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## The local food system in the ‘genius loci’ – the role of food, local products and short food chains in rural tourism

This article investigates the roles that locally produced, processed and marketed food (Local Food System) play in rural tourism and local socio-economic development. It is the first account of a 3 years’ research project (LO-KÁLI) exploring a successful Hungarian rural tourism destination, investigating both the demand side (what attracts tourists to pay for premium products/services); and the supply side (what attitudes, norms, values keep producers in their business). We contrast the externally perceived image (‘genius loci’) of the region (‘Hungarian Provence’, together with its cultural landscape, gastronomy, and social and environmental sustainability) with the impacts of the current development process on the environment and the general wellbeing of the local economy and society in reality. This article presents some of the theories and the analytical framework underpinning our project, alongside preliminary results on how the elements contributing to tourist attraction are perceived by locals and by visitors to the region.

**Keywords:** local food systems; LFS; rural tourism; rural development; interdisciplinary; Balaton; measuring touristic attraction.

**JEL classifications:** Q13, Q1

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### Introduction – context and research questions

Success stories of local economic development are often based on sustainable/rural/eco-tourism, multi-functional agriculture and the ‘experience economy’ (Marsden and Sonnino, 2008). Within the agro-food sector culturally-based, high value-added local products and short food supply chains (SFSCs) represent crucial factors for small business development in rural areas (Kneafsey, 2001; Ray, 2001). They have the potential to improve farm incomes, promote sustainable farming systems, and contribute to local economic regeneration (Hinrichs, 2003).

Local food systems (LFSs) are another useful concept for the analysis of rural development. A local food system can be defined as a set of agri-food sectors located in a regional geographic space and coordinated by territorial governance (Rastoin, 2015). An LFS depends on the relationship that exists between the social, cultural, ecological and economic diversity one the one hand, all of which are important for the vitality of the region, and the desired regionalism of food provision on the other. Another additional economic benefit of local food systems is the potential it provides for increased rural tourism due to the effective introduction of local branding and the provision of recreational shopping opportunities, bringing customers to the gate and multiplier effects to the local economy.

Social networks, innovation, co-operation, and the reconfiguration of local resources are critical in the process of establishing and maintaining LFSs, according to pertinent

literature (Lowe *et al.*, 1995; Sanz Cañada and Muchnik, 2011). Consumer trends, such as the growing demand for local/ecological products and the exponential growth in rural/eco-tourism, have also confirmed the benefits of establishing LFSs across the EU (Berti and Mulligan, 2016). Some selected EU regions (e.g. Tuscany, Provence) were designated as exemplary cases on which less favoured rural areas could model future programs (Randelli *et al.*, 2014).

Nevertheless, in spite of the wide agreement concerning the positive role of LFSs and sustainable tourism in rural regeneration, there are direct and latent criticisms in the literature and unresolved conflicts within the discourse. Local food systems can be understood in different ways, implying very different costs and benefits for the locality. When LFS is understood as ‘local food for local people’, as in the Slow Food movement, it is associated with low food miles, environmental protection (Jones, 2002), enhanced social networks and a revitalised local community (Feenstra, 1997). However, when discussed in local economic/rural development discourse, LFS tends to produce high quality, pricy products, sold to rich tourists and city dwellers. That means something quite different, ‘local food for NON-local people’, either transported to urban centres, or attracting flows of tourists into remote rural areas. Here an LFS can certainly enhance local businesses, together with economic and rural development; however, actual environmental benefits (Guthman, 2004), similar to the ones claimed by the Slow Food movement would normally be difficult to trace.

Enhanced local production, tourism, and visitor pressure can cause social, economic, and environmental degradation. Multiplier effects do not always occur to build more busi-

nesses and sustain social and economic capital. Resources, profit, and power can be overtaken by incomers or external investors, leading to conflicts and in the end, damage to the local resource base (Sonnino *et al.*, 2014). Still, the products of local food systems are produced and marketed with the added value of environmental and social responsibility, representing confusion and/or an inherent contradiction within the discourse. These aspects are not well explored yet by the literature; hence, a complex, holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, taking into account social, economic, psychological, environmental, cultural and policy aspects should create a framework for significant scientific improvement.

