

TRANSFORMING RURAL FOODSCAPES THROUGH FESTIVALIZATION: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

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This article conceptualizes the transformative potential of food festivals for rural foodscapes. The study elaborates on the ideas behind the term “festivalization.” It seeks to understand the potential impacts of festivals on the spatial surroundings rather than the opposite, which is most frequently seen in the research on rural food festivals. Festivalization describes a process where transformative forces that trickle into the rural foodscape can be seen as continuance and incentives for change. The article introduces the following paradigmatic lenses through which festivalization and rural transformation can be observed: (1) resource redefinition, (2) upstream mobilizing, (3) spatial interlinking, (4) insubordinative activism, (5) reciprocal mediatizing, (6) redistributive commodification, (7) disruptive incorporatizing, and (8) persistent emotionalizing. When activated, the rural foodscape becomes a site for integrative identity, where festivals have transformative power. Examples from the academic literature and practice sources illustrate the points. The article outlines implications for both further studies and rural policy-making.

Key words: Transformation; Festival; Servicescape; Processual direction; Rural policies

Introduction

Rural areas can be claimed to be the fabric of society and serve as the bread and butter of the economy (Wiggins & Proctor, 2001). However, to ensure that rural areas can continue to play essential

social, economic, and identity-supporting roles, there is a need for their continuous transformation to meet fast-paced global changes (Kruseman et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021). Rural transformation is a process of sweeping societal change whereby rural societies diversify their economies and reduce

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or alter their dependence on agriculture. Consequently, they become more open and linked to distant places to trade and acquire goods, services, and ideas (Berdegué et al., 2013). The complexity and mutuality of the roles are increasing.

Rural transformation does not happen in isolation from respective rural foodscapes, that is, the dynamic and ever-changing material culture of a rural community as influenced by a variety of factors, such as the terroir, tradition, history, social organization, science, and technology, as well as temporary and eventful disturbances. Rural foodscapes, therefore, refer to places and spaces where people acquire food, prepare food, talk about food, or generally gather some meaning from food (MacKendrick, 2014, p. 16). Given that, place-based food environments (foodscapes) are constructed by complex spatial and temporal dynamics (Garden et al., 2021), where change is inherent.

This article aims to scrutinize the argument that festivals play an influential role in rural foodscape transformation. How do and how can festivals affect their hinterlands? In rural areas' rapidly changing spatial constitution, it is critical to consider all potential forces that can affect development, and festivals represent one of these forces. The aim is to provide a new conceptualization that can guide future academic research and that may inspire policy-making processes.

Festivals serve as gateways organized for and created by the movement of people, goods, information, and ideas to and from host areas (Kwiatkowski et al., 2020). The food festival-related circulation of goods, people, and ideas interlinks with the sociospatial environments in which food is produced, distributed, acquired, prepared, consumed, and disposed of (Adema, 2006, 2010). Food festivals are multiactor platforms that involve horizontal collaboration between producers and vertical associations to the food chain (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018). They can also convey the experience of local territories, peoples, and their stories through the food(scape) (Park et al., 2023) and be simultaneously (re)shaped by an inflow of external forces, people, and values.

However, although extensive academic research has analyzed the characteristics, outcomes, and dynamics of rural food festivals in various settings and contexts (Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Çela et

al., 2011; Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Pizzichini et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2021), scant attention has been given to the relevance of festivals to the transformation of rural foodscapes.

The contribution of this article is to bridge this research gap by offering a new conceptualization of the linkages between festivalization and the transformation of foodscapes in the rural context. While elements of this analysis are established and understood in the academic literature, significant gaps remain in integrating and synthesizing such understanding. The need for a broader and more nuanced debate about the convergence of festivalization and foodscape transformation is twofold. First, rural foodscapes do not exist in isolation from general rural transformative factors. This interlink determines the transformation of rural foodscapes and their adaptation to changes occurring in rural areas. The most straightforward reasons for this are the progressing urbanization of rural regions and alterations in agriculture and social structures. Second, rural foodscapes must be more sustainable and resilient. The former need pertains to the necessity to convey foodscape assets to the next generation, whereas the latter is caused by the omnipresent pressure of cultural McDonaldization as well as the need to better reconnect *food to place* (Feagan, 2007; Swagemakers et al., 2019).

This article is mainly a conceptual contribution that develops the ideas of food festivalization and subtle interlinkages with foodscapes through specific examples from scholarly literature and publicized practice. First, the two guiding concepts, festivalization and foodscape, are scrutinized for definitional meaning as it appears in the literature. After this, the article provides definitory outlines of the particularities of the eight transformative powers of festivals on rural foodscapes. The outlines of these eight powers are illustrated with examples. The ambition is to give directions for rural policies and future research, which may further examine the specific transformative powers outlined in the discussion and conclusions sections.

Defining Foodscape and Festivalization

Foodscape

The foodscape is a multifaceted concept that has received much attention across the social sciences,

geography, and health research (MacKendrick, 2014). The foodscape represents the full scope of the food environment of a given place when the environment is considered to have both multisensory tangible and material aspects (touch, scent, taste) and an intangible essence that can “evoke affective responses, generate and stimulate memory, and spark imagination” (Adema, 2006, p. 3). The specific foodscape can also have several personal, social, or public layers, reaching from the body to the community to the nation.

