

## **A VILLAGE OF HIGH FERMENTATION: BREWING CULTURE-BASED FOOD TOURISM IN WATOU, WEST FLANDERS, BELGIUM.**

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### **Abstract**

In the paradigm of post-production, food tourism is developing as a phenomenon of rural restructuring in some areas, especially in Western countries. The framework of food tourism is an expanded version of conventional rural tourism, which includes not only local food and gastronomy but also the culture and traditions of that area. In the last two decades, food tourism has attracted attention in various fields, including geography and tourism, as a form of sustainable tourism, making use of local resources. This paper uses a case study of tourism in Watou, a rural village in West Flanders, Belgium, to explore the relation between a traditional brewing culture and sustainable rural tourism. The research method consisted of gathering data through fieldwork, which included investigations of the distribution of tourist attractions and land use, and analysing the data from a geographical perspective. Through analysis and discussion, we found that in Watou there is a multiplex of food tourism, which consists of rural tourism, agritourism, slow food tourism and gastronomic tourism, and that tourists consume tourism resources, which are themed to the traditional brewing culture in each kind of tourism. The results show that food tourism in Watou, which connects these subareas with one another, leads to the preservation of rurality and to the sustainability and the revitalisation of the village.

**Keywords:** *authenticity, brewing, food tourism, gastronomic tourism, hop cultivation*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The last half-century has seen changes of social and economic structures in both rural and urban contexts. The West, seeking economic growth, applied productivism to agriculture in order to solve global food shortages after WWII; this increased yields per unit area and the specialisation and expansion of agricultural production. However, this commitment to productivism destroyed rural communities by triggering population and labour outflows and harmed the environment through soil pollution and water contamination, as the ideology promoted the mechanisation of agriculture and the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides (Woods, 2005).

In the 1990s, the ideology shifted from productivism to post-productivism not only due to productivism's critics but also because consumers became increasingly interested in their food and because agriculture became less important to the economies of developed countries (Ilbery, 1998; Argent, 2002; Wilson and Rigg, 2003). The post-productivism concepts of the

‘commodification’ of rural space (Cloke, 1992; Butler et al., 1998) and the ‘rural idyll’ (Little and Austin 1996; Matthews et al., 2000; Horton, 2008) have been discussed based on the notion that rural space is captured as consumption space as well as production space. Rural tourism has been discussed in the context of the commodification of rural space, as it consumes aspects of rurality such as the nature, history, culture, and landscape of rural areas, thus promoting multi-functionalisation and revitalisation (Cloke, 1992; 1996; Ilbery, 1998).

Kikuchi (2008) argued that there are three main types of rural tourism research: static analysis of the actual state of an area, dynamic analysis of impacts to the area, and system analysis of the sustainability of rural tourism, including the preservation of rural environments and the proper use of rural resources. He stated that the scholarly perspective has changed from static analysis to dynamic analysis, and then to analyses of sustainable systems after the ideological shift to post-productivism. Moreover, he indicated that the research framework of rural tourism is useful for examining relevant mechanisms from the perspective of connections to local resources but has limitations that prevent it from establishing a framework that integrates the diversification of rural environments and local resources. As a solution, he promoted the ‘food tourism’ framework.

Studies of food tourism have been conducted by ethnology, cultural anthropology, and geography scholars. Using a concept similar to food tourism, Long et al. (1998) defined ‘culinary tourism’ as an ‘intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an ‘Other’, including the consumption or preparation and presentation for consumption of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered as belonging to a culinary ‘not one’s own’ from an anthropological perspective. Taking the tourism research perspective, Hall and Sharples (2003) drew from the wine tourism research of Hall and Mitchell (2001) to define ‘food tourism’ in the following way:

*Consequently, food tourism may be defined as visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experience the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivating factor for travel.*

Moreover, Hall and Sharples (2003) argued that such a definition does not mean that any trip to a restaurant is food tourism, rather the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region or even to taste the dishes of a particular chef must be the major motivation for such travel.

Thus, food tourism is a tourism type in which not only the food itself but also its production, production landscape, and culture are tourism objectives.

Hall et al. (1998) argued that food tourism can be divided into categories, including rural tourism, in which the natural and cultural landscapes of the rural areas become tourism objectives; agritourism, in which the production landscapes and farmers’ markets are tourism objectives; and tourist experiences of the local life and food culture. The authors argued that interactive and stratified connections between each tourism objective build a sustainable tourism. Kikuchi (2008) developed this framework, insisting that the conceptual ‘space’ of food tourism is established using the spaces of rural tourism and agritourism – driven by culture and history – and that the emerging slow-food and gastronomic tourism types reflected consumers’ increasing interest in their food.

