

European Science Foundation  
Standing Committee for the Social Sciences (SCSS)

**ESF SCSS EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP**

# Local Food In Europe

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## Scientific Report



**Bordeaux, France, 13 - 17 June 2006**

**Convened by:**

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### *1. Executive summary*

#### ***A multidisciplinary approach - stimulating the necessity of a common definition.***

The workshop was characterised by:

- High diversity among the presentations with respect to theory, empirical examples and approaches
- High motivation by all participants (passionate relationships to “their” local products and interesting comments and discussions)
- Striking differences between northern Europe and southern Europe in relation to local products (or more precisely the UK-model and the south-European model).

Everybody agreed upon the necessity for a common definition, or at least a common concept, that we should elaborate by observing structural similarities.

More precisely “local” but also “food” are two terms with various definitions. Presentations dealt with foods as natural resources (i.e. fish or fruit) as well as foods as processed products (i.e. cheese or foie gras). For each of these categories, perceptions linked to the origin are in fact based on different categories of criteria (nature, ecosystem, landscape features, in one case ; specific knowledge, work organization, type of firm in the second case). Besides, “local food products” also include producers, consumers and other traders which should be examined as a system in case-studies. The term “local” was approached from different points of view : consumers’, producers’, researchers’, managers’...Therefore “local” is much more than a territorial qualification; it is essentially a polemical and political tool or concept which serves to legitimize various aims for actions and dynamics localized in a specific “space”.

#### ***A summary through different approaches of local foods from different disciplines***

Each participant referred to a definition which is generally in use in her/his discipline. Both terminology and concepts reflected the particular scientific perspective. Various definitions were proposed within sociology and anthropology, depending on case studies and focus.

In cases such as Hungary, Local is sometimes built by national institutions following a “top-down” logic for “local food” production. In this case, Local Food appears as a paradigmatic discourse for political actions. (cf. Dr. Gabriella Zsarnoczay & Agnes Kovacs)

With the case of Denmark, “Local” was linked to buying situations: localized markets give meaning to “local food”. Buying and eating seem like two moments which can be separated for a systematic understanding of local food: shopping patterns are part of the definition of local food. (cf. Katherine Dr. O’Doherty).

But Local appears also as a result of collective (and institutional) action, as a political resource, as a stake for new strategies or regulations in order to save a crisis situation: local seems to be sometimes a support for tensions and competition, so that it can be thought as a political arena (struggle for power, for legitimacy or decision). As noticed by Dr. Gianluca Brunori, what matters is the meaning that different actors give to local food. It is the reason why symbolism and representations play a major role. Then, national specificities based on cultural and historical values, such as confidence, trust, history, regulations or health become central in the approach and definition.

Through the Norwegian account, Local is more a convention between actors in order to define various types of links with a geographical space or territory. These conventions are based on different levels of knowledge and information control, so that cognitive proximities are an element of delimitation and definition of local foods.

With West France accounts it is apparent that Local and official designations are not systematically associated and recognized, so that local also emerges **in opposition** to PGI.

Local is in fact for a large part used in an economic framework as an “etic” category (for research questions or interpretations; for marketing choices); while it is used by anthropologists as an “emic” category applied to European culture, or as a possible emic category in others cultural patterns. Various typologies and categories were proposed, which led us to “ideal typical” categories or models of understanding and exploring situations. Now deeper explorations need to be conducted and a common “grammar of interpretation” for specific situations is yet still to be constructed.

### ***Conclusion: from “local” to “localised” foods?***

The most widely used definition of local food in the workshop has been the EU regulation No 2081/92 from July 14<sup>th</sup> 1992 about Protected Designations of Origin for foods. Designation of origin is characterised by the name of a region, a special area, or even a nation, to designate products coming originally from the place mentioned, and therefore having a specific quality. The European definition is complex, but enabled us to have a first common approach and a first comparative study. Nevertheless, most participants find this definition unsatisfactory (as underlined in section 3).

It is the reason why we all agreed upon another concept, which could be more efficient and which includes several aspects: « localised product ». This concept would include food products coming from a specific area but which are not certified by a label.

This concept allows for different representations for different actors, and includes: Authenticity, Typicality, Origin, Know-how, Cultural proximity, Geographical proximity, Trust, Sanitary quality, Organoleptical quality, Health, Environment and Preservation and protection. “Localised food” is in fact at once a conceptual tool and a system of objects and actors, embedded in political and social frameworks.

