

Bernadett Csurgó: Nostalgia for the rural. Cultural heritage based tourism and community building in rural Hungary

Over the last few decades the Hungarian countryside has gone through many changes. Rurality has become an object of consumption and the most important elements of rural representation are tradition, community, nature, quietness, local particularities, rustic fashion, etc. In parallel with this process the significance of the role of rurality has grown in the constitution of national identities. Rural and peasant traditions are being portrayed and promoted as the origin of Hungarian culture. The rural and rurality are increasingly being interpreted according to the context and relation of consumers and consumption, and their essential element is the yearning for authenticity and past origin. Recent rural discourse is rooted in nostalgia for an holistically perceived world (Kovács 2012) In response to these processes more and more rural places are promoting themselves as nostalgia destinations providing traditional rural culture and local heritage. Almost all the settlements in rural Hungary organise rural festivals and events based on their local culture and traditions several times a year. From the sausage to the ham, from the cowboy to the pottery maker there are wide varieties in the cultural heritage used to symbolise and label these rural events. They have varying degrees of success, but some of them have gained regional or national attention (Csurgó 2004, 2013; Csurgó and Nagy Kalamász 2007; Fejős and Szijártó 2000; Pusztai 2003).

Nostalgic idealisation of the rural has resulted in new cultural interests in rural culture and tradition at a broader social level which has significant influence on the social and economic restructuring of rural Hungary (Csurgó 2014). The aim of this paper is the interpretation of rural nostalgia as a social practice which helps to understand the motivations and drivers of nostalgia-based revitalisation and reuse of local rural cultural heritage. Based on research¹ using qualitative sociological and anthropological methods the paper discusses the role of nostalgia as a motivating factor for tourism and community building in five micro-regions in Hungary. Research was conducted in three micro regions in the Eastern part of Hungary in the Northern Great Plain region, the fourth study area is located in the central south part of Hungary while the last one is situated in the western border of the country. Selected micro regions have many differences in terms of culture and traditions and also the landscape and the settlement structure significantly differ from each other.

The research explores the ways in which the key actors become rural culture-makers, tourism leaders and community building initiators and interpret and introduce their locations and their cultural heritage-based local events and other activities. The case study research collects and analyses local traditions, products, customs, practices and built heritage which are developing new functions as nostalgia-based goods and services for both consumers and locals. Research objects include local cultural events like festival or village days, local gastronomy and crafts and also the built heritage and rustic rural landscape.

Local heritage use including revitalisation of local heritage, image building and cultural heritage-based community building and tourism development are the focus of the case studies. The paper seeks to identify the characteristics and forms of local cultural heritage use. It

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analyses the main actors, their understandings and motivations for rural heritage and heritage use, and the processes and ways in which local cultural heritage functions are also explored. The role of nostalgia in these processes is at the centre of the discussion.

Rural culture, idyll, heritage and nostalgia

There are increasing demands on locality and rurality nowadays. Modernisation and local heritage conservation are interconnected. Tourism development significantly connects to the redefinition of local identity and it results in heritage promotion becoming profitable (Bessière 1998). The development of the cultural tourism industry and especially the heritage sector in postmodern societies resulted in an increasing interest in the heritage of regional, rural, ethnic and other previously marginalised groups. It is a chance and challenge for these groups - in the same way as rural communities - to contribute not only to their past but to their present and future (Smith 2015). Ray (1998) argues that utilisation of culture is a resource of rural communities for integration and also is an integral part of bottom-up, endogenous rural development. Based on the observation of LEADER initiatives he developed the theory of culture economy which states that people in rural areas can revive or protect their economic and social well-being through the strategic use of local culture and the pursuit of local participative democracy (Ray 1998).

Culture has been included in regional development strategies since the 1990s. Culture and cultural heritage have been regarded as a significant resource in local development policy. Communities' cultural capital has become a significant beneficial effect on local and regional development (Ilmonen 2009; Radcliffe 2006). Cultural aspects of rural development are rooted in Tönnies's theory of 'Gesellschaft' and 'Gemeinschaft' which refers to the negative value of city-like lack of social safety and to the positive value of rural places like care and community (Tönnies and Harris 2001).

