



**WHAT IS A 'TYPICAL LOCAL FOOD'? AN EXAMINATION
OF TERRITORIAL IDENTITY IN FOODS BASED ON
DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES IN THE AGRIFOOD
AND RURAL SECTORS**

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Angela Tregear¹

Abstract

In recent years, the differentiation of products by territorial origin has become a highly popular means of addressing socio-economic development objectives in the agrifood sector and in rural areas. Throughout the UK and Europe, it is possible to identify a range of political and commercial initiatives which offer agrifood producers the opportunity to specialise their products on the basis of local identity (for example, EU Regulation 2081/92, offering 'protected denominations of origin', and the regional Speciality Food Groups co-ordinated by Food From Britain). These initiatives raise a variety of social, political and economic questions. Drawing from a review of pertinent literature, together with scrutiny of the objectives and operating mechanisms of three relevant development initiatives, this paper examines the nature of territorial distinctiveness in foods and the policy implications for schemes and programmes which make use of territorial identities.

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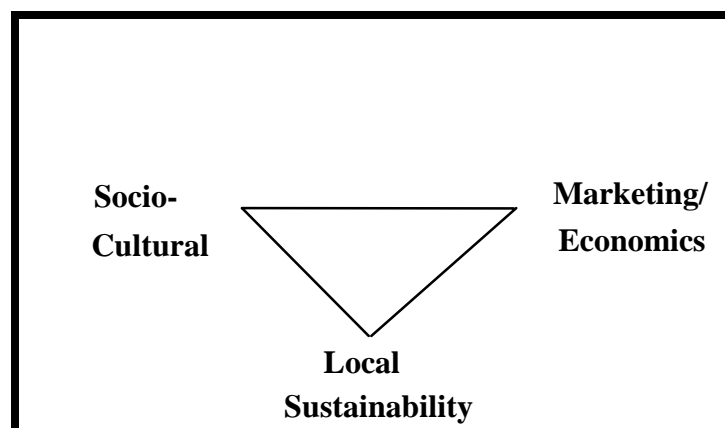
1 INTRODUCTION

Geographic origins have always been of importance in food products. For some years now, there has been a legal requirement in the UK for all foodstuffs to be labelled with their country of origin (HMSO, 1996), and in economic terms, designation of origin has significance as studies repeatedly show that consumer perceptions of products' attributes vary according to their geographic source (see, for example, Skaggs et al, 1996). More recently however, a subset of food products has come to prominence in the marketplace for which geographic identification has added significance. These products, sometimes referred to as 'produits de terroir' or 'typical', 'local' or 'regional' foods, are items for which geographic location is deemed to bestow special or unique characteristics. Examples of such food products could be cheeses (Wensleydale, Stilton), processed meats (Cumberland sausage, Ayrshire bacon), baked goods (Lincolnshire plum bread, Melton Mowbray pork pies) and confectionery (Harrogate toffee), as well as fresh produce (Jersey Royal Potatoes) and meat (Romney Marsh lamb). In each of these cases, distinctive product qualities are related in some way to production locality.

The rise to prominence of typical local food products, and the mechanisms through which they are marketed, represent intriguing subjects of study for the social scientist. First, there is a strong socio-cultural dimension to the associations between food and territory - 'typicity'² is influenced by patterns of human activity and behaviour, by cultural traditions and practices as well as by physical geography. As such, typical local foods are part of the cultural heritage of an area.

Second, food-territory links may be usefully examined from an economic or marketing perspective: that is, territorial identities are product differentiation or value adding tools which can be employed by economic actors to gain competitive advantage. Such actors may be individual producers or, alternatively, public or private designation schemes acting on behalf of groups of producers. Finally, typical local foods may also be examined from the perspective of their contribution to local, sustainable exchange networks within the rural economy. In this context, 'local' foods are items which are produced, traded and consumed within a geographic area, one set of building blocks for a self-sustaining local exchange network. Figure 1 illustrates schematically these three dimensions of a social science approach to understanding typical local foods. All three perspectives are important to take account of when examining what typical local foods are and what they represent in society today.

Figure 1 Dimensions relevant to a social science understanding of typical local foods



These three dimensions also map onto the thrusts of different policy objectives relating to typical local foods. Various, policy documents

² Throughout this paper, the term 'typicity' is used to denote the territorially distinctive attributes of

argue that small-scale, craft-based food production has the potential to: enhance the social vibrancy of an area when production practices are historic or traditional (a cultural heritage thrust); differentiate and add value to otherwise fairly basic agrifood commodities (a marketing thrust); enhance employment numbers and skills and generate ecologically sustainable activities and networks in rural areas (a local sustainability thrust). Often, all three thrusts are presented as complementary. Yet given the way in which typical local foods are classified by designation schemes, and the basis upon which public and private entities use territorial identities in food products, what potential is there for typical local foods to contribute to any or all of these three policy thrusts? Is it indeed possible to conceive of these thrusts as complementary?

