

Experiment Overview

Objective

To understand the functioning of the local food supply chain in the tourism sector; identify the main actors involved, in which sectors (or product groups) do they participate, and what challenges or obstacles they face.

Relevance

The experiment will support stakeholders and policymakers in designing a more sustainable and resilient local food system that meets the growing demand from tourists for locally produced products. This will ultimately benefit both local food producers and the hospitality industry and promote better integration between the two.

Key innovation

The innovative aspect of this approach lies in its unique methodology for identifying actors within the tourism food supply chain, mapping their connections and determining the main nodes. This system increases the transparency of the connections between actors in the supply chain, thereby creating the possibility for better targeted policy actions towards its optimization.

Living Lab Challenge

- The Zaječar District's primary challenge is its socio-economic structure and the critical need to renew its economic development strategy. To address this, the district must shift its focus toward higher-value activities by utilizing its unique competitive advantages.
- The strategy includes establishing a short food supply chain that directly aligns with the expanding tourism market's needs. By developing a more integrated supply chain that matches local agricultural production with tourism demand, the district can help local farmers meet the rising demand for fresh, high-quality local food. This approach aims to encourage sustainable growth in both the tourism and agricultural sectors, ultimately enabling local producers to capture a larger share of the economic value generated within the district.

Experiment Progress

Data sources and data collection method

Figure 1 Data sources and data collection process

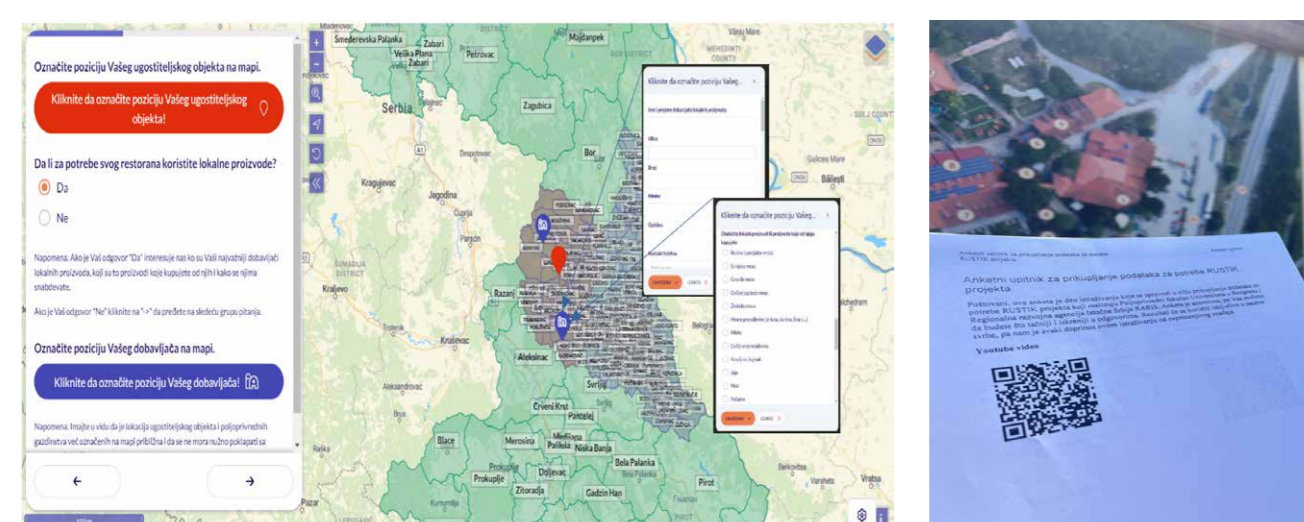


Figure 2 - Screenshot of Maptionnaire window for mapping the participants in the local food supply chain.

