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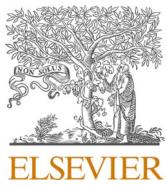
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Citation:

WESTWOOD, Caroline (2025). Agricultural shows: connecting people, place and emotions. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 119: 103754. [Article]

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Agricultural shows: connecting people, place and emotions



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Place attachment
Agricultural shows
Emotions
Participant experience

ABSTRACT

Agricultural shows are long established and key events, particularly for rural communities, but with many interconnections to wider society. They are a space that displays the finest livestock, mechanical, technological, and skills innovations, but with many underlying economic, social, cultural and environmental features and influences (Langridge-Thomas et al., 2021). Despite their multifaceted significance, they remain relatively understudied leisure events within the literature, particularly in the sphere of participant's emotional connections to these events, something which the research in this article begins to address. These long-established events provide an environment in which participants attach significant emotions to their attendance, influencing memories of their involvement. The shows act as a platform for like-minded individuals to come together, share knowledge, best practices, learn new skills and also to socialise. These connections (whether new or established) exist through the context of space (designated areas within the show) and place and the significance participants attach to these events. Although in the case of agricultural shows, whilst the physical showground might be permanent for the larger shows, the show space itself is only temporary, and this is a vital part of the tradition, heritage and memories generated through attendance at these events.

1. Introduction

This study explores the complexity of participant experiences in the context of agricultural shows in the UK. It investigates participants' perceptions of attending agricultural shows and the connections they have with these events, whether they be person or place dependent. To do so, it explores how "attached" participants felt to a particular place and (temporal) space at different shows. Whilst this might not be considered "traditional" place attachment, where a particular place or spatially defined community is the subject of attachment (Low, S.M., Altman, I., 1992; for example), this article will discuss how attachment to a tradition that takes place in a particular place at a particular time each year is possible. It is also an attachment to a specific group of people or community within that place whether they are resident there year-round or attend at that time of year for the show only.

Attachment can often be viewed as the strength of a relationship from a person-to-person connection (familial relationships) as well as person to organisation connection (employee-employer relationship) (Lee and Kyle, 2014). This article takes place attachment as one's attachment to the physical place and the meanings associated with the place. In the context of events such as agricultural shows as discussed

here, place attachment can lead to several important benefits; re-visit, loyalty, positive word of mouth experiences and willingness to pay premium entry (Campelo et al., 2014; Lee and Kyle, 2014; Lee et al., 2012). Using agricultural shows in the UK as its focus, this article discusses how the geographical place impacts on their attachment to the event, whether this be the stunning backdrop of the Malvern hills at the Royal Three Counties Show (Three Counties, 2023), the relatively remote small town of Builth Wells, transforming to a hub of rural activity at showtime (Thomas, 2016) or the site of the Royal Norfolk Show (Royal Norfolk Show, 2023). It will consider how individuals use and experience the physical space at shows, interacting within it, interacting with others within the space and how individuals create meanings and place value on these 'people to people' relationships.

Despite the significance, popularity and wide-reaching impact of these events, agricultural shows continue to be neglected from a research perspective, with greater attention being focused on other sectors of the event industry (Aquilino et al., 2021; Kyle et al., 2004). Gaining a greater knowledge of how participants connect and value these events, the attachment to the places in which they are staged, the physical spaces they create, and the people associated with these events, would be of significant value and importance to the future strategy of

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these events. Whilst investigating the familial connections between those attending agricultural shows from the farming community through the concept of “chosen families” (Westwood and Gibbeson, 2022), it becomes clear that participants were very attached to the shows and their locations despite them only being present in that space once a year. It is this attachment to temporary spaces that is examined within this article and this is explored from the participants’ perspective rather than that of the visitor (with no necessary connection to farming) which is a gap in the existing literature on agricultural shows (Bosworth et al., 2024).

