

LOCAL ACTORS AND LEADERSHIP IN RURAL DESTINATIONS: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF GASTRONOMIC CONFRATERNITIES

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Abstract

By means of an exploratory and comparative study focusing on the three rural destinations in Wallonia (Chimay, Orval and Rochefort), we have put forward reflections on the role and influence of gastronomic confraternities, both as actors in local economic and tourist development and in terms of their leadership capacity. By means of this exploratory research, we are not seeking to analyse the effectiveness or economic performance generated by the activities of the gastronomic confraternities, but rather to show the opportunities they offer for local actors to form and gain access to such networks. After having identified the many reasons and advantages to local actors of joining a gastronomic confraternity, we will try to understand why some of them do not seem to be interested in local actors, whereas others draw attract members of the local economic, political and social elites.

Keywords: Wallonia, Trappist monks, tourist promotion, beer, local development

JEL classification : R12, L25, L26

Introduction

According to several analysts, the main components of the current trends in rural tourism are to be linked to the concept of authenticity that tourists associate notably with tradition, local culture, contact with nature and enthusiasm for discovering new forms of heritage, notably including gastronomic heritage and local products. A number of studies focusing on tourist demand show that the consumption of local products in the course of holiday stays partially fulfils the quest for authenticity by certain tourists. Other scholars emphasise the important role played by the consumption of local agrifood products in the tourist experience, particularly by its influence on the positive impressions tourists take away from their visit (Bessis, 1995; Bessière, 1998; Van Westering, 1999; Fields, 2000; Poulain, 2000; Du Rand *et al.*, 2003; Assouly, 2004; Espeitx Bernat, 2004; Tellstrom *et al.*, 2005; Tregear *et al.*, 2007; Henderson, 2009 ; kim *et al.*, 2009; Sims, 2009; Barrey and Teil, 2011; Bertella, 2011; Grasseni, 2011).

This phenomenon has encouraged many public and private actors to turn to tourism in the hope of reinvigorating local development. In fact, in the past 30 years, several projects were set up to develop tourism in such a way that it contributes to policies and strategies of development in a rural area. The particular position occupied by tourism is due to the fact that this sector is considered capable of participating in cross-sectoral development patterns that favour the local economy as well as the protection of heritage and the strengthening of regional identities. The role thus attributed to, or even imposed on, tourism is part of a political and economic context of changing rural spaces that are seeking new forms of development or alternatives to a declining agricultural economy. This paradigm, which consists in considering tourism as a strategic axis of development, is a recurring rhetoric in regions that have been left vulnerable by the decline of an agrarian economy. Since these tourism strategies are fully part of territorial competition between cities or between rural communities, they regularly look to tourism, which is thus perceived by many private and public sector economic players as the hope for these regions.

Among the studies conducted on local agrifood products (LAPs), some have to do with agriculture and their value for tourism. Emphasis is placed, for instance, on the role of tourism in participating in rural development, thus stressing the specific challenges to rural spaces such as landscape management and agricultural diversification (Kneafsey and Ilbery, 2001; Pecqueur, 2001; Parrott *et al.*, 2002 ; Meler and Cerovic, 2003; Renting *et al.*, 2003;

Vandecandelaere and Touzard, 2005 ; Bossuet *et al.*, n.d.; Boucher and Requier-Desjardins, n.d.; Corigliano, 2000; Pecqueur, 2001; Vandecandelaere & Touzard, 2005; Hirzack *et al.*, 2005; Roux *et al.*, 2006; Tregear *et al.*, 2007; Muchnik *et al.*, 2008; Scheffer and Piriou, 2009; Green and Dougherty, 2009; Heralut-Fournier *et al.*, 2009; Deverre and Lamine, 2010). In these sense, the touristic valorization of LAPs makes it possible to diversify the range of what a region has to offer and to strengthen the tourist appeal of certain destinations (Bessière, 1998; Boyne *et al.*, 2000; Fields, 2000; Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000; Scarpato, 2000; Hjalager, 2002 ; Betry, 2003; Meler and Cerovic, 2003; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Kivela and Crotts, 2009; Sims, 2010; De Myttenaere, 2011). From this perspective, the valorization of food resources can turn these products into local emblems at the service of regional communication and marketing strategies. But even beyond this promotional function, these emblematic resources can also serve as a source of local identity, reinforcing people's sense of belonging to their territory (Bessière, 1998; Shortridge, 2003; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Green and Dougherty, 2009; Barthe *et al.*, 2010; Bertella, 2011). The subject of "food tourism" has to date received little attention from social science researchers, since tourism and gastronomy have only gradually come to be regarded as subjects of proper academic study (Hjalager and Richards, 2000; Santich, 2004; Csergo and Lemasson, 2008). In the last decade, however, there has been substantial growth in the number of publications addressing this topic, including for instance analyses of the logic behind the tendency of private or public actors in the field of tourism to organise into groups in order to develop agricultural products that could lend greater dynamism to local development (Bossuet *et al.*, n.d.; Boucher and Requier-Desjardins, n.d.; Corigliano, 2000; Pecqueur, 2001; Vandecandelaere and Touzard, 2005; Hirzack *et al.*, 2005; Roux *et al.*, 2006; Tregear *et al.*, 2007; Muchnik *et al.*, 2008; Scheffer and Piriou, 2009; Green and Dougherty, 2009; Heralut-Fournier *et al.*, 2009; Deverre and Lamine, 2010).