## ***2. Scientific content of the event***

### ***Institutional dependence and choice of case- studies***

Although the presented studies were quite objective, they often reflected the institutional attachment of the researcher. Thematic and methods are dependent on the institution supporting the project, which gave the opportunity to really appreciate the multidisciplinary and the richness of the workshop.

Several thematics were highlighted:

- ☀ The notion of quality
- ☀ Perceptions by consumers/ eaters, cf.: Dr. Matthieu Delabarre: “*Eater's sensibility: authenticity and local food*”,
- ☀ The local in a global market: protection, promotion, cf.: Dr. Georgina Holt: “*Communicating quality along European food chains: local traders in international networks*”; Juan José Juste Carrión “*Agrofood Industry and territory in Spain: some reflections from the case of Castilla y León*”
- ☀ Regulations, rules for certification and their impacts on producers and consumers; cf.: Dr. Chantal Crenn “*Globalization, Wine-producing territory, patrimony and distinction : the case for the Sainte-Foy country*”
- ☀ Local linked to other values such as history, tradition and so on; cf. Isabelle Téchoueyres “*Local food from the South West France- case studies around fat duck products*”; Gun Roos, Laura Terragni & Hanne Torjusen “*The local in the global – creating ethical links between producers and consumers*” .

Several approaches, referring to macrosocial/ microsocial or local/ global were presented at:

- ☀ European level : regulations and legislation
- ☀ National level : certifications as governmental initiatives
- ☀ Regional : focusing on agricultural policy and regions as supports
- ☀ Local level: where producers and rural development are central
- ☀ Individual level: local consumers, occasional consumers etc

### ***The country of origin***

The workshop emphasized incidentally an important difference between Northern and Southern Europe, both in definition and subjects. History and evolution of local products influence their development and the meanings European citizens give them.

- Producers from Southern Europe (France, Italy and Spain in this workshop) originally created and used the certification system to protect themselves and their production. It is the

reason why they developed their own concepts, as specific “terroir” or “know-how” which are a part of “local food” definition.

- In Northern Europe, the legislation came before producers asked for it, and specific concepts mentioned above do not have any meaning. Local is really linked to geography and short distance more than history and culture.

This opposition North/ South is obvious while comparing presentations by Dr. Laurence Bérard and Dr. Philippe Marchenay : “*Local food products in France : definition, protection, valorisation*” and Dr. Hielke S. van der Meulen « *Origin Food Products; an Analytical Definition Framework*”, and emphasized in Amilien and al. in “*From local to local: A comparative study of the concept of “local” through the perception of Signs of Identification of Quality and Origin in cheese case studies in France and Norway-*“

The different features, focus and characteristics could be summarized in the following way:

#### *Northern Europe:*

- Sustainability – sustainable production systems and products.
- Traceability – documentation of the movement of products along the value chain, the responsibility of each actor involved in the product (explicit traceability).
- Technical aspects of the product (explicit documentation).
- Health, hygiene aspects of the product.
- Animal welfare.
- Organic products, organic production processes (high status in supermarkets, associated with high product quality, enjoys higher status than “localised” food).

Factors explaining the specific market evolution in the UK: Food scandals such as the “mad cow” disease, powerful bottom-up lobbies (the Soil organisation, Prince Charles) have contributed to set the standards for organic foods (higher standards than EU standards).

Localised food is usually initiated bottom-up.

Localised food is part of a strategy of market differentiation.

The introduction of localised foods in supermarkets may have negative consequences for their image and consumers’ perception of their quality (becoming commodities).

#### *Southern Europe*

- Produits de Terroir.
- Closely related to tradition, history and shared know-how.
- High pride and passion related to localised products both by producers and local consumers.
- Protection of localised food.
- Consumers are deeply involved in localised products and their implicit quality.
- Implicit traceability – producers self-evidently know the value chain of their products so why need for documentation?
- Implicit animal welfare – producers love their animals so why need for documentation?
- Bottom-up processes to producing localised food.
- Producers engage in obtaining EU-regulated denominations and labels (PDO, PGI...) – but do not always use them in local markets (local consumers trust producers they know).

### ***Some theoretical perspectives***

Several theoretical approaches were presented, but they still need to be adapted and “edited” in common.

