

MAGIC MUSSELS: INGREDIENTS FOR IMPROVISING A TOURISM DESTINATION

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The article follows the foodways of mussels and explores the complex human and nonhuman entanglement their travels combine in order to uncover how a destination is improvised. Since 2010 the Museum of Sorcery of Witchcraft in North West Iceland, in a region named Strandir, has reduced its menu to serve platters of mussels during the summer as the only main course. Hence, it is examined how mussels as ingredients have added their flavor to Strandir and continue to enact it in a special way as a destination. This is a process in which I claim that mussels as a food are localized not in the sense that they are immobilized but rather through how they continue to move and enact Strandir as a destination in different contexts.

Key words: Mussels; Magic; Improvisation; Foodways; Destination

Introduction

This article follows the travel of mussels as the main ingredients for a platter served in a tourist place and its potential magical effects regarding destination development. To be more precise, mussels and magic are explored to follow the diverse ways in which mussels travel and through which a destination materializes. This article follows some of the complex human and nonhuman relations that are woven together by mussels—as products, ingredients, food—in the course of their travels, further attaching different meanings to mussels as food as well as to the destination. The destination in question is a region in the northwest of Iceland, Strandir,

with an aura of remoteness strongly attached to it. Although it only takes about 3 hours from Reykjavík to get to its municipal center Hólmavík—a village of just under 400 inhabitants—the sense of its peripheral location nevertheless remains. Distinctive subarctic landscapes with steep mountains and limited lowlands assist in shaping the aura as well as the proximity to the typically rough North Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). Traditionally, the region has relied on agriculture and fisheries, but during the last 14 years a steady growth of tourism has occurred in the region.

The Museum of Icelandic Sorcery and Witchcraft, established in 2000, has played a central role in this growth (Gunnarsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014; Lund,

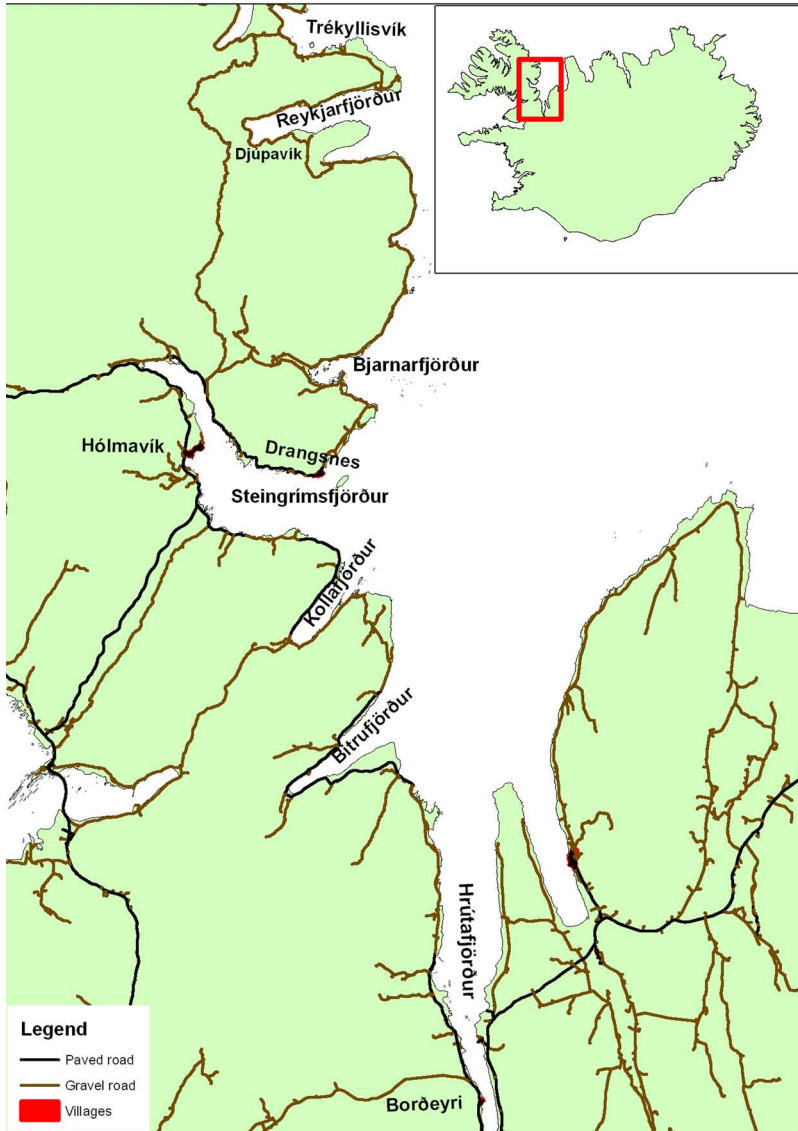


Figure 1. Map of Strandir. Design: Friðþór Sófus Sigurmundsson.