While much research into tourism studies examining strategic networks concentrates on formal actors and structures, a very limited number of research projects specifically concern the role of informal structures and associations of volunteers involved in actions and strategies for tourist development. Associations such as gastronomic confraternities have rarely been examined and hence their roles and influences have largely remained undocumented. Yet the campaigns conducted by gastronomic confraternities can have considerable impact, notably by projecting local images and identities, on regional marketing and the development of tourism. The research we have carried out indicates that under certain conditions, they can also play an important part in the dynamics of tourism development and thus demonstrate a territorial leadership that ought not to be neglected.

This article considers the question of the relationships between tourism development in rural areas and the creation or reinforcement of the potential for local leadership of gastronomic confraternities involved in the commodification of local agrifood products in Wallonia (Belgium). Like many other rural areas in Europe, Wallonia has seen an increase in tourism-related projects that are centred on promoting local agrifood products (LAPs), including abbey beers. Their production, marketing and promotion to tourists by public and private actors appear to be opening up new opportunities for developing or upgrading the range of local items on offer to tourists.

This research is intended to determine the scope of action of the gastronomic confraternities and their role in local leadership in the domain of tourism development projects in rural areas. We aim to examine the role of those players involved in such campaigns, the conditions under which these are rolled out, as well as the resources and methods used. More generally, the aim of this paper is to understand how and under what conditions gastronomic confraternities will become resources at the service of tourism strategies and projects in rural areas.

We will look closely at the analysis of various situations where campaigns and strategies are being developed for promoting LAPs for tourism purposes, concentrating more specifically on the analysis of three abbey beers (Orval, Chimay and Rochefort) of the Walloon Region of Belgium.

We will first review the types of activities and tourism campaigns in which the confraternities invest their energies locally. Next, we will analyse the rituals of enthronement of the new members of these associations, in order to discover how they participate in stimulating the imagination of tourists and in constructing individual, collective and territorial identities.

Beyond the challenges linked to marketing both products and their territory, we will show why the events organised by these confraternities play a role in the production of images,

symbols and focal points for identity, thereby contributing not only to the appeal of the region but also to the creation or reinforcement of the potential for leadership of the actors involved in these carefully staged events. The task will therefore be to analyse the symbolic and socio-political functions of the rituals of enthronement. We will show that the territorial leadership enjoyed by certain confraternities is strengthened by the creation of veritable networks both within and outside the often significant economic and political powers. Beyond the structure and operation of the confraternity itself, the objective is to gain an understanding of its social and economic function within its environment.

In the first instance, we will illustrate this potential power by presenting and analysing major elements that characterise the range of influence of the confraternities. Next, we will observe the varying degrees of intensity of the power and influence they wield within the various territories under study, and to explain the conditions necessary to render that power effective. While certain confraternities enjoy the support of public and private actors and gain access to resources that generate tourism development projects, their ability to mobilise these resources differs. Finally, the hypotheses regarding the dynamics observed will be sketched out on the one hand from the perspective of the various socio-cultural contexts, and on the other hand in light of the role played by the other actors involved in producing abbey beers, namely, the monks, whose attitude to tourism is, as we shall see, somewhat unusual.

Method

The approach we have taken in order to fulfil these objectives is to proceed via an empirical analysis of a qualitative nature (Kaufmann, 1996; Decrop, 1999; Finn *et al.*, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 2003; Hannam and Knox, 2005; Paille and Mucchielli, 2008) based in particular on theories of territorial socio-economic and of economic sociology (Granovetter, 1985; Massey, 1995; Colletis *et al.*, 1999; Gilly and Torre, 2000; Granovetter, 2000; Pecqueur and Zimmermann, 2004; Gilly and Lung, 2004).

This research is based on a heterogeneous body of qualitative data (texts, narratives, images), gathered through semi-structured interviews and field observations. The interviews (around thirty people questioned across three regions) were conducted principally with office-holders in the gastronomic confraternities as well as with the main actors in the tourist institutions of the regions in question. These interviews, of variable length (between half an hour and an hour and a half), conducted between 2010 and 2012, were designed to obtain information about perceptions, representations and practices of the local actors concerned by the tourist promotion of LAPs. These data were supplemented by a review of the regional press, of documents on the history of the regional economy, as well as of the narrative and iconographic details collected during the public enthronement rituals of the gastronomic confraternities. These qualitative data taken together were subjected to a thematic analysis using the qualitative analytical software 'Nvivo'.