Dr Pascale Maizi and Thomas Pomeon presented a potential theoretical framework called LAS (Local Agrifood System) which takes the whole “farm to fork” chain into consideration. This could help to have a common study framework around local food products.

Roberta Sonnino elaborated on *embeddedness* as a research problematic. This concept has recently been adopted as “*a conceptual tool to theorize “alternative food networks” – specifically, to distinguish them from the conventional, globalized food system on the basis of their “territoriality” (i.e., their potential to “relocalize” food).*” There is a problem around localized and relocalized food products, and in his paper about “*ambivalence and polytemporality of local food*”, Atle Hegnes tried to show in which way local food products are reflecting an ambivalence, particularly through the tension between modernity and tradition which evolves along a polytemporal dynamic.

Gianluca Brunori’s paper considered social interactions as mediated by symbols. Based on a post-modern approach, he discussed the issue of quality and local products, where quality is a system of meanings. “*There is a continuous dialectic between individual acts and attitudes and the environment in which they are embedded*”.

In her paper, Angela Tregear offered a typology of local food systems, based on marketplace phenomena. She identified three types of systems – *direct produce, close typicity* and *distant speciality* – which could highlight problematic aspects of local food systems which tend to be overlooked in literature.

Following Robert Salais in determining the quality of a product as a convention between actors working together to construct its quality, Virginie Amilien, Nicolas Ferras and Fatiha Fort, proposed to define the “local” as a convention between actors working together to construct the link to the “local” area. It is a matter of shared interests and shared aspirations.

In fact, different case-studies showed that “micro-stories” give clues and focus valuable to attempt to systematize local foods analysis; these cases studies also point out some important field of investigation or “problematization”, such as:

- Local as an ambivalent space of action and identities framework
- Temporality and innovation: two articulated dimensions to produce local products
- Local food as a multi conventional product involving a plurality of actors
- Local as a dynamic space of tensions (i.e. definition of the product boundaries and features)
- Knowledge as a strategic resource for innovation, for convention (in supply chains, between producers and consumers...), for markets and choices (of consumers, producers ...)
- Local food, micro-biology and biodiversity.

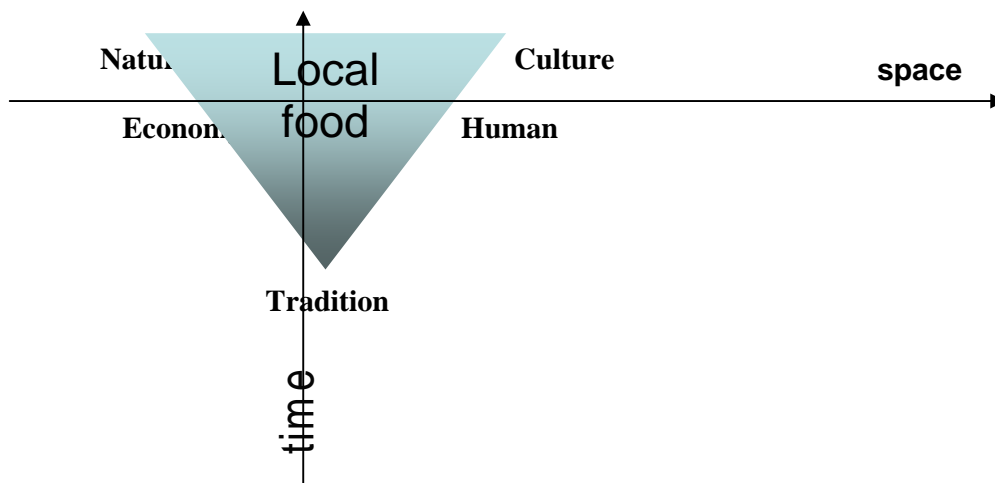
As a historical or political category, origin indication on a product leads to explore two new dimensions of this conception:

- The political dimension of its uses
- The economic dimension of this tool, with one hypothesis: the rise of local dynamics generates new forms of governance and new forms of markets management within a territory.

