



Rural-Urban Outlooks: Unlocking Synergies (ROBUST)

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Oikos d.o.o.

Mojca Hrabar

Mojca.hrabar@oikos.si

Snapshot: Expressions of Urban – Peri-Urban – Rural Relationships

The Goodies Trail (Pot dobrot)

Ljubljana Urban Region, Slovenia

1. Brief Description

The suburbs of Ljubljana are composed of former villages that are now increasingly integrated into the suburban fabric, and newer housing complexes built in 1970s and 1980s. In 2015, the farmers from former villages of Ježica, Savlje and Kleče in the north of Ljubljana, Posavje Local Community and Municipality of Ljubljana formed an initiative called “The Goodies Trail” (in Slovene language: *Pot dobrot*). The initiative aims at shortening the food supply chain and increasing direct sales of agricultural produce at farms and local food markets. The initiative is very localized; however, it provides a successful model for other suburban areas in the Ljubljana Urban Region, as well as entire Slovenia.

The Goodies Trail is using the opportunities that this rural/urban boundary provides by marketing the local farms and their produce – the “goodies” among local urban inhabitants of housing complexes of Bratovševa ploščad and Bežigrad, as well as other inhabitants of Ljubljana. Since 2016, The Goodies Trail has organized various events, the largest one being a food market weekend among the apartment blocks at Bratovševa ploščad organized in June. The participating farms have started to their own weekly sales points (including trust-based fruit and vegetables stalls where shoppers pick up produce and leave cash) and internet shopping, as well as various courses and trainings on horticulture and food conservation (e.g. sauerkraut making).

The Goodies Trail is supported by the Posavje Local Community (i.e. local authority unit of Ljubljana along Sava River) and works in cooperation with Bratovševa ploščad Initiative – a community initiative reviving the housing complex neighbourhood and organizing various activities, such as a summer open air cinema and meetups.

2. Questions and/or Challenges

- > How has the initiative for the Goodies Trail started and how has it evolved to the present state? What were the sources of inspiration and has the concept been copied elsewhere?

The farms in the villages around Ljubljana have benefitted from the proximity of an urban centre for a very long time. Although these villages have now long been integrated into the city of Ljubljana, they still preserve some rural characteristics. While the nearby urban housing areas are a potential market for farming produce, there are also conflicts related to land ownership, trespassing and urban sprawl. Farming is still strong, possibly because of the proximity of Ljubljana as the largest market. On the other hand, environmental concerns regarding farming have increased, particularly in Kleče as the area lies on the largest groundwater reservoir of the drinking water supply for Ljubljana. Nitrate Directive, as well as strict limitations and requirements for farms in the Ljubljana water protection zones have required changes in farming practices.

The initiative for the Goodies Trail might have developed from the particular rural-urban character of the area and the interaction with the authorities related to the rural-urban conflicts, support for SMEs and farming and protection of water resources. Namely the area immediately to the east of the former villages included in the Goodies Trail is an extensive water protection zone of the main water resource of Ljubljana. As a result, the farmers that farm the fields and meadows in the water protection zones have to comply with strict restrictions regarding fertilizer and pesticide use and to ensure that, the Public Utility and the City of Ljubljana organised numerous meetings and held some trainings for the farmers to raise their understanding and awareness; such activities could lead to more interactions among farmers, better knowledge of production planning and marketing methods and increased motivation for development. It is not known whether the initiative was developed on the basis of some examples, possibly from abroad, and whether it has already been copied in some other parts of Ljubljana Urban Region or other regions of Slovenia.

- > The participating farms have been selling their produce at their farms for a long time. How have they benefitted from participation in the Goodies Trail, and how have the nearby urban neighbourhoods benefitted from it?

The farms on the Goodies Trail likely have some benefits regarding the participation in the initiative. The tangible benefits are increased direct sales, both on the farm and at the occasionally organized local market days, and reduced costs for marketing and transport. In addition, the farms likely have some intangible benefits such as exchange of information and knowledge, technical support and similar. The benefits to the nearby urban neighbourhoods are difficult to assess, however the increased interaction across the rural-urban divide has had an impact on local identity. No analysis or research on the Goodies Trail has been done so far, thus no analysis of the economics of participation in the Goodies Trail is available and no estimates of the benefits of such activity have been done so far.

- > How has the interaction between the rural parts of Ježica, Savlje and Kleče with the nearby housing complexes changed over time, particularly after establishing the Goodies Trail?