2014). The original idea behind the museum was to advance cultural tourism in Strandir as the region most notorious for witchcraft and the hunting and burning of witches in the 17th century. This is a history that had been mostly kept dormant, although lingering in the minds of the older generations in Iceland. Even if many had doubts about opening a conduit to this dim era, with a magical touch the idea worked out well. The original idea remains intact, although a variety of new ingredients have

been added to it, expanding its magical effects. One of these ingredients are mussels that are served to visitors from the museum's kitchen. Furthermore, this article explores how mussels as ingredients have added their flavor to Strandir and continue to enact it in a special way as a destination.

By emphasizing food or, specifically, mussels as a traveling substance, the aim is to pay attention to the “fluxes and flows of *materials*” (Ingold, 2008) that bring Strandir as a destination

to life. This requires employing approaches such as Actor-Network Theory (ANT), especially regarding its emphasis on how networks “make their way through minds, matter and bodies” (Bærenholdt & Haldrup, 2006, p. 214) weaving together the human and non-human. And as Bærenholdt and Haldrup argue, the importance of such an approach is that it “sheds light on the production of tourist places because of the complexities of the spatial patterns and the cross-cutting of material, social and cultural aspects” (p. 214).

The argument addressed is therefore that food needs to be acknowledged as living material, not just a matter that is merely grown/farmed/hunted/gathered, cooked, sold, and consumed, which is often the main emphasis in the literature focusing on food and tourism; how food attracts (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), symbolizes otherness (Mkono, 2011; Molz, 2007), in local vis-à-vis global context (Mak, Lumbers, & Eves, 2012; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007), and in relation to the concept of authenticity (Albrecht, 2011). What food does, how it travels, engages, moves, and affects as a living substance has gained little attention. Following Probyn (2004), the intention of this article is to follow the “foodways” of mussels in order to explore how they move, engage, affect, and shape a sense of place as a destination through a creative process. Ingold and Hallam (2007) argue that a creative process is one that is characterized by ceaseless improvisation, a continuous process, which they contrast to the concept of innovation, which implies an end product. Therefore, this process acknowledges that destinations are always in the making as they are entangled in the constant flow and flux of materialities. To start the journey the mussels in question will be introduced. Following this, there is a discussion about the way in which they will be methodologically engaged with and how they entered into the process of improvisation before following their tracks or foodways. The final part will then explore the material entanglements in which the actors, human and nonhuman, involved in the process of improvisation weave together a destination.

Engaging With Mussels

It was 2010 when entrepreneurs from a nearby village, Drangsnæs, started mussel farming, which

affected the menu at the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft. Sigg, the director of the museum, decided to add a platter of mussels to the menu as seafood had been at the forefront of it since he started serving food in the spring of 2009. In 2011, he experienced problems because the menu offered during the summer, the high season, was too complicated, although it only had three main courses and two simple dessert options. Since regional Tourism Information Centre operations had been added to the museum 2 years previously, and traffic of visitors to the museum had increased, the museum’s employees were simply too busy providing information to visitors, or selling entrance to the museum, to be able to also operate the kitchen to cook different meals. In addition, the kitchen itself had turned out to be too small to support the making of variety of plates at the same time. As a result, Sigg made the decision to simplify the summer menu and offer a platter of mussels as the only main course.

I shall illustrate further the story behind Sigg’s decision in more details below, but what is of importance here is how this simple decision mobilized the mussels to become part of shaping the Strandir region as a destination in different contexts through their materiality, which combines texture, smell, and flavor. Furthermore, Sigg makes an effort to make the plate visually pleasing, emphasizing Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1999) argument that a “dish well presented is already half eaten” (p. 3). Thus, food—in this case mussels—is not to be regarded as a passive nutritional substance. Mussels nourish, give pleasure, and, most importantly, connect bodies, activities, and places. As such “they act as boundaries and crossing points” (Ren, 2011, p. 863) caught up in the flow of human and non-human relations. And as Goodman (2013) points out, food is “full of relationships” (p. 1). A platter of mussels can be seen as a matter in-between that brings together dispersed and heterogeneous ingredients, tying together human and nonhuman entities that together improvise a sense of place through their relational quality. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), “to improvise is to join with the World, or meld with it” (p. 344).