Presentation of the territories and resources

The analysis here focuses on the valorisation among tourists of the Trappist beers of Chimay Orval and Rochefort, three Cistercian abbeys located in the Walloon towns of the same names. These Trappist beers are local agrifood products that have several features in common: they are the same type of product (beer), their producers share a common identity (Trappist Cistercian monks), and they have the same legal status (resources belonging to private actors) and are produced using the same methods and approaches, and finally, they bear the name of the territory where they are produced. However, the socio-cultural, economic and tourist contexts from which they emerged are different.

Chimay is a rural commune located in the south of the province of Hainaut, with a population of around 10,000 and covering an area of nearly 200 km². The economy of the Chimay area, and more generally that of the 'Boot' of Hainaut, has historically been very closely linked to the iron and steel industry, as a result of which it faced serious socioeconomic difficulties starting in the 1970s, when the old heavy industry sector began to decline. Tourism plays a secondary role in the economy of this region, linked mainly to the tertiary public sector and agrifood industries.

Orval is a rural commune in the South of the province of Luxembourg (South of Wallonia) situated in the agro geographical area of the Gaume, which is the most southern region of

Wallonia, covering an area of nearly 750 km² with some 45 000 inhabitants. Economy of Gaume is mainly based on silviculture, agriculture and, to a lesser extent, tourism.

Rochefort is a rural commune in the province of Namur, with some 12,000 inhabitants and covering an area of 165 km². Since the second half of the 20th century, Rochefort has enjoyed considerable tourist flows. The grottoes of Han, a major attraction that draws over 350,000 visitors annually, began to be developed as a tourist destination in the beginning of the 19th century, and still constitutes one of the major tourist sites of the region and is among the most frequented in Wallonia. Tourism is one of the chief economic resources for this destination, alongside forestry, the extraction of rock and other materials from the nearby quarries, and the agrifood industry.

Gastronomic confraternities are local associations comprising persons who participate in the valorization of LAPs, their members designated through a series of enthronement rituals. "The gastronomic confraternities, in a spirit of friendship and fraternity, share a common desire to rediscover their roots while helping to protect their region. They have assumed the task of "nurturing their attachment to their territory and its riches, and helping to promote it" (Delairesse and Elsdorf, 2006, p.4).

These associations may be involved in events and activities for tourists that are intended to promote local agrifood products, such as local festivals, food markets, and other events featuring products and emphasising their importance locally.

Among such public events, the rituals of enthroning new members are spectacles that appeal to tourists, thus participating in marketing not only the products but also the territory itself. It is clear that the socio-cultural, political and identity stakes involved are high.

The ritual enthronement of new members of gastronomic confraternities: between territorial marketing, identity construction and regional elites strategies

The ritual enthronement practised by the three gastronomic confraternities studied share a common foundation: a staging that regulates down to the finest detail the positions and distances that are a spatial translation of a pre-existing or temporary hierarchy; codes (verbal and musical); rhetorical forms; and the visual styles of the principal actors (posture, facial expressions, clothing, jewellery, ornaments, etc.). We offer an analysis and overall interpretation of the three case studies.

Through the enthronement of new members, the gastronomic confraternities designate the people who will attend the various gastronomic events organised beyond the regional and national boundaries, thus helping to promote the products they represent, in this case Trappist beers, outside their local territory. In spite of their convivial nature, the enthronements follow a precise and earnest ritual. Accompanied by grandiose music, the Grand Master and the members make their ceremonial entrance, dressed in gowns of thick scarlet cloth on which rest the chains and medals bearing the coat of arms of the association. Once mounted on a stage facing the public, the Grand Master inaugurates the ceremony. If the opening speech is the place to recall the mission of the confraternity and the prestige of the Trappist beers, it also serves as an occasion for presenting the various qualities and merits of the candidate members. This ceremony is crucial, since it emphasises the seriousness of the event and the exclusive and selective nature of the enthronement. The confraternities only enthrone a limited number of members per year, a strategy that serves to enhance their legitimacy and to emphasise how rare an honour it is to receive this designation. After the words of praise, the future member is subjected to a taste test in order to evaluate his skill in testing the Trappist products being promoted. Only after that, donning a cape that attests to his future membership, is he invited by the Grand Master to take the oath of homage and fealty to the noble cause of the confraternity.

