

European Society of Rural Sociology Congress

Chania, August 2011

**PROTECTED DESIGNATION OF ORIGIN IN SIERRA DE CÁDIZ (SPAIN)  
AND REGIONAL LABELS IN THE WADDEN SEA (THE NETHERLANDS):  
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ON AGRO-FOOD LABELLING  
STRATEGIES<sup>1</sup>**

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest transformations that are taken place in rural areas of Europe is the increasing importance of quality production in the agro-food sector. This phenomenon is related to the new functions that these areas have in post-industrial societies, which explain the growing number of territorial labels in their many schemes: *Protected Designation of Origin* (PDO) or *Protected Geographical Indication* (PGI). Many studies have focus on them in the last decade; some of them link the promotion of these products with a new rural economy, and define them as economic strategies of local producers. This strategy is defined as a positive strategy to reduce over-production, to invigorate less competitive regions socio-economically, and to provide small and medium producers with an instrument to distinguish themselves within a globalised market (see Knickel and Renting, 2000; Miele and Pindeci, 2001; Banks and Marsden, 2001; Pugliese, 2001; Tregear et al., 2007).

This paper is the outcome of an on-going research that follows the line of the mentioned studies. The objective of the paper is to identify the characteristic of two territorial labels as instruments of territorial development. Thus, we implemented a comparative study in

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<sup>1</sup> This research is the outcome of a project founded by the I+D program titled "La producción de calidad: nuevas estrategias rurales para nuevos consumidores" Ministry of Science and Innovation. I+D (CSO2010-22074-C03-01) and Talentia Program of the Andalusian Regional Government. These projects are implemented by TECUDE Research Group (P.A.I. SEJ-418).

two observational units: the Wadden Region<sup>2</sup> (The Netherlands) and Sierra de Cádiz (Spain). The last one represents the model that focuses in protecting and promoting a product linked with a territory, the PDO. The Wadden Region represents the model that links a territorially based community with their production (Regional label). They should be understood as local responses to global dynamics, and their study should take into account the new challenges that globalized economies bring to the rural areas of the European Union (EU). Nevertheless, PDO are highly institutionalised labels with a strongly pre-defined framework; whilst regional labels lack of such support and constrictioin. It can be translated into different levels of transaction costs and flexibility.

## 2. RURAL DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND A NEW CONTEXT

### 2.a. Defining rural development

Rural development is still a highly contested concept, thus, we decided to adopt a simple but complex definition: rural development is the development of the rural (Ploeg and Marsden, 2008). This approach allows us to conceive rural as a dynamic reality. Therefore, we define rural as “the place of encounter, interaction and mutual transformation between living nature and human being” (ibid: 3).

This definition underlines two main elements: society and living nature. Both elements and their interaction are key factors to the idea of sustainable development. Two concepts are important to analyse this interaction: co-production and co-evolution (Ploeg, 1997). Co-production is understood as the mutual interaction and changes of the human being and nature (Ploeg and Marsden, 2008). At a higher level, the same process drives to co-evolution, which leads to a mutual and positive reinforcement of both parts. Some practices may affect the co-evolution due to the subjugation of nature to social interests in such a way, that the cycle of co-production breaks down. This is the case of the so called agro-industrial model, whose implementation through the last decades disembedded rural activities, such as agriculture, from nature.

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<sup>2</sup> The Wadden Region is a not an official territory, but the outcome of a pragmatic definition by the Wadden Group Foundation. This territory is defined by the centrality of the Wadden Sea, and includes the Wadden Islands and 25km inside from the Wadden Sea. This definition includes three provinces of the Netherlands and the coastline of three countries (Netherlands, Germany and Denmark). We will later discuss this delimitation in detail.

Summing up, our paper defines sustainable rural development as those practices and dynamics that preserve and enhance co-production and co-evolution of human being and nature in a giving territory.

#### 2.b. The new agro-food context

It seems clear that these new local dynamics are part of a global phenomenon, which explained a key part of our research. In our case, the new functions of rural areas are a respond to the new demands and social awareness that characterise post-industrial societies. Climate change, the environmental impact of intensive agriculture, food scandals, market openings..., etc., partly explain the progressive shift towards high quality, and more natural and healthier products (Lozano and Aguilar, 2010). In the same way, territorial labels are related to a transition from mass economy to value economy (Bueno and Aguilar, 2003). Local actors use them as tools for territorial change and consumers to access symbols and identities. This new value economy is characterised by the capitalism of symbols (Lash and Urry, 1997), and it is sustained by the small size of the enterprises, the flexible specialisation, continuous innovation and high adaptability to new tastes. This new economy of value takes over previous models, such as *taylorism* and *fordism*, which were too stiff and could not answer to continuous demands of consumers. Such change also affected the viability of the agro-industrial model, which become not only economic and ecologically unsustainable, but also unable new patterns of consumption.