2. Agricultural show context

Before examining the literature on place attachment and agricultural shows, a brief introduction to agricultural shows to establish the context of this research is required. Agricultural shows are long established events, steeped in history and rural traditions. They vary in size from small one day local events to large scale events attracting in excess of 20,000 visitors both national and international (Gray, 2010; Holloway, 2004; Westwood et al., 2018). Run by agricultural societies (the custodians of these events, usually charities and volunteers) they seek to promote excellence and innovation within the local agricultural industry and to foster communication between the farming and non-farming communities. The agricultural events sector continues to grow and strengthen, with attendance at shows growing to over 7 million in the last decade (from 6 million in 2010). With over 400 show days in the UK each year the show calendar is a busy one (Three, 2023; Scott, 2014). Events showcase a wide variety of farming including breed livestock, traditional skills such as basket making, farriery and wood turning. They feature a wide variety of rural and recreational pursuits, appealing to a broad range of participants targeting agricultural, regional and tourist communities (Wiscombe, 2017).

Whilst the experiences participants have whilst at the events focus on three key dimensions; ‘machinery and livestock’, ‘exhibitors and amenities’ and ‘equestrian and main ring events’ (Westwood et al., 2018), participants also attend to socialise, experience tradition and gain new knowledge (Thomas, 2016). Many attending shows will return annually demonstrating the planned social connections with peers within the farming community, opportunities for new learning through orchestrated meetings with machinery dealerships as well as traditional aspects such as breed society and membership dinners (Langridge-Thomas et al., 2021; Westwood et al., 2018; Holloway, 2004). Agricultural shows have developed their own regional identities, offering a connection to the past through tradition; they provide a platform for connections and interactions within the farming community and also with the wider public. Viewing these through the lens of the place attachment allows therefore a focus on the valuable role these events play within the rural and wider community and begins to address Aquilino et al.’s (2021) call to examine how sense of place emerges from participating in rural events. It also explores a place that exists only at one time of the year albeit in the same location and usually at the same time, they are temporary spaces rather than fixed, permanent places. And yet, as the findings will demonstrate, it is a place where strong, positive attachments are formed by participants and where the events become special for those who participant in them.

3. Place attachment and agricultural shows

People’s attachment to place has been widely explored in the disciplines of environment psychology and geography. The majority of this literature examines the manifestation of a place at a particular point in time (Devine-Wright, 2014) or investigates the people-place bonds that occur in these places over time (Guiliani, 2003). The term “place attachment” is often used to denote the emotions that people feel towards a particular place and although the concepts of place attachment and emotions are connected, emotion is often seen as a precursor to

attachment (Hosany et al., 2017). People-place relationships can consist of both positive and negative emotions (Hosany et al., 2017; Manzo, 2005; Scannell and Gifford, 2010) and these emotions are considered to be intense feelings that are associated with a specific person, place or object (Hosany et al., 2017). Place attachment is created through emotional bonds with places that are meaningful for people (Aquilino et al., 2021; Low, S.M., Altman, I., 1992) as these places influence collective memory and create a sense of belonging and continuity (Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Low, 1992; Lewicka, 2008). Attachment to place links people together (Low, S.M., Altman, I., 1992), creates a sense of belonging (Guiliani, 2003) and mediates social relations connected to identity and behaviour (Sebastien, 2020).

Places become meaningful for people through the connections, sense of community and affective processes they enable (Erfani, 2022; Stedman et al., 2006). Erfani (2022) argues that much of the literature that explores place concepts focus on the individual rather than the collective, and where literature does exist, this focuses either on residents’ sense of community socio-cultural features or a community sense of belonging and ecological features (Erfani, 2022). Devine-Wright (2014) suggests that person and place are likely to be intertwined and that it is not possible to separate them out from one another however location itself has been seen as being insufficient to generate attachment and length of residence or involvement in a place is required (Guiliani, 2003; Shamai and Illatov, 2005). However, this has been challenged by Manzo (2014) and Gibbeson (2020) who contend that length of residence does not automatically lead to place attachment, nor do you need a long period of residence in order to be attached to a particular place. This is important when considering events such as agricultural shows as they are not permanent but appear, disappear at the same point each year.