In addition to discussions of food tourism’s structure, the sustainability of local food production under globalisation has become a controversial topic (Ilbery and Maye 2004; Marsden and Smith 2005; Mak et al., 2012). Wilson and Whitehead (2012) pointed out that the concept of local food is changing due to globalisation and that superficial branding is developing in remote rural areas such as County Clare, Ireland. Pike (2011) argued that

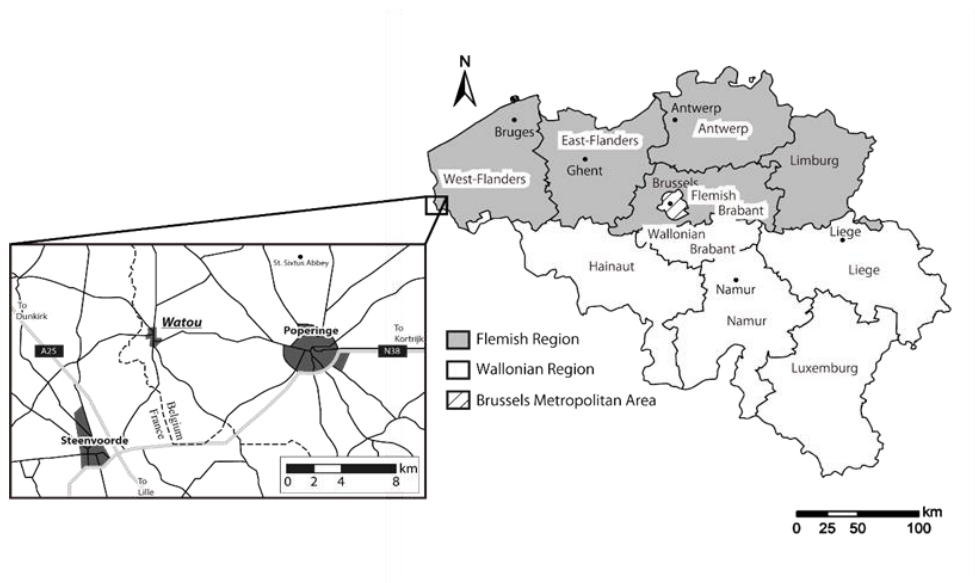
famous beer brand Newcastle Brown Ale has been experiencing the ‘sequential disconnection’ of its brand from local materials such as barley, hops and yeast, as the brand’s value has been expanding worldwide. This illustrates the discrepancy between ‘branding’ local and true local, while local branding and locally branded foods admittedly promote an area’s image. However, the relationship between local food and tourism in the context of globalisation has not been widely discussed and requires further analysis and case study.

Therefore, this article investigates the spatial structure of food tourism through a case study on Watou Village, West Flanders, Belgium, where food tourism is important to local industry and thus suitable for this research. Additionally, the research is based on a literature survey of the history of the village and the data from fieldwork, including investigations of the distribution of tourism attractions and land use and casual interviews with tourism actors. Food tourism in Watou Village is strongly related to rural settings, which provide the fresh food ingredients and good environment demanded by tourists. Particularly, revealing the structure of food tourism in Watou Village will offer an example of tourism based on the consumption of rurality in the village.

## 2. BREWING IN THE WATOU VILLAGE

### 2.1 Geographical setting

Watou Village lies in the Poperinge Municipality, located on the border with France (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Study area

It lies on a plateau with hills and dales running successively from the south towards France and to the north towards the North Sea. The centre of the village is located on the edge of the plateau, which is eroded by a brook, Warandebeek.

The origin of Watou Village is estimated at between the seventh and ninth centuries. It was a typical medieval feudal village (Rubbrecht, 1983). In the eleventh century, when hops were generally used for brewing, hop cultivation developed around the village because its soil was drier and more fertile than that of the sand dune areas and marshes on the shore of the North Sea. Since that era, the village’s local industry has consisted of agriculture – mainly hop

cultivation – and brewing, which have become interconnected. Therefore, though hop cultivation has declined due to an increase of import products, its agriculture and brewing industries remain strong. The village also features hospitality businesses connected with tourism such as cafes and restaurants.

However, Watou Village is suffering from a serious population outflow to urban areas because of the reduced working opportunities in agriculture due to changes in its industrial structure after WWII. In 2010, the population of the village (including Abele and Sint-Janter-Biezen) was 1,828 (Poperinge Municipality, 2012), half of the village's population in the 1910s, when the brewing industries were in their golden age (Watou Community, 2012). This depopulation has affected the sustainability of not only the industry but also the community (Thissen, 2010; 2012).

Recently Watou Village attracts food tourism, in which artisan brewing uses local resources, hop cultivation occurs as traditional agriculture, and slow foods and a sophisticated gastronomic cuisine are tourism resources. These are promoted in order to increase work opportunities and alleviate the depopulation problem (Figure 2). Therefore, new tourism in Watou Village is used to benefit the community.