A central aspect of the idea of the foodscape is the interaction among people, place, and food, weaving the individual into the surrounding materiality, environment, culture, and society (Sage, 2010). The idea derives from the notion of the servicescape, which is a physical setting with many dimensions in which a service (and possibly also production) process takes place. Since its origin, the concept of the servicescape has developed significantly, among others entering food studies, where it has received diverse interpretations and meanings (Mikkelsen, 2011).

Vonthron et al. (2020) indicated four approaches to the foodscape concept. The first takes up the spatial perspective, highlighting how food outlets are spatially distributed and their dynamics. The second approach turns its attention toward the social and cultural meaning related to the physical constitution of foodscapes. It aims to understand how social and cultural factors shape food provisioning practices and how people access, perceive, and experience food. The next approach underlines the behavioral dimension and centers attention on how food behavior is affected by domestic and visited foodscapes characteristics. The last approach attempts to see the concept holistically, integrating various perspectives into a more complex construct where the systemic approach dominates. It reveals high similarities with the notion of food systems but is more decisive in places linked to food. In its principle, the systemic approach contests the global corporate food regime and promotes local, ethical, and sustainable food networks (Vonthron et al., 2020, p. 1).

When observing the implications of the foodscape concept for festivals, the notion must be considered, in a broader sense, as an ongoing construction: dynamic, constantly adapting and changing according to internal and external factors. Dynamic

understandings of foodscapes are concurrent with Appadurai’s (1990) conceptualization of “scapes,” which are always “fluid, irregular,” and “shifting” (p. 197). In this context, King (2009) underlined that foodscape is the “dynamic culinary culture of a community, as influenced by a wide variety of factors, such as region, tradition, history, social organization, and science and technology” (p. 35). Dolphijn (2004) added to the above consideration that food functions in immanent structures that are always in the process of change, whereas Johnston and Baumann (2014) complement our understanding by describing a foodscape as “a dynamic social construction that relates food to specific places, people, meanings” (p. 3). The fluid nature of foodscapes has also been indicated by Garden et al. (2021, p. 931), who point out that foodscapes are influenced and impacted by various global, national, and local processes that affect localities and places, such as urbanization, shifting policy frameworks, migration, and population growth, as well as changes to territorial boundaries through governance reforms (Garden et al., 2021, p. 931).

However, despite being overall dynamic and self-evolving, each specific rural foodscape and the spatial entity in which it is embedded are also transformable. An essential role in foodscape alteration occupies a combination of factors associated with continuous rural transformation, in which festivalization gains importance. This standpoint has been noted by Gibson et al. (2011) and Quinn and Wilks (2017)—the former saw festivals’ transformative potential when analyzing the importance of festivals to rural communities. In contrast, the latter authors underlined transformative aspects implied by festivals when analyzing how the spatial and temporal interruptions caused by celebrations temporarily transform the social order.

Admittedly, rural transformation determines profound changes in respective foodscapes, presenting challenges and opportunities for their development and growth. The foodscape, consequently, cannot be seen as an autonomous process concerning rural transformation but is enormously dependent on and (re)shaped by it. Different levels of diversification of rural economies away from agriculture, the globalization of agriculture systems, and the urbanization of rural regions are significant game changers for the rural foodscape (Berdegué et al., 2013;

Hjalager, 2020). This, in turn, is further mediated by localized factors, such as rural decline, urban–(semi)rural migration, changes in rural values, and other place-based circumstances. A mediating role in foodscape transformation also occupies local entrepreneurs' willingness to convey old recipes, habits, and customs to current times (Kwiatkowski et al., 2021) as well as the dilemma of balancing tradition and innovation (novelties) (Gorgoglione et al., 2018).

Foodscapes are also under threat from external forces. For instance, communities that used to thrive in producing wine, olive oil, and sheep, or engage in any other specialization, may be affected by devastating climate changes (Orlandi et al., 2020). Another threat to foodscapes is political pressure of many kinds, which can be highly destructive to production and the broader cultural and social fabric (Archer et al., 2008). When terraced fields are decomposing, it is not only a production resource that becomes obsolete but also the image and identity of a total foodscape (Yehong et al., 2011). The same challenge occurs in the European context, where family farms are replaced by agricultural holdings that have a massive impact on rural areas' physical and cultural landscapes (Ziętara, 2018). Rural policies address this by attempting to stimulate reorientation of the use of rural space to follow natural and cultural conditions.

Festivalization

Festivals are seen as vessels of meaning and unique spaces for articulating, performing, and rediscovering identity, including that related to spatial lifestyle and foodscapes. Festivals are sites for performing and critiquing lifestyle, identity, and politics (Bennett et al., 2014). Most studies of festivalization address the urban environment (Cudny, 2016), and avant-gardism is an underlying stream of thinking where successful (rebellious) festivals can contribute to the city fabric (Weller, 2013), instituting new traditions (Picard & Robinson, 2006). Festivals can be flagships of consumer change (Organ et al., 2015). Because of that, festivals can be integrated into the ideas of urban change (Smith, 2012). Examples include the gentrification of a neighborhood and change in the atmosphere and meaning for those who visit and reside there.