The former farming communities on the fringes of Ljubljana, the capital and the largest city in Slovenia have been increasingly under pressure from urbanization. The area was and still is popular for construction of new housing. Although the planning documents limited the urban sprawl in the past, there might be pressures for new construction, including replacement of family homes with larger condominiums. It is possible that most of the farms are protected as farming resource and thus cannot be sold for development, but this does likely pertain only to larger farms. Namely in Slovenia farms are protected by legislation (Inheritance of Agricultural Holdings Act) as a resource, thus preventing sellout of land to different buyers and conversion into residential buildings. However, not all the farms are protected because protection depends on economic viability and the size is the proxy used for its estimate. While the farmers owning the land can benefit from the sales of land and/or buildings to the developers, development for housing/businesses also reduces their space for farming-related activities. As a result, this is a viable approach only if the farmer does not intend to continue farming: because the farms in Slovenia are rather small (the average size is 6,8 ha), decrease in size can be detrimental to its economic viability.

The Goodies Trail Initiative is so far an informal initiative that connects the local farmers, representatives and interested individuals from local communities (both former villages and the high-density housing complex) and the City of Ljubljana officials. The Initiative can help its members to benefit to the maximum from this situation. It can also assist at developing the local supply and support network, for example by ensuring the provisions and infrastructure for local food market and a community centre. Moreover, other initiatives have been formed, such as Bratovševa ploščad Initiative that interact with the Goodies Trail.

3. Main Insights

3.1. Indications of the application of the new concept of 'New Localities'

Ježica is located on the old Roman road towards Vienna and has thus developed as a transit spot and tourist destination for Ljubljana urban dwellers already in 19th century, known for its pubs ("gostilna"). Meanwhile Savlje and Kleče remained traditionally agricultural villages. Ježica has also experienced rapid urbanization in 1970s when a high-density housing complex known as BS7 or "Bratovševa ploščad" was built just south of the village, and other housing complexes were built further to the south and the east.

While the former villages along the Sava River - in the case of the Goodies Trail, Ježica, Savlje and Kleče - have maintained their rural character, the number of farms is decreasing, and the housing is increasingly converted to fit the urban lifestyle. The proximity to the city (including accessibility by city bus network) is on one hand a peaceful, safe rural environment. On the other hand, it makes them attractive to urban inhabitants. In addition, high-density housing complexes built in the 1970s and 1980s have brought high numbers of new inhabitants to the area; they had both urban and rural background, were ethnically mixed and had different habits. Urban gardens were established nearby, too. These

housing complexes are undergoing transformation, too: while initially settled mostly by young professionals and young families, its inhabitants are currently a mixture of aging first owners, students, young families and a new, different set of immigrants. While previously the immigrants were predominantly from other republics of former Yugoslavia, now the immigrants are from across Europe.

The Goodies Trail can be viewed as a response to several trends and new concepts. In terms of farming, it was a response to the new requirements and trends in farming, including the EU regulations and the competition at single market after joining EU in 2004. In terms of new space, the Goodies Trail initiated better communication and exchange between rural and urban areas as these are usually perceived in Slovenia. While in the past the divide was sharper, the socio-economic trends, especially after the political change in the 1990s and EU accession in 2004 influenced the need for more communication and expanded view of own localities. The former villages are seeing an influx of mostly urban inhabitants buying up property who have no previous attachment to the area and have different lifestyles and life dynamics than the “old” locals.

Moreover, the old housing complexes needed to redevelop and reinvent themselves. They were rather large and centrally planned, including all the amenities necessary for a new community springing up in the new housing, like kindergartens, schools, green areas, shops and sports facilities. Newer housing complexes constructed after 1990 are smaller, built by developers in such a way that they maximise the number of square meters of flats per area. Consequently, although they are more modern and newer, they are not that attractive for young families or people who are keen on green areas, and older housing complexes and their value are being rediscovered.

Proximity to rural areas is valuable as Slovene culture is oriented towards outdoor activities, locally produced food and own gardening.

The scale of urban areas and the difference between rural and urban areas in Slovenia is quite specific due to small size of the country and its towns. However, the example of the Goodies Trail could be replicated not only across the country, but also in other countries in the fringe urban/suburban areas, possibly preserving green belts or vast green areas including local farms or enabling community/urban gardening.

3.2. Insights related to the broad area of 'Smart Development'

The farms participating in the Goodies Trail have developed new approaches to distribution and marketing of their products. While their approach may not be innovative on the international scale, it is using the advantage of their location (proximity of urban area) and new technologies (internet based direct sales) to shorten the supply chain and sell their produce directly to numerous customers.

Related to that, farmers have increased communication and improved organizational and social skills to target their urban customers. Moreover, internet has been increasingly used for communication and marketing, mostly through Facebook pages but also by internet-

based ordering. The farmers had to accordingly adjust the system of payment (in line with the legislation on invoicing) and some are adjusting their distribution models.

No research has been done so far to analyse how the proximity of rural area and local produce has influenced the lifestyle patterns in the nearby urban areas, especially the shopping patterns.