*Source: Poperinge Municipality*

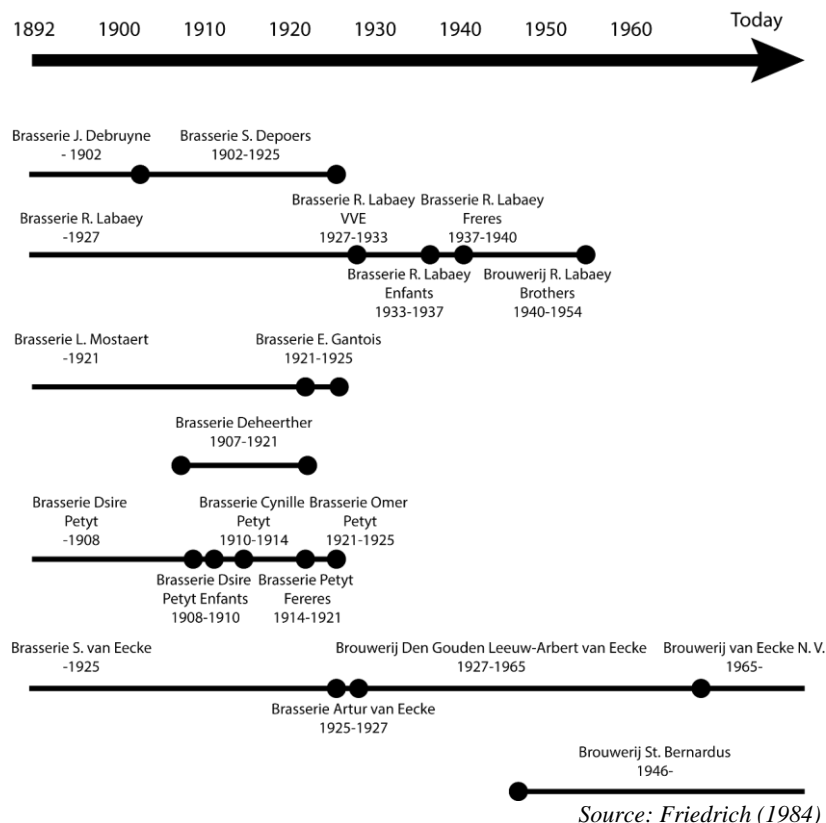
**Figure 2.** Promotion logo for tourism in Watou Village

## 2.2 Brewing history in the Watou Village

The brewing industry in Watou has been driven by two local breweries – Van Eecke Brewery, descending from a brewery owned by a noble family, and Sint Bernardus Brewery, which started as a cheese factory in an abbey. Thus, the development of brewing as a local industry is described by surveying the history of these two breweries in this chapter.

In medieval villages, beer was generally brewed at home as a nutritional supplement. Brewing in Watou Village emerged when the Earls van Yedeghem started governing Watou as a territory in the seventeenth century. Johanes, son of the first Earl, Karel van Yedeghem, built a castle in 1642 to display his family's prosperity and attached a brewery to it. The beer was brewed not only for the family but also for the villagers there. At this time, some breweries were owned by aristocrats, the royal family, and abbeys (Jackson, 1997). However, the brewery and castle were demolished by the French in 1793.

In 1820, a local farmer rebuilt the brewery, named 'In de Gouden Leeuw' ('in the golden lion'), in response to the village's increased brewing requirements. The brewery was renamed the 'Van Eecke Brewery' in 1862 when ownership was transferred to the Van Eecke family through marriage. As shown in Figure 3, which displays the evolution of Watou's breweries, they were named after their owners and thus changed names when their ownership changed.



**Figure 3.** Transition of breweries in Watou Village

The figure also shows how strongly the brewing industry was related to the village's families. Such family-owned breweries, as well as hop growing, became the main local industries. In 1907, at least six breweries were operating in the village.

However, the golden age soon ended, as more than half of the breweries closed down in the latter part of the 1920s due to deteriorating management during WWI and the death of brewers. The Van Eecke Brewery survived in these hard times and had its ownership transferred through marriage in 1962 to the Leroy family, who were brewing in nearby village Boezinge. Since then, the Leroy family has been running the Van Eecke Brewery in both Watou Village and Boezinge Village. The Van Eecke Brewery asked in 1981 by the Poperinge Municipality to brew a special beer for the Hop Festival, began brewing the Poperings Hommel Bier. This beer, brewed with hops harvested in the Poperinge area (including Watou Village), is a world-famous local branded beer.

Sint Bernardus Brewery began when the monks of Mont des Cats Abbey in Godewaersvelde, France, about 10 km south of Watou Village, fled there to escape the tyranny of French government occupation in the early 1900s. They built a cheese factory named 'Le Refuge de Notre Dame de St. Bernard' and refurbished an abandoned farmstead. When the tyranny eased in 1934, the monks went back to France, and the factory was bought by Evarist Deconinck. He expanded the factory and took over the production of cheese, which was sold at the Mont de Cats Abbey.