However, it is significant that the platter of mussels has been created at the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft, further connecting mussels to magic. As Jackson (1998, 2005) points out, magical acts

stir together diverse elements, bodies, and matters, in order to affect and reorder existing realities. In other words, magical acts are carried out in order to influence and enhance existing circumstances. This can certainly be related to the original thought behind the museum as an establishment intended to enforce particular type of cultural tourism in order to craft Strandir as a destination. Magic entangles the human and the nonhuman and to perform magic is an act in between in order to act upon the world or to affect everyday conditions and take them into different directions (Lund & Jóhannesson, in press). Thus, magic and mussels combine as elements in ordering Strandir as a destination.

In order to explore how mussels craft a sense for Strandir as a destination one needs to delve into the relations that mussel embody and simultaneously the ones they create, a form of methodological exploration that demands following the travel of food, its “foodways” or food lines as Probyn (2004) has suggested or in Cook’s (2006) term, food stories. This goes along with Latour’s (1987) approach “to follow the actor” (see also Jóhannesson, Ren, van der Duim, & Munk, 2014) in order to recognize the multiple relations he/she/it brings together and where they may take us. Thus, following a single actor—a mussel—is about bringing together multiplicity of threads, lines, and/or stories that entangle but simultaneously continue to spread in various directions, recognizing the actor’s various potential versions that Deleuze and Guattari (2004) have likened to rhizomic growth. This demands the researcher to enter the relations and become a part of them and move with them using participatory research methods. As Hansen, Blichfeldt, Hvass, and Meged (2014) state, “research is also a performance” (p. 15), a fact that researchers should acknowledge and reflect on, or how they get entangled in the improvisation that shapes the reality of their exploration. As stated by Law (2007), it is not “possible to explore the social without at the same time studying the hows of relational materiality” (p. 9). Inevitably, the researcher becomes visible and heard in the research process as well as in the text produced precisely because of her or his integration in the creative process of improvisation that shapes the sense of the destination. To acknowledge this, much of this article is written in the first person since the communications required

of participant observation take place in the first person with the researcher near rather than afar.

Magic Mussels

It was the beginning of May 2012 that I visited Hólmavík accompanied by two fellow researchers and three assistants. We had been doing research about the creation of Strandir as a tourism destination during the summer of 2011 that was to continue in 2012. In 2011 we asked people—tourists and also some local people—to send us photographs they had taken with captions and explanations that reflected what Strandir stood for in their minds. In other words, we wanted to collect an assemblage of heterogeneous images that could represent Strandir as a place that people travel “toward, around and away from” (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 8). We received about 140 photographs to work from, some of which we wanted to share with the inhabitants of Strandir and their visitors. The purpose of this visit in May 2012 was to put up an exhibition, called “The Creation of Strandir” using a selection of the photos and their captions. The exhibition was meant to travel to different places in Strandir during the summer. The first place to host it was the regional Tourist Information Center, which is attached to the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft, located in a small building close to the coastline in Hólmavík that previously served as a warehouse for fishermen. We arrived in the late afternoon on Friday and arranged the photos together with relevant captions on the walls. Siggí, the director, promised to take care of the food that would be served at the formal opening the day after. When we left him late in the evening he was still thinking about what to serve and complained about the responsibility giving him a headache. Still, he told us not to worry because he would find out sooner or later.

On Saturday morning I woke up early and walked to the museum in order to see if Siggí was there and to have a cup of coffee with him. When he saw me coming he called out and told me to come quickly because, as he said, “magic happened.” I followed him into the information center. On the middle of the floor was a table he had covered with stones from the nearby seashore. He had created an image of the coastline inside the building. At the middle of the table was a stone with the rune Helm of Ave, the

sign of lucky charm, carved into it. In between the stones pieces of celery had been randomly distributed to resemble seaweed as well as empty shells of mussels (Fig. 2).