3.3. Other insights that could be relevant for further work

The Goodies Trail and all the initiatives evolving and revolving around it may be seen as an example of social innovation. It is pulling together the resources and products of farmers in the villages that are now considered urban fringe; their products are complementary (ranging from honey to vegetables and meat) and cooperation helps them to market and sell them as much as possible directly to local consumers. Moreover, it bringing the inhabitants of the urban and rural part of the northern Ljubljana closer together, the rural neighbourhood becoming part of the appeal of the urban neighbourhood next door, particularly Bratovševa ploščad with its own activities and initiatives.

- > It would be interesting to see whether this helps the urban newcomers (new flat owners/renters in the housing complex) to form a local identity and whether it helps to the newcomers of rural background to settle in and find their identity in urban area.

The activities at or organized by the Goodies Trail contribute to more beneficial economic and social relations. The farmers are possibly earning higher incomes and save on time needed for logistics, while the inhabitants of urban areas have access to locally produced (often organic) food and have higher awareness of its seasonal patterns and life in rural area in general.

- > The farms participating in the Goodies Trail are relatively large and have good natural resources compared to the average farm in Slovenia, but it would be interesting to see how they benefitted compared to similar size farms - whether their income has increased, became more stable, whether they have modernized, changed the production and what impact that had on potential heirs' decision-making about their studies and employment.

It is also possible that the establishment of the Goodies Trail has increased the presence of the participating farms in the Ljubljana Food Markets as well as increased interest of inhabitants to shop for food at local farmers and in the food markets instead of the supermarkets and chain retail stores.

4. Data Sources and Indicators

The Goodies Trail (Pot dobrot) is an informal community supported by the Municipality of Ljubljana and as such does not follow particular indicators, thus the report is based on qualitative data. However, the Goodies Trail is relatively small community with proactive

members (mostly farmers) from whom some information can be gathered, particularly on joint activities, trainings they organize, volume of sales and earnings etc.

Variables and datasets from national and local data systems on population, agriculture and food production in Ljubljana Urban Region and Municipality of Ljubljana could be used to compare the Goodies Trail farms to the others. Information on funds received and type of projects supported by Rural Development Programme could help at the comparison to the national level.

Table 1 Data / Indicators for the Goodies Trail

Data / Indicator	Source
Number of farms in the Goodies Trail	Municipality of Ljubljana
Volume of sales of food produced on the Goodies Trail by type	Farms on the Goodies Trail
Number and type of events on the Goodies Trail per year	Farms on the Goodies Trail, Municipality of Ljubljana
Number and type of events involving the Goodies Trail per year	Farms on the Goodies Trail, Municipality of Ljubljana
Number of participants of events and workshops/trainings at the Goodies Trail	Farms on the Goodies Trail, Municipality of Ljubljana
Volume of support (in EUR) by the Municipality of Ljubljana for the Goodies Trail and its events	Municipality of Ljubljana
Number and type of projects supported by Rural Development Programme on farms on the Goodies Trail since 2004	Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, http://www.arsktrp.gov.si/
Volume of support (in EUR) by Rural Development Programme for farms on the Goodies Trail since 2004	Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, http://www.arsktrp.gov.si/
Earnings from farming in Ljubljana Urban Region	Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, https://www.stat.si
Earnings from farming in Municipality of Ljubljana	Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia, https://www.stat.si
Gross added value on farms in Ljubljana Urban Region	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si
Gross added value on farms in Municipality of Ljubljana	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si
Structure of farms in Ljubljana Urban Region	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si , Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry

Structure of farms in Municipality of Ljubljana	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia, https://www.kis.si , Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry
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5. Critical Appraisal of Data Use

The data available from the Statistical Office may not be available for individual settlements, only on regional level. In this case, it would be difficult to distinguish between urban and rural areas. It is possible to ask for less aggregated data for a fee.

The data on the Goodies Trail, Bratovševa ploščad Initiative and related events would need to be collected by a survey and/or semi-structured interviews among the participating farms, their buyers, Local Community and Municipality of Ljubljana. While farms report annually to the Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development, the data and their quality might be limited and possibly only estimates could be obtained with the survey.

The Agricultural Institute of Slovenia and the Agency of Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development have access to a wealth of information, including detailed information on the structure and production on farms. However, it has yet to be seen whether they are allowed and willing to share this information for research purposes beyond the national analysis of agriculture, such as ROBUST.

6. References

European Commission (2010) Europe 2020: A Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

Pot dobrot: <https://www.facebook.com/potdobrot/>

Bratovševa ploščad: <https://www.facebook.com/bratovseva.ploscad/>

Čerin farm: <https://www.facebook.com/kmetija.cerin>

Pr' Konc farm: <http://www.kmetija-prkonc.si/>

Pr' Ramovž farm: <https://www.facebook.com/ramovz/>

Posavje Local Community (četrtna skupnost): <https://www.ljubljana.si/sl/moja-ljubljana/cetrtna-skupnosti-v-ljubljani/cetrtna-skupnosti-v-ljubljani-2/cetrtna-skupnost-posavje/>

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