One of the main social representations of the rural is the rural idyll. It concerns the increasing demand for rural authenticity. The rural is represented as the lost and found community, lost and found traditions, lost and found beauty etc. There is a strongly idyllic view of rural pastimes (Ehrentraut 1996). The rural idyll is strongly connected to nostalgia. It is deeply embedded in the process that is designated as the desire for memory in contemporary society by Dickinson (1997). "The shift of identity from traditional familial, community and work structures to "lifestyle" along with the fragmentation and globalization of postmodern culture engenders in many a profoundly felt need for the past" (Dickinson 1997:1). Rural places can be regarded as sites of memory.

Nostalgia is an important emotion in society. Nostalgia in social sciences revolves around three main topics: collective memory, yearning for the past and identity. The originator of the collective memory concept is Maurice Halbwachs (1992), who argues that the collective memory is always socially constructed to explain the past in the present. According to his concept there are several types of collective memory connecting to different social groups and social classes. Collective memory refers to the social nature of remembering. This remembering has a strong impact on the future (Halbwachs and Coser 1992).

The sociology of nostalgia is also rooted in the thesis which argues that nostalgia is an individual experience, however its origins and implications are highly social. There are two major works in the sociology of nostalgia: Fred Davis's (1979) *Yearning for Yesterday: a Sociology of Nostalgia* and Svetlana Boym's (2001) *The Future of Nostalgia*, which both provide deeper theoretical explanations. The definition of Boym (2001) distinguishes between two strands of nostalgic emotion. "Reflective nostalgia" has its roots in individual memory of one's personal past and is associated with fragments and details in the present that evoke

connections to a personal past. “Restorative nostalgia” is grounded in grand narratives of national identity and shared values and truths, and is concerned with the return to a previous, ostensibly better, state. Davis (1979) defines nostalgia as longing for the past and he sees nostalgia as a tactic used by people to hold on to a sense of identity. The concept of nostalgia is strongly connected to identity construction which brings the discussion back to Ray’s theory of place identity (Ray 1998).

Both negative and positive aspects of nostalgia are emphasised in social sciences. Our study is strongly connected to the positive aspect of nostalgia which is based on the analysis of consumer behaviour where the role of nostalgia has importance for consumer attitudes and choice. So marketing and tourism research linking nostalgia focus on consumers’ attitudes and motivations towards goods and services with a sense of nostalgia including museums, heritage sites, historical attractions etc. (Fairley 2003). Heritage in cultural tourism studies is regarded very similarly but generally more positively than nostalgia in the social sciences. Heritage is defined as the contemporary use of the past, it is a means of linking past and present (Smith 2015). From a consumer-based point of view a broader definition of nostalgia has been developed: Holbrook and Schindler (1991) define nostalgia “as a preference (general liking, positive attitude, or favourable affect) toward objects (people, places, or things) that were more common (popular, fashionable, or widely circulated) when one was younger (in early adulthood, in adolescence, in childhood, or even before birth)” (Holbrook and Schindler 1991:330). Based on this broader definition of nostalgia case studies in this paper use nostalgia as an analytical tool to help to understand the motivations and goals of key actors of rural communities towards revitalisation and reconstruction of local heritage.

Exploring use of nostalgia in rural heritage - case studies

In the following sections five case studies are presented based on qualitative and anthropological methods: document-analysis, semi-structured interviews, transect walking and observation (Kvale 1994). 30-40 interviews were conducted with the key actors of local culture, community and tourism in each case study area between January 2014 and September 2015.

The aim of the paper is to explore nostalgia in rural cultural heritage use including rural cultural events and tourism services. The paper aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main characteristics of local cultural heritage?
- Who are the key actors of heritage use?
- How do local actors present and represent their cultural heritage-based activities?
- How are local heritage and heritage use connected to nostalgia?
- How can local community be influenced and affected by nostalgia-based activities?

The case studies present local events using rural heritage and analyse local discourses on these events and related heritage. To summarise this paper, it is argued that nostalgia provides new understandings and a fruitful approach to the analysis of cultural heritage-based rural development.