This paper attempts to address these issues by undertaking the following. First, in a basic answer to the question 'what is a typical local food?', a brief review is given of the literature relating to how food and territory are interlinked, setting out the key dimensions of typicity. Next, the paper considers designation schemes which offer their own 'classifications' of territorial distinctiveness in foods, and which make use of territorial identities to some extent. Three alternative designation schemes are examined: the 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO) and 'Protected Geographical Indicator' (PGI) appellation schemes available under European Union regulation 2081/92; the regional Speciality Food Group membership scheme co-ordinated by Food From Britain; and the Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Products' programme. In each case, the bases for the classifications of typicity are examined, and the scheme's underlying objectives are assessed. Finally, the paper relates the analysis of the schemes' classifications and objectives to the main

food products.

policy thrusts set out above, in an attempt to examine how designation schemes may contribute to the achievement of policy objectives relevant to typical local foods.

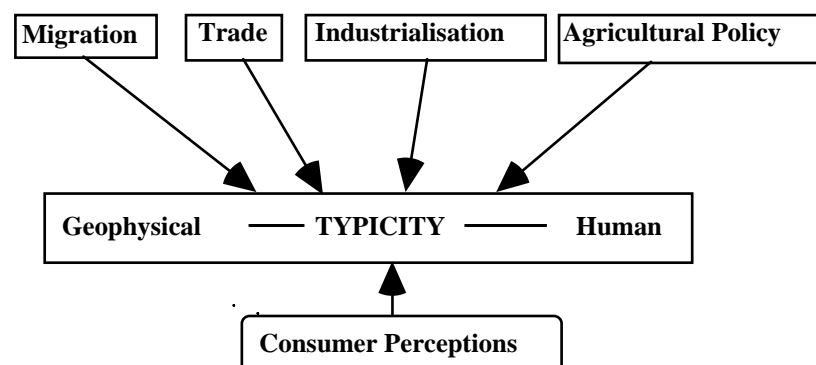
The information on which this paper is based has been drawn from a variety of sources. In addition to existing studies of the socio-economic impacts of EU regulation 2081/92, the paper also draws from the author's scrutiny of official scheme documentation, participation in information dissemination seminars run by scheme co-ordinators, and execution of in-depth interviews with persons responsible for operating the schemes.

2 THE LINKS BETWEEN FOOD AND TERRITORY

In investigating the links between food and territory there is a potentially enormous literature to draw from, from scientific studies attempting to determine the effect of soil composition on organoleptic qualities of wine (as discussed by Lichfield, 1998), to social historical studies which track and explain the transfer of specific food production and consumption practices across geographic boundaries (e.g. Goody, 1982; Tannahill, 1988; Montanari, 1994; Mennell, 1996). Across this literature however, it appears that there are two main facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods: geophysical and human (Figure 2). Geophysical facets include environmental conditions such as climate, topography, soil types, and the existence of species or flora and fauna which combine to influence the raw materials from which food products are made. Thus, at a basic level, cheese-making is associated with pasturing regions, and honey production is associated with areas with abundant white clover and low average rainfalls. At a more specific level, some scientific studies have shown that the organoleptic qualities of cheeses are influenced by the

indigenous breeds of milk-producing livestock or by the composition of local feeding materials (see Bettencourt *et al* 1998 and Teixeira *et al*, 1998). In terms of human facets, these refer to the production, processing and preservation methods which are distinctive or unique to populations in particular geographic areas (as discussed by Bérard and Marchenay, 1995). Often, there is a logic or rationale to these methods given the social context of the product's production. For example, the vegetable, meat and pastry combination of a Cornish pasty was a practical means of 'wrapping up' nutrition for the population of this mining area (Mason, 1999: p188).

Figure 2 Facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods



However, as Figure 2 would indicate, neither the geophysical nor the human facets of typicity are static: their nature changes over time. Synthesising the literature, it seems that four key factors influence the geophysical and human facets of food-territory links: migration, trade, industrialisation and agricultural policy. These all have particular relevance within a UK context. First, migration of peoples across geographic boundaries contributes to the development of typical foods through the dissemination of skills and practices which become incorporated within a local context. For example, cheese-making recipes and skills were brought to the Pennines area of northern England by

continental Cistercian monks in early medieval times, being gradually naturalised into territorially distinctive cheeses such as Wensleydale (Mason, 1999: p141). Trade in agricultural commodities also has an impact on the links between food and territory by influencing the types of ingredients available for use by local food producers. For example, the 19th century trade in sugar brought large sugar refineries to the Scottish port of Glasgow, which contributed to the development there of distinctive sugar based confections such as tablet. Similarly, the east coast town of Whitby and the west Cumbrian ports were heavily involved in the spice trade, spices which were then used, for example, in the production of distinctive types of gingerbread in these areas (Mason, 1999: p255).