Literature on place attachment in environmental psychology, leisure and tourism and geography has tended to focus on fixed places rather than temporary ones such as agricultural shows. An exception to this is Barcus and Braun (2010) whose concept of “place elasticity” is helpful here. For them, place elasticity is when individuals retain a long-term engagement with a place regardless of whether they reside there continuously. They suggest that it is made up of three elements: “strong place bonds, permanence and portability” (Barcus and Brunn, 2010:285). They contend that whilst an element of time is involved, the amount needed to bond with a place varies from person to person. Individuals need a period of time to bond with a place (strong bonds), for that place to be rooted in the psyche of an individual (permanence) and for it to be possible to return to that place (portability) (Barcus and Braun, 2010). Place identity is also considered a key part of creating meanings, emotions and psychological connections between a person and a place (Lee et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2019; Tsaur et al., 2018). This attachment is tied to relationships with others (for example family and friends) and the particular place (Lee et al., 2012) which corresponds with the Environmental Psychology literature (for example, Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Low, S.M., Altman, I., 1992). Given that agricultural shows are often attended by families over generations, this creates a long-standing family connection creating strong bonds to the place where the show is held. Agricultural shows also take place each year, in the same place thereby enabling people to return, renew and deepen their connection with a place and a particular show.

4. Place attachment and sense of community

Within the tourism literature, a sense of community is seen as being important in creating an attachment to events (Tsaur et al., 2018). Derrett (2003) contends that a place or sense of place is where a community meets to establish what is significant to that community. Attendance at festivals and events, such as agricultural shows, are seen as building social capital and promoting social cohesion (Quinn and Wilks, 2013) and capturing a sense of shared experiences (Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013). Agricultural shows therefore enable the farming and associated communities to meet, finding meaning, establish and

reestablish their values. Derrett (2003:38) argues that festivals and events then offer these communities a sense of "belonging, support, empowerment, participation and safety". Derrett (2003) then suggests that festivals have the opportunity to engage with each other in a non-threatening way and exchange information through whatever role they take in that festival. However, it should be noted that communities or groups of communities have been seen in a less positive light by Wenger (1998) who argued that such groups can hoard information and knowledge and as a result leave people out. For some, they may not be such a positive experience, and this has been seen with agricultural shows (Westwood and Gibbeson, 2022).

The importance of community is seen as being particularly important in a rural context but as a process that constantly changes (Aquilino et al., 2021). Events and festivals can provide the context for connections to be made, connections to be anchored in a place and a sense of community to be provided (Quinn and Wilks, 2013). However, whilst much of the leisure literature has focused on looking at the activities undertaken at such events, less is explored in terms of the locations in which these activities take place (Eisenhauer et al., 2000). In their study exploring recreationists Eisenhauer et al. (2000) suggested that emotional ties to a particular setting and the social ties associated with it are closely related to each other and an attachment to place is a contributor to how individuals develop both a sense of place, and a sense of community which in turn leads to a personal sense of belonging. This is supported by Raymond et al. (2010) who contends that community attachment is related to individual connections to local social networks and the interactions that take place there.

Whilst it is the connection between place, social networks and community that encourage attachment and emotional bonds, importantly for this research, attachment to a setting is also seen as being possible without being dependent on that specific location (Eisenhauer et al., 2000; Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013; Quinn and Wilks, 2013). Given that agricultural shows are only in a location for a limited time each year, the research discussed in this article seeks to establish if a sense of place and belonging can occur when an event is not in a permanently fixed location. As Mihaylov and Perkins (2014:68) argue, a sense of community is "the affective attachment to the social aspects of community or place", the place itself therefore need not be permanent. The majority of place attachment literature, whether it is within environmental psychology or leisure and tourism, has focused on places that are permanent rather than those that are temporary and occupy fleeting moments in the yearly regional social calendar such as agricultural shows. As such, this article expands on the existing discussion on the emotions and processes to investigate the temporary elements of place attachment creation.

5. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach as it focused on how people construct attachments to the space and place agricultural shows take place within. Much of the environmental psychology literature explores place attachment through quantitative data however recent literature (Bailey et al., 2016; Gibbeson, 2020; Sebastien, 2020) argues that by using a qualitative approach, people's subjective, lived experience can better be captured which was key for this study. Qualitative methods are employed to explore the meanings people attribute to phenomena (Cresswell, 2017) which was the focus of this research. Utilizing semi structured interviews to collect data, allowed for a flexible, yet focused exploration of key themes and issues related to space and place attachment. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were utilized to select participants who could provide rich and diverse insights on their experiences of attending agricultural shows.