## Research questions

We are currently exploring the above issues by means of a three-year, interdisciplinary research project in one of the most successful rural tourism destinations of Hungary, the Kali-basin. The central question of our research is:

*What roles can locally produced, processed and marketed food (or the LFS) play in rural tourism and local socio-economic development?*

Within this we are investigating three main problem areas:

- Demand side* – How is the ‘genius loci’ constructed? What makes the area attractive as a rural tourism destination and what is important for people living there?
- Supply side* – How local food and services are produced? Who are the entrepreneurs, and what are their origins, motivations and values?
- Local effects* – What benefits, costs, tensions, developments (social, economic, environmental) result from the LFS and rural tourism?

At the time of writing this article, our research has just started; thus, we are far from having answers to all of our research questions yet. Here we present some of the main theoretical considerations, our planned methodology and some preliminary results, mainly focusing on how the elements of place attractiveness are perceived by different social groups and on the implications of this for the dynamic evolution of the genius loci.

## Local production and local food systems

The term “local product” has no accepted, universal definition, it is used in various contexts on different ways. An obvious Euclidean/geographical approach (Morrison *et al.*, 2011) determines the maximum distance between production and consumption. There are many examples of this approach, but the distance, depending on the size of the country, is different: local is defined around 40-100 km in Europe<sup>1</sup> and 100 miles in the United States. Local production can also be understood within administrative boundaries

<sup>1</sup> In Hungary agricultural products can be sold as ‘local products’ by their producer (or immediate family members) on the farm, or on farmers’ markets within 40 km, on the county seat or in Budapest (FVM, 2009).

defining ‘local’ within settlement, district, county, region or country. Nevertheless, besides geography, local food can also be understood in a cultural and socio-economic context, having connotations to different value systems, worldviews or behavioural patterns. Fonte (2008), for example, concentrates on the valorisation of local products in three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. He stresses that economic valorisation is the “dominant dimension of sustainability in a strategy of integrated rural development for marginalised and impoverished areas”; and that the social dimension “require a collective effort that activates mechanisms of social coordination and cohesion in the community” (Fonte 2008, p. 209). Finally, environmental dimensions can refer to special characteristics of the area, which can embrace wider environmental characteristics linked with the symbolic value of the product and not just local varieties of plants or breeds of animals.

Local food systems can be explored in three fundamentally different contexts (Table 1). One perspective takes into account grassroots initiatives for re-establishing the link between producers and consumers in an “interpersonal world of production” (Morgan *et al.*, 2006). Since the 1990’s, many initiatives led by social movements representing groups of producers and consumers or by local institutions have been launched to re-build food production at a local level, especially in northern Europe and the US. The most typical examples are the self-sufficient farmstead movement, farm direct selling, the farmers’ market movement (USA, UK, Ireland, Scotland). These cases involve local communities based on shared ecological values, aiming at self-subsistence, joint production, local exchange and trade, and all in all – producing, exchanging, selling and consuming food locally. Value systems in this context include environmental sustainability, resilience in the face of globalisation and consumerism, empowerment of local communities, health, protecting culture, traditional ways of life and production, etc.

Nevertheless, there are many people, living in cities, who cannot move to a village and start self-subsistent agriculture, but still desire some level of engagement with the above values. Thus, many initiatives have been launched in areas where food is almost exclusively available in super-

**Table 1:** Typology of LFSs

	Locally embedded	CSA based	PDO/PGI based
<b>Producer</b>	local, rural, small scale	local, rural, small scale	rural, any scale
<b>Consumer</b>	local	extra-local – urban	extra-local – urban
<b>Food miles</b>	low	medium	high
<b>Value system</b>	environment, health, taste, anti-global, embedded production practices	environment, health, taste, anti-global, embedded production practices	food quality, health, culinary art, traditional cultural value,
<b>Food chain</b>	direct sale, SFSCs	direct sale, SFSCs	any chain
<b>Examples</b>	Farmstead, self subsistence, eco-villages	CSA, box schemes, purchasing groups, GAP, AMAP, etc.	speciality shops, fine dining, etc.