Industrialisation is a third factor influencing food-territory links. In many existing studies, typical local foods are either explicitly or implicitly characterised as products of small-scale, craft-based peasant agriculture. Indeed, some authors do contend that this form of agricultural production is most closely associated with geographically distinct, specialist foods³. In countries such as the UK therefore, where the effects of the industrial revolution were severe in terms of rural depopulation and rapid urbanisation, it is argued that a process of 'delocalisation' (Montanari, 1994, after Pelto and Pelto, 1983) has taken place, whereby the links between rural territories and distinctive food production have been broken (Mennell, 1996; Driver, 1983). Crucially however, it may also be argued that some geographically distinctive products in the UK have appeared as a result of industrialisation. For example, the branded cordial soft drinks 'Vimto' and 'Dandelion &

³ For example, Symons (1982), cited in Mennell *et al* (1992) makes the link between the lack of specialist food culture in Australia and the fact that this country experienced a rapid development in

Burdock' were originally produced in the Victorian philanthropic industrial era as temperance and tonic drinks for the urban working classes based in the north west of England (Burnett, 1999: p104). Although manufactured mechanically, these products are nevertheless the result of specific social historical circumstances occurring in certain geographic areas, lending them human facets of typicality. The industrialising era of the 18th and 19th centuries also saw the production specification and branding of plant and animal species now thought of as 'traditional': thus, Cox's Orange Pippins and Bramley apples (Twiss, 1999), Aberdeen Angus beef and Gloucester Old Spot pigs (Mason, 1999) owe their renown to the consolidating tendencies and promotional efforts of the enthusiastic societies and entrepreneurial individuals of this age. Trognon (1998) also notes that the opening up of national-scale markets in the 19th century, thanks to the transport revolution, effectively led to the creation of 'regional specialities'. Industrialisation, it may be argued therefore, has had an ambiguous influence on food-territory links. However, the influence in the UK of agricultural policy, the fourth factor impacting on the links between food and territory, appears more clear cut. Here, it is widely accepted that the production-maximisation and efficiency drives of UK agricultural policy in the 19th and 20th centuries have mitigated against geographic distinctions in food production by encouraging, for example, the scaling up of production facilities, increased mechanisation, the centralisation of processing facilities, and the homogenisation of plant and animal species through production-oriented improvement programmes.

Such are the commonly cited facets of typicality and the factors which influence them. However, as Figure 2 indicates, there is another facet of

food provisioning from hunter-gather to industrial agriculture, without a sustained period of small-scale, craft-based farming.

typicity which needs to be considered when examining typical local foods: that of consumer perceptions (Lagrange and Trognon, 1996). As typical foods are commercial items being offered for exchange between producers and consumers, from which they derive value, typicity is determined not just by the physical ingredients comprising a food or the production methods involved, but also by the end product qualities that consumers perceive as attractive, leading them to differentiate typical foods from other products. Without these differentiating qualities, typical foods would not be distinct from any other foods. However, from the consumer's perspective, typical product qualities may be varied and contrasting. For example, consumers may choose typical products on the basis that they are 'old-fashioned' or 'traditional' (Tregear *et al*, 1998), 'rustic', 'nostalgic' or 'natural' (Trognon, 1998), or 'hand-crafted', 'exotic' or 'gourmet' (Kupiec and Revell, 1998)⁴. In turn, these perceptions may vary according to consumer type or profile: for example, local consumers may associate typical foods with quite different qualities compared to those located far from the place of production. In addition to the geophysical and human facets of typicity therefore, there is a whole range of associated qualities projected onto typical foods by different consumers which gives these products economic value. These facets are important to take into account because typical local foods are exchangeable commodities with market value as well as tangible outputs of geophysical and social historical contexts of food production.

In summary, it has been argued that there are two main facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods, geophysical and human, and that a

⁴ For more results of empirical consumer research, see the proceedings of the AIR-CAT workshop 'consumer attitudes towards typical foods', Dijon, France, October 1998 (c/o MATFORSK, As, Norway), and the proceedings of the 67th EAAE Seminar 'The socio-economics of origin labelled products in agrifood supply chains: spatial, institutional and co-ordination aspects'. Le Mans, France, October 1999 (c/o INRA-UREQA Le Mans, France).

range of factors influence the extent to which these facets are found in food products. Within the UK context, it may be argued that forces of industrialisation and 20th century agricultural policy have militated against the development of territorially distinctive, peasant-culture-derived foods, although industrialisation has given rise to geographically distinctive products which are manufactured on a more mechanised scale. A further facet to consider when assessing the links between food and territory is that of consumer perceptions, with the notion that regardless of whatever geophysical and human factors link any particular food product to a specific area, consumers will perceive typicality on the basis of multiple and contrasting end product qualities and features. The focus of this paper now turns to designation and labelling schemes which make use of territorial identities. Given that these schemes communicate forms of typicality to consumers, which indeed are 'collective', legitimised forms due the schemes' official nature (Amilien, 1999), how is territorial distinctiveness classified or defined, and what are the underlying objectives of such classifications?