In this type of visual spectacle, none of the appearances are left to chance: the elaborate garments, the gilded medals, the coats of arms, the Gothic script on the diploma and a sort of authenticating decorum are marshalled to gain recognition for the heritage aspect of Trappist beers. The tone of voice, verbal rhetoric, the appearance of the protagonists, the lighting and accompanying music all play a decisive role in constructing the event, impressing on it a distinctive style that cannot but affect the way the spectators receive the message (Bromberger, 1990; Abdelmalek and Chauvigne, 2001; De Myttenaere, 2011).

Territorial marketing actions

The staging of these events, and all their constituent elements, are intended to evoke the historical depth of the products as well as of their producers (the Trappist monks); the effect is to emphasise the uniqueness of the products and to bear witness to the longstanding tradition of these beers.

The aim of the enthronements is to promote the local product and give collective expression to the excellence of the region by stressing the noble and prestigious nature of the product and distinguishing these Trappist beers from other beers. These visual events thus serve in a sense to encapsulate the image that a geographical or social group wishes to project to its own members or the outside world. The gastronomic confraternities studied are concerned not so much to participate in improving the quality of the beer as to enhance quality at a symbolic level and create difference by reinforcing a certain image. This image conforms to the renewed notion of quality behind the production and valorization of monastic beers. By communicating these messages abundantly at the traditional, cultural and social levels, such discourses rely upon strategies of differentiation within a context of beer-brewing and tourism that is particularly competitive. The aim is thus first and foremost to create a world of gastronomic meaning that seeks to move away from the image of industrial production that is seen as inauthentic because it is regarded as the opposite of traditional artisanal production.

Therefore in the ritual enthronements, those officiating emphasise the historical depth underlying the product by underscoring the continuity between the product, the history of the monks, and the confraternities. As long as the producer is a monk, the mythic dimension of the monastic milieu offers a narrative of spatio-temporal origins whose historical and cultural richness plays a key role in the symbolic and economic dimensions of the product. What is at play is a sort of transfer of authenticity and of the sacred, brought about notably by rituals of a Christian inspiration that participate in the traditional cultural image associated with both the product and its producers (De Myttenaere, 2013).

As manufacturers, the monks are unusual in that they are not supposed, according to the Rule of St Benedict which they follow, to promote consumption, and thus should not resort to commercial strategies that are the stock in trade of capitalist society. By highlighting this traditional image, associated with the monastic world and conveyed in part by the confraternity, the monks appear to remain above any marketing approach. This discreet use of advertising by the monks should be understood in the light of the history and weight of “religion in western societies and the taboos that surround it, notably when it comes to commerce” (Lugrin and Molla, 2008, p.170).

Construction and political use of identity symbols

What values are expressed by the rituals and festivities of the confraternities and what social significance should we assign to these events? Of the rituals, we can say that they participate first of all in consecrating a local legitimation of LAPs. The confraternities disseminate cultural models, and the method they use to promote the territory participate in the “heritagization” of Trappist beers. The ritual enthronements are, in other words, not merely commercial activities guided by marketing strategies. Rather, they are moments laden with socio-cultural meaning and emotion for both actors and spectators. If the problem of economic attractiveness and tourism development plays an important part in this process, it can also be seen to have a role in terms of the construction of identity and of social representations. By putting forward local specificities and particularisms, the aim is to produce promotional discourses and images that help create a sense of belonging to a community and a territory. The link between the product and the territory is all the more direct given that these beers carry the name of the place where they are brewed. In this sense, the Trappist beers, with their added value for tourism, become not only territorial emblems but also serve as symbols, identity markers that enable local people to share a common interpretation of their area.

On the other hand, the enthronement rituals as public events participate in and reinforce the visibility of the actors who take part in them, and render visible the boundary between those who have a right to appear “in full honours” and those who do not. The same is true within the group itself. One can frequently identify within the gastronomic confraternities a number

of actors who occupy privileged places in the social hierarchy, within domains as diverse as politics, economics or the media, at both local and regional levels. Seen from this perspective, the participants' appearance and the decorum surrounding the proceedings are all ingredients conceived as supporting the values they seek to celebrate, as well as political messages they wish to transmit. By taking part in these local festivities, displaying their attachment to their local territory in order to render it attractive to tourists, and demonstrating their ability to incarnate socio-cultural emblems with strong powers of association and hence to arouse collective emotion, local actors place themselves in the limelight to ensure their public visibility. These actors present themselves as representing that which is constitutive of local identity, hoping thereby to win over the adherence of the local population and to enjoy a renown that can establish or confirm their socio-political or economic authority locally. These factors can thus contribute to constructing legitimacy and thereby to gain a form of power. In this sense, the rituals of enthronement are inscribed within economic and socio-political strategies. Seen from this angle, the promotion of territorial identities is not an end in itself, but is instrumentalized for political or economic trajectories and for the purposes of local development. Commitment to civil society contributes to accumulating moral capital that appears to be a prerequisite to gaining status as a local notable. Given that our societies value the spectacular, appearance in public does not merely crown fame that has already been achieved, serving as a way station or culmination of a "cursus honorum", but can in fact be the starting point for a recognition among actors who are only beginning to try to establish their power (Bourdieu, 1982; Bromberger, 1990; Abdelmalek and Chauvigne, 2001; Laferté, 2008). These observations are in line with those whose research on the local development (notably in France) shows that new forms of territorial leadership and new modes of action by local politicians in the face of the practical reality of decentralisation are constructed by means of promoting local resources mobilised around projects of identity formation and local development (Garcia and Genieys, 2005; Koebel, 2000)

