

SHORT FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS: A LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE FROM THE TERRITORIAL APPROACH AND VALORIZATION OF IDENTITY AND BIO-CULTURAL ASSETS

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ABSTRACT

In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Short Supply Chains (SSCs) are beginning to gain recognition as a relevant and growing phenomenon, linked to the local, cultural heritage and biodiversity and, to a lesser extent, to agro-ecology and solidarity economy (CEPAL, 2014). The main question of this paper is: which kind of Short Supply Chain (SSC) can contribute to a higher level of small scale producers and entrepreneurs' inclusion stimulating new dynamics and connections between urban and rural areas in the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) region?

KEYWORDS: Territorial Development with Cultural identity; Short Supply Chains; Small scale producers and entrepreneurs' inclusion; Biocultural assets.

INTRODUCTION

The main intent of this paper is to better understand whether and which kind of Short Supply Chain (SSC) can contribute to a higher level of small scale producers and entrepreneurs' inclusion stimulating new dynamics and connections between urban and rural areas in the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) region. Firstly, it is important to briefly introduce the context in LAC within which SSCs are set and which strongly influence their development. LAC region is subject to serious territorial inequalities. Although in the last years territorial gaps have been decreasing, they still are a severe issue in LAC, constituting a challenge for the region development. Substantial improvements have been registered in some of the development dimensions but this has not always been reflected in a parallel decrease of territorial gaps (RIMISP, 2013) since a considerable number of LAC countries is subject to territorial polarization (Berdegué

et al, 2012). Another important trend is the increasing recognition of family farming as relevant for food security, agricultural employment generation, biodiversity, cultural traditions conservation and thus poverty mitigation (FAO 2014). It provides between 27% and 67% of the agri-food production at the country level occupying between 12% and 67% of farmed areas (FAO, 2014). On the other hand, we have been assisting to a rural transformation characterized by a transit from a rural economy where agriculture represented the main working activity to a one where the relevance of non-agricultural incomes in the family farming is constantly growing. Another important aspect is the growing middle class which in the last decade increased more than 50% in the region (Ferreira et al., 2013). Against this background, how can SSCs constitute an element of inclusion? Among the different types of SSCs in LAC, this paper will mainly focus on the "territorial markets" characterized by strong linkages with

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territories, biocultural valorization and a comprehensive basket of products and services.

METHODS AND SOURCES

The employed research strategy will be a synthetic analysis of the case study of Chiloé as a territorial market. It will be set within a specific theoretical framework which will help to understand how it is possible to implement a process which prioritizes SSCs with cultural identity valorization from a territorial approach. The literature selection was realized through personal research, by the analysis of previous studies on the topic and the applied research works realized by RIMISP. Some of these studies are based on primary data directly collected from the authors.

THEORETICAL FRAME AND ORGANISING CONCEPTS

The employed theoretical frame is the Rural Territorial Development with Cultural Identity approach (RTD-CI). RTD leans on two related pillars: productive transformation and institutional development. The former aims at linking the economy of a territory with dynamic markets implying changes in employment and production patterns. The latter encourages cooperation processes between local actors among themselves and with external actors aiming at modifying formal and informal rules which reproduce marginalization in the productive transformation processes (Schejtman & Berdegúe 2004).

One of RTD aspects is CI and its valorization in rural areas. RTD-CI is based on the idea that the involved actors should share a common view which, leaning on identity and cultural elements, can transform weaknesses into strengths. For a better conceptualization, three elements which strongly influence SSCs development need to be outlined:

- A comprehensive territorial strategy centered on the valorization of a basket of products and services which implies the mobilization of collective actors and their coordination for a common objective (Fonte&Ranaboldo, 2007).
- Capacity building processes addressed to local territorial stakeholders training and thus empowerment.
- Governance.

RESULTS

Analyzing the case of Chiloé it is possible to better understand how the development of inclusive SSCs within a territory can be stimulated by a RTD-CI process with the final objective to boost small scale producers and entrepreneurs' inclusion. At the beginning of the process, Chiloé was clearly identifiable as a "contradictory" territory. It was characterized by contrasting development trends: the salmon industry represented the largest dynamic sector with a 20% annual growth rate from 1990 until 2006 (Ranaboldo et al. 2009). On the other hand, the territory counted on high-valued biocultural assets which represented an important touristic attraction. Industrialization and modernization processes caused the erosion and loss of traditional elements which are vehicle of identity. On the other side, territorial biocultural assets were acquiring a renewed touristic, cultural and heritage value (Venegas, 2011). As a result, production, distribution and touristic dynamics were not sustainable for the territory and did not benefit and include local communities. Against this contradictory context, a new tendency affirmed itself creating a wide basket of services and products according to an integral territorial strategy. The cultural valorization process in Chiloé started from productive transformation. The final aim was to create integrated SSCs contrasting the trend of exports thus valorizing territorial cultural assets. A strong emphasis was put on agricultural products and rural tourism.