3 DESIGNATION SCHEMES FOR TYPICAL LOCAL FOODS

This section considers three different schemes for which the territorial identities of food products play a role. It proceeds by examining the bases upon which each scheme appears to classify typicality, making comparisons with the findings of the previous section, and, consequently, examines the objectives underpinning these classifications.

Scheme 1: European Union regulation 2081/92, offering appellations of 'Protected Designation of Origin' (PDO) and 'Protected Geographical Indication' (PGI)

This scheme involves a piece of European Union legislation which allows groups of food producers, or individual producers, to register the names and production practices of their foods where these products have special characteristics relating to the geographic area of production (CEC, 1992). Two designations are offered under the scheme. For PDOs, the special characteristics of the product must be exclusively derived from the local territory (Article 2.2a), whereas for PGIs, characteristics are not exclusive (Article 2.2b). In both cases however, designated product names act in the manner of trademarks, whereby competitors are prevented from 'passing off' their goods as the 'genuine' articles (Thienes, 1994). Yet unlike trademarks, the designations solidly bind together in law (Besch and Thiedig, 1999) a typical product name with a nominated set of producers *and* a precise statement of production practices *and* a pre-defined geographic area of production. In this way, designated typical products are tied explicitly to certain geographic areas and producer groups. In the UK, producers apply for registration through the MAFF, undergoing a procedure of vetting before the application, if successful, is approved by the EU. Registered producers then undergo periodic auditing to ensure that the production specifications set out in the application are adhered to. Appendix 1 lists the current registered PDO and PGI product names in the UK.

In terms of the basis upon which territorial distinctiveness is classified in this scheme, the content of the original EU Journal documentation makes quite explicit reference both to geophysical and human dimensions of typicity (Article 2.2). Thus, under the description of products acceptable for a PDO, foods with qualities "due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent *natural* and *human* factors" (my emphasis) are the objects of this registration scheme (Article 2.2a). As examples of

this in the UK, PDO registered 'Beacon Fell traditional Lancashire Cheese' is specified as being made from milk sourced from a particular local area, and involves methods of production which reflect the craft-based techniques traditional and characteristic to the area: intensive handling, the use of three days' curd, and long maturation times. Similarly, Shetland Lamb, another registered PDO, is produced from native sheep reared in a tightly defined geophysical environment, and involving specified slaughtering procedures.

What are the objectives underpinning this classification of typicity? The whole subject of the socio-economic dimensions of 2081/92 is highly complex, and is the subject of a number of studies (e.g. Moran, 1993; Bérard and Marchenay, 1995; Casabianca and Coutron, 1998), hence the following analysis is tentative. However, drawing from the original Journal documentation, one appears to find three main thrusts of objectives. First, is the notion of preservation of cultural heritage. On the basis that modern agrifood systems threaten traditional craft food production practices, these designations are a means of officially recording techniques of value to our cultural heritage, which otherwise might be at risk of erosion or corruption at the hands of free market forces. As such, they offer badges of authenticity to culturally significant food production practices. A second thrust is the protection of the renown or reputation of foods from a geographic area. On the basis that the good name of specialist products could be undermined by individual producers offering inferior versions, the designations set out an 'official' version of how the registered products are produced to which all producers should adhere. The designations allocate intellectual property rights (Moran, 1993) to registered producers, excluding those producers and practices which might threaten the integrity and reputation of the

designated products. The third underpinning objective is that of competitive advantage. On the basis that typical local foods have market value, the designations have the effect of patenting product names and the production techniques underpinning them which means registered producers can use them to differentiate their products and compete more effectively in the marketplace. Overall therefore, it appears that EU Regulation 2081/92 is underpinned by a variety of perspectives of typicity. As the legislation encourages producers to invoke their territorially distinctive product names and practices as value-adding competitive tools, it seems that a marketing rationale is driving the legislation. However it is also stated that these producers are being supported and encouraged on the basis that their typical products signal activities of socio-economic worth in disadvantaged rural areas (CEC, 1992). Thus, a combination of cultural heritage and local sustainability perspectives of typicity are also purported to be driving the legislation, with the implication that all three perspectives are complementary.