In 1946, Sint Sixtus Abbey in Westvleteren faced financial problems due to the need to repair its building and brewing facility, which were damaged by the Germans. The abbey decided to sell its brewing and selling licenses in order to cover the repair costs. These were sold to the Deconinck cheese factory, and the 'Sint Sixtus' brand of beer was brewed in a new brewery, Sint Bernardus, named after the former cheese factory.

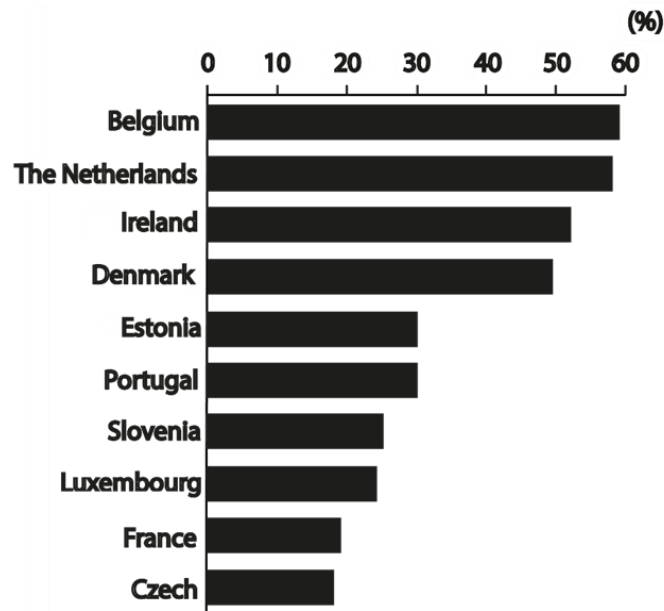
Sint Sixtus was brewed at the Sint Bernardus Brewery until 1992 when the license expired. Afterward, the brewery brewed the same kind of beer but rebranded and sold as 'Sint

Bernardus Abt 12'. The quality of the beer brewed at the Sint Bernardus Brewery is highly regarded all over the world, which is why 40% of its products are exported.

### 2.3 Brewing in Watou Village from the perspective of Belgian beer production trends

Why have Watou's two breweries – Van Eecke and Sint Bernardus – survived in such a small village on the periphery of Belgium? The expansion of their sales markets overseas and their branding as 'authentically' brewed in Watou Village appear to be factors.

On the whole, Belgian brewing has tended to favour export: approximately 60% of all Belgian beer production was exported in 2008 (Figure 4).



Source: *The brewers of Europe* (2010).

**Figure 4.** Top 10 beer exporters in Europe

There are two reasons for Belgium's export-oriented brewing. First, as is true of the top four beer-producing countries, Belgium contains the world's famous beer company, Anheuser-Busch InBev, which is headquartered in Leuven and brews the world-famous lager Stella Artois. Second, even relatively small Belgian breweries tend to export, while promoting their 'originality'. Craft beers have recently begun to gain in popularity against mass-produced beers along with the restructuring of global food culture and increased gastronomic demand.

These trends in export-oriented brewing include the breweries in Watou Village. The Van Eecke Brewery mainly exports to France, along with countries such as Britain, the US, and Japan. The Sint Bernardus Brewery exports 40% of their production, which goes to European countries such as Italy and Sweden along with the US and Japan. These exports increase not only revenue but also the international recognition of branded beer. Tourists, especially beer lovers, visit Watou Village from all over the world – from Japan and the US as well as from neighbouring areas in the Netherlands and France.

Authenticity is another factor in the breweries' survival. MacCannell (1976) defined 'authenticity' as the quality of being 'real', 'genuine', or 'original'. Watou's breweries exist as consumption spaces of authenticity, as tourists are able to experience and enjoy the village's own resources when they visit. The breweries hold tours regularly to respond to tourists who want to experience their authenticity.



The tours provide the tourists with a systematic understanding of the brewery, the village's history, and the brewing process and equipment (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Guided tour of brewery

All aspects of the brewery, such as the sound and heat of the brewing machines and the smell of the malts, hops, and leftovers, become significant factors in the authenticity as the tourists walk around the working breweries and enjoy the experience with all five senses. The final attraction of the tour is a beer tasting, during which tourists drink beer brewed in the facility, thus testing the authenticity. The Sint Bernardus Brewery gives souvenir sets of beer bottles and glasses in order to allow the visitors to re-experience their authenticity later. The brewery tour is a strategy used to inspire repeat visits to Watou Village.

Another factor that improves the authenticity of brewing is branding, especially local branding. Both breweries use local hops harvested in the Poperinge municipal area, including Watou Village. This not only shows their local pride but also improves the authenticity of their beer. Moreover, their products are distributed locally and enjoyed by local people, though their marketing is worldwide (Sint Bernardus' export percentage is particularly high, as mentioned).