The sample of 10 was identified thorough purposive and convenience sampling techniques (Silverman, 2000), established through the authors' industry network and previous collaborations with agricultural shows. These techniques allowed a diverse representation of

participants, who all had an established connection with agricultural shows across the UK; all attending either numerous shows per year or who had attended fewer shows but for a number of years to ensure a fair and reliable data set. The shows the interviewees had regularly attended and experienced varied in size, duration and location, all were annual events and all interviewees had attended the shows for the full duration of the event. In addition, the participants were selected based on their involvement within breed societies, different types of livestock (pigs, sheep, dairy, beef) they farmed both currently and historically to ensure a richness within the data, as practices differ across the different types of farming and as did their involvement with the livestock breed societies.

These selection methods ensured the participants possessed specific characteristics through expertise, knowledge, and firsthand experiences of attending these events, necessary to ensure a meaningful contribution to the study (Ritchie et al., 2003). Convenience sampling allowed for the practical recruitment of participants from existing networks and contacts. Whilst convenience sampling may not yield a representative sample of the broader population, it offered availability and accessibility advantages in terms of participant recruitment and data collection (Obilor, 2023; Saunders et al., 2016). Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection in this study, providing a balance between flexibility and structure, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants perspectives whilst ensuring the key themes were addressed (Balushi, 2016; Saunders et al., 2016). The interview questions were devised to explore and examine how the participants connected with the shows, their heritage and history as well as value they placed on the network and connections made as a direct result of attending the events. The interviews were conducted June 2022 online using Zoom to ensure accessibility for all participants and were recorded and transcribed using the same software due to ease of use (Salmons, 2014), with the interviews averaging between 30 and 60 min in length. A participant information sheet and consent form were provided to participants before the interview and all names used are pseudonyms and informed consent was obtained from interviewees in advance, following standard ethical approval by Sheffield Hallam University.

The study's sample consisted of 10 participants (as mentioned above) with a variety of experiences and geographically spread across the UK:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Participant 1 | A male aged 30–39, farms pedigree sheep flock in Wales |
| Participant 2 | A female aged 40–49, based in the Northeast, working on mixed livestock and arable family farm. |
| Participant 3 | A female aged 40–49, based on a family farm in the East Midlands, mixed, dairy, beef and sheep. |
| Participant 4 | A male aged 20–29, farmer tenant, also working as a contractor, mixed farm beef and sheep based in the North West. |
| Participant 5 | A male aged 40–49 based in the West Midlands, pedigree pig breeder. |
| Participant 6 | A female aged 30–39 based in the South East, works in agricultural livestock sector. |
| Participant 7 | A female aged 40–49 based in East Midlands, primarily pedigree dairy farmer. |
| Participant 8 | A female aged 20–29 based in East Midlands, works in the dairy industry. |
| Participant 9 | A male aged 30–39 based in East Anglia, family farm, mixed arable and pedigree beef herd. |
| Participant 10 | A female aged 30–39 based in West Midlands, family farm primarily sheep farmers. |

The study from which this data is taken initially set out to explore the concept of "chosen family" relations rather than place attachment specifically however it became clear during the analysis process that attachment was also a theme that was emerging from the data. Whilst the findings have been discussed elsewhere in the context of "chosen families" (Westwood and Gibbeson, 2022), these took the form of case studies rather than a detailed analysis of verbatim quotes and it was felt that the data could provide further insights that are discussed in this

article. The initial results of the study were analysed using thematic analysis, these were coded, and the findings grouped into the key themes of place attachment, space, sense of community and identity and social bonds. This approach allowed for familiarisation with the transcripts and themes to emerge and develop during analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). As the theme of place attachment was not initially anticipated within the research questions of the wider project, the approach was similar to that of grounded theory in that the themes arose from the data rather than from the research questions (Charmaz, 2006; Ezzy, 2002) and the thematic analysis was used to identify the experiences and meanings for the participants (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The quotes from the interview transcripts are presented to allow participants voices to be heard in their own words as well as to enable other studies to investigate similar phenomena in other contexts to aid reliability and validity. The study takes Hunter and Brewer's (2003) definition of validity as being that the research measures what it purports to measure.