Scheme 2: Food From Britain's Regional Speciality Food Groups

Food From Britain was set up by the MAFF in 1983 with the remit of raising the international profile of British food products and stimulating increased exports (Food From Britain, undated^a). Since its inception, one focus of the agency's activities is the 'speciality' food sector, which includes the co-ordination and financial support of a national network of regional and county speciality food groups (Food From Britain, undated^b). Currently, there are 9 such groups in England, with separate promotional bodies in charge of speciality foods in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Appendix 2). Each Group operates on behalf of its fee-

paying members as a business support centre, networking forum and collective marketing function. Thus, the groups offer training and advice services in production and marketing, arrange events where members can make contact with new buyers, and offer, through the group name, an 'umbrella brand' under which individual members can market their products. With respect to this latter function, each group's name has a territorial allegiance, for example, 'Yorkshire Pantry', 'Kentish Fare', 'Tastes of Anglia'.

A further set of activities which some speciality food groups are involved with is the development of local supply chain networks, for example, by encouraging members to use more local sourcing of materials, or by bringing together producer members and local or regional retailer buyers. For example, Tastes of Anglia have set up a 'Local Food into Local Shops' initiative (ERM, 1998), and many, such as the Yorkshire Pantry (Coulthard, 1996) have developed 'gourmet trails': listings of members' products with advice to the consumer (primarily the tourist) on the retail or catering outlets which sell them. Often, such initiatives have been brought to fruition with the aid of Objective 5(b) funding.

So what role does typicity play in this scheme? One way of examining this is to consider the profile of membership of the groups. From this, it may be seen that members are primarily (though not exclusively) small sized firms (i.e. have less than 100 employees), producing what can best be described as premium quality, speciality or gourmet foods (DTZ Pidea Consulting, 1999). Amongst these, some producer members do employ distinctive local ingredients and unique production methods (indeed, most holders of PDO or PGI designations in the UK are members of their local speciality food group). But in terms of inclusion in the scheme, it is

the marketable end qualities of the product and what they communicate to the consumer which appear to be the determining features. Referring to the facets of typicity set out in the first section therefore, it seems that this scheme, rather than resorting to geophysical or human facets of typicity to determine its membership profile, draws more from the consumer perceptions facet, whereby the end product qualities of what could be described as 'specialist' foods have positive attractions for the consumer, whether or not they incorporate any distinctive territorial characteristics⁵.

It can be seen that the set-up and remit of this scheme is different to the operating mechanism of EU regulation 2081/92. Similarly, it can be seen that the objectives underpinning the Food From Britain scheme are also distinct. The speciality food groups aim to showcase and promote their members' products. More specifically, they aim to raise the profile of their members outside of the local area, encouraging them to distribute their products on a wider geographical basis, including exporting, and to engage in major and mainstream supply channels where this is conducive to their marketing strategies. In effect, the groups are encouraging small business growth. With these objectives, the primary role of typicity is as a positive product attribute which alongside other complementary attributes, can be communicated to consumers through careful adjustments of the product mix. As such, typicity is not 'fixed' in a particular set of production realities, it is viewed as an intangible product quality that is manipulable and adjustable in the hands of the producers responding to customer perceptions. Similarly, when the groups

⁵ It is interesting to note therefore that this scheme, in its current form, contrasts with the original 1970s "Taste of Scotland" catering initiative, where a deliberate attempt was made to develop a classification system for Scottish dishes, in turn providing a basis for membership of the initiative (Hughes, 1995). The whole scheme was driven and informed by a more ambitious, culturally based project to develop a British Culinary Code, whereby an attempt was made to link dishes to local natural resources and socio-political forces influencing local diets (Brown, 1990).

themselves draw from territorial references to identify themselves, this is not intended as an assurance to trade or end consumers that members' products are all made with special ingredients or unique production methods characteristic of the region (though some may be). Instead, territorial allegiance is used to project an image of products with desirable end qualities such as speciality, luxury, distinctiveness, hand-crafted, or made on a small scale.

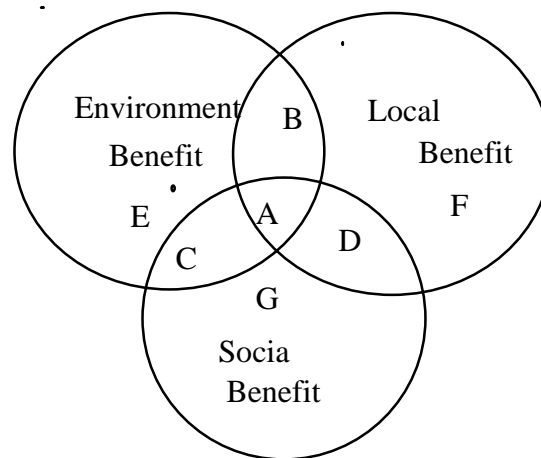
Scheme 3: Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Products' Programme