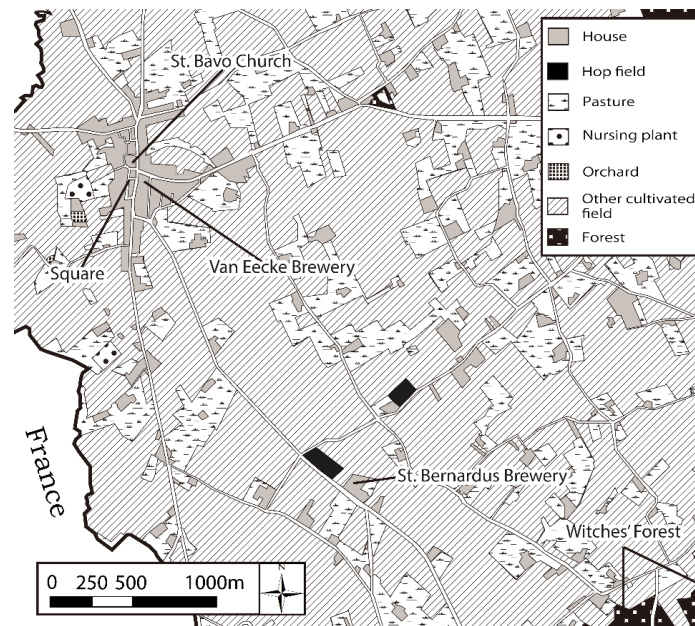
They use the local names 'Watou' and 'Poperinge' to label their beer – in, for example, the Watou Tripel and 'Sint Bernardus' series produced by Sint Bernardus Brewery and Watou's Wit and Poperings Hommel Bier produced by the Van Eecke Brewery. Thus, the beers brewed in Watou Village are promoted as local brands.

Therefore, the global expansion of their marketing promoted the international fame of Watou's breweries and of their beer. This fame then became an opportunity to attract tourists from all over the world. The authenticity of the village's traditional brewing has been preserved in order to respond to the tourists' demand for authentic brewing. Therefore, brewing in Watou Village, a remote village in Belgium, survives due to the ideal combination of the breweries' pursuit of marketing expansion and tourists' demand for authenticity.

### **3. STRUCTURE OF FOOD TOURISM IN WATOU VILLAGE**

#### **3.1 Rural landscape**

Watou's breweries are an important tourism resource but not the only one. The village's rural landscape, including the area's farmhouses and cultivation as well as the actual landscape, is another important tourism resource. As Figure 6 shows, the centre of the village was apparently originally a street, along with the road running north to south.



**Figure 6.** Land use in Watou Village (2012)

After Sint Bavo Church was built, the village changed into a green village, of a kind typical in Europe. Cafes, restaurants, groceries, and galleries are now located around the village square, forming a small commercial centre. The village has begun to form into an irregularly clustered style, with the building of new shops and houses and the development of urbanisation and tourism continuing alongside farmsteads located apart from the village centre. The changes in the village's structure have been influenced by the geographical position of the village centre, which is located on the node of a series of roads.

Farmsteads are dispersed around the village centre, a distribution that reflects area reclamation. This area was once covered by woods on a gently undulating plain. People settled along the dales or along the border of the lowlands and plateaus, where they could obtain water easily. They reclaimed only their own lands. Thus, settlers built their houses dispersively and were surrounded by reclaimed farmland. This agricultural reclamation produced the current distribution of farm houses and large, concentrated farmlands. Some woodland was left alongside the ridges, as the reclamation expanded from the dales. In the southeast of Watou Village, there is a woodland called 'Witch Wood', a forest left over from the reclamation. Witch Wood, a place of preserved nature, is used for tourist activities such as hiking and trekking.

Farmlands are concentrated around farmhouses, but the nature of their usage tends to depend on their distance from the main buildings. On farmlands near main buildings, potatoes and vegetables tend to be cultivated; on farmlands somewhat farther away, grains such as barley and corn are grown; farmlands even farther away are used as meadows. Hops, so typical of Watou Village's landscape, tend to be cultivated in the fields close to the main buildings (Figure 7).