The same transformative conceptualization is not so frequently found in the literature about rural food festivals. The studies commonly assume that festivals are means to preserve rather than transform rural lifestyles and cultures and that those festivals provide an opportunity to expose the values and qualities as they are seen through the lens of the locals. Authenticity, heritage, and culture are terms often used in research on food festivals (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Kwiatkowski et al. (2021, p. 4) indicated that festivals can be both preservers of tradition and bringers of renewal and sometimes providers of coherence, commitment, and meaning for local community members and visitors alike. According to Derrett (2003, p. 57), festivals play myriad development roles. They celebrate a sense of place, provide a vehicle for communities to host visitors, are the outward manifestation of the community's identity and serve as a distinctive identifier of place and people.

However, festivalization is, per se, a process that suggests an ongoing activity and transformative endeavor, where festivals are seen as transgressive brokers of local and universal values. Extensive applied literature exists on establishing, innovating, and managing events of all kinds, including food festivals. It contributes to a better understanding of festival development's success factors over time (Dalgic & Birdir, 2020), innovation processes and creativity in festival organizations (Dragin-Jensen et al., 2022), and managerial challenges and opportunities in festival operation, to name but a few. This research recommends for festival organizers to be aware of the advantage for local stakeholders (Getz & Andersson, 2010), linkage with unique amenity values, cocreation, and place attachment meaning for residents, exhibitors, and visitors. Considering community sites, past studies recommended handing over part of the surplus to local institutions, creating relationships with volunteers in the area to assist and be ambassadors, inviting locals, celebrating locales, and coordinating the festival's promotion with wider promotional endorsers coordinated by DMOs.

However, the literature on festivalization, at least in the food-themed angle, lacks depth in understanding the festival's relationship with the environment—in this context, with the foodscape. Although the literature on the impact of festivals on

host places and communities is relatively saturated, focused studies on festivals' role in transforming rural foodscapes are rarely seen. It is increasingly evident that festivals are unique spaces that can serve as gateways for various influences and become brokers of local values transmitted toward the external and internal foodscapes. Given that, the current study attempts to bridge the abovementioned academic gap by exploring the potential of food festivals in transforming rural foodscapes and another practical gap in the knowledge of potential and fundamental changes in which local foodscapes are under pressure. This, in turn, conveys managerial meaning, as such knowledge can impact the development of new products and innovation as well as marketing practices of local producers, which tend to use festivals as selling and promotional platforms.

Research Approach

The purpose of this article is to provide novel concepts that encapsulate the ways that food festivals may transform rural foodscapes. Theorizing in qualitative research takes place inductively or deductively, but in this article the endeavor is a process that may be characterized as "abductive" (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). Abduction, where the research process is not linear but a continuous pragmatic moving forward and backward between generalization, information and data interpretation, is the core of this research approach. In particular:

abduction occurs when we encounter observations that do not neatly fit theories, and we find ourselves speculating about what the data plausibly could be the case of. Abduction thus refers to a creative inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence. Abduction produces new hypotheses for which we need to gather more observations. (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, p. 5).

This article is not based on empirical studies, and it is not well defined by spatial or organizational contexts; it is a conceptual think-piece. Conceptual research is emerging in tourism (Xin et al., 2013) and festival studies (Armbrecht et al., 2021). The

advantage of conceptual research is that it may assist in comparison, reflection, and abstraction processes. The findings and suggested classifications can lead the road to either qualitative or quantitative inquiry, but the offered classifications may have their own theoretical and processual value as guidelines for practice. This may be the case in the field of festivalization and foodscapes, both matters of continuous real-life experimentation and knowledge creation. The benefits of conceptual research may be providing a holistic view and a philosophical underpinning of relational factors without an obligation to ensure special testing, which would often not be feasible (Xin et al., 2013). The limitation of conceptual research is the lack of evidence supporting ideas and the risk of moving into speculative sidetracks (Wilson et al., 2020).

The ideas for this conceptual article have developed over a long time and in connection with other rural tourism projects. Referring to Xin et al.'s (2013) typology, what we do is embark on a set of "defining concepts," and through a textual exemplification, we "deconstruct" the content. The abductive research process has taken place over the following phases:

- Revising our own and other researchers' work, in which we gradually could conclude about the nature of the existing conceptual gaps on how festivalization transforms rural foodscapes.
- Involvement in a transnational study group (under the management of Linnaeus University, Sweden), where we jointly tried to understand the entrepreneurial processes in food festivals. We presented earlier versions of the eight concepts and received helpful comments on the logic and the exemplification.
- A reassessment of the literature on rural development, food festivals, and tourism.
- The iterative composition of the eight forces, and particularly the double ingredient in each of these, are essential keys to our deconstructive striving.