This third 'scheme' is different again to the previous two in terms of structure, operating mechanisms and objectives. In 1998, the Countryside Commission⁶ funded an investigation into alternative means of supporting and promoting those rural-based producers (including non-food producers) whose products met the Commission's aims regarding environmental sustainability and socio-economic improvements (ERM, 1998). Although an over-arching labelling scheme of 'Countryside Products' was considered, the initiative has developed instead into a programme of activities where the Countryside Agency works in partnership with other public and private bodies to support initiatives which accord with its objectives. Such initiatives include co-operative marketing schemes or local product promotions which have the potential to lever out environmental and socio-economic improvements to geographic areas.

The programme of activities which is being conducted is of relevance because of the basis upon which the Agency identifies schemes suitable for its support and development. In the original documentation on Countryside Products, the most desirable products or schemes for support

were characterised as those where a combination of three objectives were met: environmental (i.e. improved land management practices, wildlife habitat creation), local economic (i.e. increased local networking and commercial activity, development of local supply chains), and social (i.e. improved access, recreation, education for local people) (Figure 3). In this characterisation, products or schemes which fell into sectors A, B, C and E were considered to be within the remit of support, with A sector products being the most desirable as they would meet all three objectives. Crucially however, products in the above sectors were considered within the remit of support because they all displayed the 'most important criterion' - environmental benefits.

Figure 3 Classification Framework for Countryside Products



Source: ERM, 1998.

Since publication of the above framework, and the Countryside Commission's evolution into the Countryside Agency, a wider remit is now pursued which emphasises more the pursuit of social and economic improvements to rural areas as well as environmental ones. However, objectives regarding land management practices, environmental sustainability and the physical appearance of the countryside are still high

⁶ Now evolved into the Countryside Agency

priorities. In involving itself in the support of any scheme or initiative to market local products therefore, the Agency considers strongly the environmental sustainability dimensions of such schemes. In this respect, the Countryside Agency's programme contains a discrete dimension not explicit either in the Food From Britain speciality food groups or EU regulation 2081/92. Thus, although seeking to support local product marketing schemes which offer the same kinds of socio-economic benefits targeted by the other schemes, the Agency is also wanting to see local products leveraging out improvements to the physical environment.

What are the implications of all this for the characterisation of typicality? Clearly, the Countryside Agency, with its programme of activities, is tackling the issue of typicality from a different perspective than the other two schemes. In fact, from the documentation it appears that the keyword is 'local' rather than 'typical': the Agency targets products and marketing schemes where the local nature of the products is what is important. In turn, drawing from the Agency's objectives, 'local' is characterised as 'being produced in a way which enhances the physical rural environment' and also 'participating in a localised supply chain network'. Therefore the notion of typical products, those which have some geophysical or human link to a local area, is significant to the extent that their production processes are environmentally sustainable, they participate in a localised supply chain, and their end product qualities can lever out consumer spending. Some of the product marketing schemes which the Agency supports, such as marketing of rare breed meats, may indeed involve products with geophysical and human links to an area, but it is the ability of these characteristics to lever out the desired local environmental benefits which makes them a target of support, rather than their intrinsic typicality characteristics themselves.

4 DISCUSSION

The preceding section has introduced and examined the typicity classifications and underlying objectives of three different development schemes operating in the UK for which food product territorial identities play a role. From this, it has been argued that each scheme uses slightly different classifications of typicity, drawing to varying extents from the three facets of territorial distinctiveness mentioned in the first section of the paper (geophysical, human and consumer perceptions). In turn, these different characterisations of typicity and use of territorial identities in foods can be explained by the schemes' discrete objectives and remits. To summarise these, Figure 1's depiction of the main underlying policy thrusts relating to typical foods (cultural heritage, marketing and local sustainability) may be referred to.

With reference to these policy thrusts, it may be argued that EU regulation 2081/92 is underpinned by quite explicit marketing objectives, in which food product territorial identities are viewed as tools to be used by commercial producers to gain competitive advantage. In addition however, the legislation is also underpinned by cultural heritage objectives, with carefully defined classifications of typicity designed to protect and preserve socially and culturally important food production practices. Local sustainability objectives appear to be more implicit as the scheme does not seek to influence supply chain flows. Overall however, there is an assumption of complementarity between the use of typicity as a marketing tool and the preservation of typical foods as socio-culturally valuable entities. For the Food From Britain scheme, with its internationalist origins and small business development remit, it

appears the most explicit perspective of typicality is also that of marketing: territorial identities project desirable attributes onto end products which make them appealing and valuable to consumers, and both members and scheme co-ordinators creatively employ such identities for commercial gain. As the scheme does not stipulate requirements for the geophysical or human facets of members' production processes, nor oblige members to engage primarily in local supply chain networks (though some groups' activities may encourage this), cultural heritage and local sustainability objectives are more implicit. Finally, the Countryside Products programme has a different perspective again. Its priority is to encourage local products which, through their production and distribution processes, are conducive to sustainable rural development and enhancement of the physical environment. 'Local' products targeted in this programme would be those which achieved these enhancements, rather than those which, for example, did have geophysical and human attributes of typicality, but which did not offer these developmental and environmental benefits. Thus, the local sustainability perspective appears most explicit. To discuss further the implications of different perspectives of typicality in foods for the achievement of policy objectives, each one is now taken in turn.

