates fresh produce and pure ingredients

which can be purchased at a fair price. It sees organic foods, even those handled by global suppliers as an improvement upon chemically enhanced and processed food distributors. It eyes fair trade, food co-operatives and food sharing plans both large and small, local and/or global with admiration and respect. Indeed, it champions large food chains which support local merchants and develop close ties to the communities in which they operate. In addressing the importance of the local, localism and locavores, SFM turns the conversation in two directions: the first, no doubt anticipated by the reader, is toward “green consumption” (Peattie, 2010); the second more subtle direction imbedded in the ideology, points towards the celebration of a form of globalization which embraces and gives more than a nod to the centrality of green glocalization (Roudometof, 2005). As a *portmanteau* of global and localization, glocalization, a term which first appeared in the 1990s, describes global services or products which are customized and adapted to local markets.

Local as Green to Local as Glocal

What is important is, SFM advocates insist, is the prevalence and diffusion of an unhealthy or an increasingly toxic set of lifestyles marked by social acceleration (Rosa, 2013) driven by the speed up occasioned by dominant global market forces (Hassan, 2003). Rather than investing time and energy in directly seeking to attain or prepare nutritious food, engage with family, or trusted companionship with a sense of purpose in one’s community, the postmodern citizen compromises his or her time, knowledge and central life commitment to advance in these increasingly globalized markets (Appaduria, 1996). It is clear that the return on this investment, even for winners, while very good, often leaves even those with the most wealth in a bind. They are income rich but increasingly time poor (O’Sullivan, 2008). They are, in America and elsewhere, overworked (Bonney, 2005; Shor, 2008). Time is money and slowing decrease’s one’s ability to keep up with

the Joneses (Christen and Morgan, 2005). Moreover, in maintaining and growing ones “network” (Anderson, 2008), one ought to spend time and pay attention to what (and who) has the greatest likelihood of advancing one’s reputation in constantly shifting global markets. This reinforces weak neighborhood and friendship ties (Lewicka, 2005) with a strongly instrumental and transitory character. One is left with wealth, distant connections or acquaintances but little time and energy to invest in and on what is close at-hand or local-sharing the basics with one’s family, intimates and friends.

SFM cleverly positions its views on globalization so as to kill two birds with one stone. First, it opts for a version of local that embraces the global but only insofar as it is made “glocal” (Luke, 1994) or customized to suit the local culture and bio-region. This is a form of recognizing “the global”, particularly as embodied by the multi-national corporation, as part of the SFM worldview. This holds when the global tailors its offerings to meet the needs, bio-rhythms and cadences of local life. Glocalization, the processes wherein the global head office invests in the unique conditions of the local/regional culture, are applauded by the SFM (Leitch, 2010). SFM adapts a version of “localism” (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005) in its appreciation for the glocal when it is seen as both compatible with lessening the ecological footprint (Curtis, 2003) and aligned with the ideology of green virtuous consumerism (Jansson et al., 2010). Increasingly this green consumerist alignment is operationally defined within the controversial reach of whether or not a global firm is on the “slow down” framing of climate change (Carvalho, 2007; Root et al., 2003). Turning to each of the ideological “birds” of the SFM dealt with by localism, one must note that the first-the global can be made local- is more nuanced. Indeed, it turns the traditional corporate call issued in business schools to glocalize (Matusitz and Leanza, 2009) on its head.

In the hands of corporations operating in global markets, those like transnational banks, for example, the “glocal” speaks to a strategy for introducing global firms and their offerings into local markets without appearing intrusive, overly foreign and unfamiliar (Jain et al. 2012). The solution for Banks like HSBC (Koller, 2007) or entertainment giants like Disney (Matusitz, 2010), is to announce that they operate globally by providing excellent customized local offerings. From a corporate perspective glocalization is a firm’s strategy for circumventing local resistance (Ram, 2004) to the anxiety regarding the loss of what is perceived by locals to be authentic (and essential) in their region (Clancy and Ruhf, 2010). Stated in more corporately friendly terms “glocalizing” is a signal to stakeholders that they: hire locals; contribute social and economic benefits to the local community and are good to their neighbors (Raz, 2009). This signal can be either “global” dominant with local as a recessive and transitory position; one that abates as local resistance diminishes. The SFM positions itself as a movement that educates the public to consume locally and to put pressure on transnational firms to “genuinely” glocalize – or place local customization as a mainstay in its strategy.