To move the conceptualization toward a more concise understanding, we have extracted from this process the critical processual forces of foodscape festivalization. The forces that are in play when festivals affect rural foodscapes are (1) resource

redefinition, (2) upstream mobilizing, (3) spatial interlinking, (4) insubordinative activism, (5) reciprocal mediatizing, (6) redistributive commodification, (7) disruptive incorporatizing, and (8) insistent emotionalizing.

The aim is to decompose the potential dynamics of integration with the foodscape. The intention pertains to embracing what might happen in the foodscape when festivals are in play. Therefore, the point of view is the foodscape as a production space, community, culture, and social environment. Accordingly, the perspective is the rural fabric and social system. Here, we only indirectly address the perception or behaviors of festivalgoers and only when it is important for the festival's impact on the foodscape.

This article focuses on how festivals can transform foodscapes, particularly, but not exclusively, foodscapes near the festival's location. The next section discusses the eight transformational forces in detail.

Transformative Forces

Resource Redefinition

Resource redefinition is the process by which actors in the foodscape, assisted by festival activities, gain a new understanding of food resources and their potential. Resources are here understood as the material elements (i.e., any elements of importance to produce food: vegetables, crops, fauna, soil, water, etc.). Can they be creatively used in other ways, in new constellations, for other purposes? Under the headline of "resource definition," we do not consider immaterial, intangible resources in this definition, as these will be scrutinized under the concepts below. Through the portfolio of products presented, marketed, and promoted at festivals and the claim for constant novelty, farmers and food products are stimulated to assess their environments in new ways, for instance, to counteract the loss of biodiversity resulting from modern agricultural methods.

A Danish producer of liquor and vinegar experimented intensively with different ingredients, such as herbs and flowers. Signature products included elderberry flowers from the surrounding hedges but also, as a surprise to most customers,

dandelions. The farming of dandelions had become a very professional endeavor. The produce is sold at fairs and festivals, accompanied by the owners' narrative about the production. In their promotion, they are open about the business model, which suits well a small crop space and a situation where one of the owners struggles with a chronic disease. Combining the small-scale dandelion crop and the distillery work fits the personal situation.

Apiculture is challenging in mainstream monocultural landscapes where pollination suffers. Honey is the most popular item at food festivals—the product comes in wide varieties, it is easy to transport, tasting is encouraging, and cooking with honey is very multifaceted. The inspiration from festival activities may lead back to a resource redefinition in the foodscape to benefit the crops. For example, the diversification of production into flowers, berries, and fruit may go hand in hand with honey production (St. Clair et al., 2020). Sweet Bee's Honey Festival, outside New York, includes a list of vendors demonstrating surprisingly creative combinatory crops and livestock synergic with honey production.

Unlocking resources in natural areas that have never been considered resources is also part of this striving to redefine the foodscape. Food gathering—berries, herbs, mushrooms, etc.—is a popular tourism endeavor (Zuba & Domański, 2006). However, it has also moved into professionalization with implications for developing and using rural foodscapes in new ways. The sea buckthorn has gained a new meaning, which festivals have readily taken up, and vendors contribute with the positive appraisal of the otherwise reasonably hostile plant.

In recent years, discussion about the sustainable and climate-adapted use of natural resources and agricultural land has become prevalent. New farming systems and feasible business development are sometimes under consideration and sometimes under implementation in rural areas (Altieri et al., 2015). Festivals can be a welcome platform to expose achievements. As outlined by Hayter (2008), resource redefinition is critical in sustainability and a green transition, and all of these are likely to have the potential to obtain synergies with food festivals.

Upstream Mobilizing

Upstream linkage is a term from the supply chain literature, and it includes the activities related to an organization's suppliers. In this case, the foodscape as an entity can be understood as a supplier to a festival. The constituting of the chains, also with middlemen and facilitators, is what we attempt to capture with force named "upstream mobilizing." Such mobilizing includes new links and alliances, which may benefit the actors in the foodscape and create new opportunities for them. Festivals bring suppliers from the wider supply chains, thus interlinking—in a human and material sense—the layers and the elements of foodscapes into a joint collective and synergetic mobilization (Janiszewska et al., 2022). In that sense, the festivals are relationship builders where the vendors can contact each other and address potential collaborative or competitive arrangements.

Festivals facilitate the collective mobilization of local resources in the shape of producers, brokers, and sellers. It is important for the success of a festival that it can attract exhibitors, vendors, and experience providers of quality and variety that fits the festival's concept. It is part of the festival planning to let the composition of the foodscape affect how to approach the vendors. Festivals attract various producers who can elevate the knowledge of particular resources to new recipients. Collectively, such interactions generate changes in each of the local systems by creating synergistic creativity. The intention of building networks in hinterland foodscapes is often prevalent, but the motivations of the exhibitor are not always congruent with this intention (Roep & Wiskerke, 2013).

Many small food festivals struggle to fill the space, and they experience that festivals' appearance is in stiff competition with other activities, such as harvesting, production, and sales from their facilities (Ossowska et al., 2023). The fact that festivals are often held in the busiest summer season contributes to the difficulty of convincing producers to participate and contribute to upstream mobilization. A local food festival may be a tagged affair, and some festivals, even with high ambitions, fail to ensure a recurrent annual event. There is a good deal of planning and promotion, and even appealing to vendors and exhibitors with sponsorships and special deals.