Results

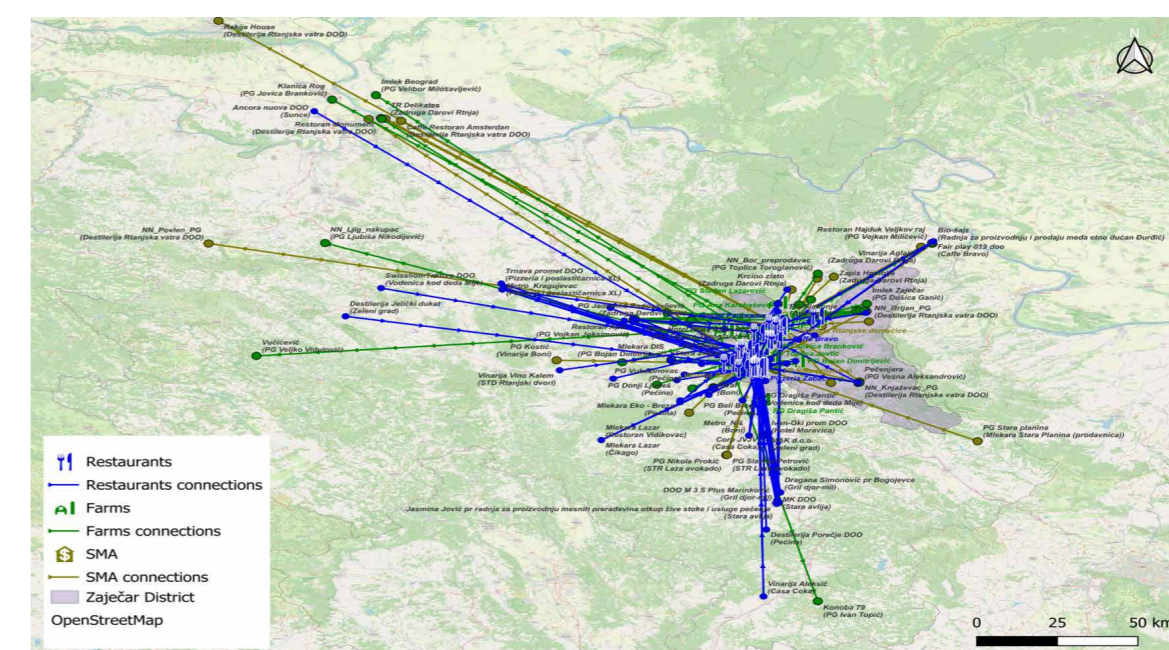
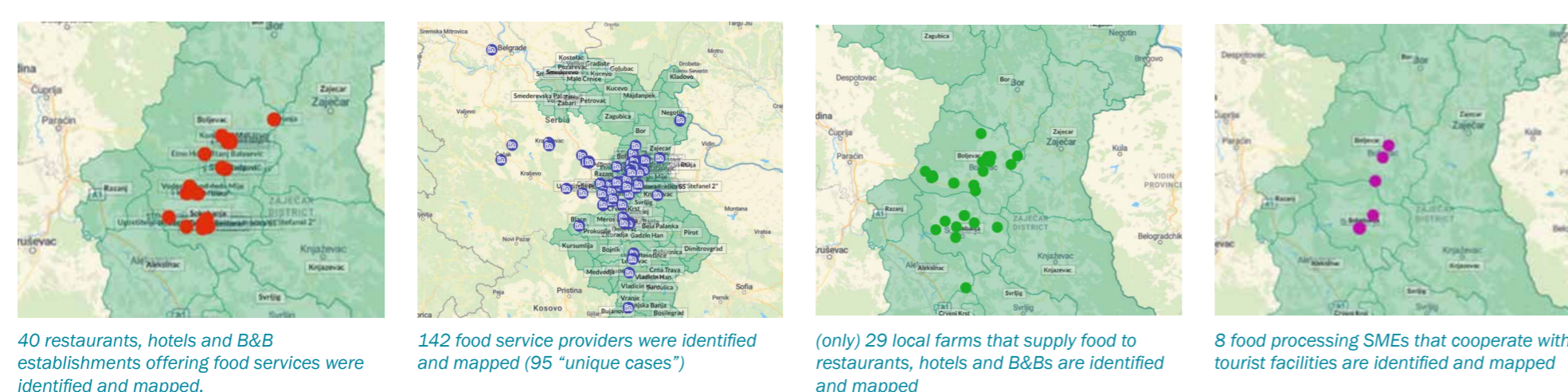
Secondary data:

- Open Street Maps: 21 restaurants and 2 marketplaces
- Google Maps: 64 restaurants; categorized accommodation establishments (hotels): 5 hotels
- Accommodation facilities accepting vouchers: 33 rural households
- Farms selling online: 184 farms
- SMEs in food-businesses: 16
- Microlevel (unit-level) farm data of the Statistical Office: 4,666 farms (of which 1,962 farms sell more than 50% of production)
- FADN database: 29 farms

Primary data:

- 77 questionnaires completed
- 240 actors (nodes) were identified and mapped
- 300 connections between actors were identified and mapped

Map 1 – Identified and mapped actors in the food supply chain



Map 2 – Identified and mapped connections and connectors in the food supply chain

Preliminary Conclusions

The survey results analysis revealed that:

- Hotels and restaurants source considerably less produce directly from local farms, favouring larger suppliers instead.
- The majority of restaurants obtain supplies from wholesalers based outside the region.
- Most business relationships between local restaurateurs and farms are with those specializing in niche products (fish, mushrooms, honey, eggs, and early vegetables). Conversely, farms specialised in meat, meat products, and dairy tend to collaborate less frequently with local restaurateurs.
- Institutional barriers were also identified, with the current legal framework for marketing of undifferentiated or unbranded farm products presenting obstacles to collaboration between local producers and restaurateurs.
- Local and regional governments, as well as tourism organizations, were identified as primary actors in addressing these challenges, whereas the civil society sector and local NGOs was not seen as central to driving change.

Reflections

What went well?

- The methodological approach is well chosen to address the chosen topic; a large amount of data and information was collected;
- Well cooperation with the Statistical Office – micro data on request was prepared and delivered to the project.

Challenges

- insufficient personnel capacities within the research team; overload due to the complexity of the methodology and the short time frame for conducting the field research;
- The Maptionnaire questionnaire is complex for the type of respondents that are surveyed;
- Time pressure and subcontracting procedures;
- Distrust of respondents and refusal to cooperate.

Learning

- Allow time for interventions and changes to the methodology during the experiment that may be necessary after the initial results are available;
- With a few additional questions that go beyond the narrow focus on the topic of the experiment, it would be possible to collect data on environmental transition.

Next steps

- **Exchange the results with LL stakeholders:** The results will be presented to the LL and other local stakeholders, including those directly involved in the research. This dialogue will initiate a discussion on their future activities to strengthen the local supply chain, necessary partnerships and future joint projects.
- **Reaching national stakeholders:** Results will also be shared with national stakeholders, with discussions focusing on institutional challenges that may hinder the development of short food supply chains and exploring opportunities for government support, particularly from local governments.
- **Academic exchange:** The results will be shared with the academic and research community to contribute to the broader body of knowledge on regional supply chains and local economic development. It is planned to publish two papers in peer-reviewed academic journals. By sharing results and method, the project will facilitate knowledge transfer and encourage replication of successful practices in other contexts.