As a lifestyle movement, SFM attempts to take the corporate glocal and use its members to push towards its version of localism. SFM self-consciously attempts to mobilize informed consumers to create market demand that is flexible enough to include a healthy dose of fresh, healthy, green food acquired in an already established global market. Despite the recurring comments of some critics (Simonetti, 2012), SFM is not a simple return to the “good old days” movement (Jones et al., 2005). Globalization is not the first preference of the SFM (Friedmann and McNair, 2008). But when it is flexible, mindful of local cultures and health conferring, the option can be embraced within its movement. SFM’s structure itself reflects this. Its local chapters are empowered to guide consumers in rejecting, for instance, corporations which fail to purchase

and identify locally produced goods and produce, or who in their all-encompassing pursuit of efficiency at all costs support monoculture, genetically modified foods and are deeply committed to the chemistry in food production as both a means to boost yields and permit long distance transport of perishables. In this regard, the glocalizing position of the SFM (Frost and Lang, 2013) is much more flexible and portable than that of the voluntary simplicity movement. Rather than oppose “big” organizations—for surely big organizations are often slow—the SFM educates consumers through lessons regarding the well-set convivial table on the sorts of selective consumption likely used by markets to reinforce an already existing position, and strengthen it, in organizations which pass the test (Germov et al., 2011).

This test largely rests in the second prong in SFM’s position on localism. It is imbedded in its logo. The healthy snail is not only slow but speaks the language of a green locavore (Van Bommel and Spicer, 2011). This speaks to SFM’s desire to push selective consumption outward from its regional platform to one that aligns itself with a green consumer market orientation (Yavas et al., 1992). “Green” within the lexicon of the SFM stands for or is associated with “health”- at the levels of the individual, community and indeed the planet as a whole. The snail is a slow-moving mollusk which nurtures the gardens of not only a region but in a global sense, and with informed consumers bending global producers to their “slow” position, eventually to all regions.

The green consumer ideology speaks to far more than the locavore diet (Farenga and Ness, 2010) with its call for green urban markets, vegetable gardens and local food co-operatives in which local (often organic) farmers cut out the intermediary in dealing directly with the consumer. The SFM’s stretch from local to green to global is accomplished in three ways. The local consumption reduces transportation costs and thus reduces fossil fuel emission and use (Horlings and Marsden, 2011). Second, local consumption lessens the power of agribusiness and third-party

brokers in the food chain resulting in a closer and more secure relationship between food consumer and producer (Lotti, 2010). Third, local consumption creates a local community rooted in economic exchange and supported by the bonds of friendship and affect that go into generating the sort of social capital (Ericksen, 2008), which can, through institutional linkages like those adopted in fair trade practices (Trentmann, 2007) bridge the local to the global in a green manner. Investing in what is local, even by global players, not only is good for the bottom line in investors but it reinforces the communitarian commitment to community social capital.

Social Capital: Healthy Communities

The communitarian values (Dixon, 2011) of the SFM do not call upon a dismantling of markets but upon their humanization. The call to speed-up, advocates of the SFM insist, is driven by processes of financialization (Dore, 2008). What is valued in globalizing markets is not the human inputs into the flows of capital, but the riveting pursuit of larger shares of these flows. In pursuit of this goal not only are local cultures blended into the flow but as well, human capital is prized only if and when it is believed to contribute more than it costs. It is not accidental that within the quest for capital flow efficiency, human inputs are given the label “human resources”.