Data saturation was achieved as mentioned through the process of thematic analysis when no new codes or themes emerged from the data. Interviews were transcribed and analysed concurrently, allowing themes to be developed and refined progressively. By the tenth interview, the coding process revealed a consistent recurrence of themes across participants, and no additional meaningful patterns were identified. This confirmed that thematic saturation had been reached by the tenth interview, ensuring the themes accurately reflected the breadth and depth of participants' experiences.

6. Connectedness to physical space

The data from this study demonstrates the link between emotional connection to place and the formation of place attachment to agricultural shows. This manifests itself in three ways, connectedness to a physical space, generational experiences and a continuity in farming heritage. The findings demonstrate strong, positive attachments for each of the ten participants interviewed. These attachments were created through a combination of social bonds, a sense of community which was combined with a sense of identity. Despite the shows being temporary and once a year, they created forceful connections that lasted across both time and distance. The sense of community, and social bonds discussed below, were a key reason for the formation of strong attachments:

It's not just a social community which forms, some won't go to every show, but there's one or two real highlights which is that get together to see people you probably don't see 12 months–12 months a year (P1).

There were several aspects to the sense of community that shows created. Firstly, they were places of shared interest:

Looking around cows, it's something we've all got an interest in, something common (P4).

The animals themselves but also the people:

It's the people coming together to make the show (P5).

And the atmosphere this created:

I just love the atmosphere. It's such a big part of our lives. A lot of farmers just attend different shows but just going is not enough, certain shows I really love going to and showing (P5).

The above quote is important for two reasons. First, the overlap of shows and the visiting of multiple shows help to define a rural area and the place to which people feel attached. The choice of show by people can be seen as a strong reflection of this attachment and the associated attachment to the community of that show. Secondly, that community is important; the shows were seen as being more than simply an opportunity to show their animals, attending formed a key part of their lives and their identities. The face-to-face interaction between participants was also seen as significant, and something that could not be replicated

elsewhere:

Having a chat with someone can lead anywhere is very different when you're having an interaction on social media (P6).

Attending shows gave something that just a conversation could not. The interviews were conducted following the covid pandemic and this was discussed by Participant 4 as shows did not take place:

With this year the shows not taken place, a lot have been replaced by online shows or photographic competitions and other things, it's been really good (P4).

The attachments expressed towards attending the shows were strong despite the shows taking place one a year. During the covid pandemic the places themselves were not available, even temporarily and so alternative methods were adopted in which to continue the shows and attempt to foster the same sense of community they would normally have created. This sense of community and attachment was fostered through the social element of the shows.

All the interviewees expressed very strong positive attachments towards the people they met and knew at the events they attended. Significantly, the shows fostered friendships over time and repeated attendance. Participant 3 stated that there was a "huge wonderful friendly atmosphere" at the shows with Participants 4 and 5 stating that they know there will be likeminded people when they attend with Participant 5 saying "it's a proper good gathering!" and Participant 4 suggesting that it was the passion and interest in the same things that connected them. Despite the fact that the shows are once a year for a limited time, all the participants felt strong friendships had formed over the years:

You really get to know those people and each year. One year it's just really nice to catch up with people. Sometimes they feel like your best friend because you actually spend so much time with them (P5).

I've got friends I have grown up with on the show circuit, both the showing and the social side of things. You camp in the caravan with them, you just grow up with them (P3).

A good day at a show for me is heavily about the social aspect of it. Catching up with people that I sometimes don't see because there's a lot of people who do a lot of showing, and then those who aren't necessarily from my area (P6).

Even though the shows were only annual and for a short period of time, strong and deep bonds developed between participants through the process of shared passions. This demonstrates that strong, positive attachments need not require a continued length of time and residence in a place in order to form.

7. Generational experiences

Attending agricultural farming shows was also seen as something traditional and that participants had been brought up to do, it was something passed down the generations of families.

We've been going to the Royal Welsh since, well since I was knee high to a grasshopper, we then ventured up north and came back with the champion rosettes from there and it was really nice (P1).

In all cases, interviewees stated that they had got into showing and attending through their family connections:

I just kind of have always been brought up to go along and show livestock, because dad's very much always done, more so than my mum but she's always been into show pedigrees (P6).