Festivals organized by one producer or a group of (local) producers can attempt to overcome the difficulties upstream mobilizing by ensuring that the events occur in the foodscape. Thus, the cherry wine festival allows visitors to take a guided tour into orchards and see wineries. Hereby, the landscape and the production system become central festival experiences. It is also critical that the cherry wine festival invites purchasing agents from restaurants and supermarket chains, thus linking to the upstream strategy (Sundbo & Sundbo, 2018).

In terms of efficient upstream mobilization of the rural hinterland, a festival depends on professional event management (Stadler et al., 2014). The involvement of intermediaries to provide basic facilities, marketing and festival promotion is critical. This somewhat contrasts with the fact that many food festivals are organized by local groups of volunteers (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018).

Spatial Interlinking

The upstream mobilization described above is about linking a festival to the nearby foodscape. The festival is expected to represent materiality and ensure closer ties among producers. Foodscape density is a potential result, as the supplies are interlinked in social and material networks. However, the concept in this section—spatial interlinking—takes another view on the geography of festival supplies. It recognizes the advantages of relations to foodscapes outside the narrow area of the festival location.

Festivals are hubs for local and external stakeholders, where ideas, goods, and services can be acquired, transferred, and exchanged. Festivals are live platforms where exhibitors embedded in one social-spatial setting can express themselves to others and give inspiration from other foodscapes that later can be integrated locally. In this sense, the "spatial interlinking" that takes place may go beyond the material exchange and include knowledge and ideas.

Thus, Fisker et al. (2021) indicated that festivals may become key nodes and hubs in various networks connected to the festival theme. Furthermore, on a very basic level, festivals activate formal and informal resources from local and external businesses, associations, and public institutions

(e.g., Wi-Fi access, meeting places, storage facilities, and logistical services) to organize an event. Festival managers emphasize such alliances as crucial in terms of the pragmatics of running a festival, but they also indicate their role in gradual processes of professionalization.

The Weekend Food Festival in the fishing port of Rovinj, Croatia, is a good example of how the connection to the world is organized and how the festival becomes a place for learning and mutual inspiration. The program includes expert talks—for example, demonstrating new knowledge in health and master classes that can give local produce new meaning. The exhibitors are both in food and food tech, and there is competition for food tech startups, locals, and nonlocals. The festival is only one of the area's range of gastronomic events. It demonstrates the value of festivalization with links to the contemporary food scene and advanced food knowledge (Pivčević & Lesić, 2020).

Festivals with a special theme can solve the problems of myopia of festival foodscape concepts. For example, slow food events bring together producers from different countries, and thereby, there is a recognition that food and food cultures travel across space, carried by common logic. During the Terra Madre Slow Food Festival in 2016, out of 50 restaurants, 40 served dishes closely related to the local territory, and the rest offered various ethnic dishes, including sushi.

The academic festival literature offers limited insight into how and why food festivals are interlinked across space (Naulin, 2022). Hence, it is unclear to what extent spatial crossovers mentally and in terms of organization can support the ideas of rural foodscapes.

Insubordinative Activism

Wherever people are collected in crowds, there is a possibility to manifest the power of persuasion. If the crowd has the time and is attentive, messages beyond the simple pastime of enjoyment of food in all its dimensions can be transmitted. Festivals can provide such attentive audiences, and it may—as suggested with the example of slow food above—find room to raise awareness of wider food agendas, controversies, and conflicts (Hall & Gössling, 2016), for example, about the environment,

biodiversity, rural poverty, etc. A long range of issues related to foodscapes can be and are, in some cases, invited into the festivals. The appearance in a public space is a chance to explain, debate, or even propagandize. NGOs can gain membership and attention through participation and action, and festivals may acquire a role in social protests or activism (Duignan et al., 2021).

Authenticity and landscape heritage protection are cases of interest that align well with many food festivals. The choice of exhibitors can include criteria about the foodscape (e.g., organic, commitment to landscape protection measures, etc.). The products embody the policy, as Fontefranco (2020) explained in the case of the Pink Asparagus Festival in Messago, Italy. The foodscape is reterritorialized, and pride in the production facilities and opportunities has grown in parallel with the success of the persistent activism of the local community during festivals, including farmers who removed invasive species and took the production foodscape back. This case taps into a more comprehensive agenda about soil protection, sustainable production and farming methods.

While concern for the future of foodscapes and the regional and local development in the hinterland are apparent in the festival context, other topics are more distant and perhaps theoretical. However, they can still be integrated into the food festival context. Hunger is one of them. An example is Feast Portland in the US, which is a classical celebration with a potent endeavor to simultaneously raise awareness about poverty, hunger, food waste, food insecurity, and the negative impacts of the foodscape degradation. In 2012, the contradictory and provocative environment made it possible to raise funds from donations to support charity partners to fight against hunger.

Food festivals have addressed other distressing problems. The Copenhagen Refugee Festival invites refugee chefs to cook meals from their home places and to raise the discussion not only about the refugee problem but also how food traditions and crafts travel over borders and solidarity is created (Murphy, 2019).