Source: own composition

markets and there is no market place for local agricultural products. These are a "placeless foodscape", according to Morgan *et al.* (2006) or "food deserts" according to Wrigley (2002). Initiatives include many different forms of community supported agriculture (CSA): box schemes, local food buying groups, city food circles, food policy councils (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002, Friedmann, 2007). Initiatives that sell food in alternative ways are therefore becoming increasingly common, and the demand to buy 'alternative', 'local' and/or 'quality' food products is rising (Ilbery *et al.*, 2005). The reasons for this are by now well-known and include various food scare episodes, growing consumer mistrust in standardised food production methods, and ethical and environmental concerns associated with how and where food is produced (McMichael, 2008). Locally produced food, so it is argued, offers a closer 'connection' with the point of production and an opportunity to support the local economy (Guptill and Wilkins, 2002). Thus in this approach, food is produced locally (small scale, environmental friendly, etc.), but consumers are extra-local (mainly in cities). Nevertheless, the surrounding value system is still very similar to the first case, concentrating on health, culturally and socially embedded production, anti-globalism, anti-consumerism, etc.

The third approach combines the local product with values associated with territory, traditional production practices, high quality and value added. The EEC has launched a system for regulating geographical indications (Protected Designation of Origin - PDO, Protected Designation of Indication - PGI) for agricultural products and foodstuff in 1992 with the aim of helping to maintain the diversity of the European agricultural economy. It also gives farmers in disadvantaged or remote areas the opportunity to preserve their traditional production systems, communities, ways of life, etc. and provides consumers with adequate, clear information about products from different geographical areas. In some of the reportedly successful examples of PDOs and PGIs, the positive impact and potential economic and social valorisation of the product seems to be related with the involvement of local actors which are not part of the supply chain. Quetier *et al.* (2005) link the success with 'closed' forms of common management and de Roest and Menghi (2000) with the cooperation of local actors.

Buying high value added local products has become a fashion and a strong consumer trend, and as such, it has attracted considerable investment both in production, processing and marketing of the products in question. Some PDO and PGI products (Rioja wine, Parma cheese or lavender from Provence as a few famous ones) have become fundamental to the local economy in many rural areas. This process has been hugely reinforced by strong growth in rural tourism, attracting many customers into rural localities. In this context, high value added, often certified quality food products are produced. They are supported with images of being local, small scale, personal, familiar, and environmentally friendly and are interwoven with images of cultural landscapes, stories and traditions. Then, the whole 'pricey package' is sold to 'extralocal customers' with the apparent objective of maximising profit. This obviously helps to sustain socio-cultural values and enhance

local economic development, providing the locality with marketable/exportable products; however, it is associated with values and mechanisms that are considerably different from those associated with the origins of local food systems. It is more geared up for economic (than social or environmental) sustainability and is more exposed to risks, associated with external capital investment (the capture of resources and business opportunities by external investors, power struggles, etc.). Nevertheless, the 'genius loci' or the 'social imaginary' commonly associated with local products is heavily used for their marketing (Kirakosyan, 2017). Within this framework, unlike the two previous ones, LFS is an outward-looking construction, creating significant income through 'exporting' products, based on the natural, economic, social and cultural resources and capitalising on the social imaginary/genius loci of the particular locality (Counihan, 2016).

## Shortening the food chain

When good quality, raw and processed food is produced by a LFS and is readily available for consumption, the next important issue is how it actually reaches potential customers. Traditional long food chains are normally not suitable for this because industrial production has unbalanced the market equilibrium and, more specifically, generated a break in the global supply chain. According to Low *et al.* (2015), industrial marketing processes have led to a niche activity which has grown over time into a complex system that has expanded from farm-to-farmer's market to farm-to-institution and more recently to farm-to-retail.

To fill this niche, many alternative ways/channels have developed all over the World, and there is a wealth of academic literature exploring different aspects and consequences of the issue. A number of approaches and definitions exist in parallel, concentrating on the actors, the channel itself, the social innovation (Peters *et al.*, 2018) and the new ways of marketing involved, and exploring the socio-economic consequences or the contribution made to rural development (Brunori *et al.*, 2016).

We are using in this project a Short Food Supply Chain (SFSC) approach focusing on the exploration of producer-consumer relations. According to European regulation, an SFSC involves a limited number of economic operators, committed to co-operation, local economic development, and close geographical and social relations between producers, processors and consumers. The regulation recognizes the importance of social relationships between people involved in the food chain, which are key to a proper understanding of how collaborative SFSCs operate. There are a number of different applications of this approach throughout Europe, however, they all aim to:

- decrease the distance – both physically and personally – between small-scale farmers and consumers;
- empower agricultural producers and stabilise their income; supply consumers with locally made, healthy food;
- decrease environmental pollution;
- support a food supply policy – based on real funds.

