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Explorations of a Latin American Perspective

Claudia Ranaboldo





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INTRODUCTION

Explorations of a Latin American Perspective

Claudia Ranaboldo¹

Within the framework of conceptual and operational advances relating to rural territorial development (RTD),² in 2005 a little-known and studied facet of it was identified in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): cultural identity (CI) and its valuation in rural areas.

Over the course of two years (July 2005 - June 2007), RIMISP - Latin American Center for Rural Development and a wide range of academic institutions, development institutions and social, economic and cultural organizations in the region, with support from the Ford Foundation, conducted an exploratory study in the subject via the Rural Land Development through Identity Products and Services Project.³

This project included, among other activities, the development of a conceptual and methodological foundation (Ranaboldo 2006), a publication on the state of the art (Fonte and Ranaboldo 2007), the execution of nine case studies in eight countries in Latin America, with a final stage of summary and analysis, and an articulated set of initiatives related to communication and discussion of the results through various media with different audiences and territorial learning processes.

This volume presents articles concerning the cases and their comparative analysis.

Hypotheses and research questions

A preliminary examination of the state of the art of the subject, taking into account the justification and the broader objectives of the project, led to the formulation of three main hypotheses to be considered in the case studies:

1. Many poor areas in Latin America and the Caribbean are endowed with an abundant, rich and distinctive cultural heritage based on multiple assets (tangible/intangible, movable/immovable). Investment in the enhancement of CI can be an effective strategy for sustainable and inclusive development in said territories.

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² For a review of the state of the art, see, among others, Schejtman and Berdegué (2004).

³ See: www.rimisp.org/territorioeidentidad2

2. There is emerging demand, by major customer segments, for products and services carrying the CI associated with rural areas. The attributes valued by these consumers are the patterns of production and consumption, local knowledge and customs, differences associated with those goods and services, and their quality. These consumers are willing to pay a higher price and/or choose CI products and services over other alternatives.

3. The valuation of CI requires the development of innovations in policy, public investment and services, and the strengthening of actors, institutions and networks that allow: (a) the production of CI goods and services; (b) the identification and assessment by consumers of such goods and services, (c) the dissemination of the process and benefits throughout the territory, and (d) the substantive participation of the poor in the Rural Territorial Development with Cultural Identity (RTD-CI) Strategy and the distribution of its benefits.

The research questions that guided the case studies are shown in Box 1.

Box 1

Research questions that guided the case studies

The Central Question

Is it possible that the valuation of cultural heritage in poor rural areas will constitute a localized development process engine that reduces poverty, inequality and exclusion? If it is possible, how might it be achieved?

Operational Questions

1. *What kinds of experiences exist to promote processes of rural territorial development with cultural identity?*

Contextualization referring to:

- 1.1 The region and its local production system
- 1.2 Cultural assets
- 1.3 Actors, networks and institutions related to valuation of the region's CI
- 1.4 Existing strategies for the valuation of the region's CI

2. *What are the main features of the region's cultural identity valuation strategies derived from those experiences in relation to:*

- 2.1 RTD-CI objectives
- 2.2 Integration and exposure of the region's CI
- 2.3 Market valuation
- 2.4 The determinants of access
- 2.5 Benefits and their distribution

3. *What is needed to stimulate the valuation of cultural identity in the context of sustained and equitable rural territorial development with cultural identity?*

- 3.1 In the area of public policies and investments
- 3.2 In the area of services
- 3.3 In the area of roles of different sectors

Analytical and methodological framework

We defined an analytical framework articulated around three axes: types of experiences, features of the RTD-CI strategies as well as incentives for the RTD-CI. For details, see Annex 1.

Simultaneously, we developed the selection criteria of the territories, determining that the selected cases should be closely related to: rural areas with significant poverty levels, the presence of different RTD-CI strategies, and different internal combinations of these strategies. See Annex 2.

The analytical framework served as a flexible guide because it was a preliminary exploration based on case studies that were limited in terms of resources and time.⁴ We emphasized the need to use research to build a platform for dialogue and collaboration between different actors who were interested in the RTD-CI and willing to invest in these studies;⁵ at times we joined processes already underway.⁶

We also requested early participation by young local talent, broad and representative population groups and local grassroots organizations in the research process in order to identify, from their input, the products that could mobilize RTD-CI in the area.

Therefore, the analytical and methodological framework would not become a "straitjacket" but rather was adjusted according to local contexts and the focus in each case. However, as shown by comparative analysis in this volume (Fonte and Schejtman) we achieved consistent results in relation to initial assumptions.

Furthermore, the project produced a wealth of products that are being used to promote and/or strengthen RTD-CI initiatives, such as the DVD on community life and the music of San Basilio de Palenque in Colombia, the maps of products and services with CI in Concepción (Bolivia), Chiloé (Chile) and the Moche countryside in northern Peru.⁷

Table A shows the nine case studies that were conducted, the same as those presented in this volume.