I was as impressed as Siggí was proud of his creation. He told me how it had just popped up into his head when he woke up at 6 o'clock in the morning. The idea was to replace the empty shells with cooked mussels for the opening and the table would then look like a shore full of mussels. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the table was ready and people started gathering for the opening, which was initiated by a short welcoming address delivered by me as the principal investigator of the research project. After having examined the photos displayed on the walls, the guests gathered around the table at the middle of the floor to have a drink and eat some mussels, not the least to socialize at the same time as they admired the creative design of it (Fig. 3).

Although Siggí claimed that the idea behind the table of mussels had been a magical happening I want to argue that it was more akin to a conscious magical act, not the least regarding how it intentionally brought together diverse materials: stones, celery, mussels and the Helm of Ave. Not only had he designed an image of a coastline full of food,

or mussels, but he had also located it at the center of Strandir, planting a magical sign right in the middle of it. Thus, mussels and magic were placed and combined at the center while the photographs that featured the landscape of Strandir in various ways surrounded it. Simultaneously, he had put the museum and its kitchen at the forefront as he used the opportunity to display his trademarks: mussels and magic. This can be understood as an act of place-making. Furthermore, it is part of a creative process, a continuing improvisation that he has been involved with since starting the museum in helping to carve out Strandir as a destination with the museum at its center. This is an act of arranging and rearranging, which is significant in relation to the fact that Siggí was adding new ingredients to the operation of the Museum and taking it in a slightly different direction. He had recently made the decision to serve mussels as the main course during the summer season, which was just about to start. Knowing that this could be risky as he would be reducing visitor choice, on the one hand, he might, on the other hand, be able to enhance the status of the museum's kitchen as unique from other kitchens in the vicinity. Thus, as with the growth of the rhizome that Deleuze and Guattari (2004) introduced, new arrangements and

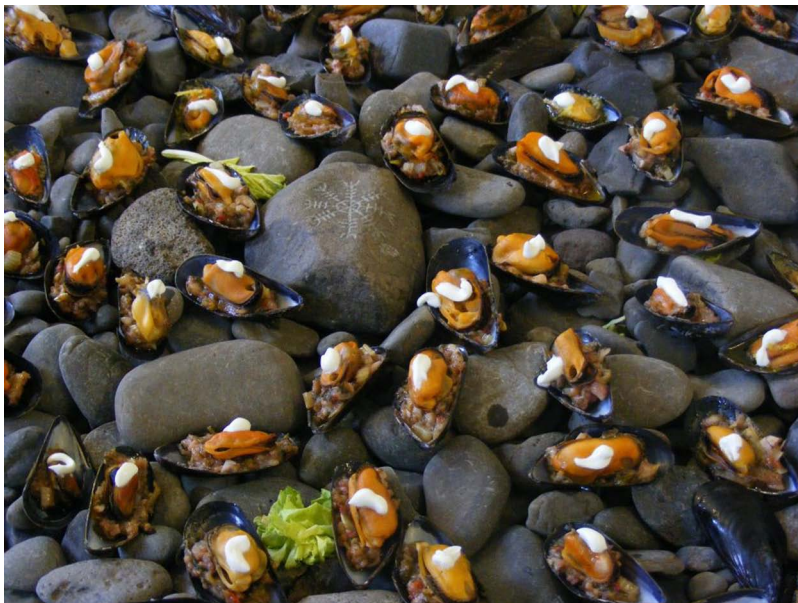


Figure 2. Table full of food. Photographer: Sigurður Atlason.



Figure 3. Guests listen to welcoming address at the opening of the exhibition. Photographer: Guðrún Þóra Gunnarsdóttir.

new connections were made in order to continue the process of improvisation that emphasized Strandir as a destination for magic and mussels.

Improvising Ingredients

The menu at the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft contains colorful photographs of the plates on offer (www.galdrasyning.is). It also thoroughly describes the courses, illustrating where the main ingredients originate from and how they combine with other ingredients. The Mussels platter is described as follows:

Our delicious mussels come straight from our fjord, where they are cultivated by a small company in Drangsnæs. It is served with homebaked bread and the broth from the mussels.

Ingredients: Celery, parsley, chilly, garlic, passata tomatoes, Worcester sauce, maple syrup, taste of chorizo, wasabi and white wine.