I have got my niece involved in X taking part in the young handler's classes. She started coming with us when she was seven. I think we took her with us for three, four years, each year we gave her a little more information to coach her a little more (P2).

My grandma was involved in the agricultural society and my dad still is and I'm on the committee as well now so I have quite a lot of input. So, it you know, that's a special show because you're part of it (P3).

Experience, training, guidance and a sense of responsibility is passed down through the generations of families that attend these events and consequently the events become part of participant's identity. Identity and place are connected as well as length of time spent within a particular place. However, it is clear from the above quotes that despite the shows taking place one a year in a particular place, due to the repeat visits and family ties to them they did engender strong attachments to them. Equally important were the social bonds they created.

The social aspect of the shows was emphasised by all participants, this was actually seen as more beneficial than the shows themselves:

From a marketing perspective and shop window, absolutely no point going whatsoever. But from a social perspective, great! You catch up with other breeders see people you only see a few times a year or a catch, you come away, tired, but having a great time and usually getting rained on but great fun from a social perspective (P4).

Social aspect is critical, you have to enjoy it and no need for introductions with people you've known for years, even if you haven't seen them for months at a time (P6).

The sense of community shared by breeders and participants and the social bonds this enabled could be argued to be the key reason by people attended the shows, rather than the actual day to day farming aspect of it. Participants spoke about how they had grown up through the shows and how this had created the strong bonds.

There was a group of us kids that sort of grew up together going to shows. And we were always really competitive with each other and young handlers, but we were all really good friends (P6).

Because of going to local shows it's a lot of people close by. We've got to know families and we can see their kids are starting to come through now (P2).

The family aspect of shows was seen as really important and was a theme echoed by all interviewees. Many remained in contact with friends through their families (P5) and saw their friends as being as close as actual family members (P6).

The community was seen as being one big family:

It's very much like one big family and we all look after each other and once in the stock lines there's a lot of fun and banter. I would certainly choose to spend my time with lots of friends that I have met over the years of showing (P5).

Participant 6 echoed the idea of looking after each other saying:

We'd either all go and get a takeaway together or between us there'd be like 3 or 4 caravans out of our social group, and we'd all cook stuff and just have a big meal in the lines. Of all of us and anybody would come and join and then sit and have a drink afterwards (P6).

The atmosphere painted is one of conviviality and everyone "mucking in together". This extended beyond the shows themselves with Participant 4 stating:

It's not just about the travelling around we could go on holiday as children, we'd call in and see someone's herd, might only have met them a couple of times or know vaguely at a show, but Dad would ring them up so we can call in and see them (p4).

Friendships and connections lasted beyond the shows themselves with participants visiting each other if they happened to be passing. The shared interest and friendships that developed from this endured well beyond the shows and their locations themselves. The role of social experience in creating attachments can be seen in the above quotes. The meanings and attachments displayed here have been created to the

people and events that take place in a particular space at a limited time of year, the place itself is not fixed nor permanent. Here it is clearly demonstrated that it is the "social bonds and memories created in these places which is likely to be the foundation for that attachment" (Gibbeson, 2020:5), rather than the specific place itself.

8. Continuity in farming heritage

The connections between place, the social element of shows and family connections all helped to foster strong attachment to agricultural shows. Participants also expressed the desire to keep the shows going:

There's definitely also something about wanting to keep the shows going as well,

so keeping going, these are important events for the communities and farmers (P5).

Attendance was seen as a way of doing this for P5 but P6 also felt that the organising committees were important and were seen as being a key part of the success of the event for the participants and helped to foster the sense of community:

I think the different show grounds are made by how your stewards are and how they treat you as an exhibitor. [...] Royal Norfolk, they'll do anything they can to help you out. And they recognise it's an effort to go (P6).