## Trends in rural tourism and their significance for LFS and local development

The significance of local food systems, especially in terms of creating ‘exportable’ products, has been greatly enhanced by rural tourism in recent years/decades. Tourism is one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries (Saarinen, 2006) and, according to the World Tourism Organisation, rural/alternative/ecological tourism is growing three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole (Cox, 2006). The development of communication and ubiquitous information systems, along with significant improvements in productivity and production systems, have contributed greatly to opening up rural areas to the outside world. Rural populations have extended their networks, widening their social space and economic scope (Bessière, 1998). Tourism and its integration into the rural economy can very much contribute to developing employment opportunities, increasing local prosperity, conserving and maintaining the environment, celebrating cultural assets and generally ensuring a greater spread in terms of who can benefit (economically, socially and culturally) (McAreavey and McDonag, 2010).

Rural tourism brings customers to the gate of the producers and to those rural businesses (shops, markets, restaurants, coffee rooms, etc.) where the marketing of high value added local products is concentrated. Tourists eat, sleep, and buy products and services; and a great part of the economic value, increased by multiplier effects, stays in the locality. This is the situation where the social imaginary has the greatest effects. Customers, besides paying for products and services, also ‘buy the genius loci’, they come back, and they might start buying ‘local products’ in cities too, delivered through short food chains. Rural tourism can also reinforce a more coherent local identity, strengthen local networks and be in many other respects beneficial and highly valued in the context of rural development or an LFS.

Nevertheless, rural tourism destinations must face pressures placed on them both directly, from increased visitor numbers, and indirectly, from negative impacts on the environment and on destination communities (Gössling *et al.*, 2008). For more than three decades many studies have detected various negative socio-cultural impacts as a result of tourism development (Mansfeld and Jonas, 2005). Besides economic benefits, tourism can also cause much damage in all-important domains of human life, that is ecological, infrastructural, sociodemographic, cultural and economic. Complex consequences can include (Hashimoto, 2002):

- tension between social classes due to the uneven distribution of tourism-generated wealth;
- conflicts between indigenous people, old locals and incoming second-home owners;
- overdependence on tourism, and the commercialisation of local cultures;
- visitor pressure, crowded places, pollution, environmental degradation.

Growing tourism can easily result in rising property prices, local people moving away and whole villages becom-

ing tourist ghost towns, with beautifully maintained buildings but no real rural life and culture to be found.

## Our case – the Káli-basin at the Balaton-uplands, Hungary

### Research focus

We designed a three years’ research project (LO-KÁLI – Myths and Realities of Local Food Systems – discourses, producers, customers and socio-economic effects in the ‘Hungarian Provence’) to investigate the complexities of the above phenomena by focusing on a small Hungarian region, the Balaton-uplands and particularly the Káli-basin within it. This region has a long history of urban incomers, as until the late 1990’s it used to serve as a safe haven for Hungarian artists and intellectuals. However, the local economy and society experienced significant changes during the last 10 years, comparable to the exemplary stories encountered in Tuscany or Provence (Czuppon *et al.*, 2015). The Káli-basin has been emerging as a very strong destination for rural/ecological/food – tourism. Today a number of small scale family businesses, crafting high-quality, value-added products (cheese, wine, meat, honey, sweets, jams, bread, etc.) and services can make a decent living here, thanks to the flow of tourists, and the organic markets, fine restaurants, speciality shops opened within the area and in Budapest. The Káli-basin, thus, is becoming a real brand for local food, wine, gastronomy and sustainable tourism and is being referred to as the ‘Hungarian Provence’. Simultaneously, the Balaton-uplands is turning into a byword for well-performed rural development in the Hungarian context – an exemplary case for other rural areas. Improvements are visible and obviously rooted in changing patterns and trends in rural tourism, the local food system, and supportive policies.

Nevertheless, even within the Balaton-uplands, there are huge differences between smaller micro-areas in terms of socio-economic indicators, trends, and business opportunities. The Káli-basin, for example, has since the 1960s been on much the same development track as as the neighbouring areas. It is still part of the same National Park, the same wine region and tourist area. Yet, while its neighbours have not changed very much, today the Káli-basin has more ‘five star’ restaurants’ and pensions than any other parts of rural Hungary, and its all-year-around Sunday market (Liliomkert) has become so famous that it is impossible to find parking around it. At the same time, while mostly old people live there, very few children and almost no entrepreneurs outside the tourism industry live in this valley, whereas the neighbouring area (Nivegy-völgy) has one of the youngest population rates in Europe and is full of vibrant life.