Typicity as Cultural Heritage

In the introduction, it was argued that typical local foods may be analysed and understood from the perspective that they are culturally important symbols of human activity within an area. One can empathise with policy initiatives which are underpinned by this perspective, from the point of view that it behoves any civilised society to take care of its cultural patrimony. For any support initiative to work however, there

needs to be some form of classification of those types of products and production practices which can be deemed culturally significant. Problems arise in setting the boundaries of these classifications: too loose, and non-culturally significant products are included, too rigid, and sensitivity to local differences in interpretation of cultural significance is lost. As an illustration of this latter difficulty, it has been argued that the historical impacts of industrialisation and agricultural policy decisions in the UK have given rise to a set of products (e.g. soft drinks such as 'Vimto') which do not have their roots in small-scale peasant agriculture, but which do have characteristics shaped by the social history of specific geographic areas. Their dimensions of typicity are different, therefore how should they be dealt with in classifications of culturally significant foods? (this point is discussed further by Wilson and Fearn, 1999). How can an effective classification of typicity be arrived at which takes account of these local differences without undermining the voracity of cultural heritage protection claims? It would seem that given the potentially multiple interpretations open to terms such as 'traditional', 'distinctive' or 'unique' (Bérard and Marchenay, 1995), the more centralised the decision-making on such classifications, the more difficult it is to arrive at an effective characterisation of typicity.

Another potential danger of policy initiatives for typical foods driven primarily by a cultural heritage perspective is that there is a risk of stifling development and innovation within a geographic area. In the search to solidly preserve geophysical and human aspects of typicity, forces of creativity and invention may be compromised to the detriment of rural development possibilities. Furthermore, if the products arising from policy supported initiatives are still to become exchangeable commodities in a market system (rather than publicly funded museum

pieces), producers and co-operatives require some freedom to adjust their product mixes and territorial images in order to respond to changing market needs (Casabianca and Coutron, 1998). Overly zealous 'preservation orders' compromise the ability of producers to be viable, self-supporting, commercial entities (as alluded to by Hamlin and Watson, 1997). In short, the argument here is that policy initiatives driven by primarily by socio-cultural objectives, where acknowledgement of the value of typical local foods from a marketing or local sustainability perspective is lacking, risk undermining some of the benefits they purport to target.

Typicity as a Marketing Tool

On the subject of typicity as a marketing tool, this paper has introduced and examined the notion of territorial identities as encapsulations of end product qualities which appeal to consumers. Thus, 'typicity' is one attribute which can be used proactively by individual producers and co-operative schemes alike to differentiate and add value to food products. One can see the logic of policy initiatives underpinned by this perspective in that the power of the market is being invoked to support producers who might otherwise be economically disadvantaged. Three issues arise however. First, even now relatively little is understood about how consumers respond to typicity. Indeed the theories which do exist often draw from rather unsophisticated notions of the mechanisms underpinning food choice and behaviour. Thus, the logic fundamental to the marketing perspective of typical foods is still in question. The second problem arising from a marketing perspective is that if territorial identities are viewed primarily as image-conveying tools, freely manipulable at the discretion of the commercial operator, it is possible

for any producer to employ them for their own purposes, whether or not they are the kind of disadvantaged producer which policy initiatives profess to target (Trognon, 1998). Even in Regulation 2081/92, where product specifications are required for designations to be awarded, claims regarding the territorial distinctiveness of the product or the traditional nature of production practices are not subject to any serious scrutiny (Bérard and Marchenay, 1995), which means that products with relatively little socio-cultural significance may be registered. Similarly, products with little local or environmental sustainability may be awarded designations under this scheme: as Edwards and Casabianca point out (1997), PDO registered Parma ham is produced from a modern breed of pigs reared intensively indoors, with no specifications in the designation relating to welfare, pollution or ecological criteria. Without territorial identities being 'fixed' in some way to production realities therefore, it may not be that the most appropriate types of producer are benefiting from support. The final problem arising from initiatives driven primarily by marketing objectives is that if typical product producers are encouraged to pursue the most attractive and lucrative markets (as they would be if marketing was the priority), it may be expected that substantial volumes of product would go to geographically distant markets, such as major urban centres, rather than local outlets. This would have the effect of losing some of the economic value contributable to the local area, undermining possible local sustainability benefits of typical foods.