Places of mediation between regional actors from a variety of socio-professional backgrounds
 Finally, by virtue of the bonds of sociability thus formed and their many ramifications, the confraternities facilitate relationships among local and regional actors and in this sense constitute veritable places of mediation between actors from a variety of different socio-professional backgrounds. In this sense, the network of local associations, such as gastronomic confraternities, can also serve to mediate between the public authorities and segments of the (real or potential) electorate and thus constitutes a space for acquiring or maintaining local power.

By virtue of their multiple roots in local socio-economic and political life and of the range of responsibilities covered by their members, the structures of these associations, often made up of the local elite, further reinforce their influence and can thus serve as crucial elements in making up local leadership and in facilitating local competitiveness and development.

In fact, authors who discuss the coordination of the economy of proximity and analyse collective action, focusing notably on localised industrial districts and local production systems, stress the importance of networks of confidence and cooperation among territorial actors when it comes to the economic success of projects involving local competitiveness and development. This research shows that the areas where we see a close proximity between actors with differing socio-professional backgrounds but shared values are the areas marked by a more pronounced culture of cooperation, facilitating the circulation of information among local networks and favouring access to socioeconomic, cultural and financial resources (Marshall, 1919; Bagnasco, 1977; Becattini, 1990, 2003; Cooke and Piccaluga, 2006; Bouba-Olga and Grossetti, 2008; Courlet, 2008).

Gastronomic confraternities of the Trappist beer : different implications for the political, tourist and social spheres

As we have seen, the confraternities are institutions made up of actors who may be involved in numerous aspects of the social, economic and political life of their local community, but not all of these local actors are able to penetrate the networks to which these associations grant access. Becoming a member of a confraternity requires a selection process that leaves nothing to chance. Depending on the confraternity, the selection privileges local actors who already enjoy a certain legitimacy, social visibility and media appeal. For this reason, not all local actors have the same capacity to play a part in producing the symbols and markers of the local territory and identity, and as a result, to enjoy the social prestige that such processes can

generate. Moreover, each confraternity has a different way of acting locally, not all of them enjoying the same field of influence.

Although our analyses tell us more about the tools and modes of constructing visibility and gaining the recognition of local elites than about the precise effects these can have, our case studies do reveal important contrasts among different areas when it comes to the role and influence of the gastronomic confraternities. While some confraternities enjoy the support of public and private actors and have access to resources that generate tourist development, not all of them have this possibility. These contrasts can be observed through a series of indicators set out in the table below.

TABLE I: Various indications of the local influence of gastronomic confraternities

Confraternities	Food resources being promoted	Level of involvement of the confraternity in the local tourism and cultural campaigns	Socio-professional affiliations of the members of the confraternities	Place of enthronement of the new members of the confraternity	Intensity of attendance at the enthronement of new members of the confraternity	Logistical – economic support by local authorities	Logistical – economic support by the Trappist monks
The confraternity of the Sossons d'Orvaux (Orval)	Trappist beer from Orval	Major involvement	Important positions in the cultural, political and socio-economic sectors of their region	At the abbey of Orval	Between 450 and 500 people	Significant financial and logistical contribution	Significant financial and logistical contribution
Jurade Princièrè (Chimay)	Trappist beer and chees from Chimay	Major involvement	Important positions in the cultural, political and socio-economic sectors of their region	At the castle of the Princes of Chimay	Between 450 and 500 people	Significant support by public actors responsible for tourism	Significant financial and logistical contribution
The confraternity of the Grusalle and of the Trappist beer of Rochefort	Trappist beer from Rochefort	Little involvement	Majority of local restaurant owners and shopkeepers	In the back room of a restaurant in Rochefort	Between 30 and 50 people	No support	No support

The 'Jurade Princièrè' (Chimay) : a confraternity that is very involved in tourist projects

The local confraternity in Chimay, known as the 'Jurade Princièrè' (princely order of sworn members), counts several hundred members with a varying degree of involvement: there are permanent members and others who are just enthroned for a day, the position of whom differs depending on the level of responsibility they hold within the association and the extent of their participation in the collective activities that are necessary for the maintenance and smooth operation of the confraternity (preparing the festivities, organising the activity, participating in the General Assemblies, keeping the treasury's accounts, etc.).