The quote from P6 above highlights the efforts made by participants each year attending the show and taking time away from their farms to do so. This recognises that there needs to be a reason to attend the shows, to gain from them in multiple ways. The shows are temporary spaces that combine social, family connections but also spaces to learn, trade, gain experience and make connections for the farming business from which participants come; they are combinations of both business and pleasure. Participants stated that because of these connections, the shows become "special places":

Our local show for sure X is the best day out, rain or shine. It's definitely the people and the place that make that so special, I just know lots and lots of people, I remember being the same when I was young, we could never walk very far without my parents stopping to talk to someone, it's a good job it wasn't a big show, we'd have never got around. The place is special as its just down the road, the fields that are used are owned by family friends and it's just a special place (p10)

For participant 10, the generational link to their family is present, friendships and social bonds are equally present but this also connects to the place itself as this is where the memories are created and triggered. Similarly for participant 7:

I guess X show it has to be, as it's our village show, it holds a special place in my heart. I always support this, and I don't remember ever not going. I always think it's so important to support the small shows, never want them to fail. My family and me, help with the committee when we can too. To give as much support as possible, my parents are both on the committee, so it's certainly the one that means the most (p7)

Family and the place are important here but so is the desire to ensure that the show continues, that it does not fail. There is an emotional attachment that creates the impetus to help the continue into the future, potentially after the person themselves is no longer there. This is something that is seen more like an inheritance or heritage as well as being a functioning agricultural show in the present. This was equally the case for Participant 8:

It's got to be X show, that's the one where we walk around, and we literally know everyone. It's a special day out and one we never miss. It's more than just showing the cows that's just a small part, it's

supporting the show turning up every year and spending money, so the show keeps going. He's also catching up with people that you don't see for six months at a time, you might see their stock see what they've got to sell but you also will have a really good laugh with them. It's days out at shows that make up my holidays are literally don't take more than a week, so going to the shows feels like a break from the day-to-day (p8)

Again, Participant 8 emphasised their connection to the place, the people and keeping the shows going, they were seen as both something from their past, their present but also the future. They stressed the support they give the shows, the giving up their holidays to go, them being a break from day-to-day life, all positive emotions and feelings. The shows foster social and emotional connections and attachments but are also part of the heritage of farming and the farming community, connecting the job of farming and the people involved in it across generations.

9. Discussion

The data in this study suggests that places that are temporary and only appear once a year can nevertheless create strong attachment to that place, the people and the emotional connections. This challenges the existing place attachment literature that argues a long residence is required to generate such attachments (Guiliani, 2003; Shamai and Illatov, 2005). In doing so, it further opens up the discussions around how and why attachment and emotional connections to place are created and to what type of places they are formed. The focus of much literature on place attachment has previously focused on the individual rather than the collective (Erfani, 2022) and whilst participants are individuals attending the shows, this research demonstrates that they also considered themselves to be part of a community of farmers and show attendees.

The data in this study has also shown that participants experience intense emotions which created attachment (Hosany et al., 2017) to the place of the show and the participants who attend, it is the people-place bonds (Guiliani, 2003) that are created through attendance at the shows. The shows mediate social relations (Sebastien, 2020) which in turn create collective memory (Scannell and Gifford, 2010; Lewicka, 2011). It is the individual connections to the shows, through their attendance across generations that in turn leads to community attachment (Raymond et al., 2010). Whilst length of residence in a place has been seen as key in establishing attachments (Guiliani, 2003; Shamai and Illatov, 2005) participants attend only once a year thus suggesting length of residence is not necessary (Manzo, 2014; Gibbeson, 2020). However, it could be argued that continual attendance across time with family and through the generations is similar to length of attendance as traditions are retained year on year, deepening connections across time and across families. Following Tsaur et al., (2018), it can be suggested that participants felt community attachment to shows as they help build the social capital and cohesion (Quinn and Wilks, 2013) through regular attendance and participation, seeing friends, gaining new knowledge and sharing experiences (Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013).