What appears is how the ingredients represent various areas of different continents of the world while emphasizing that the mussels themselves

come straight from the fjord. This, I will argue, is an attempt to localize the mussels. Although mussels can be found all around Iceland—except on the south coast—consuming them is neither a local nor traditional practice. Collecting mussels is by no means a custom in Iceland and it is only in the past few years that people have started farming them. Although I use the term localized, I do not claim that Siggí is merely cooking up a “local” plate from global ingredients (e.g., Mak et al., 2012). Indeed, examination emphasizing improvisation and relationality is more complex than the framework of global vis-à-vis local proposes. Rather I find it fruitful to continue to follow the mussels’ foodways, to travel their heterogeneous paths “towards, around and away from” Strandir, and explore how they become localized through an improvisational process.

When I asked Siggí how it came about that he started serving mussels he said there were many reasons but the main reason is the fact that the entrepreneurs in Drangsnæs started farming them. This is a convenient reason. Not only do they have the technology to farm them but they also have developed a technique that makes it possible to offer them consistently throughout the whole year. This is the practical point that brought mussels to

his menu. The mussels were already in place but it would simply have been too tedious and time consuming to have to pick them. He then told me how the idea originally started growing when he went to an EU meeting, related to an international tourism project he was involved with, in Brussels and discovered mussels. It made him think why mussels were so rarely offered on Icelandic menus. The mussels plates he had sampled were very tasty and they also made him feel good. He then pointed out that to his mind “this is just such a beautiful food.” When in Iceland a few months later he had his 50th birthday and got two presents that brought his thoughts from Brussels back to him. The first present was an assortment of mussels that he was given by the people at the mussel farm to serve the 150 people that attended his birthday party. The other present was a recipe for mussels given to him by an Icelandic chef, who had a temporary residence in the vicinity of Hólmavík. Siggí tried out the recipe and adopted it to his own tastes, allowing him to claim it as his own. Thus, the mussels traveled by different routes to the museum, arrived from different directions, and emerged in different parts: as an idea generated in Brussels, as birthday presents, as tasty, as beautiful, as a product of the sea, etc., and combined with other ingredients to become a platter of mussels on Siggí’s menu served to tourists. This is how they are localized; through a process of improvisation and transformation the mussels become food (Roe, 2006). However, saying that they have been localized does not mean that the travel does not continue; indeed it does, not the least because a plate of food is served to be eaten and “eating always connects us to others” (Probyn, 2004, p. 225). Roe (2006) states:

Things become food through how they are handled by humans, not by how they are described and named. Attending to what people say about foodstuff is only half of the story about how things become food; the second half is what people do with the material foodstuff. The process of eating food connects together the . . . site of production, the domestic site of eating and the site of the stomach. (p. 112)

The localization of the mussels happens precisely through the process of them connecting places and bodies through which the creative process of

improvising place, a destination, happens (Casey, 1996). And a destination, as a place that happens, is constantly unfolding “in constant motion, taking on new shapes and forms” (Lund & Benediktsson, 2010, p. 6). As Lund and Jóhannesson (2014) argue, “places emerge through relational ordering of mobile practices. They are alive, in the sense that they emerge through creative currents of the world where everything is entangled” (p. 444) (see also Ingold, 2011).

Because places are alive and dynamic they emerge through how they are ordered during the continuous process of improvisation, consciously and unconsciously. Thus, Siggí making a platter of mussels as the speciality of the kitchen of the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft is a conscious endeavor to order a destination, to create a sense of place.

Combining mussels and magic, as Siggí does in his improvisation, emphasizes a variety of different material components that are a part of the landscape in Strandir. At the same time, he opens up a selection of possibilities for visitors to take part in the improvisation and offers them elements to play with as they continue their travel: elements of ordering. As such, he activates Strandir as a “place in play” (Sheller & Urry, 2004) for visitors to continue to play with by providing alternative possibilities to connect to the place. Accordingly, Strandir as a destination is in a permanent making, still always partial (Strathern, 1991) depending on how visitors relate mussels and magic with other components and elements of their journey. It is certain that not all visitors to Strandir care about mussels or magic. For many, mussels are not an appealing food (Hjalager & Wahlberg, 2014) and Siggí is aware of this. Still he chose mussels as the only main course on offer for the summer season because he wanted to propose a meal that no one else in the vicinity had to offer, emphasizing the unique aspects of Strandir in his operation. He tells me that if he had decided to offer something regarded as properly “local” it would have been lamb and then he adds

you can get it [lamb] everywhere and it does not matter where in the country you are, lamb always tastes the same. Some farmers claim that theirs is different but for me it always tastes the same. Mussels are not local in that respect but they come straight from the fjord and I tell people that and I emphasize that they haven’t been transported a long way.