This new context helps to explain current demands of new consumers, who seek to consume products that come from specific ecosystems, produced with local “known-how”, traditional varieties, own history, etc., products that bring the “taste of nature” (Lozano and Durán, 2010). These special characteristics need an appropriate marketing strategy to generate that added value. Territorial labels are these strategies. They are tools to transform those promises into a new economic capital as far as trust between producer and consumer is generated (Lozano and Aguilar, 2010)

#### 2.c. Quality labels and their importance

Our analysis defines agro-food territorial labels as institutional agreements; in other words, new rules of the game between the actors involved in producing, processing, and consuming the labelled product. It means that the approval of these rules is a process of re-thinking and hence, re-defines the reality where the product is embedded. This process affects human being, nature and their co-evolution.

We divide these labels according to their object of protection: the product and the community. The first category includes those labels that try to preserve a product or a specific production process. A clear example would be the PDO, the IGP or TSG (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed). The second category embraces territorially defined community and their products, having the regional label as main example. Both are local and collectives' initiatives, but their creation respond to different objectives and their implementation and outcome will be also different.

Following such framework, our hypothesis is that both labels will affect in a different way to the co-production and co-evolution of the territory where they will be implemented. In the first case, the new agreements may privilege one product of the local economy over others; further success of this strategy may overload that part of the local economy and later on affect the territorial capital as a whole. In the second case, community and territory are the object of protection, thus, the new agreement may seek to re-direct local economy to new forms of co-production in order to preserve the territorial capital, which may support the continuity of co-evolution.

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Our research answers a combination of social anthropology and rural sociology disciplines, thus we implemented an interdisciplinary scheme. The strategy used a mix of interpretative analysis and an actor approach methodology. A comparative analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected during fieldworks periods has been applied.

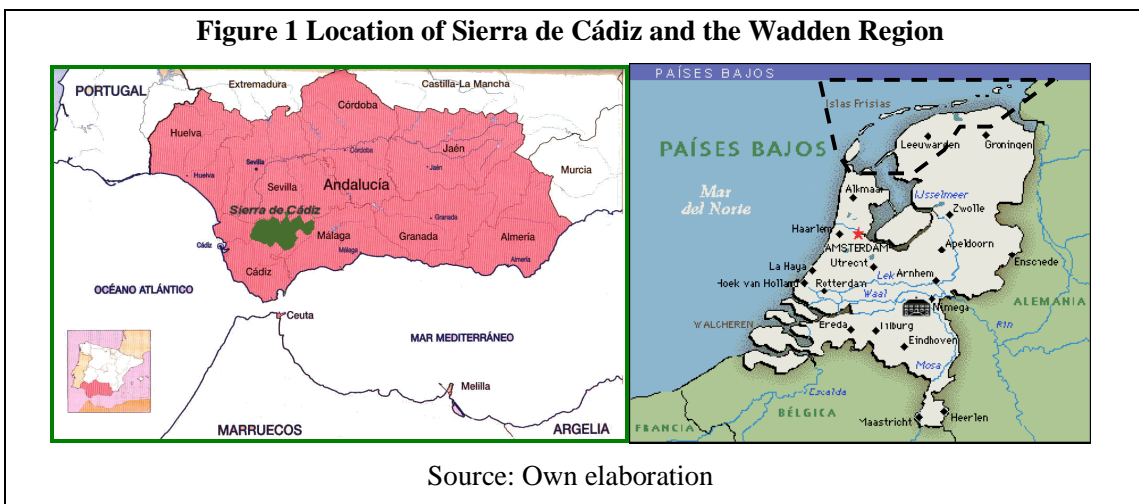
#### 3.a. Selection of observational units

This study is supported in the comparison of two rural areas of Europe: Wadden Region in the north west of the Netherlands, and Sierra de Cádiz in the south west of Andalusia (Figure 1). This selection answers to a double game of similarities and differences in

relation to 4 variables: (1) Similar typology of rural area, (2) Similar trajectory on labelling strategy, (3) Contrasting institutional frameworks, and (4) Contrasting labelling models.

### 3.a.1. Similar typology of rural area

The Wadden Region and Sierra de Cádiz are intermediary rural areas according to the OCDE, (2008, 2009), which means that both have a similar position in relation to their national and regional contexts. We found this approach too reductionist, and the centrality of numbers instead of dynamics and interaction do not answer to our research framework. Thus, we defined both observational units as Areas of Agrarian Specialisation (Ploeg and Marsden, 2008), which make them suitable to compare agro-food labelling strategies



### 3.a.2. Similar trajectories on labelling strategies.

The use of labelling strategies is customary and based in local and collective initiatives in both areas. In the first case, the Local Action Group (LAG) is the steam actor responsible for many of the local initiatives in the agro-food sector, and their support goes further than the financial aid. Indeed, the manager of the LAG is the president of the Olive Oil PDO Sierra de Cádiz. Nowadays, the LAG is involved in achieving two new PDOs for cheese, PDO Queso de Cabra Payoya and PDO Queso de Oveja Merina de Grazalema.