The nostalgia for eating and making traditional food: Hajdúság region

The first selected study area is the Hajdúság, which is located in the Eastern part of Hungary, in Hajdú-Bihar County and is characterised by the high level of urbanisation and famous for spa tourism which is mainly concentrated in the town of Hajdúszoboszló, which is a traditional tourism destination. The most important cultural heritage of Hajdúság stems from

the historically privileged status of the settlements of the region, named “hajdú” towns from the 17th century. This hajdú heritage is represented by material and spiritual traditions and monuments with very strong connections to traditional peasant culture. All “hajdú” towns have several built heritage sites and many of them have local historical collections. The centre of Hajdúság is Hajdúböszörmény, where the Hajdú Museum is located. Hajdú tradition is a common heritage of the settlements but all of them try to find their special characteristics and images. Special place image mainly come from special local food products and local gastronomy.

The key actors of heritage-based local development are mostly connected to local governments. Institutions of local governments (such as. Cultural Centres, Museums, Schools) are the main organisers of cultural heritage-based events. There are only some events in some places where the initiators and organisers are non-governmental actors such as civic associations. However, the characteristics of events organised by civic organisations do not differ essentially from those that are organised by governmental actors.

The common characteristic of heritage-based local events in Hajdúság is the central position of gastronomic heritage. All of the settlements have a special gastronomy festival and many of them developed special local food products with special labels connecting to their events. Initiators and organisers emphasise that local food and the special traditional methods of food preparation provide the connection to past origin through the practice and taste. The main target group of their events are locals and so-called ‘return to home visitors’ who have family relationships to the place or to the wider region. Hajdúság Pig Killing in Hajdúböszörmény, Cabbage Days in Hajdúhadház and the traditional food (e.g. slambuc- a traditional cowboy meal) are featured in competitions to show that the main characteristic of these events are the strong connection to peasant culture and practices. Peasantry in this sense involves the meaning of strong community and these events provide a common sense of the past for both locals and visitors. Traditional food and the sense or practice of ‘eating together’ evoke the memories of the lost community. The taste and feeling of - lost and returned - home are also strongly emphasised. Other elements of local and especially peasant culture (such as folk art, folk music, built heritage etc.) are also presented in these events as a framework or circumstance. For example, the Pig Killing event in Hajdúböszörmény is placed in a local built heritage site: in an open air museum presenting peasant houses. Furthermore, the special characteristics of presented food and food culture and related heritage elements can strengthen the local identity through the presentation and promotion of local specialities. Local gastronomic heritage here has a symbolic function, it presents the local specialities for both locals and outsiders through taste, food preparation and the ritual of eating together in an idyllic rural setting. The nostalgic idealisation of special gastronomic heritage revitalises local identity and provides new or more specific images for the places. Nostalgia-based events here are the main drivers of positive self-identification for the local community.

Nostalgia for authentic activities: Derecske-Létavértes micro region

The second study area is the Derecske-Létavértes micro region in Hajdú-Bihar County near the Hungarian-Romanian border. The suburbanisation process (more and more settlements in the region have become part of the Debrecen city agglomeration) is a special characteristic of the micro region. All of the settlements have their own local traditions e.g. folk traditions, castles or celebrities. However, the most common image of the region is rooted in an agricultural product, the horseradish. 80% of the Hungarian horseradish production comes

from the micro-region, and it became a PDO (protected designations of origin) in 2006. Horseradish recently is regarded as the most important local tradition.

The Horseradish Tourist Route Association was established by eight local governments, four horseradish producer firms and a local restaurant as a result of symbolic reinterpretation of horseradish since the 2000s. The main actor of the Association is the biggest horseradish producer firm and the centre of their activities is located in Bagamér village where the firm is situated and also the nearest town Létavértes has a central position where many actors are located. The main purposes of the Association are to generate tourism activities and to revitalise local cultural heritage. Horseradish did not have a cultural meaning before the Association started its activities, it was only regarded as the main economic resource. The main target group of the Association is tourists but recently mostly the locals are involved in their activities. A new local network has been created through the new cultural and symbolic redefinition of horseradish. Local events (Horseradish days, Horseradish Festival), local heritage collections and new local dishes have been created or revived. More and more locals participate in heritage-based activities from collecting traditional objects to creating horseradish-based meals. Nostalgia for traditional activities are strongly emphasised by the main actors. Nostalgia here has a strong connection to authenticity. Authenticity of product, authenticity of methods and authenticity of places are at the centre of discourses. The symbolic meaning of horseradish includes the local specialities, local identity and also common rural traditions with traditional ways of life and traditional methods in cultivation and in cuisine. However, peasant culture with folk art is only the broader context for this symbolic redefinition of horseradish. The main emphasis is on the special characteristics of the place including traditional ways of life which are symbolised by horseradish. Nostalgic idealisation and symbolic redefinition of local products as cultural heritage can lead to the revitalisation of local community.