Thus, one aspect of localizing the mussels is that they grow in the area. One does not need to go far to get them and they are farmed locally. He says that people like this and points out that it often results in tourists discussing with him how travel pollutes, sometimes with feelings of guilt, and possible ways in which it might be lessened. But however the mussels have traveled to end up on a platter at the museum, a dislike may be sensual and personal, often related to cultural backgrounds and what people are used to. Siggí is aware that by offering only mussels he is excluding certain customers, such as certain types of Icelanders who do not want seafood because it is what one eats at home. He has also been aware of many Central European people who are not used to seafood and are not willing to try it. He tells me that he sometimes uses a trick in which he offers people to try the mussels and if they do not like them then they do not have to pay. He is proud that this has always worked out in his favor. Nevertheless, by only offering mussels, he is conscious that there are other places in Hólmavík in which people can eat: one fast food shop and a middle of the range restaurant, so the choice is there. However, by eating at the other establishments the composition of mussel and magic is not going to add to the improvisation of making Strandir as a destination. Still, lamb, cod, and puffin at the local restaurant or burger, sandwich, and deep fried chicken at the fast food place will assist those who choose to eat there to order different realities in Strandir—in other words, different ingredients for improvising Strandir as a destination. These need not be contradictory realities or unrelated because, as Law (2007) argues, “Realities hold solid by relating through discontinuity or by Othering one another. But perhaps they also hold together because they flow into one another” (p. 14).

Different venues offer different ingredients in different settings and provide various ways in which a destination may be embodied and traveled through and, as a result, created and carved out.

Improvising a Destination

I want to go back briefly to the opening of the exhibition “The Creation of Strandir.” There I described how guests gathered and socialized around an image of a coast full of food/mussels that

had been created in the room at the same time that a miniature version of Strandir was being exhibited on the walls through photographs. The aim was to give a glimpse into how Siggí is consciously arranging Strandir as the destination he wants to cocreate with his visitors. What is important is how, after having examined the photographs, the guests gather around the table to socialize and share what is on offer but at the same time to share their views, opinions, or even enter into mundane conversations about life. What is unusual at the opening is that most of the guests live in Hólmavík and the vicinity—people that maybe see one another every day but do not necessarily exchange much information as the hustle and bustle of everyday life does not allow it. Some of the guests come from outside the area and use the opportunity to converse with people they have not met for a long time or get to know people they have never met before. It can be argued that at the opening of the exhibition an intimate, miniature version is being made of the everyday operation of the museum when almost all who visit are tourists. Still, no matter if the visitors are locals or tourists, all kinds of connections are being made and, as Probyn (2004) states, “it is hard to avoid the fact that eating is profoundly intimate” (p. 234). Thus, in examining how food shapes a sense of place as a destination it is not enough to examine simply how it is arranged, cooked, and served. How it is bodily consumed cannot be ignored because it is the eating that connects bodies and bodies connect places. Moreover, eating is a sensual performance in which all the senses are incorporated (e.g., Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Mak et al., 2012; Probyn, 1999, 2004; Sutton, 2001, 2010) and intimacy and sensuality call forth limits and regulations to how food is consumed. As Probyn (1999) points out, different settings as well as types of food order the ways in which they are eaten. Eating at home or eating in a restaurant brings forth different limits to what is allowed and what is not, and different types of restaurants also set different rules depending on the type of food they offer, the service they provide, and the interior of the restaurant. Typically, the hamburger at the fast food restaurant is eaten quickly with the assistance of both hands before the journey is continued; the well-presented meal at the restaurant is often eaten at a slower rate with the assistance of cutlery and possibly a glass of wine as the

visitor might not be in such a hurry to go ahead with the journey. Mussels, on the other hand, require a direct touch with both hands. One has to open the shells that are covered by the broth they have been cooked in, one after another, and if cutlery is not involved one needs to dive into the bowl with empty shells to fish out the ingredients. A platter of mussels, at the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft, is not to be consumed with speed, like the hamburger, and it accentuates the intimacy and sensual pleasures that eating involves.