The three concepts that arose from the data; connectedness to physical space, generational experiences and continuity of farming heritage, can be argued to be similar to the three concepts of "place elasticity": strong bonds, permanence and portability (Barcus and Braun, 2010). Barcus and Braun (2010: 281) argued that place elasticity "reflects in essence a virtual relationship in which individuals who may or may reside in a community maintain a permanent or continuous engagement with one place for a lifetime irrespective of actual residence in that place". Participants in agricultural shows do not usually reside in the community in which the shows take place and yet they exhibit a continuous engagement with that place across the generations of their family. The "strong bonds" element of place elasticity (Barcus and Braun, 2010) requires an element of time for individuals to bond with a

place and the repeated attendance at agricultural shows allows for this and creates the connectedness to place. "Permanence" (Barcus and Braun, 2010:286) necessitates a place be rooted in the psyche of an individual and can be attributed to family and friends which can be seen with the generational experiences of agricultural shows for participants. Finally, "portability" allows for people to live elsewhere and to return. It also "reflects a continuing dialogue with a place through time" (Barcus and Braun, 2010: 285). Participants at the shows wanted the shows to continue in the future, reflecting a continuity of the farming heritage experienced there as well as the connections made through attending.

10. Conclusion

Strong emotional attachments to a temporary space, albeit one that returns each year, emerged. The findings suggest an overwhelming sense of community experienced from all participants when attending these events, with almost 'family-like' bonds existing far beyond the time and space the shows setting provides. A connectedness to the physical space of the shows each year was demonstrated with emotional attachments driven by generational experiences at the show. Ensuring the continuity in the shows was also an important factor in producing attachment, the sense that the shows would continue into the future being important for participants. Participants felt connected to both the place of the shows and the people who attend; valuable and lifelong relationships were established between participants with relationships spanning generations and geographies as they often met up at other shows.

The contribution of this study is to extend the discussion on types of places that create place attachment, here using agricultural shows as temporary spaces. In doing so it builds on existing event literature (Aquilino et al., 2021; Jaeger and Mykletun, 2013; Quinn and Wilks, 2013; Tsaur et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2019) which explores the connections between meanings, place and attendance at events and festivals. A key question which it addresses is whether it is possible to form strong attachments to places that are temporary. The findings demonstrate that participants at agricultural shows do attach to the spaces in which these shows take place through the connections that they make there be this social or family connections.

The findings in this study are significant and contribute to the existing literature in the following four ways: by expanding on Manzo's (2014) and Gibbeson's (2020) assertion that length of residence is not always a prerequisite for place attachments to form; by revealing the possibility and strength of attachment to temporary spaces; by responding to and advancing Hernandez et al. (2014) call to examine the different types of places that create place attachment and by responding to Aquilino et al.'s (2021) call to investigate how sense of place emerges from participating in rural events.

Whilst this study provides valuable insight into the value participants place on attending these events (over a significant amount of time), there are several avenues for future research exploration. First by establishing a comparative analysis of non-farming public and farming related participants, to establish if the same ties, emotions, and sense of connectedness are prevalent in regular participants but from a non-farming perspective. Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking the same individuals over time could provide valuable insights into how the relationships and networks change and evolve. This would further add to the debate in place attachment literature as to the length of time needed for attachments to form (Gibbeson, 2018; Guiliani, 2003; Manzo, 2014; Shamai and Illatov, 2005). When reflecting on the limitations of this study, online data collection whilst offers accessibility and cost saving advantages, the ability to observe physical cues from body language and changes in emotions as the participants were interviewed are certainly somewhat diluted in comparison to face to face interviews.

Drawing on these findings; shows themselves, agricultural societies and breed societies must acknowledge the significant role they play within the farming community, providing a platform for relationships to develop, networks to form and knowledge to be exchanged, both

formally and organically. Whilst this role has developed historically over decades and generations, the need for this to continue is significant to allow information to flow more freely, drawing on the tacit knowledge of generations and looking towards the future to shape the industry. Additionally, whilst these shows provide a valuable platform for the farming communities, these are also tourist attractions, drawing on the non-farming public seeking new experiences and days out socialising with friends and family, providing not only economic impacts but also social impacts for the wider community.

This study showed that strong emotional attachments can form at temporary spaces and highlighted the significant value participants placed on how shows have enabled them to create and maintain social and industry networks. This is where this research offers something new and divergent from the literature in exploring rural agricultural shows from the participant perspective and by extending the types of places investigated in the creation of place attachment. It is hoped that this work will help highlight how these valuable networks transcend across generations and geographies and must continue to exist to allow knowledge exchange both between the farming communities and beyond and outside the rural communities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Carolyn Gibbeson: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Caroline Westwood:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this study.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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