Nostalgia for historical origin: Mezőtúr micro region

The third study area is the Mezőtúr micro region in Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County. The most famous cultural heritage of the region is the pottery art of Mezőtúr. However, common cultural identity of the municipalities is connected to the peasant traditions and Cuman past origin. The centre of Cuman traditions in the micro region is Túrkeve town. Mezőtúr micro region is a part of the historical and geographical region of Greater Cumania (Nagykunság). Most of the settlements of the micro region except Mezőtúr town are so-called Cuman settlements where Cumans were settled in the 13th century.

As a result of European Rural Development Programs and especially the LEADER, the settlements of the micro region and other joint settlements from other parts of the Greater Cuman region seek to find common symbols to promote themselves to outsiders and also to strengthen their local (micro regional) identity. The centre of the LEADER Local Action Group was in the micro region (previously in Túrkeve, recently in Kétpó) so actors from the micro region have a central position. A nostalgic reinterpretation of local historical origin, the Cuman origin became the core element of the image building process. Civic organisations from Mezőtúr and Túrkeve are the main actors of this process. While in contrast, local governments of the towns mainly focus on their own cultural and heritage specialities like the pottery art in Mezőtúr and the shepherd culture in Túrkeve. Civic associations proposed to create a joint image which could be the basis of tourism development of the region. They emphasise that single settlements do not have enough attractions so they have to provide a common touristic image and the group of attractions covering the whole Greater Cumania region. According to this goal Mezőtúr started to present itself as a kind of centre of the Cuman settlements even if originally the town has never been a Cuman place. It presents its

connection to Cuman past origin by emphasising that its inhabitants have Cuman origins. All the settlements including Mezőtúr installed Cuman Memorial Monuments and use the Cuman term as a common symbol. However, there are very few Cuman artefacts, only some elements of special language and special needlework motifs remained and survived the assimilation of the Cuman nation over the past few centuries. Cuman culture is mainly represented as a way of life in which animal husbandry is at the centre. Thus, Cuman cultural specialities are strongly connected and are not separated from the peasant culture and folk art. Cuman specialities and the historical origin of the region are represented in tourism brochures but local events are not able to represent Cuman past origin in a special sense. The strongest link for creating common place image is based on the nostalgic reinterpretation of a common historical origin. Nostalgia for a common past origin is the basis of common local identity.

Nostalgia for folk art: Kalocsa micro region

The fourth study area is Kalocsa micro region in Bács-Kiskun County, in South-Central Hungary. Kalocsa and its surrounding villages are famous for the colourful flower motifs of the ornamental painting and embroidery. These unique elements of the traditional peasant culture became the emblematic symbol of not only local but also Hungarian folk art and national identity. Local identity and image are very strong in the Kalocsa region. Nostalgia for traditional folk art appears both inside and outside of the local community. Local identity and also community integration are based on these living traditions. Local folk traditions are kept alive through the activities of women and their groups and societies who still draw, paint and embroider in the traditional style and also through folk dance groups wearing traditional costumes and art education involved in elementary school curriculum. There is nostalgic idealisation of folk-art based activities in the region which strengthen the local identity and local community integration.