This human resource equation makes for a bumpy ride for many. To invest in capital flow efficiency of human resources, one is acting as a rational investor when no cheaper and equally productive option can be employed. This entails large shifts in human resource deployment and creates a swelling rank of people who are unemployed, under-employed, precariously employed (Clarke et al., 2007) and/or engaged in temporary contract work in a contingent market (Kunda et al., 2002). As a result, there is a growing concern that this speed up may leave one caught in a bind—namely a lifestyle in which from time to time as a (human) resource one is replaceable and/or

expendable. The SFM recognizes that this scenario, rooted in efficient capital human resource flows, frightens many. In its ideological position, it seeks to diminish this fear and to humanize the depersonalized human resource depiction by introducing a communitarian interpretation of the benefits of investing in training and developing local or social community capital.

It was sociologists like Robert Putnam (2001), who drew attention to how the justifiable alienation behind those who feel threatened by the growing recognition that they are not only replaceable and/or expendable, but as a result, often feel isolated. Although Putnam focused upon diminished relevance of the experience of “community” in the United States, others elsewhere (De Hart and Dekker, 1999) draw attention to the growing fears of the middle, even upper middle class as debt rises and their community support system has been left to atrophy. The sawhorse upon which these questions sit varies. Relatively high paid engineers, architects and programmers worry that their employees may elect to send their work to less costly professionals elsewhere (Gupta, 2008). Doctors are concerned about the growth in medical tourism (Connell, 2011). Travel agents, owners of taxi firms, bookstores and hotels worry that the sharing economy as evidenced by the success of Uber (Koopman et al, 2015) and Airbnb (Guttenberg, 2015) and buoyed by Internet transactions, PayPal and the Social media, may be disrupting their hard-earned property rights (Cammaerts, 2011). These sorts of questions remind one that it is rational to be flexible, possess a diverse portfolio and make sure that if one’s eggs are all in one basket one should have firm control of that basket’s handle.

SFM’s reading of books like Putnam’s plays strongly upon the need to have a life outside of work, under one’s control, health conferring and tied to the creation of social capital rooted in shared sense of community. In the work-related social scientific literature, this idea of a life outside of work is typically referred to as work-life balance (Guest, 2002). As in the local/global tension

and its resolution in customizing the local to the global, SFM's version of work-life balance speaks to the importance of celebrating healthy food as a means of recognizing that one can both take control (become less precarious) and as well contribute effectively in one's work. In the ideological potpourri of the SFM, the more significant the time invested in the convivial table the greater the returns and the less work-skewed and precarious one's life. The essence is to rebalance (Cooper, 2005) and to put work into perspective by the slow and deliberate celebration and sharing of healthy fresh food around the convivial table. The convivial table like the snail in the logo of SFM stands for something. It stands for one's need to take time to invest in a community which is more than a means to an end.

The "social" reach of the convivial table is tied to a community of choice not as a prevalent work contest in which one seeks to act as an agent to get ahead or rise in rank, reputation and salary. In relevant terms to the SFM, the emotional regulation (Grandey, 2000) associated with work, particularly in the service sector (Asforth and Humphrey, 1993) is reduced as one sets aside special (slow) time to establish one's off-work identity and share the well set convivial table. The off-work identity tied to slow time and the sharing of the convivial table provides an opportunity to build authentic community bonds to supplement the shallow acting (Hochschild, 2003) required in one's personal life to become commercialized. In the SFM lifestyle, the call to put aside time to build an authentic community around the celebration of healthy, fresh green food shared with friends serves as an oasis in what can at times, be experienced as a desert; one not only without healthy food but without the unconditional social support one needs to thrive. SFM speaks to the authentic or authentic community not only at the level of the neighborhood, but also pushes the notion of how indispensable this is for our planet as a whole (Hall, 2012).