The Jurade Princièrè is not only very active in organising and carrying out campaigns and events that serve as a magnet for tourists in the principality of Chimay, but also in managing and collecting the funds needed for holding these events. This confraternity was founded in 1986 on the 500th anniversary of the Principality of Chimay, at the initiative of the former director of events policy at the Chimay brewery and of local actors that include members of the family of the princes of Chimay. The origin of the Jurade Princièrè should thus be understood from the perspective of the commercial strategies of the Chimay brewery, carried forward by local actors; this explains why this confraternity promotes only the Trappist beer, and secondarily Chimay cheese. Among the events and activities in which the association

takes an active part, some are more specifically aimed at local people, and in such cases the profits generated are distributed to charitable organisations or invested in educational projects. The present head of the gastronomic confraternity is the Prince of Chimay, and the majority of its members are professionally involved to varying degrees in the social, cultural or political life of Chimay and hold (or held) important positions: heads of tourist and cultural associations (Tourist Office, libraries, cultural centres), sports clubs, members of the Chamber of commerce, heads of the local social welfare office, fire-fighters, etc. It would seem that just about every local association is represented within its ranks.

The enthronement ceremonies and other events that mark its calendar take place at the castle of Chimay, indicating a close proximity to the princely family that is especially valued by the local inhabitants. The festivities surrounding the enthronements are promoted via the local and regional press and through the tourist organisations, thus attesting to a desire on the part of the confraternity to lend these events a tourist dimension. The closing banquets of these ceremonies have a large attendance, with more than 500 guests annually – that is, the maximum number of people that the banqueting hall can accommodate. Like the confraternity of the Sossons d’Orvaux at Orval, the persons enthroned are selected for their renown and membership in political and economic circles. It should also be emphasised that the Jurade Princièrre receives logistical support and sponsorship from the Groupe Chimay as well as from local actors responsible for tourism.

The Sossons d’Orvaux: a gastronomic confraternity that is very involved in the local network of associations

The confraternity of the ‘Sossons d’Orvaux’ comprises more than a hundred local and regional actors who come together around the touristic valorization of the Trappist beer of Orval. This confraternity is involved in organising events and festivities with a tourist dimension and participates in regional events of significance for the agricultural sector (markets of local products and farmers’ markets). The confraternity is also particularly active in philanthropic actions and projects. For instance, it participates in preparing meals in shelters for the homeless and financially supports several local charities such as centres for women who are victims of domestic violence, for persons suffering from addictions or for indigent elderly persons. The philanthropic activities which the confraternity undertakes are regularly the subject of media coverage and are mentioned in its website, thereby reinforcing the reputation and legitimacy of this organisation whose mandate extends far beyond those of promoting the local Trappist beer.

Like the Chimay confraternity, the members of the Sossons d’Orvaux hold important positions in the cultural, political and socio-economic sectors of their region. In this regard, we may mention for instance that the current head of the confraternity is also the director of the Tourist Office (Maison du Tourisme), which is the principal public structure responsible for organising and promoting tourism on a regional scale.

The enthronements conducted by the Orval confraternity take place in the abbey of Orval and draw a large audience, particularly for the annual banquets. This attests to a close proximity between the region’s population and the abbey, confirmed by the testimony by the head of the local confraternity: “Whether someone is politically on the left or the right is all the same to us, political conflicts and differences of opinion are left at home. What binds us is first and foremost Orval and the Gaume region¹.” While the enthronements and other festivities connected to the confraternity are public, the closing banquets are strictly reserved for local actors (members of the confraternity and a few guests). These are occasions intended to favour convivial exchange: “it is an opportunity to see friends from the region and to have a nice time together sitting down with a good Orval beer”². Given this testimony, one of the essential aspects of the banquets are the chance to form and renew bonds between actors from the political, economic, media and other local circles of the region, gathered around an element that makes sense to them all: Orval beer. The meal contributes to developing and maintaining the internal bonds among the elite of the Gaume, and thus it could be said that the confraternity of the Sossons d’Orvaux achieves the objective of maintaining local social bonds.

¹ Interview realized with the Grand Master of the Sossons d’Orvaux confraternity, Orval, April 2012.

² Ibidem.