These differences most likely originate in recent local cultural and social history and in the social fact that the Hungarian Provence, the Káli-basin has become a social imaginary in certain strata of the Hungarian society, especially for the elite and the intellectuals, since the 1960-70s, and for the well-off middle class more recently. Appadurai (1996: 31) considers the “imagination as a social practice” and the

social imaginary as culturally constructed, historically situated knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge of action, an active force, which mobilises people to take actions, for example to move from one place to the another, to take part in tourism, to consume, etc. He states that “The imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order” (Appadurai 1996: 31).

According to our preliminary analysis, the social imaginary of the Káli-basin, consisting of different dynamic processes, has changed significantly in the last few decades. In the making of the Káli social imaginary, emerging in the 1970-80s, mainly film directors, actors and other movie professionals as well as artists (of music, fine arts, popular culture etc.) took part. The social imaginary was based on the ‘rural idyll’, attracting immigrants from Budapest. This period is formulated as a counter-culture of Hungarian socialism by the people having second-homes in the area. The second phase started after the fall of socialism (1990’s), when private agriculture entrepreneurship became a life strategy again. The emergence of wine and festival culture and the refurbishment of old buildings into new forms can be detected in this period. The formation of high quality, elite tourism started when the Kali Art Inn was established in the mid-1990s. The third phase, characterised by new forms of tourism (eco/green/food/wine) emerged as the basis of the awakening of the ‘Hungarian Provence’ started around 2010, building on the previous phases, external connections, human and financial capital. Food tourism became the main image of the area, constantly appearing in cooking programmes, gastro blogs, social media, etc. One of the villages, Köveskál is called today the Hungarian Gastro-village.

## Research methodology

Our research is based on a principally empirical qualitative methodology combined with a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Cobrin, 1994), as we develop social theory alongside the empirical work. We use mixed methods research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010) in order to gain a deeper understanding of the sociocultural and economic reality. Most of the empirical evidence comes from case studies, questionnaires, structured and semi-structured interviews, appreciative inquiry, and participant observation. Stakeholder workshops have been used to validate our results and to gain more insights through participatory analysis. Besides rural sociology, social economy and geography, we have made use of the distinctive qualitative research methods of cultural anthropology and environmental psychology while having primarily a local focus – a micro level perspective –, where the researcher observes the given issue from the point of view of the subject of the study, an insider’s view of reality, called an “emic” perspective.

## Preliminary results and analysis

We are at the very beginning of our research, and still in a preparatory phase. Up to the point of finishing this article, 26 stakeholder interviews were held (with producers, local leaders, gatekeepers, etc.), and 84 long questionnaires with local dwellers and 89 shorter ones with visitors were conducted.

According to the grounded theory approach, we planned our research as an iterative process, continuously validating our results through participatory analysis and with a view to stakeholder involvement occurring in the later stages. Here, therefore, we can only give preliminary answer to some questions and speculate about the reasons.

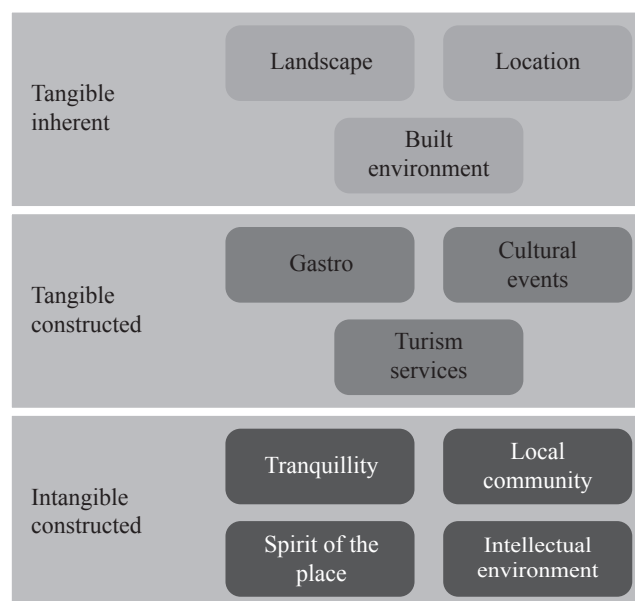
## Measuring the role of local products and gastronomy within touristic attractiveness

Based on our interviews, we first identified the main involved social groups according to their relation to the locality. Main groups were (1) locals and (2) visitors, both divided into two subgroups. Locals could be (1/a) indigenous or (1/b) newcomers, while visitors could be: (2/a) staying (overnight) or (2/b) daily visitors. Then we designed a short questionnaire complemented with card sorting. During the interviews, first we clarified the interviewee’s relation to the locality, then asked them to choose five out of the ten attractiveness-elements cards and sort them according to their importance (Figure 1).