One of the most important results was the recognition of the archipelago as one of the seven world pilot Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS). This seal is an initiative started in 2002 by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to “safeguard and support the world’s agri-cultural heritage systems²” standing out for biodiversity conservation, agriculture, cultural landscapes, traditional knowledge application etc. The process has been brought forward by local and international institutions led by the Center of Education and Technology in Chiloé with a strong inclusion of local communities. The seal implemented an important shift in a territorial context characterized by weak organizations affected by exogenous forces and it led to small scale producers’ inclusion within the value chain.

CONCLUSIONS

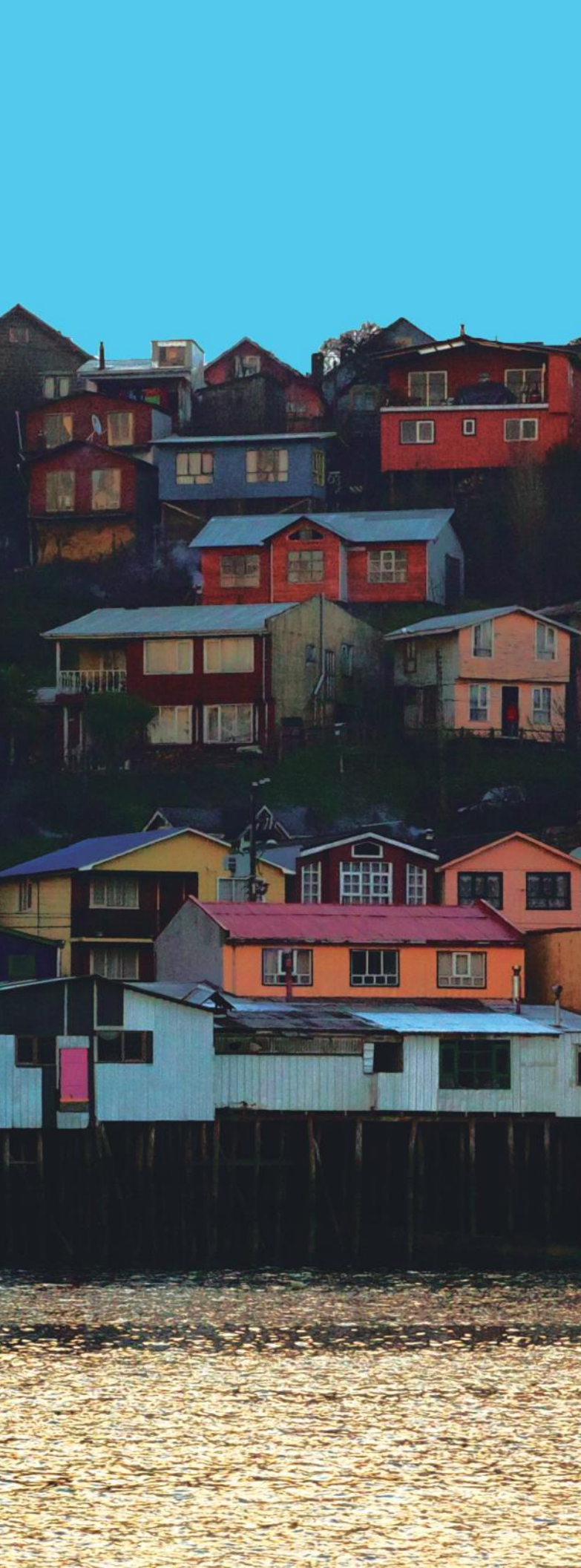
GIAHS recognition did not represent the final result for a comprehensive system based on inclusive SSCs and the valorization of territorial biocultural assets. It represented the beginning of a territorial brand which has been allowing the reinforcement of territorial governance leading to the escalation of the model. Chiloé, as territorial market, experienced both a productive and institutional transformation process reaching the development of inclusive SSC dynamics within an integrated logic. Throughout the productive transformation process, the territory managed to shift the production and distribution pattern from an industrial economy centered on exports to the creation of a value chain which valorizes territorial biocultural assets with a high inclusion of local actors. As regards the institutional transformation process, the governance process which resulted in the interaction and cooperation among local

actors between themselves and with international and national organization, was one of the key elements for strategy success. Lastly, it is essential to underline the importance of local stakeholders capacity building process without which the model scaling up would not be possible.

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² <http://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>



In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs) are beginning to gain recognition as a relevant and growing phenomenon, linked to the local, cultural heritage and biodiversity and, to a lesser extent, to agro-ecology and solidarity economy (CEPAL, 2014). Nowadays, several Latin American governments (such as Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Perú) are designing public policies oriented towards strengthening family farming including the valorization of territorial agri-food heritage. The present paper will try to provide an initial answer to the following research question: which kind of Short Supply Chains (SSC) can contribute to a higher level of small scale producers and entrepreneurs' inclusion, stimulating new dynamics and connections between urban and rural areas in the Latin American region? In order to do this, the paper will briefly characterize four different markets in which SFSCs can play a central role, with a special focus on the territorial markets and, particularly, on the case represented by Chiloé.



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