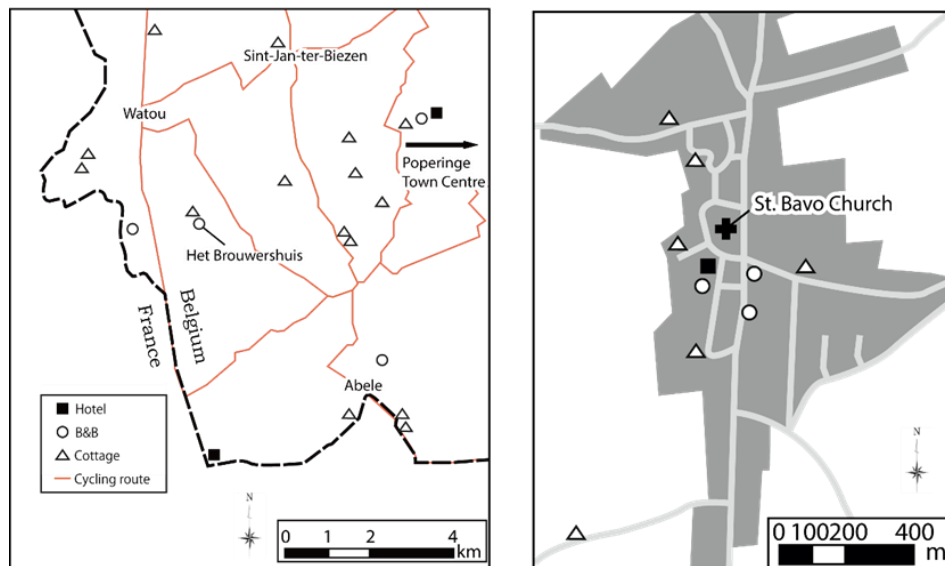
**Figure 7.** Landscape of hop cultivation

Hop is a dioecious climbing plant species of the Cannabaceae family; only its unpollinated female flowers are used for brewing. The harvest season for hops is usually late summer (i.e. early September) in Watou. Hop vines grow to six or seven meters by harvest time, climbing along wires.

Brewing and hop cultivation occur quite close together in the village because Belgium's hop cultivation occurs only in Poperinge Municipality (aside from Aalst Municipality, where a few hop farms are located); this is very advantageous for the village breweries, as they use fresh hops, whose aroma and taste deteriorate rapidly over time. Therefore, Watou's rural landscape, including its hop cultivation landscape, is a resource not only for rural tourism but also for the agritourism associated with the brewing process.

### 3.2 Hospitality facilities and accommodations

Watou's restaurants and cafes use the area's environment as another tourism resource. Figure 8 shows the distribution of the area's restaurants and cafes.



**Figure 8.** Distribution of catering facilities (2012)

The restaurants are concentrated near village centres such as Abele and Sint-Jan-ter-Biezen around the village centre of Watou. Many cafes are also located between the village centres of Watou and Abele; these restaurants and cafes serve local cuisine and beers brewed

in Watou Village, allowing people to enjoy slow-food tourism. However, the centre of slow-food tourism in the village, where the restaurants and cafes are concentrated, is in the centre of Watou.

The restaurants and cafes in the village centre are clustered around the square. Although the local cuisine and beers served in the facilities surrounding the village centre are also served in these facilities, the venues around the square tend to serve a more sophisticated, gastronomic style of cuisine. For instance, rabbit pot, which is boiled with potherbs, satisfies tourists' appetite for traditional local food. When they use local beer to cook this dish, an ordinary local traditional meal becomes specialty cuisine that satisfies epicures as well. The emergence of this kind of cuisine illustrates how slow food tourism in Watou Village has developed into gastronomic tourism.

Het Hommelhof ('The Hop Garden'), located on the village square, in the heart of the area's gastronomic tourism. Het Homelhof was an ordinary local restaurant that opened in 1984, when a closed disco was refurbished. In 1986, owner–chef Stefaan Couttenye decided to introduce the village's food culture to the world and started serving 'Bierkeuken' ('beer cuisine') in collaboration with the two local breweries. It began to attract beer lovers from all over the world. Michael Jackson, English beer critic, described Het Hommelhof as a splendid restaurant that serves beer cuisine along with local beer in his books *The Great Beers of Belgium* and *The Beer Companion*, attracting the attention of epicures and cooking expats. Het Hommelhof appeared in the *Michelin Guide*, and Couttenye wrote a book, *De Bierkeuken van't Hommelhof (The Beer Cuisine from Het Hommelhof)*. Thus, the presence of a restaurant with a worldwide reputation was an important factor in the development of gastronomic tourism in Watou Village.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of accommodations in the village. Accommodations are distributed eastwards from the village centre, reflecting the fact that Poperinge's town centre is located approximately 10 km east of Watou Village. Distribution patterns differ by accommodation type.