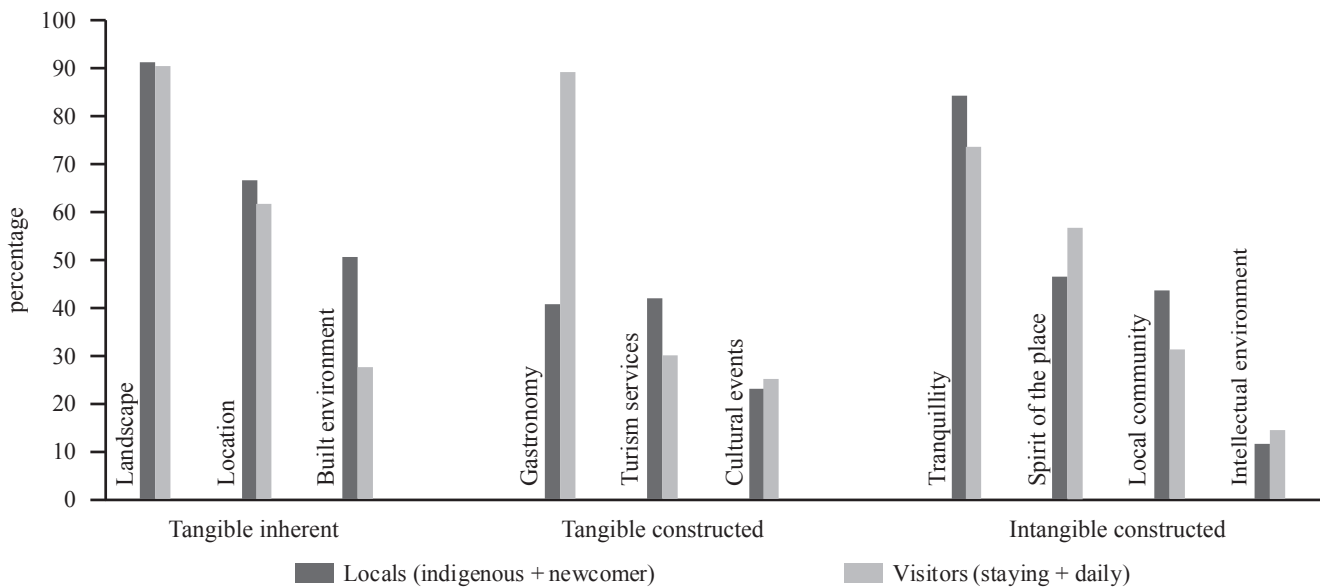
These elements can be classified into three groups:

- tangible, physically existing long-term elements/values, inherent to the locality;
- tangible constructed elements/values, products of the recent decades and urban incomers (the intellectual safe-haven past and the more recent rural tourism development);
- intangible constructed elements that are associated to the locality only through social imaginary.

During the first phase of the research, we conducted 157 full questionnaires in two different situations: local people were asked in their homes in one particular village, as part of a census survey. Visitors were asked on the main Sunday farmers’ market of the area. We plan to conduct more questionnaires in different setups and locations, however, preliminary results are already quite thought-provoking (Figure 2).



**Figure 1:** Card sorting set for measuring attractiveness. Source: own composition



**Figure 2:** Proportion of the attractions ranked in the first 5 places according to the type of respondents, grouped according to the classification of attractions.

Source: own composition

The first important/surprising result is that within each social group, the subsequent subgroups (indigenous/newcomer and staying/daily visitors) showed virtually no differences in their approach towards the attractiveness of the locality. This, on the one hand, means that though newcomers (second home owners) are culturally more similar to visitors/tourists, they ‘became locals’ in this respect and find the same elements attractive as the indigenous population, who have generally lower social status, lower levels of education and less external experience and connections. On the other hand, visitors coming for just a day visit (mainly to the market) and those staying several days in the area were also very similar in their choices. This is also remarkable, indicating that the perception of visitors is quite pre-defined and is not very much modified by personal experience of staying in the area.