### 3. *Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome*

- Local as a concept has to be reconsidered
- Local has to be seen in relationship to the mainstream context, but not in opposition.
- The idea of localisation/place/space in « local » is actually better visible in terms of a value set than in geographical terms
- Importance to look at control – power forces around the politics of symbols and discourses
- Local: far from just a geographical dimension

**Figure 1:** *Local food as a PLURI-concept: PLURI-temporality, PLURI-territoriality, PLURI-traditionality*



#### **Potential research questions**

- How producers think about their local products: how they conceive them but also in relation to the market for those products?
- How do global political frames and regulations (as EU policies, WTO...) influence small-scale producers?
- How do global and local interact? At what level? What other scales?
- Study of the cultural discourses in local food – discourse analysis-
- Comparison of consumption-production of local food products in Europe, based on inventories (previous ones and new ones).
- + a self-reflexive discourse analysis of those inventories
- A holistic approach taking into account that local food, traditional food and their embeddedness is NOT only a social construction.(role of institutions, culture; etc.)

- Network oriented research possibly based on relationship between embeddedness and tradition: the local as a new strategy
- To what extent can local food challenge the organisation and distribution power in the food sector?
- To what extent can local food change consumer culture and social organisation?
- Importance of practices and habits in local food systems, both at production and consumption levels

**Potential projects about:**

*Any commercial food networks needs to have information to better understand the products in their context; from production to consumption, through stakeholders and consumer associations, agrofood business , EU, tourism business ...*

- Cultural geography of local (and locality) food: a particular field, which sometimes involves political aspects and that emphasizes that culture may be more link to economy; what is “mainstream” reaction in front of local phenomenon.
- Investigation of food practices in specific regions across nations starting with identifying the diet in households, how consumption support different supply chains
- The role of localised food, the symbolic content, the social status, the meaning of localised food
- Comparison of consumption-production of local food products in Europe.

“Localised food” is in fact at once a conceptual tool and a system of objects and actors, embedded in political and social frameworks.

Such a type of Workshop is an effective space of collective thought and an efficient tool to build scientific networks.

Papers are now written down into articles and will be submitted to referees in October 2006, before potential publication in a special issue of *Anthropology of Food* ( [www.aofood.org](http://www.aofood.org) ).



## 4 · Final programme

### Wednesday 14 June (day 1)

#### 09.30 - 12.00: What is meant by Local Food and Local Food Systems...? VA

- “Food habits and locals products” Dr. Laurence Bérard and Dr. Philippe Marchenay, CNRS, Ressources des terroirs, UMR 8575Alimentec, Bourg en Bresse.
- “Quality food and local food” Dr. Gianluca Brunori, University of Pisa
- **Coffee break**
- “An introduction to the SYAL - AgroFood Systems- and its European perspective”. Dr. Pascale Maizi and Thomas Pomeon from CNEARC, National Centre for Food Research in the South, Montpellier.

#### 12.15 –13.30 Lunch.

#### 14.00- 16.00: The Policies of Local Food across the EU MDL

- "Origin Food Products; an Analytical Definition Framework"
- Dr. Hielke S. van der Meulen. Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University.
- Local foods from the perspective of the European market" Dr. Angela Tregear Management School and Economics, University of Edinburgh
- 'Communicating quality along European food chains: local traders in international networks'. Dr. Georgina Holt, Tecnoalimenti S.C.p.A
- **Coffee break**
- 16-30 - 17.00 Conclusion of the first day. Chairwoman Dr. Gun Roos
- 17.00 Aperitif – hosted by the SHS, Pr. Bidart.
- 19.00 Dining out in Bordeaux

### Thursday 15 June (Day2)

#### 09.00 – 10.20 Local Food: Technical and commercial perspectives MDL

- “Local meat and local needs.” Dr. Gabriella Zsarnoczay & Agnes Kovacs.
- 'Shopping for Organic Foods in Denmark: Local Food Shoppers and Supermarket Shoppers Compared'. Katherine Dr. O'Doherty Jensen

#### Coffee break

#### 10.35 – 12.00: Local places and local cultures AT

- *The power of place. Embeddedness and local food systems in Italy and the UK* Dr. Roberta Sonnino, Cardiff University
- *Products from local places: a study on local food products in Norway and France –* Dr. Virginie Amilien, SIFO, Oslo (in co-operation with Nicolas Ferras et Dr. Fatiha Fort, ENSAM, Montpellier)

#### 12.15 –13.30 Lunch.

#### 13.45-16.00: Local Food : Anthropological perspectives GR

- *Local food from the South West France- case studies around fat duck products-* Isabelle Téchoueyres. University of Bordeaux 2
- *The standardizing of a local product: The case of Norwegian “Old Cheese”* Atle Hegnes, SIFO, Oslo.