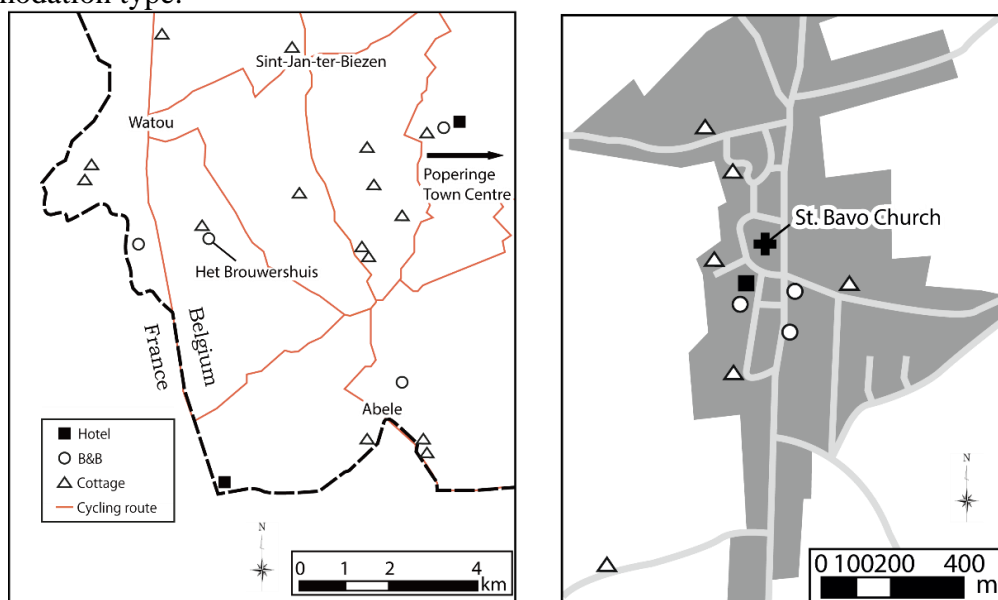


Figure 9. Distribution of accommodations (2012)

For example, many hotels and BandBs are near the centre of the village. These facilities offer more luxury and services than are needed to enjoy the rural environment and thus relate strongly to gastronomic tourism. On the other hand, holiday cottages tend to be located at a distance from the centre; some of these are barn conversions on farmsteads. Their users clearly prefer the rural environment as a refuge from the bustle of the town.

Het Brouwershuis ('The Brower's House'), located far from the centre, is a BandB owned by Sint Bernardus Brewery. The building was the mansion owned by Dekoninck, the brewery's founder. Guests can enjoy activities such as brewery tours, cycling, walking around the rural villages, and tasting the local and gastronomic cuisine in area restaurants. In the BandB's library, free Sint Bernardus beers are prepared for the guests, who can read books or converse while enjoying their beers. For breakfast, local food such as bread baked at a village bakery and cheese made at Sint Bernardus Brewery are served. Although most guests are European (including Belgians), more Japanese are visiting, thanks to the fame produced by increased exports to Japan.

Watou Village's hospitality facilities and accommodations have specific spatial distributions. The restaurants and cafes that serve local slow food and the cottages used to enjoy a rural static ambiance tend to be located around the village centre, while the restaurants, cafes, hotels, and BandBs for beer lovers and tourists who wish to enjoy a more sophisticated experience are located right in the centre. The spatial specialisation and distribution of the various kinds of hospitality facilities and accommodations are designed to respond to tourists' demands and to attract them. Paste that uses beer brewed in Watou Village is sold in a butcher shop on the square, representing a local slow-food supply system. Thus, slow-food and gastronomic tourism co-occur, in which village and food are strongly interconnected, as tourists enjoy the local food supply as a tourism resource in Watou Village.

### 3.3 Infrastructure of food tourism

Tourism resources alone cannot serve as a tourism attraction. Cycling routes are provided by West Flanders Province in order to connect tourism resources effectively. Tourism by bike is encouraged by the province, exploiting the region's relatively flat terrain. While touring on road bikes is a major sport in the area, casual cycling on rented bikes is popular with tourists, and many cycle shops, hotels, and BandBs rent bikes.

Cycling routes run all over the province, and tourists can easily obtain cycling maps published by the province at tourist offices, souvenir shops, and groceries stores. Tourists enjoy cycling around rural areas, even when unfamiliar with their geography, because they can trace their way by checking the number of cross points on a map and the number of signs on the road (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** Cycling route and route sign

These cycling maps cover all of West Flanders Province, based on official maps published by the Belgium Geographical Survey Institute. Moreover, about 50 kinds of themed courses are available and are also mapped. Hoppeland ('Hop Field') runs around hop fields in the

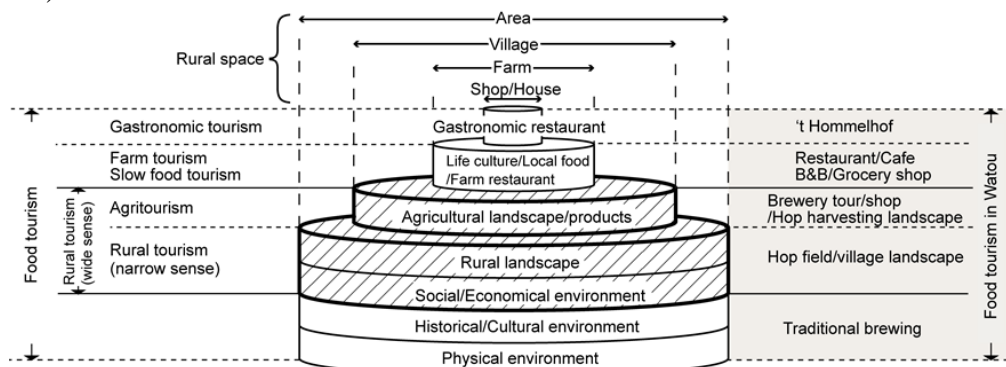
Poperinge Municipality, and Malende Molens ('Grinding mills') passes by mills around the Bruges Municipality. Every map indicates the locations of tourism resources such as restaurants and cafes as well as bike repair facilities and bike-friendly BandBs.