This psycho-social pointing towards the vulnerability of relying upon the work-related authority or “work table” is not the end of the potential benefits to be garnered by adhering to the SFM’s doctrine of the returns on social capital to be gathered from the convivial table. The insights about the social anxiety engendered in investing too heavily in the work culture tied to capital flows and shallow acting are, in the ideological big tent of the SFM, inextricably linked to short-term thinking and a reliance on just-in-time innovation to run the planet. The scope of commercial global flows is saturating the planet. It results in rampant social acceleration; environmental concerns; runaway globalization and, at the personal level, exhaustion and burn out. SFM proposes a solution similar to that embodied in strategic intent: namely to become successful in diffusing its meaning and message across the planet; tied to simplifying and lightening the planetary footprint; and rooted in glocalised capital flows sensitive to unique regional demands. All of this is embedded in a notion of an authentic community constructed around fresh, healthy and shared food, in fact, while starting out modestly in speaking to one room in the architecture of the home—the kitchen. SFM believes that it can, like a pebble thrown into a pond, create ripples to bring its message from the convivial table in the kitchen outward—not only to the functions of other rooms in the house—but to the manners in which food and social justice issues which accompany it are dealt with on the planet.

Conclusion

SFM’s big tent strategy has the benefit of creating a critical mass drawn from social movements with whom it shares a portion of its ideologically laden message. This has brought it attention from others seeking to employ the notion of slowing down (slow tourism, slow fashion, slow cities, and slow money) in creating an attention-getting social movement. In fact, by avoiding

a strong “protest” position rooted in the targeting of negative exemplars it has succeeded in becoming a positive exemplar for the “slow movement”. The fact that others in the loose confederation of social movements in the “Slow Movement” family use the SFM as a benchmark for arriving at best practices suggest that its big tent strategy has a discernible pay off. However, we would be remiss if we failed to comment on both the cost and its success which is achieved by constantly compromising and extending solutions beyond the sorts of behavioral change built into the big tent ideology.

With regard to costs, the big tent ideology as employed by SFM turns off highly engaged members of the social movements with whom it shares an ideological position. SFM works from a need cluster (heathy, fresh food shared with others). This concretizes its position but in so doing dilutes or “shorts” the ideological position of the other groups upon which it leans. Thus, for instance, committed and long-time members of the voluntary simplicity movement are disturbed by SFM’s extension into gourmet foods, up-scale wine and often (in the eyes of voluntary simplifiers) expensive organic foods. In a similar vein, committed anti-globalists take umbrage with SFM willingness (in their eyes) to magically differentiate between relatively acceptable (glocalized) forms of globalization and those outside the acceptable range. To committed localists, conferring special status on some forms of globalization will create an opportunity for powerful global concerns to widen and distort SFM’s supposedly “narrow” glocal portal.

SFM big tent ideology succeeds precisely because it compromises. SFM is both easily commercialized and not particularly offensive to most employers. It respects business and commercial ventures which offer the harried leisure class a reason to take a much deserved, health conferring if not recuperative break—slow time, off the job. Interestingly, a good deal of employers, agree with the SFM in seeking a better work-life balance for many of their over-stressed employees

and are searching for communitarian solutions like the adaption of communities of practice or an increased interest in accommodating workplace napping and day care facilities as a means of both humanizing and de-stressing the workplace.

Last, from the consumer's vantage point, the "big tent" ideology adopted by SFM is comforting. It enables choice and puts no limits on either the cost of one's purchases or the quantity. Moreover, individuals judge whether or not one is generally adhering to the lifestyle positions articulated in SFM. After one has judged oneself positively there is a sense of moral superiority derived from the belief that one is amongst those working hard to set things right. Indeed, membership in the regional chapters of the SFM constantly chronicle how progress is being made not only at the regional level but at the global level as well. The "big tent" ideology works best when the message in the social movement is of the sort which suggests that a minor but "basic" behavioral change will ripple outward thereby improving one's mental and physical health to enliven one's community and make the planet a better place.

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