The confraternity of the Grusalle and of the Trappist beer of Rochefort has a low level of involvement in local tourist or charitable activities

Contrary to what we have observed for the territories of Chimay and Orval, the local confraternity of Rochefort has a very low level of involvement in the valorization of LAPs to tourists, and does not take part in any local project of a social or charitable nature. The activities they engage in are limited to their presence at a small number of local events, but they are neither their initiators nor directly involved in their organisation. Like the two other confraternities, this one holds an annual “Chapter” at which new members are enthroned. Although the enthronements are advertised by the tourist organisations in Rochefort and via the confraternity’s website, the banquet held on the occasion involves less than fifty people, made up largely by local restaurant owners and shopkeepers. However, the confraternity of the Grusalle has no existence outside its own circles, and in this regard differs radically from those of Chimay and Orval.

How are we to understand and interpret these differences among the confraternities? Why are the gastronomic confraternities of Orval and Chimay important local institutions in terms of their territorial leadership, while that of Rochefort seems to play only a minor role in the dynamics of tourism development? To seek to answer this question, we believe it is important to bear several factors in mind: the economic weight of the resource being promoted in a socio-economic context that is specific to each territory and the social legitimacy of the associations’ members of appear to be decisive. Certainly these interpretations can only be regarded as hypotheses that require further research to confirm, nuance or disprove.

On the socio-economic and cultural importance of Trappist monks and beers

Our observations of the territories under study here suggest that the influence of confraternities and the local leadership which they engender should, in our view, be interpreted from the perspective of the socio-economic and cultural importance of the Trappist monks and their food products. It seems that where the monks as producers carry considerable economic weight, the confraternities are seen as strategic networks by certain local actors who therefore seek to join them because of the many economic, political and socio-cultural opportunities they are likely to offer.

In Chimay, thanks to the significant economic growth of the abbey, owing notably to the commercial success of its Trappist products, the Groupe Chimay (a limited company owned by the monks) is one of the principal job providers of the region, and its turnover places it among the top 100 enterprises in Wallonia. The Groupe Chimay is made up of some ten subsidiaries active at local levels in the agrifood, tourism and cultural sectors as well as in sustainable development. The monks control nearly all the principal sectors that provide jobs in this region. The Groupe Chimay has set up a museum space, the Espace Chimay, dedicated to the history of the Trappist monks and their production methods, as well as a restaurant, the Auberge du Poteaupré, that serves and sells monastic products; these are the two main tourist attractions included on most organized tours of the region.

As in Orval so in Chimay, the monastery and the interpretation centre devoted to its Trappist products, the Atelier Frère Abraham, are the principal tourist attractions of the region. The majority of tourist flows to this region are concentrated on the abbey site, which hosts numerous services (interpretation centre, guided tours of the ruins of the medieval abbey, signposted walks, accommodation, etc.). Not only do Orval abbey, its products and activities occupy a significant place in tourism and the economy of the region, but the Trappist products are also regarded by numerous local actors as cultural objects and markers. Many of those interviewed in the course of this field study expressed a sincere attachment to these products, as is evident from the testimony of a local restaurant keeper: “a good Gaume resident absolutely must drink Orval beer – someone who does not appreciate Orval is someone who is not really one of us”. In both Orval and Chimay, the processions that mark the opening of the festivities for the enthronement of new members of their respective gastronomic confraternities move along the streets with great pomp and ceremony, thus underscoring the

public and demonstrative intent of the organisers. In Chimay, the procession starts at the village church and ends at the castle of Chimay, while the one in Orval ends at the abbey, where the enthronements are held. The choice of these emblematic locations is significant in itself, inasmuch as the castle and princely family as well as the abbey and its monks are linked, in the collective memory of the local populations, to the spatial stability and permanence of the group, two dimensions that Halbwachs considers central to the process of constructing individual and collective identities (Halbwachs 1994). By using these emblematic places, the local actors stress not only the religious dimension and nobility of the Trappist products, but also their roots in the territory and their links to identity in the two rural areas where the Catholic francophone party has, ever since the nineteenth century, occupied a central place in the political landscape. While the heritage dimension associated with Trappist products means that the gastronomic confraternities and the monks help create or reinforce a sense of belonging and impact on the territorial emblems and points of reference for local identity, it should nevertheless be noted that the confraternities are only one possible outlet for the expression of identity formation, as the actors often have a number of other means of exhibiting, expressing and constructing their identities. The place of Trappist products in the production of social and local identity differs among our three case studies.