Local specialities such as Kalocsa's folk art heritage are also presented in local museums, folk art centres and village centres where the target groups are not only locals but also outsiders and tourists. Local governments, cultural and tourism institutions, civic organisations and tourism enterprises are the leading actors of heritage-based activities in the Kalocsa micro region. There are several events providing the chance to see and also to practise the living local traditions such as the Danube Folklore Festival, Kalocsa Paprika Days, and several other village festivals. Kalocsa is a relatively popular tourism destination but mostly for foreign tourists and mainly for a one-day tour. Foreign tourists are involved in some folk-art activities during their one-day tour: they see a folk-dance show, taste local food products, and visit a traditional house and receive a folk-art based gift. Domestic tourists do not appear to be nostalgia-motivated tourists in the region. However, local initiators plan to provide traditional practice-based activities for outsiders who are attracted by the nostalgia of folk art. They have not yet managed to attract a large number of domestic tourists with their nostalgic activities. Mostly locals are involved in and participate in folk-art based activities. Their involvement is based on the nostalgia for local past traditions and on the motivation to keep them alive.

Kalocsa folk art tradition and especially the flower motifs stand out from their original local circumstances and represent Hungarian traditions and identity for the outside world. They are one of the main Hungaricums which are well-known all over the world. Nostalgic idealisation and symbolic discovery of Kalocsa folk-art returned in the 1930s, hence the Kalocsa motif is the most characteristic icon which can symbolise both past and present Hungarian identity. From the 2010s a renaissance of the Kalocsa motif began and the folk-art motif was transformed from an elite to an ordinary design. However, the local area has not benefited by this symbolic rediscovery. The economic impact of the Kalocsa motif renaissance is not concentrated in the region. New design businesses were established outside the region (mostly

in Budapest). Consumers demanding Hungarian identity products can access the Kalocsa motif everywhere in Hungary from rural festivals to shopping centres. The Kalocsa motif is more strongly connected to the national identity than the local one for non-local Hungarians.

Even if the Kalocsa region has an extremely strong folk-art symbol with a significant nostalgic idealisation it only revives and strengthens the locals' nostalgia-based activities locally. The Kalocsa folk-art symbol has been detached from the place according to outsider perceptions. Kalocsa folk-art traditions do not make domestic tourists visit the place because they can access and experience it everywhere in Hungary as a national symbol. Nostalgic idealisation of folk-art can be observed inside the community and also outside, but in the latter case independently from the place.

Nostalgia for landscape: Órség region

The fifth study area is the Órség, which is located in the Western part of Hungary in the corner of the Austrian and Slovenian borders. Settlements of the Órség region belong to two counties: Vas and Zala. The western frontier location resulted in special status for the region with a higher degree of control and a lower degree of development during the socialist era. As a result of this disadvantaged status, the Órség region has kept its traditional landscapes with special traditional settlement structure and shape of houses and untouched nature.

From the late 80s and most significantly after the change of political system from 1990, Órség became one of the main tourism destinations of upper middle classes demanding a rural idyll. Year by year, more and more urban inhabitants (mostly from Budapest) bought second homes in the Órség region and many of them stay there from spring to autumn or settled there permanently. Órség has been regarded as an idyllic rural landscape since that time. Thus Órség is the main nostalgia-based tourism destination in Hungary. Órség as a landscape has the association of being a rural idyll. The sense of place contains rural traditions, nostalgia for peasant culture and traditional know-how, and also the traditional shape of houses and settlement structure.

The main actors of cultural heritage-based tourism activities are the newcomers from Budapest. They were the pioneers and initiators of new, nostalgia-motivated tourism activities. Their main service was accommodation in a rustic, idyllic rural milieu. They have a very strong nostalgia for rurality, rural traditions, peasant culture, etc. They emphasise that they escaped from the estranged urban milieu and they found here community, nature, quietness, etc. The landscape of Órség provides them with a nostalgic rural milieu where they can find all the elements of nostalgic rurality. In addition, they share their nostalgic idealisation of place with their visitors. All of their services from the accommodation through to the food to the events contain the sense of nostalgia for rurality. This nostalgic idealisation of the Órség as place and landscape results in a strong identity for urban newcomers. This identity is strongly connected to the national identity as there is a strong association of Hungarian nationality with rurality. Being in the Órség provides a sense of common identity and a sense of community for visitors with shared values and truths, and the feeling of returning to a previous, ostensibly better way of life.

