



Experiment Overview

Objective

To explore the potential of the local food system in enhancing territorial development by examining the existing relationships among local and non-local food-related actors, as well as identifying untapped opportunities.

Relevance

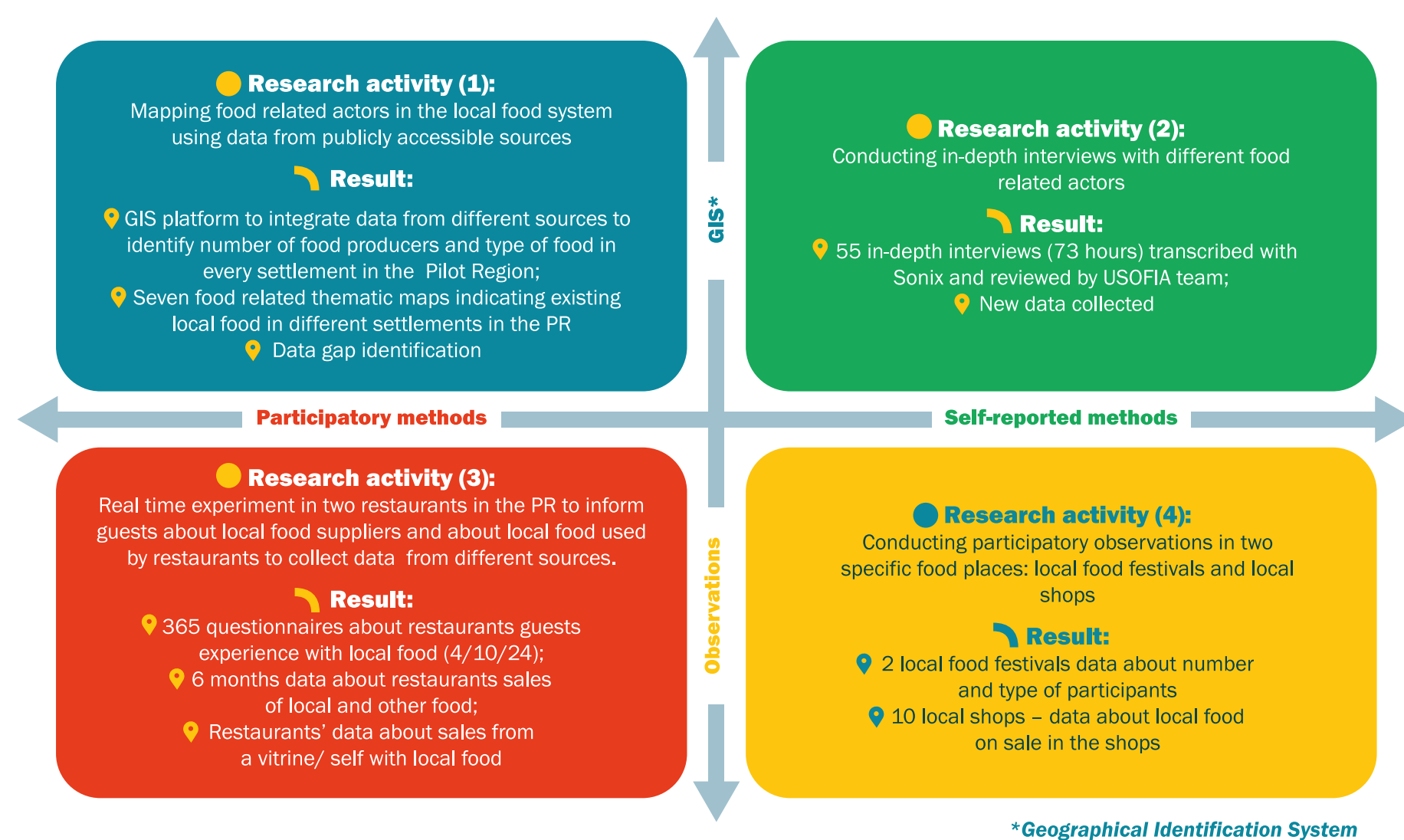
The primary challenge identified in the TAU pilot region is **the underexplored potential of the local rural food system** to serve as a resource for local development.

There are significant knowledge and data gaps regarding the linkages between food production and consumption in the Pilot Region (PR), as well as a lack of cooperation among local actors, which limits the region's ability to achieve territorial development through food systems.