The way in which Siggí serves his platter of mussels plays with both the sensuality and intimacy involved. Only a fork and a napkin are offered in his restaurant for assistance. He is conscious of the visual presentation, although he does not do much to decorate the mussels because, as he states, “they are just beautiful food.” However, the interior of the restaurant, which is at the same time the Tourism Information Center attached to the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft, allows for this. This is not a formal restaurant, this is a place in which one eats, one communicates, a place where different people from distant places connect at random as they pass through at different paces. Some people come to visit the museum or only to get information and then decide to leave while others might be lured to stay for a meal or even just a cup of coffee, especially on sunny days when the restaurant extends onto the terrace, where one might be looking over the fjord in which the mussels grow. This is a place of mingling, where tourists meet locals, where tourists meet other tourists; a heterogeneous place where different human and nonhuman actors entangle. This is a place where the person who serves you the meal may be telling you at the same time about all the possibilities to extend the travel, about local peculiarities, the history of sorcery and witchcraft, or about everyday life.

As Probyn (2004) has revealed, a meal that is shared often extends conversations into the personal and private areas of life, connecting peoples’ lifeworlds and distant places, which provides conditions for further extending the rhizomatic entanglements that mussels and magic provide. These are entanglements that further the improvisation of Strandir as a destination and expand its terrain beyond its physical settings into spatial and temporal dimensions. However, this is a destination

that grows from a center where magic and mussels play the main role. I want to introduce two of these rhizomatic twigs. The first one is consciously designed to bring the museum into nature and improvise Strandir as a destination of magic and mussels, while the second one concentrates on the embodiment of mussels at the museum itself, which moves Strandir as a destination beyond geographical boundaries connecting people and places at distance.

In 2012, when Siggí decided to decrease his summer menu to a platter of mussels he also started designing and offering different types of tours around the region with different combinations of themes, mainly including folklore connected to magic and mussels. Siggí has a natural talent for storytelling and, although he dresses up as a sorcerer when going on tours, he introduces himself as a storyteller. I attended one of the first tours he undertook in 2012 with three guests: one from Italy and a couple from the US. Instead of following the tour in detail, which I have done elsewhere (Lund, 2014), I want to briefly introduce some of the actors we were introduced to; actors who activated the landscape and brought that which is absent into the scene. These were hidden people and elves living in rocks and cliffs we passed by, trolls that had been turned into rocks, warm and cold natural springs that had been blessed by a Catholic priest in the 17th century, as well as fossils of an arctic fox since before human settlement in Iceland just before the year 1000. These appearances brought the experience of the region into different dimensions, entangling the tangible with what would have otherwise been the intangible, and bringing together spatially and temporally heterogeneous inhabitants of Strandir as a destination. When the nearly 10-hour-long tour was about to hit its last leg, a meal of mussels was made on the seashore and Siggí, the sorcerer, took over the role of the storyteller while cooking the meal (Fig. 4).

He sent us, the tourists, down to the shore to pick up thin pieces of wood from the driftwood lining the shores of Strandir, driftwood that has traveled all the way from Siberia. He used the pieces of wood to light the fire and the performance started to peak as he, with exaggerated gestures, transformed the mussels into a meal. As he once told me, “to cook can be such a visual and beautiful act” and he used



Figure 4. The sorcerer cooks mussels. Photographer: Katrín Anna Lund.

the opportunity to make the cooking into an act of performance. He then brought the pan with the mussels to us where we all sat and filled our bowls with them. This was the highlight of the tour. This was the point when we started openly reflecting on the tour: asking questions, sharing our thoughts and understandings in a personal way by relating what we had experienced to our own backgrounds. The meal of mussels thus connected together lives of humans and nonhumans, from distant worlds, in the process of improvising Strandir as a destination.

Siggi tells me that all his tours are designed with this meal of mussels served by the shore in mind. If the weather does not allow for it, it is done at the Sorcerer's cottage, which is a replica of a peasant's homestead from the 17th century—an off-shoot of the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft. This is his attempt to bring the museum out of its walls and into nature where folklore and magic connect and, thus, a conscious act of improvising Strandir as a destination of mussels and magic.