As Figure 8 shows, restaurants and cafes are located about six or seven kilometres from the centre of the village; the cycling routes branch off from these places, which are thus convenient places for tourists to take a rest, as they start from the centre of the village and cycle slowly around the rural areas. Accommodations are located at a distance from the cycling routes, where quiet rural environments are preserved. Restaurants and cafes are thus more related to the cycling routes than are the accommodations, indicating that the cycling maps are designed for ordinary tourists, who want to enjoy casual cycling.

As discussed, cycling routes help connect tourism resources to each other in Watou Village, with restaurants and cafes working as nodes. Accommodations that can function as starting or destination points are located inside spaces created by the passes, and the nodes support the village's tourism spatial distribution. Therefore, Watou Village's tourism has developed stable because its nodes, passes, and tourism spaces are located rationally and work not only individually but also as a correlated system.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

We have discussed the structure of food tourism in Watou Village. It comprises four spaces (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Structure of food tourism in Watou Village

The first is the space of rural tourism; here, the natural and cultural landscapes are the attractions. For Watou Village, the hop cultivation landscape that characterises its local tradition, its terrain landscape composed of hills and dales, and its village landscape that has preserved the typical green village have become attractions for rural tourism.

The second space is that of agritourism, which comprises not only the agricultural production landscape but also the direct sale of the products cultivated and processed in the area. Watou Village features several agritourism factors. The hop cultivation landscape, a major rural tourism attraction, can also become an agritourism attraction because it is a food production landscape. Moreover, brewery tours that exhibit beer brewing using local hops are attractions that feature a kind of food production landscape. Tasting the beer in the breweries, buying it directly from the breweries, and staying at a brewery's guest house are also important agritourism practices.

The third space is that of slow-food tourism, which is based on an area's traditional food culture. Watou Village's restaurants, cafes, and grocery shops are slow-food tourism resources. Traditional local cuisine and locally brewed beer are served in the village's restaurants and cafes; other local foods such as cheeses are sold in a butcher and supermarket used by local people.

The fourth space is that of gastronomic tourism, an evolution of slow-food tourism inspired by epicurism; its resource is a new-traditional local food culture generated by first-class chefs. The area's sophisticated local cuisine becomes an attraction. In Watou Village, Stefaan Couttenye, owner–chef of Het Hommelhof, transformed slow-food tourism into gastronomic tourism by introducing his new-traditional food culture – beer cuisine (local beer combined with local traditional food) – to the world.

Food tourism in Watou Village is thus divided into four spaces: rural tourism, agritourism, slow-food tourism, and gastronomic tourism. However, area-specific phenomena, factors, and systems are needed to connect these spaces with one another (Kikuchi 2008). In Watou Village, one of the strings that bring each space together is a network of cycling routes. Tourists visiting the village enjoy the rural and brewing production landscapes and taste the local traditional cuisine and beer in the local restaurants and cafes while cycling along the routes, which thus serve as passes that systematically connect the village's tourism resources.

Another string is culturally and historically generated authenticity. Traditional hop cultivation and brewing are deeply related to each tourism space. Authenticity is thus added to not only the beers brewed in the village but also the tourism related to brewing. Tourists enjoy this authenticity either consciously or unconsciously.

Furthermore, those spaces are commonly based on the rurality of Watou Village. The setting of Watou as a rural area becomes not only the foundation of the tourism space but also of tourism resources themselves through the production of hops and beers and also the cuisine in which those products are used. As a result, tourists who visit the village enjoy such rurality-based tourism resources. Tourists who value this authenticity and rurality become frequent guests and thus sustain the village's tourism industry.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Watou Village features a new systematic tourism that has developed a local tradition and culture into food and gastronomy. Its food tourism is more sustainable than are many other tourism attractions based on culture, history, and rurality; it is connected by strings in the form of cycling routes and authenticity and supported by breweries that are not trapped by tradition but have actively expanded their marketing worldwide. Collaboration between those breweries and a restaurant has made the local food world famous. In addition to this, rurality in the village plays an important role of the food tourism. Namely, the food tourism is strengthened by the connection between rurality and authenticity as a hop cultivating, West Flanders village.

Therefore, food tourism in Watou Village becomes a sustainable structure due to the existence of diverse spaces and local resources. The development of food tourism leads to the revitalisation of the village, which once declined as a result of traditional industry. Tourism in Watou Village illustrates one kind of response to the post-productivist rural area under globalisation that has improved a local brand and its rurality-supported authenticity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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