Food activism is not always peaceful, clean, and neat. It may be grim, violent, and very provocative. Grøn (2022) examined artistic representations of unpleasant food realities, such as food waste,

obesity, animal welfare, morals, gastropolitics, etc. In this study, we have not identified cases of forced entry by activists on food festivals. However, many festivals mix formats and purposes, a development likely to occur even more frequently in the future (Alkon & Guthman, 2017). Experiences with an edge are often more interesting for visitors, foodscape movements and activists can use this in their communicative endeavors, and they are not necessarily counterproductive for mainstream festival stakeholders.

Reciprocal Mediatizing

Mediatizing is widely discussed in tourism, referred to by Månsson (2011) as: “Tourists create media products/images which circulate online through various channels like social media. These products are then available for consumption by other tourists, which in turn influences new media products” (p. 1634). Popular culture and film are generators of content that activate tourists’ communicative processes and contribute to the reciprocal intermediation of destinations. However, gastronomy has strong potential, as the distinct visual and contextual experiences are highly “instagrammable.” Foodscapes that constitute the productive hinterland of the food seen and consumed at festivals can gain an enhanced visual supplement to the sensory experiences of the food itself.

Celuch (2021) pointed out that currently, the “camera eats first” (p. 966); people take pictures of a meal and upload them to social media platforms before they eat. The use of social media has transformed eating experiences into shareable and long-lasting experiences. In contrast, gastronomy, per se, has evolved from pure sustenance to a star attraction, where social media serves as a new resource for food festivals to engage with consumers (Beleñoti et al., 2017).

Festivals allow visitors to talk to the representatives of the foodscape and other audiences. Therefore, anyone can exploit the festival space to express themselves and listen to others, stimulating in situ and online dialogue between producers/vendors and event visitors. Festivals and media thrive from parallel and interlinked influence. Exposure is essential among festival stakeholders, and the media needs appealing raw materials to drive their

success. The digital foodscape reaches far beyond the festival space. In a sense, connective and reciprocal effects can integrate people who are not visitors to food festivals but are of critical importance for foodscapes; for example, influencers can curate dialogues of concern for producers and consumers (Goodman & Jaworska, 2020). The affiliation of a festival with consumer groups, with other festivals, and with foodscapes with similarities or differences takes place in many ways. Festival marketers are increasingly aware of the importance of SoMe, not only for the festival’s success but also for the upward links to the supplying foodscapes (Londono et al., 2022). At the Vancouver International Wine Festival, Canada’s premier food and wine event, the public can choose from approximately 750 wines at four International Festival Tastings. Industry professionals can elevate their wine knowledge at trade tastings. There are dozens of special events around the tasting room (seminars, vintage tastings, winery dinners, lunches, brunches, wine mingles, and more) at which hundreds of other wines are served.

The mentioned Terra Madre festival offers various ICT and traditional channels that allow visitors to view videos showing how the food is produced, the nature and heritage, and the values of the foodscapes that nourish the festival. Tagging, liking, and forwarding are part of the more comprehensive rural destination promotion, which includes the touristic demand and the demand for particular food and beverage products. Digital opportunities are found to be underutilized (Sebata & Mollah, 2022). There are many examples of hypermediation in wine tourism and in connection with wine festivals with a long history of distinct appreciation of location.

Retributive Commodification

Frequently, food festivals are established to enhance local and regional development. Some rural areas are significantly challenged by depopulation, declining industrial and economic activity, and in the worst cases, poverty. Festivals constitute market access directly to consumers and vendors to avoid the costs connected to the use of middlemen, wholesalers, and others who claim a part of the profit. The vendors at food festivals can bring more

back to their communities and local areas with a higher income per sold unit. The benefit for the rural economy develops as income generation for the rural stakeholders, the farmers, producers, and staff employed held voluntarily or involuntarily in the foodscape.

With redistributive commodification, we refer to the fact that producers of food products engage in the innovative adaptation of their produce. This may be through the launch of more variants or tastes of a product or features (e.g., in terms of health characteristics, or to fit new tastes). Commodification can also consist of innovation through tradition, which can be developed about the past. It could be appealed through reference to old practices or more appealing packaging that accommodates customers' appreciation or need—for example, by making it easy to travel with the product or offering the option to purchase it as an attractive gift. Experience ingredients and narratives can be essential for obtaining prices and profitability.

Commodifying is the operation of transforming something, perhaps otherwise regarded as a free service to become a commodity that can be sold at a price. Instead of demonstrating cooking skills openly for all who want to attend, vendors and exhibitors may redesign the experience to become a cooking course and ask a fee to participate.

Festival sales may be modest, and some vendors may ask themselves if it is worthwhile. However, creative festival vendors can eventually ensure a stream of customers to their farm and village shops, and the presence at the festivals is a way to communicate with customers. In that sense, the festival is about relationship building and ideation, and business is moved back into the foodscape.