In most elements of attractiveness, there was no significant difference between the perception of locals and visitors. The absolute winner is, not surprisingly, landscape and natural beauty for all. Nevertheless, there were significant differences between the preferences of locals and visitors in three topics. Most importantly, gastronomy and local food in general is the most important one for visitors and one of the least important for locals. The two other ones were the built environment (nice old stone buildings) and tranquillity, both of which are more valued by local people, with property and a strong connection to the locality. On the other hand, even non-significant elements show some interesting tendencies. Locals tend to value more almost all elements that are tangible or/and some kind of inherent properties of the locality (including tranquillity). Visitors’ preferences tend to belong to those elements, constructed alongside the touristic image of the area and such as gastronomy, cultural events.

### Genius loci as a dynamic concept – preliminary analysis

According to our interviews and also to the preliminary analysis of questionnaires, genius loci should be understood as a dynamic concept, when used for the explanation of attractiveness to tourists and the role of local food within it. Dynamism here has two interconnected dimensions, as we will now explain.

The first dimension is time. We saw in the description of the locality how the defining image of the Káli-basin has changed over the decades since its first transformation from a declining rural region to an intellectual safe haven; through its second phase emerging as place for unique holidays for a narrow elite and a third one, where it has become a busy rural tourism destination, focused on food, wine and local products. The constructed image of the region changed significantly alongside these transformations, from artistic films, photos and paintings, through high quality services, wines, accommodation, to a complex marketing of the area as a destination for culinary expeditions through broadcasted cooking programmes, wine and food festivals, the involvement of social media, blogs, etc. At the same time, the three phases described here are far from distinct, they are interconnected, largely building one another.

The other dimension of dynamism is the social one. Looking at how locals and visitors see the area it seems obvious that visitors are greatly influenced by the image projected by the media and different kinds of discourses (constructed tangible and intangible attractions), while locals (either indigenous or incomers) having spent significant time in the area value other elements much more (inherent tangible + tranquillity). At the same time the immense growth of the number of visitors in parallel with the development of services in tourism reinforces the new genius loci / social imaginary based on local food. One could see this as an itera-

tive process, resulting in the evolution of local economies, culture and society.

As a preliminary answer to our original research question<sup>2</sup> we could say that the LFS plays a very complex role in the evolution of the Káli-basin as a rural tourism destination. The LFS in its current stage of development is both the result of and the reason for such an evolution. It is certainly becoming more and more significant in the process, and the resulting economic/business opportunities are certainly apparent. Nevertheless, social and environmental costs, a number of ethical problems remain to be examined, and the investigation of them is the primary aim of our project.

## Some questions, dilemmas for further investigation

During our preliminary interviews, questionnaires and analysis of the genius loci, we have found some interesting tensions, and further questions to be explored. In the following paragraphs, we will share some of these.

The most interesting/important issue concerns social justice and development ethics. As far as we understand the situation, (at least) two distinct worlds exist in the Káli-basin. One is a tourism reality, based on gastronomy, local products, wine and the now well-established image of the Hungarian Provence. When the restaurants, wineries organise a 'gastro-picnic' or a festival, or on a simple Sunday farmers' market day the Káli-basin fills with wealthy tourists. Nevertheless, besides this shiny, constructed reality, one can find here quite normal, run-down Hungarian villages with the usual rural development problems, such as ageing inhabitants, depopulation, and a lack of basic services, infrastructure, etc. These two worlds are hardly connected with each other, local (indigenous) people rarely take advantage of the opportunities provided by tourism and gain little income from it.

The other problem concerns directly the structure of the local food system. While most restaurants (flagships of the Káli-basin) claim that they base their menu on local products, when interviewing local producers one can find that they hardly sell anything to these restaurants. Sources of local products, the structure of the LFS, and power relations between producers have to be the subject of further investigation.

The third area is, again related to local power, social and environmental costs. Today the main tension within local society is not between indigenous people and newcomers any more, but between old immigrants, who gained local influence (economic, social, or public) before or during the tourism boom, and newly appearing external investors, who see rural/food tourism in the Káli-basin as a business opportunity. The ongoing fight for resources and space can endanger natural beauty and tranquillity, the very basis of the current tourism development.

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