In the case of the Wadden Region, the Waddengroup Foundation (WF) is indeed the outcome of the join of two previous initiatives in 1996, which already were using territorial labels to market their products: *Sint Donatus Foundation* and *Stichting Wraldfrucht*. This foundation stands for a sustainable economic development of the pre-defined territory, and the use of labels and certification are their main instruments to achieve it. Their certification can be achieved by following a set of rules based in three principles: (1) environmentally friendly agriculture, (2) local processing of products, and (3) sales and promotion under a collective brand (currently Wadden Goud<sup>3</sup>).

### 3.a.3. Contrasting institutional frameworks

This is one of the key elements that affect the outcome of both processes. The region of Andalusia (and consequently Sierra de Cádiz) is a region where rural development has been strongly institutionalised by a traditionally interventionist administration (Aguilar, et al., 2009). The practices of rural development have been concentrated in the hands of the LAGs, and they are mainly controlled by public institutions since the approval of the Leader II initiatives<sup>4</sup>. The Netherlands case represents almost the opposite framework, it is an independent initiative standing on agreements between private actors, which seek for autonomy and self-organisation to achieve a better position in the global market for their products. The role of public administration in this framework has been reduced to financial support of the network.

### 3.a.4. Contrasting labelling models

PDO is a closed model defined by the EU legislation (EC. N510/2006), which regulates the access and application process, the legal framework, and the general conditions to achieve them. It means that the product can get a high level of protection (Worldwide since 2006), but the process can be a slow and long bureaucratic nightmare that may take

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<sup>3</sup> Wadden Goud literally means “Gold from de Wadden”. The WF had two trademark before this one: Wadden Delicatessen and Waddenprodukten. This new label is a certification label approved by the SPN. Local producers can apply for it, and the WF will include them in the Foundation if they fulfil the requirements.

<sup>4</sup> In Andalusia the arrival of Leader II introduced the requirement of 50% minimum of public actors in the LAGs.

many years, even 10 years in some cases<sup>5</sup>. The model itself is also expensive, the requirement of Regulatory Boards and continuous test and technicalities increase the cost of the production in such a way that may exceed the added value of the label<sup>6</sup>.

The Regional label lack of such international legal framework, and most of them are supported by national legislation or authorities (The *Stichting Streekeigen Producten Nederland*<sup>7</sup> in this case). Most of them use collective brands for marketing, which avoid problems of copying or selling and reduce bureaucracy to the minimum level. Thus, the registration of this brand and a logo are enough to start working. At the same time, the individual contract between parts is the core of this model, which support the creation of trust and facilitates re-definition and re-negotiation within the network.

### 3.b. Current policies and legal frameworks

We collected information about laws and regulations for both observational units before the fieldwork phase. We found that although they share the EU legal framework, the principle of subsidiarity respects the internal diversity of each region. This starting point become clear once we started the participant observation. We observe the interventionist pattern of the Andalusian public administration, which is reinforced by the dependency of local actors. This dynamic result into an endless cycle of interventionist administration and dependent civil society. In the case of the Netherlands we found a strong narrative about the independent farmer, the “*bouren*”, which supports the practices of an independent civil society. We also found that there is a sense of democracy within the Dutch rural economy that is missing in Andalusia. In the Netherlands horizontal agreements in economy are the usual, whilst Andalusia rural economy can be characterised by the pre-eminence of vertical relationships in economic agreements.

### 3.c. Mapping and interviewing local actors.

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<sup>5</sup> It is the case of the new PDOs for Sierra de Cádiz, which process for applying started in 2001 and is not finish yet.

<sup>6</sup> For a deeper discussion on PDO cost and their effects see Belletti et al, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Foundation for Dutch Regional Typical Products (SPN)

Mapping was implemented in the area defined by the selected labels. During this phase we analysed the internal networks and their quality<sup>8</sup>. In the case of the PDO Olive Oil Sierra de Cádiz we found a network with strong up-down patterns, where actors of each phase of the supply chain interact with the previous, the following and the regulatory board. The information flows according to a pattern of representation in this network, and also has two different levels of importance: from the centre to the periphery as a rule, and from the periphery to the centre as an appeal. This fact affect the perception and practices of the actors involved in the PDO, which tend to perceive the PDO as an independent entity that does not have to answer to their needs; or even worse, a new set of problems and rules to follow. This perception increases when the added value of the label is low. The network drawn by the regional label showed multiple spaces of interaction and negotiation. Information flows within each phase of the supply chain, and it is promoted by the 1 to 1 interactions between the Foundation and each actor. The Foundation also mediates in case where problems appear within the network, and between the network and other actors.