#### Coffee break

- *Eater's sensibility: authenticity and local food,* Dr. Mathieu Delabarre.

#### 16.15 – 16.45 Conclusion of the second day.

#### 18. 30 Bordeaux by boat and dining out

## Friday 16 June (Day3)

### 09.00-12.00: Local, Global or Glocal Food : Economical and sociological perspectives *MLD*

- *The local in the global – creating ethical links between producers and consumers* Gun Roos, Laura Terragni & Hanne Torjusen, SIFO, Oslo
- *Economic globalisation and local issues: case study from wine production -* . Dr. Chantal Crenn. University of Bordeaux

### **Coffee break**

- *Glocal seafood products in France and Norway*, Dr. Inger Beate Pettersen, SNF- Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration, Bergen
- *Glocal agrofood industry in Spain*, Juan J. Juste, Valladolid

### **Lunch. 12.15-13.30**

### **13.30- 15.30: Common discussion**

- "Groups working on a common research project", for example EUROCORES 2007

### **15.00- 15.30:** Plenary meeting.

- Chairpersons : Dr. Matthieu Delabarre and Dr. Virginie Amilien

Presentation of group's propositions

### **Coffee break**

### **15.45 – 16.15 Conclusion of the workshop**

## Saturday 17 June (Day 4)

### **09.30: 12.00: Meeting about the special issue of Anthropology of Food on local food**

*With members from the editorial board of AoFood, co editors for the special issue and other partners from workshop.*

- Review of the past three days
- Comments about the workshop: organisation and evolution
- Preparation of the special issue of Anthropology of Food on local food

## 5 · Final list of participants

Name	Affiliation	Key words
<b>Norway:</b>		
Dr. Virginie Amilien	SIFO National Institute for Consumption research	Food culture, local food, consumption and consumer research
Atle Hegnes	SIFO	Sociology of food Food festival, local food
Dr. Gun Roos Hanne Torjusen	SIFO	Anthropology and sociology of food Nutrition
Dr. Inger Beate Pettersen	SNF <i>invited participant</i>	Marketing Fish
<b>Denmark:</b>		
Dr. Katherine O'Doherty Jensen	The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University Research Dept. of Human Nutrition	Ecological food Nutrition
<b>UK:</b>		
Dr. Angela Tregear	Management School and Economics, University of Edinburgh	Socio-economic analysis of food and territory links Agrifood supply chains
Dr. Roberta Sonnino	Department of City and Regional Planning Cardiff University	Embeddedness in local food systems Food relocalization issues
Dr. Ruth Mac Areavey	ESF representative	Sociology Rural economy
<b>France:</b>		
Karen Montagne (Replaces Dr. Florence Bergeaud-Blackler)	University of Tours	Sociology and Anthropology of food and consumption
Dr. P. Maizi and Thomas Pomeon	CNEARC: National Centre for Food Research in the South Montpellier	Local Food Label and quality in local food systems
Dr. Laurence Bérard And Dr. Philippe Marchenay	CNRS, Ressources des terroirs, UMR 8575Alimentec, Bourg en Bresse.	Local food Designation of origin Regional food
Dr. Chantal Crenn	University of Bordeaux 2	Anthropology of food Health and food

Isabelle Téhoueyres	Doctorante Université de Bordeaux 2	<i>Terroir</i> Local foods and foodways
Dr. Matthieu Delabarre	Université de Bordeaux	Sociology of food, Sociology of body
<b>Spain:</b>		
Juan J. Juste	Department of applied Economy Valladolid University	Agrofood systems, Agrobusiness, Food quality and food safety
<b>Nederland:</b>		
Dr. Hielke S. van der Meulen	Wageningen University	Rural Sociology
<b>Hungaria:</b>		
Dr. Gabriella Zsarnoczay Agnes Kovacs	Hungarian Meat Research Institute	Meat processing , sensorial evaluation testing packaging films Meat biochemistry
<b>Italia:</b>		
Dr. Gianluca Brunori	Professor for Agricultural Economics , University of Pisa	Food quality , agriculture and local food systems
Dr. Georgina Holt	Tecnoalimenti S.C.p.A. R&S per l'Industria Agro- Alimentare R&D for the Agri-Food Industry	Marketing and food, local food, originally labelled food, ISO 9001:2000

*6. Statistical information on participants (age bracket, countries of origin, etc.)*

**Country of origin:**