Studies demonstrate that the stakeholders in food festivals are varied. Community groups and highly profiled producers are often at the forefront (Janiszewska et al., 2022). The role of stakeholders in the joint and collaborative development of food festivals in rural areas is not well researched. It is a question of whether the most deprived rural areas receive the full benefit of commodification. The role of advisory services, marketers, and other agencies is to compensate for competencies in marketing, product development, etc., that primary producers, in many cases, are not proficient in.

Disruptive Incorporatizing

Festivals host a wide range of vendors and businesses. Many are small, but some giants in the food sector also find it relevant to exhibit their profile at food festivals. Prominent stakeholders can also accept to play roles as (semi)philanthropic sponsors, think tanks, incubators, test environments, etc., thus potentially affecting the innovation climate for food at a wider scale and with the foodscape in the hinterland. The large Nordic dairy company Arla is present at food festivals with educational offers to children and their parents.

For small start-ups, festivals may be among the first contacts with the market. If “big players” are present, the festival is a place to get in touch with potential investors and allies (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018). Festival appearance may for young companies have a role in maturing entrepreneurial ideas, market testing, and iterative product development. However, festivals can also expose opportunities for corporative collaboration and cobranding with partners from outside the specific foodscape, preparation for an exit strategy for a successful entrepreneur (Kwiatkowski et al., 2021). This can potentially lead to a larger company's acquisition of the start-up. Some serial entrepreneurs start a new business and develop themes to the stage where they can ensure a reasonable price for accumulated existing and future prospects. To achieve rapid growth with sufficient capital, the companies shifted hands. To some degree, this process of incorporatizing can be considered a loss for the local foodscape (Aerni, 2018).

Local (craft) breweries' takeover by Carlsberg in Poland shows how incorporatizing means revitalizing the local area. Much-needed investments are coming into the rural area, embedding a development potential. This is an example of how a large company invests its prestige in social responsibility without compromising the benefits and market power of being significant. Beer festivals are popular, and for better or worse, they mirror the economic dynamics in the brewery industry (Pezzi et al., 2022).

Agriculture and rural food systems are sometimes very conservative in exploiting science and technology results. Food festivals invite universities and research laboratories to exhibit and explain

new ideas and recall a forgotten process. For example, during the Pomerania Taste Festival in Gdańsk, it was possible to learn the difference between pasteurization and tantalization (i.e., two techniques for sterilizing food used in Poland since the 19th century). The Aarhus Food Festival exhibited novel research results in the microbiological processes of fungi and invited visitors and producers to examine whether the research could be used in practical production processes. The role of science contributors to festival exhibitors and their underlying production systems is underinvestigated.

Gradually, foodscapes are taking on some smart systems, for example, monitoring production processes and attending to environmental and climatical matters (Sebata & Mollah, 2022). This may also be of importance for foodscape stakeholders' discovery of the foodscape of new alleys of development, for example, in maintaining contacts with other vendors and with such visitors who are first movers.

Insistent Emotionalizing

Festivals can, when spatially appropriately organized, narrated, and visually materialized, create emotional layers of memory about the specific products and wider surrounding foodscapes. They can generate deep sympathy and affection and a feeling of belonging and empathy with the people and offer activities that constitute the foodscape. The concept of insisting on emotionalizing frames the effects of the festivals in the minds and personalities of the visitors, not only for the period of the festivals but also in the aftermath, when the visitors in their minds connect food with the landscape in which it is grown and cultivated.

Some foodscapes are of breathtaking beauty, and some signal values are not to be lost. UN Food and Agriculture has launched an ambitious project called GIAHS (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems). Its purpose is to identify production landscapes of exceptional social, cultural, aesthetic, and emotional value, resources that cannot be lost. In the case of the Japanese terraced rice–fish–duck symbiosis farming system, Nan et al. (2021) mention that traditional festivals have an essential role in the conversation of agrobiodiversity. The location of food festivals may be directly

in the landscape that is interpreted in the food or beverage, and as in the example of cherry wine festival (Sundbo & Sundbo, 2018), visitors can take a tour into the orchards and, supposedly, get a wider feeling of meaning. Food festivals have proven useful entry points to a wider cultural pride and emotional attachment palette. Visitors are far more than consumers; they are also foodscape volunteers, but effective movements in this direction demand a festival design with plenty of new elements (Olwig & Christiansen, 2016). This is a path for development in the future.

Diasporas worldwide organize their food festivals, evoking the nostalgia and remembrance of the old country (Kamal & Chung, 2022); they link to the foodscapes both in the home country and the host country.

Discussion

Due to the burgeoning number of food festivals staged worldwide, understanding the interaction between festivals and host environments has become a current, yet largely neglected, avenue of research. The importance of analyzing the interplay between food festivals and foodscapes pertains to providing new insight into broader transformative forces in rural areas and the need to create more resilient foodscapes.