Key innovation

Develop data-driven local food initiatives to support the transition from agriculture to broader food-related activities; identify new data sources and datasets; address existing data gaps.

Experiment Progress



*Geographical Identification System



To see the GIS platform **On the way of local food in Troyan, Apriltsi and Ugarchin** scan this QR code



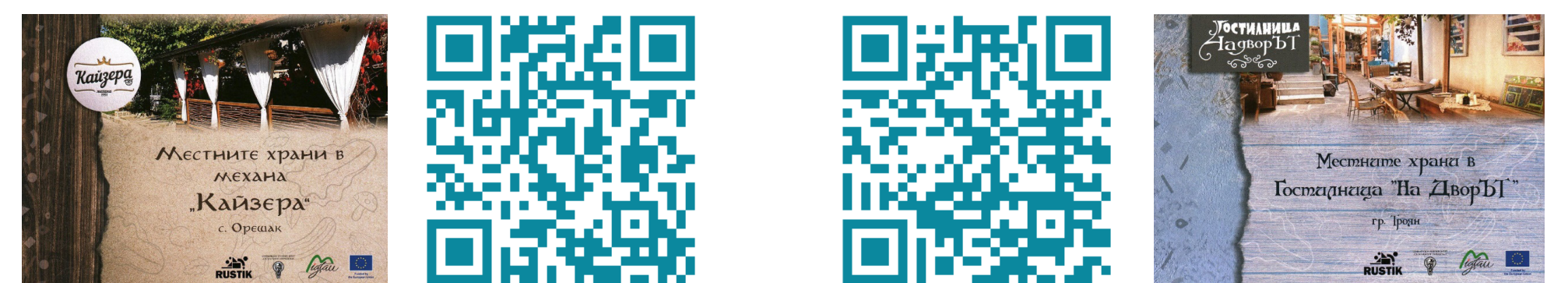
To learn more about our research experiment journey visit: <https://rustik-he.eu/tau-bulgaria/>

Reflections

A real-time participatory experiment with restaurants, designed to collect data, offers valuable insights into:

- the circulation of local and non-local food within the territory;
- customers food preferences;
- administrative obstacles to cooperation between local actors through food;
- positive and negative experiences from collaboration with local food actors.

To see booklets developed together with restaurants to promote their local food suppliers visit:



The development of the GIS system revealed:

- significant data gaps in public food-related registers;
- a substantial number of small households that are not officially registered as farmers or food producers but collaborate informally with other food actors. These households supply natural local food to restaurants but are reluctant to turn this domestic practice into a formal business initiative.

Challenges

- Developing the GIS system;
- Building trust with local actors.

Learning

This complex data experiment requires interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as spending weeks in the pilot region to collaborate closely with local food actors.

Next steps

- Process and analyze the collected data;
- Integrate new data into the GIS system;
- Write articles to present our findings and develop new concepts;
- Formulate policy recommendations and design specific initiatives that can be promoted and supported by the activities of LAG TAU.

Our preliminary findings so far:

- No support for local cooperation concerning food, i.e. the development of agricultural activities (payment per hectare; investment in agricultural machinery) is supported but not the development of food-related activities;
- Existing food production facilities have limited capacity and many food producers don't plan to extend them because of the expected administrative burdens;
- Many different types of informal practices exist everywhere;
- Famous local food brands are suffering from loss of authenticity due to a broken local value chain, e.g. ordinary plum brandy is made with alcohol, flavourings and imported plums; the same with another local sausage, made from imported meat.
- Lack of some food-related facilities, such as slaughterhouses;
- Lack of food traceability initiatives - difficult to make a direct link between local food and sustainability;
- Consumer awareness of food origin and sustainability is critically low.
- Taste and culinary are important, but not the origin and nutritional characteristics of food;
- Many administrative burdens prevent the use of natural, seasonal and sustainable local foods, e.g. restaurants are not allowed to make their own minced meat but must use ready-made products; bakeries can sell sandwiches with legumes but not salads.

However...

We found many young people developing food-related initiatives, entrepreneurs eager to collaborate and support local food, numerous initiatives promoting natural local food, and a growing number of organic farmers. **Food needs to be supported by specific local policies.**