Rurality-based nationality and rural idyll appear in all of the activities of nostalgia-motivated tourism. Both tourism service providers and tourists discover local cultural heritage as an object of the rural idyll. They demand connections to local traditions and they find it especially in the consumption and production of cultural heritage-based goods and services. Local newcomers with the participation of local institutions organise local heritage-based events such as Blossoming Day, Órség Fair, Hétrétország – open yard and houses festival, etc. All the events and services involve the participants in traditional, cultural heritage-based

activities such as food preparation, dancing, feeding animals, harvesting, etc. The sense of place with the strong nostalgia for rurality and with the association of national identity is perceptible everywhere: the Órség landscape per se provides the sense of return to an ostensibly better way of life. Nostalgia is the main feature of the Órség landscape.

Discussion and conclusion

The case studies presented above prove that rurality is significantly associated with nostalgia. Nostalgia means the preference or positive attitude toward several elements of rural cultural heritage. In the case of the Hajdúság region, the main local cultural heritage related to nostalgia is the gastronomic traditions. Nostalgia for eating traditional local food together strengthens the local identity. Gastronomy-based events are organised for locals where they experience their traditions through common preparation and eating of traditional food. A traditional food product and its cultivation method is the main cultural heritage in the Derecske-Létavértes micro region too. A horseradish thematic tourist route is organised with the strong involvement of locals. Nostalgia toward authentic activities motivates the participation of locals in tourism services and it is demanded also by visitors. In terms of nostalgic idealisation of local heritage, horseradish strengthens both local image and local identity. In the case of the Mezőtúr micro region, there are several elements of cultural heritage in certain settlements, but the common heritage is the Cuman historical origin. There is a strong demand for a common image of the region which is rooted in nostalgia for past origin. Installing memorial monuments and collecting the memories of Cuman origin connect locals and swaddles them in a nostalgic community and also provide a common local image for outsiders. Kalocsa micro region has a strong cultural heritage-based local image and local identity. Kalocsa folk-art is one of the main Hungarian identity markers too. There is a very strong nostalgia for folk-art based activities such as needlework, dance etc. locally. Several forms of folk-art activities are found in each of the settlements in the region. However, Kalocsa folk-art based tourism services are not highly demanded by domestic tourists. Kalocsa folk art has a significant Hungarian meaning but it has lost its local characteristics from an outsider's point of view. The Órség region includes all the elements of nostalgic idealisation of rurality based on the traditional shape of landscape. Nostalgia for traditional rural landscape motivated urban newcomers to settle down temporarily or permanently in the region. These urban newcomers provide nostalgia-based tourism goods and services for tourists. Nostalgia for rural landscape is the driver of tourism development in the Órség region.

Case study area	main cultural heritage	main target group	main activity	nostalgia
Hajdúság	gastronomic traditions	locals	organising gastronomy events	nostalgia for eating traditional food together
Derecske-Létavértes	horseradish cultivation	locals and tourists	organising thematic tourist route	nostalgia for authentic activities
Mezőtúr micro region	Cuman historical origin	locals (and outsiders)	sites of memory	nostalgia for historical origin
Kalocsa micro region	folk-art	locals (and tourists)	folk art activities	nostalgia for folk-art
Órség	traditional shape	tourists and	tourism services	nostalgia for

	of landscape	newcomers		landscape
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Summarising the case studies we can say that rural cultural heritage has the meaning of past origin. Rural place and related cultural heritage is authentically memorable. Rural places appear as places of memory where authenticity can be reached through activities or just through being in the place. There are strong connections between memory, place and identity. Rural places provide the images of community, home, traditions necessary for the stabilisation of local identity and local image. Memory with the strong feeling of a lost but better way of life results in both locals and visitors becoming cocooned in a nostalgic environment in rural places. The nostalgic idealisation of rurality has become the driver of tourism development in all cases, even if the studied regions are in a different phase of development. Rural tourism provides goods and services drawn directly from the past but mostly those services create only the feeling of the past. Nostalgia can be seen as a motivation factor and driver which impacts on consumers' (tourists') and producers' (locals') behaviours, attitudes and perceptions in cultural heritage-based rural tourism.

References