The magical improvisation continued in 2013 when Siggi built a greenhouse beside the restaurant terrace (Fig. 5). This is consistent with the ideology of having the ingredients at hand rather than having to import them from a long distance. The

year before, he had started growing parsley outside and had liked being able to run from the kitchen to get ingredients for his cooking. Since he built the greenhouse he has started growing tomatoes with an aim of growing enough to supply the kitchen; additionally, he is experimenting with growing celery. The future plan is to grow all the vegetables the kitchen needs.

But like the meal that is shared the greenhouse also brings forth conversations that entangle distant material worlds. When guests see that Siggi is running to the greenhouse to get ingredients for the meal he is cooking they become curious about it. They think it is peculiar and find it hard to imagine that it is possible to grow vegetables and herbs in this northerly peripheral area. This often spins to conversations about food, its quality, and the topic of gardening. The guests want to see what he is growing in his greenhouse and often they see plants that they grow in their gardens in the much warmer south. This may then result in conversations in which the visitors provide Siggi with advice and ideas. He enjoys this because he is the specialist at the museum but when it comes to the greenhouse he is the one who is learning, therefore making the exchange reciprocal. As a result he gets sent all



Figure 5. Siggí and his greenhouse. Photographer: Gunnar Þór Jóhannesson.

kinds of seeds and sprouts from all over the world and now the greenhouse appears as a slightly chaotic miniature world of growing vegetables including beanstalks, garlic, basil, and chili, just to name a few. Thus, the guests enter the improvisation of destination directly by adding advice and ingredients from afar through which the kitchen continues to grow and enhance Strandir as a destination.

These two brief snippets provide a glimpse into how mussels and magic carve Strandir as a destination. Above Siggí described how the platter of mussels was created through a process of heterogeneous incidents and ingredients: thoughts brought about in Brussels, birthday party and birthday presents, one of which is a recipe that mixes local

mussels together with a variety of food components from different parts of the world. And the continuous mingling between people and materials that takes place at the museum allows for the recipe of Strandir as a tourism destination to continue to be in creation. Strandir as destination is being improvised through how mussels, magic, and tourists entangle in the course of their journeys. This is also the process through which the mussels are localized, through a diverse and mobile web of relations between people that visit The Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft who engage with the region through the taste of mussels and sense for magic, ceaselessly stirring in new ingredients from their own journeys in life.

Conclusions

Using the concept of foodways, this article has observed the travel of mussels and their entanglements with other materialities, human and nonhuman, as they move along and sprout in different directions. I argue that it is through these entanglements that a sense of place as a destination is created. Following Ingold and Hallam's (2007) writing, I claim that this is a process of improvisation; a process that is both consciously and unconsciously continuously in the making. I started by following the foodways of mussels as they traveled to the Museum of Sorcery and Witchcraft where they became transformed into a platter of mussels served as the single item on the museum's kitchen menu. In that process they pair with the main product of the museum, magic, as Siggí, the museum director, shapes and arranges Strandir as a destination within the museum building. This is a creative combination that extends itself outside of the museum, out into the natural environment where it ties with folklore in the tours designed by Siggí. The improvisation also continues within the walls of the museum itself through the embodiment of the mussels, cooking, and consuming, through which Strandir even extends itself beyond geographical boundaries. This is a process in which I claim that mussels as a food are localized, not in the sense that they are immobilized but rather through how they continue to move and enact Strandir as a destination in different contexts.

I argue that to be able to observe the entanglement that occurs in the process of improvising destination the researcher needs to engage directly in the procedure. This I have done by following the foodways in which the mussels flow and flux in relation to the other moving materials. This is not least important because to experience how food is shared and bodily consumed plays a central role in how a destination is improvised in relation to tourism activities and performances. Eating is a primary human need and it does not matter if the journey centers around food or not; nourishing oneself is a fundamental practice for tourists. Thus, food connects bodies and places and plays a vital part in the tourists' experiences as they travel towards, around, and from a destination. Destinations are, at least partially, embodied through eating, shaping

the sense of place and the experience of the place as a destination.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by the University of Iceland Research Fund and the *Chair in Arctic Tourism. Destination Development in the Arctic* (2010–2012), hosted by Finnmark University College, Alta, Norway, and financed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I want to thank Gunnar Thór Jóhannesson and Michael Leonard as well as Sigurður Atlason for all the assistance they gave in the process of writing the article.

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