This study responds to this call by offering new insights into the relationship between food festivals and local foodscapes, as illustrated in Figure 1. The study takes up the argument that the festival's unique capacities, understood and expressed by, among others, creative crowding, attentive focus, and centripetal and centrifugal energy associated with the event, can arouse numerous spinoffs that reshape and transform the host foodscape. The changes that occur before, during, and after festivals can vary, starting from societal transformation, to more functional changes, ending with normative changes. Furthermore, the changes can also be of various magnitude and life expectancies, starting from very short ones (temporarily associated with a given celebration) to ones that are more solid and better grounded in local foodscapes. However, despite the nature of changes, their magnitude and life expectancy, it is important to note that event capacities, transformative forces, and the changes

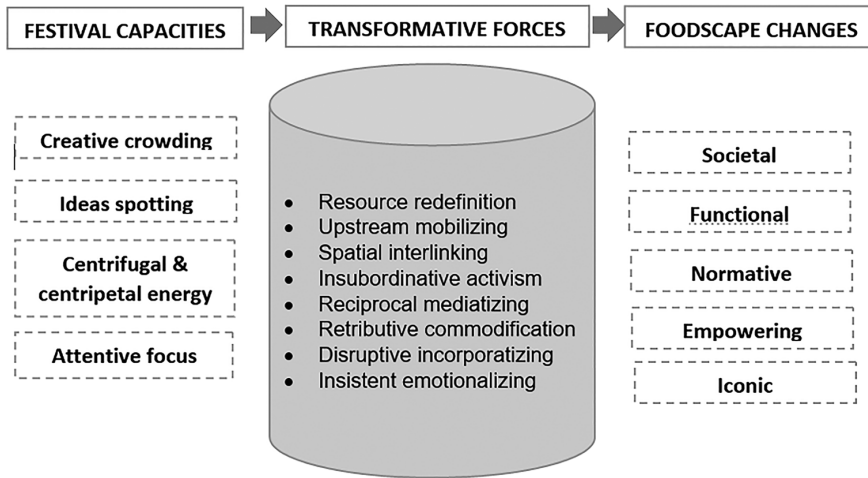


Figure 1. Processual forces of festivalization and foodscapes.

generated are inherently “continuous” and mutually reinforcing.

The research results demonstrated a multilayer interaction of food festivals with local foodscapes. The study opened a conceptual ground for a more tailored investigation concerning transformative dynamics by decomposing the festival impact on foodscapes into clearly defined processual forces. It also delivers evidence that, in many ways, festivals can elevate local foodscapes, making them more accessible, vital, and visible to both local inhabitants and visitors and spur innovative processes in the hinterlands. Therefore, the study confirmed that food festivals are impactful celebrations that, despite hedonic values, convey broader meanings that can alert and moderate the local environments. The scope of identified forces is vast and ranges from most known commercial forces to those still needing to be fully understood and empirically examined, for example, innovation, emotionalization, or mediatization.

The research contributes to the event management and rural development literature. It is also indicative of the potential of new policy paths. It offers the first-of-its-kind inquiry that considers food festivals as “game changers” in local—or when relevant in the context—wider food systems. This is in clear opposition to the existing contributions, which tend to mainly examine the impact of foodscapes on festivals rather than the opposite. The concepts augment the rural development literature,

delivering evidence about the importance of rural festivalization in the context of more comprehensive transformative processes.

Conclusion

This contribution is a conceptual study that aims to unpack a series of transformative forces that a viable festival environment can enact. Based on the extensive literature review, desk research, and authors’ field observation empirical inquiries, eight transformative forces are identified, named, and described—giving the same solid basis for further empirical research. The contribution of this study lies in enlightening the forces’ functionality and addressing the contextual conditions, potentially for festivals and foodscapes. Festival studies tend to some extent to be retrospective. The contribution to the festival and event theories lies in the account for the driving forces for transformation, which reach into and take on board some of the logic of societal transformations. The occurrence of dramatic climate change incidences, rural decline, spatial degradation, conflict-creating scarcity, emerging safety risks on many dimensions, etc., gradually moved into the agendas of food festivals and complemented the positive sentiments and eagerness to celebrate. The balancing is interesting to follow, and there is a need to envisage whether we can foresee futures where the foodscape constitution and the festivals are completely different

(Findlay & Yeoman, 2015), also including the urban and vertical farming futures.

The eight driving forces and examples may be useful for local policy-makers and festival management. “Business as usual” is gone, as Duignan et al. (2021) underlined in their analysis ideas of “event leveraging.” The concepts offered in this article also seek to see the potentials of interpretation much wider than the specific food items and the immediate hinterlands. The intermingling interpretation of foodscapes on many physical and digital channels is essential to challenge otherwise restrictive political and economic structures.

A critical look at the conducted study can open a discussion about whether temporary, relatively small-scale celebrations have the necessary gravity to transform collapsing foodscapes. The power of single festivals is limited and only sometimes reflects the eight processual forces mentioned in the study. However, conceptual thinking and the provided evidence pave the way for the conclusion that food festivals are powerful moderators of local foodscapes. Their potential needs to be better utilized and estimated when transforming host foodscapes. This study, therefore, offers a creative cradle for more studies devoted to individual forces and their deeper understanding in more context-based settings.

Acknowledgments

The work was created as a result of the research project No. 2019/33/B/HS4/02068 financed by the National Science Center, Poland.

This work also has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 872618.

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