Unlike the dynamics observed in the Chimay and Orval regions, the Trappist monks and their products in Rochefort play a secondary socio-economic role, from the point of view of both the agrifood sector and of tourism. Although the Trappist products are present among other food items in the communication strategies of the local tourist industry, they nevertheless play only a secondary role in the strategies and campaigns of local development. Contrary to Chimay and Orval, Rochefort's local marketing strategies do not rely on the valorization of concepts such as authenticity, products of the local *terroir* or village social life, all aspects of collective imagination generally associated with rural areas. The tourist appeal of Rochefort and the resultant influx of visitors derive essentially from the key attractions such as the caves and grottoes that are the legacy of karstic phenomena, as well as kayaking on the Lesse River – an important economic resource for tourism in Wallonia (De Myttenaere and d'Ieteren, 2009). The influence of the Trappist abbey and its food products on the economy of Rochefort is less important because the monks do not take part in the economic dynamics, not wishing to get involved in the tourist sector. Visits to the abbey are not in fact allowed, nor is there a monastery store or museum dedicated to its products. In a context where the monks stay out of local economic activities, we can observe that the confraternity is composed largely of members of the artistic and creative layers of society, and thus does not constitute, in the eyes of the elites, a strategic network that offers socio-economic or political opportunities. Given that elites wish to arouse and maintain belief in their legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1982), they tend to belong to the local confraternity only if the latter is seen to be influential.

Discussion and conclusion

By means of a comparative study focusing on the three areas of Chimay, Orval and Rochefort, we have put forward reflections on the role and influence of gastronomic confraternities, both as actors in local economic and tourist development and in terms of their leadership capacity. These associations, through their participation in promoting local products, organise events with a focus on tourism and thus contribute to diversifying the range of products on offer in this sector within their territories and to enhancing their attractiveness. Among their activities, the ritual enthronement of their new members are important events in for the social life of their areas, and thus constitute a key aspect of their *raison d'être*. The social bonds they forge give rise to networks that facilitate connections among local actors, whether of the public or private sector, and members of the local population, and create resources for local leadership. The relations formed or reinforced in the course of such festivities thus have a long-term impact beyond simply the commercial promotion of local heritage food products.

In spite of their appearance, which might suggest a superficial and anachronistic staging aimed at an audience of outside consumers, the enthronement ceremonies carry a meaning and participate in strategies that are important in themselves. These activities are reinforced by the toponymic dimension of the product being promoted and a thick collective consciousness and history that are indispensable for their effectiveness.

The Trappist products studied here are economic resources around which questions of cultural and identity issues can coalesce. It is for this reason that gaining entry into the networks created by the gastronomic confraternities has a significance that far exceeds the benefits for marketing and tourist development. Emphasising their socio-cultural, historical and geographical attributes therefore builds a bridge towards the spheres of political and economic power, since it is within the confraternities that local actors can appropriate the symbolic and identity markers represented by these LAPs. Once they have incorporated these into their image, they can use these points of reference to reinforce their legitimacy, in other words, their charisma as local leaders.

If the actors make their choices depending on the context of action and from among many possible sources of local identity, the importance of public enthronement rituals for acquiring or reinforcing social authority varies according to the local situation, and functions in accordance with a 'dialectal' dynamic and logic. Those enthroned who enjoy renown or legitimacy thanks to their position in the socio-economic, political or media spheres raise the cachet of the confraternity, and the confraternity in turn helps to further enhance the standing of the newly enthroned, as a result of the prestige enjoyed by the product being promoted, namely Trappist beer, a prestige that is proportionate to that of the members of the confraternity.

The dynamic and generative capacity of gastronomic confraternities can be perceived only by taking account of the socio-economic context in which they operate, contexts that contribute to building or reinforcing their territorial leadership. In this way, far from being limited to short periods of time or a narrow spaces, they are capable of acting on a fairly large scale and of integrating "society", "history" and "politics" into their scope of action.

We do not consider that membership in gastronomic confraternities can be reduced to a quest for power and strategic positioning in political, socio-cultural and economic domains, even though the role played by these aspects should not be neglected. The specificity of the commitment and mobilisation of local elites in the gastronomic confraternities lies in the convergence of a number of different motives: connection to a territory, protection of particular or general interests, social ties, all of which are intrinsically linked to the construction or reinforcement of social status.

The relationships into which actors within a territory enter, and their capacity for joint organisation by means of networks, are the result a complex, dynamic process that involves multiple sociocultural, political or institutional factors. Legitimacy, authority and local leadership appear, in our case studies, to be influenced by the attitude and behaviour of the Trappist monks towards tourism. Although affected by the entrepreneurial atmosphere in the territories analysed, the degree of their power, their involvement in local socio-economic institutions and their economic behaviour must be interpreted in terms that go beyond the purely local context. These actors have motives and interests of their own, and should be understood in relation to the particular relationships they maintain with the economy in the light of their religious identity (De Myttenaere, 2013).

Finally, if as seems most likely, the socio-economic and cultural weight of the Trappist monks and their food products exert an influence on the confraternities and of territorial leaders within the areas studied, we nevertheless cannot claim, at this exploratory stage of our research, to have developed a model of the role and influence of these variables on local leaders and on tourist development and dynamics. Other case studies focusing on different territories are indispensable in order to nuance the validity of the interpretations offered here.

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