

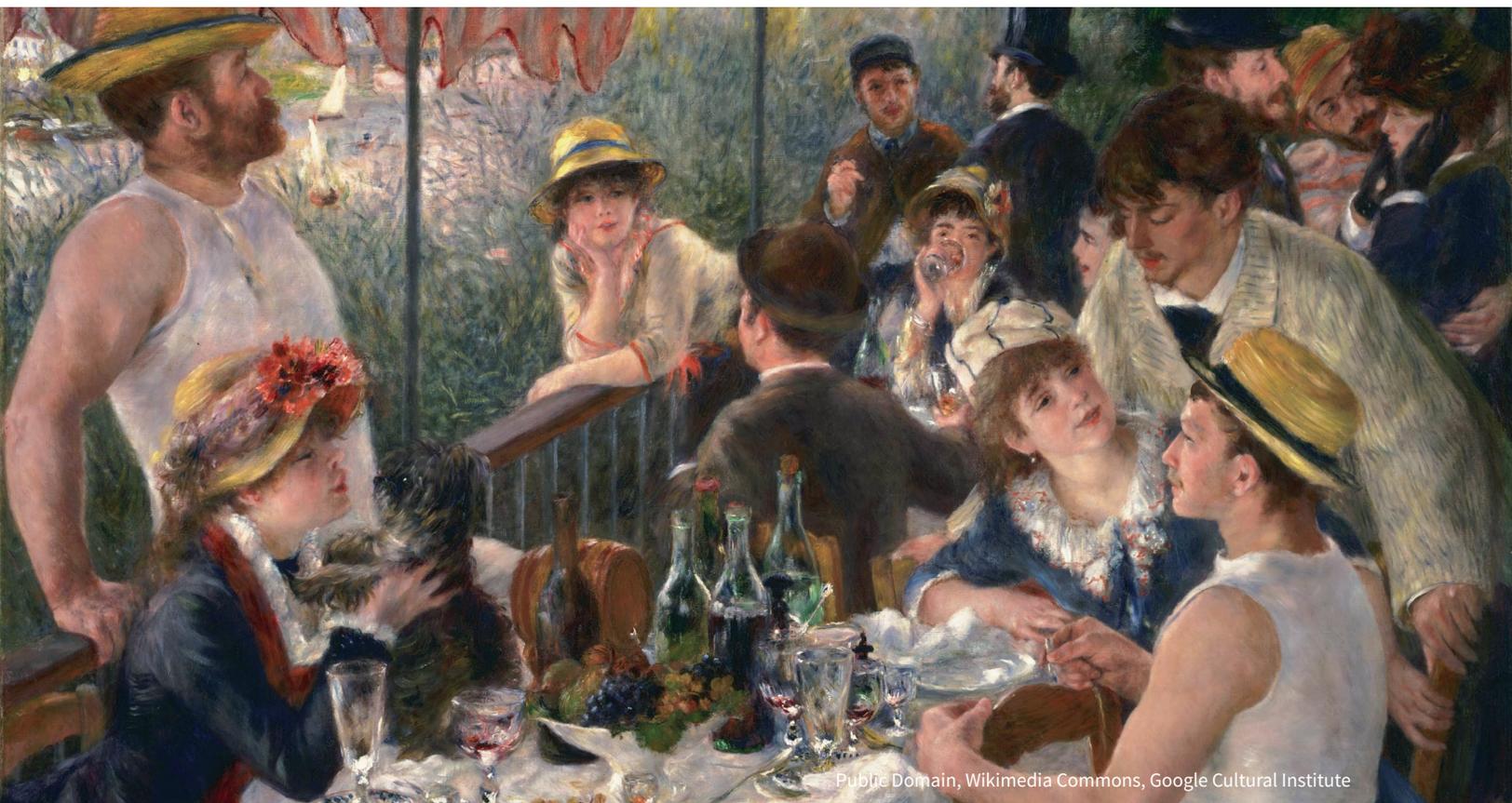


**RICHERS**  
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## FOOD AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE URBAN AGE: THE ROLE OF LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENTS



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Food has played a vital role in the formation of European cultural heritage. The production of food has shaped Europe's rural landscapes, whilst spaces for buying and eating food shape cityscapes, ranging from distinctive restaurant quarters and local food markets, to anonymous peri-urban supermarkets. Food is integral to everyday behaviours as well as moments of special celebration. It shapes individual and collective identities in a multitude of ways, symbolising nations and evoking individual memories of home.

In many European cities and regions, local food movements aim to recover the 'true' meaning of food, restoring it to a more central role in the social and cultural lives of people and communities. In the context of rapid urbanization and the emergence of convenience culture, many local food movements have a strong commitment to reviving or defending traditional food cultures that are

perceived to be disappearing or threatened. Urban growing projects, for example, seek to re-skill citizens in food production and preparation, and use food as a ‘bridge’ for building connections between people of diverse cultural heritage. Other initiatives seek to connect urban citizens to regional food producers by building local economies around traditional farming and artisan foods and resisting the standardizing and globalizing tendencies of contemporary food systems.

Drawing on our exploration of the role of local food movements in relation to Europe’s cultural heritage, we address some key policy questions that emerge in two different realms. The first is in relation to intellectual property. Whilst it is true that the European Union legislates to protect its regional foods through its Protected Food Names scheme, citizens are increasingly concerned about the impact of seed patenting by some of the world’s largest bio-technology companies. This is seen as a threat to the knowledge systems and cultures that underpin traditional farming practices which have long worked to conserve biodiversity, resilience, taste and variety in the plants and animals which sustain human life. In this context, how can the European Union negotiate international property rights and trade laws that respect the diverse food cultures and food rights of its citizens?



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The second policy realm is in relation to urban and territorial planning. In many cities, spaces for citizens to develop community-led growing projects are threatened by urban development that replaces common spaces with privatized spaces for housing or retail. At the territorial scale, new entrants to farming, including a new generation of peri-urban farmers often face difficulties in acquiring land of adequate quality, in proximity to large urban markets. What policy mechanisms could be put in place to enable easier access to land for community-led food production or community-oriented farming? How can policies help to ensure that traditional food and farming cultures are passed on to new generations?

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