Typicity as a Lever for Local Sustainability

In terms of a local sustainability perspective itself, this can also be perceived as a highly worthy approach to the support of typical local

foods. From this perspective, typical products are considered to be those which participate in short supply chains and localised exchange networks: they represent the output of local resources made available for local consumption. However, it would be naïve to assume that consumers will buy local foods just because they are local: the appealing qualities of such products must be delivered and communicated in an effective way. Thus, a marketing perspective is needed. Finally, it is conceivable from a rural development perspective that the development opportunities with the greatest potential are not those which draw primarily from local natural resources or traditional patterns of activity in an area. As such, products with these culturally significant dimensions may be overlooked by development co-ordinators who have their eye on levering out the greatest socio-economic benefits to an area. This laudable approach needs to be balanced with a socio-cultural perspective therefore.

5 CONCLUSION

In seeking to answer the question 'what is a typical local food?', this paper has investigated two areas. First, it has sought to explain the facets of territorial distinctiveness in foods, concluding that typicity is a combination of geophysical and human factors, shaped over time by macroenvironmental forces such as migration, trade, industrialisation and agricultural policy. Consumer perceptions add a further complex layer to territorial distinctiveness, whereby typicity acts as a signal for a range of end product qualities such as speciality, gourmet, nostalgia or naturalness. Second, the paper has introduced and examined three different policy initiatives which make use of the territorial aspects of food products in some way. This examination has argued that each

scheme uses different characterisations of typicity according to the objectives it prioritises and the perspectives underpinning them (cultural heritage, marketing, or local sustainability). The problems associated with the emphasis of only one of these perspectives has also been highlighted.

In conclusion, this paper also set out to address the question of whether current schemes and initiatives related to typical local foods are likely to achieve the various policy objectives sometimes claimed for them: that is, enhanced employment opportunities and skills, increased local economic activity and value, and enhanced social vibrancy. From the preceding discussion, it may be argued that the most effective way for schemes and initiatives to achieve these objectives is if all three perspectives of typicity are acknowledged. But, in spite of implicit assumptions in some schemes of a complementary overlap between, for example, typicity as a marketing tool and as a culturally valuable quality in a food, it must also be recognised that these three perspectives have fundamental *tensions* between them. For example, development of fixed, culturally significant classifications of typicity detracts from the ability of typical product producers to engage creatively with the consumer. Alternatively, the free use of territorial identities to differentiate products encourages a system of exchange based on product symbols bearing little relation to territorially distinctive production realities. Furthermore, the encouragement of local supply chain networks for typical products may detract from their effective marketing if the most lucrative customer base resides elsewhere. Future research therefore does need to continue to examine the complex nature of territorial distinctiveness in foods and the means by which policy initiatives can address effectively the tensions

which exist between cultural heritage, marketing and local sustainability perspectives of typicality.

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Appendix 1 List of PDO and PGI Registered Foods in the UK

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Beer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newcastle brown ale - Kentish ale and Kentish strong ale - Rutland bitter | <p>PGI</p> <p>PGI</p> <p>PGI</p> |
| <p>Cheeses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beacon Fell traditional Lancashire cheese - Bonchester cheese - Buxton blue - Dovedale cheese - Single Gloucester - Swaledale cheese/ Swaledale ewes' cheese - Teviotdale cheese - White Stilton cheese / Blue Stilton cheese - West Country farmhouse Cheddar cheese | <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PGI</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> |
| <p>Ciders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gloucestershire cider/perry - Herefordshire cider/perry - Worcestershire cider/perry | <p>PGI</p> <p>PGI</p> <p>PGI</p> |
| <p>Fresh fish, molluscs and crustaceans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whitstable Oysters | <p>PGI</p> |
| <p>Fresh meat and offal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Orkney beef - Orkney lamb - Scotch beef - Scotch lamb - Shetland lamb | <p>PDO</p> <p>PDO</p> <p>PGI</p> <p>PGI</p> <p>PDO</p> |
| <p>Fruit, vegetables and cereals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jersey Royal potatoes (PDO) | <p>PDO</p> |

Source: MAFF website, as at November 1999

Appendix 2 Regional Speciality Food Groups in the UK

A Taste of the South East

A Taste of the West

Hampshire Fare

Heart of England Fine Foods

Middle England Fine Foods

North West Fine Foods

Taste of Anglia

Kentish Fare

Yorkshire Pantry

A Taste of Ulster

Scottish Enterprise

Welsh Food Promotions

Source: <http://www.foodfrombritain.com/search.htm>.