### 3.d. Interviews and participant observation.

In this phase we focused either in participant and no-participant actors together with the satellite actors and interfaces. In the case of the PDO we found four categories: famers, millers, technicians and representatives of local organisations. Their main interface is the Regulatory Board itself, which also represent the whole network outside and inside the territory. Interviews focused in changes that their practices have since the creation of the PDO, complementing them with perceptions about past, present and future of the sector and the territory. Participant observation was implemented during visits to the cooperatives and olive fields during harvest time, and also to the PDO facilities for tasting. One of the effects in the territory has been the introduction of the idea of quality production as a promise for the future of the sector. This effect goes further than the PDO partners, and it also came out during interviews with farmers from other sectors. Indeed, some local producers apply the same specifications of the PDO to their production even when they do not intend to be certified.

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<sup>8</sup> Quality was defined by the direction and reciprocity of the flows



In the case of the Wadden Region the interviews focused on members of the WF, farmers, processors, seller and satellite actors. It has to be said that the network unfolded by the WGF is much more complex, and includes two boards: one supervisory and one executive. The first one is composed by local volunteers with high reputation either in science, politics or agriculture. This board formally designate the members of the executive board according to the needs of the organisation, which have to manage the label. In contrast with the previous case, other public or private organisations have no room in their boards, although the government authorities and LAGs are usual partners for financial support on their projects. Any member of the network can complain to the boards about malpractices or inform about any improvement in their practices. The interesting point of this network is that they have one person employed to deal with these issues, which makes it easier to introduce innovations in the system.

#### 4. DISCUSSION ON SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Throughout this paper we have compared two cases of quality labels focusing in the actors involved, their practices, perceptions and interactions. We also pointed out the importance of the institutional framework to understand their organisation patterns. We found that both initiatives can be located within a general transition in Europe towards quality production models, but each model answers to their unique historical and cultural trajectories.

In relation with the origin of both initiatives we found a higher institutional support in the case of Sierra de Cádiz, where the PDO was initiative of the LAG and still depends of them for promotion and general support. Meanwhile, the WF and most of the projects born within it comes from local farmers. Their different origins leave an impression in their way of working. The initiatives created by local producers tend to promote common values and social cooperation, whilst initiatives created by local institutions tend to work as mediators between existing and contrasting interests (Cavazzani, 2007). In the case of the PDO, we found that the interest of some actors can have higher priority than others, and eventually drive some of them out of the initiative. It has been the case of the PDO Olive Oil Sierra de Cádiz, characterise by the in and out of partners since the approval (Figure 2).

The other common but contrasting element is the use of territorial identities. In both cases identity plays an important role, but they follow different strategies. Sierra de Cádiz PDO uses a pre-existing territorial identity, the Andalusian County of Sierra de Cádiz. The WF uses neither a governmental unit nor a geographically defined unit. The centre of this territory is the Wadden Sea, which is a well-known nature protected area, World Heritage since 2009 and an usual holidays destination for Dutch and German people. Both strategies consist in transforming the symbolic capital of a given area into added value, but with different consequences. The selection of a pre-existing identity introduces the initiative in an already institutionalised territorial capital, and they can join forces in the reproduction of that symbolic capital. The selection of a non-predefined territory gave to this initiative the monopoly on the reproduction of the meanings of this new territory, but also put them into a demanding position.

Figure 2 Evolution of partners since 1999

ENTERPRISE	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Troya Cantalejo S.L.												
SCA El Agro												
SAT 1184 San José Obrero												
SCA Oleica Coripeña												
SCAA Ntra Sra Remedios												
SCA San Antón												
Almazara La Pilas												
Aceites Blazquez SL												
Almazara El Vinculo												
SCAA Ntra Sra del Rosario												
SCA Sierra del Terril												
SCA San Juan Bautista												

Source: Regulatory Board PDO Olive Oil Sierra de Cádiz

The last aspect of the analysis was the consequences on the co-production and co-evolution of both labels over the territory. We found that the PDO is more passive in this sense than the WF. The PDO is an instrument of preservation and promotion of a specific product, thus, the actors involved try to unfold the right network for their product, but it ends there. On the order side, the WF goes further; they also organize the marketing of the products and support the integration of new ones in the initiative. It can be said that

the second case can make a bigger contribution to the complexity of the territorial co-evolution through the integration of new practices of co-production within the umbrella of the WF. However, the PDO is also a positive instrument to assure the continuity of co-production and co-evolution due to the outcome of an added value for the actors involved. Therefore, we understand that both initiatives are positive responses to the current situation within the agro-food sector of the EU, and can be considered as interesting instruments to unfold territorial development.

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