Summary of major trends found

Based on research results, we can say that there are conditions in LAC for RTD-CI processes that would generate new opportunities for the poor and marginalized. However, these opportunities must consider a number of risks that may limit or rule them out, which is why RTD-CI should not be assumed to be a new "prescription" that is valid and applicable in any context and under all circumstances.

⁴ These were studies performed over about six months with teams usually made up of a senior researcher and an average of two or three researchers (among seniors and juniors). In the case of Argentina there was a single person, a doctoral candidate; in the case of Colombia there was a large and active team from the university as well as several local researchers involved in the study. In other words, the teams had varying compositions.

⁵ The project had funding from the Ford Foundation for only four cases, though in practice, nine cases were studied thanks to the contribution of the institutions that coordinated the work, from universities and research centers to NGOs and local organizations. These contributions reflect clearly their commitment to the subject.

⁶ For example, in Ecuador, the case study was part of a self-assessment conducted by social organizations concerning the processes of indigenous development and management in the area.

⁷ All of these are contained in the DVD *Territorios con IC. Experiencias 2005-2007*. RIMISP (2007).

1. There are rural areas with high rates of poverty and marginality, characterized by a remarkable tangible and/or intangible cultural heritage. The availability per se of these cultural assets has not yet managed to trigger positive, sustained and massive economic processes of greater well-being and development, particularly for the local poor. However, there are signs of potential in this direction, for example, on the Caribbean coast of Colombia and its African American communities, in the Colca Valley in Peru and the communities of Cabanas and Collanas, as well as on the north coast of Peru with its numerous archaeological sites of international value.

Table A: Institutions and projects

Country or territory	Institution	Final Report
Argentina Mendoza Oases	Institute for Human, Social and Environmental Sciences (INCIHUSA) National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET)	"Territorial valuation and identity. Geographies and practices in the Mendoza oases"
Bolivia Concepción	Center for Sustainable Human Participation and Development (CEPAD)	"Sustainable human development in the Jesuit Missions of Chiquitos in Bolivia. The case of the Municipality of Concepción"
Brazil Caminhos de Pedra and Vale dos Vinhedos	Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) International Cooperation Center of Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD)	"Cultural heritage as a strategic element for development; two cases of Italian immigration in Brazil"
Central America and Mexico Huehuetenango, Guatemala; Los Santos, Costa Rica; La Fortuna, Honduras; Pluma Hidalgo, Mexico	Market Intelligence Center on sustainability (CIMS)	"Community Experiences. Coffee as a flagship product of Latin America: a trigger for the RTD-CI?"
Chile Chiloé	Education and Technology Center (CET-Chiloé)	"Chiloé: a reservoir of cultural heritage"
Colombia San Basilio de Palenque	Externado University of Colombia, Department of Finance, Government and International Relations (FIGRI)	"Palenque: culture present, territory absent"
Ecuador	Ecuadorian Studies	"The strategy for

Cotacachi	Institute (IEE)	promoting tourism in Cotacachi"
Peru Temples of the North	Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP)	"Huacas of the North Coast"
Peru Valle del Colca	Southern Highlands Development Project (PDSS), Fund for Social Compensation and Development (FONCODES) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP)	"Valle del Colca"

For more details and to access the full final reports see:
http://www.rimisp.org/proyectos/nuevas_subsecciones.php?id_proyecto=188&id_subseccion=56

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2. This cultural heritage is seen not only in a mechanical transmission of tradition but rather is recreated in an innovative process stemming from the meeting of various local and global actors. This requires overcoming a closed perspective into "maintaining tradition," encouraging instead a diverse and non-stereotypical array of elements that differentiate the territory and characterize it as an area "in motion," not static and identical to its prior expressions. For example, Chiloé handicrafts in Chile, embroidery of the Colca Valley in Peru and wooden, ceramic and cotton objects from Chiquitanía in Bolivia, are all, on the basis of certain original cultural elements (symbols and local raw material), creating new models of high-quality crafts oriented to national and international markets. The participation of designers and other external actors is contributing significantly to the revival of tradition, not its distortion, and to the creation of "new collections" with a balance between the past and the present.

3. The cultural heritage of these rural societies in many cases is recognized in broader contexts- national and international- becoming an emblem of their respective areas, with all of the unknowns still involved in the process of "territorial marketing" in terms of the sustainability of local processes "on offer" and of the channeling of benefits to a wide range of local people and not just to a few individuals and companies. This happens, for example, in the Chiquitana missions in Bolivia, in the Vale dos Vinhedos and Caminhos de Pedra in Brazil and in Argentina's Mendoza oases.

4. Growing segments of the urban populations of the countries of the region and elsewhere recognize in this cultural heritage an element that meets the expectations and demands for recreation, culture, health, tradition, sense of belonging, roots, etc.

This opens a new opportunity for employment and income generation in rural areas, from the so-called "cultural economy" and from access to diverse markets. This raises questions about the profile and characteristics of consumers, since their range is very wide, with demands ranging from new "folk" products intended for mass- and therefore increasingly stereotyped and globalized- consumption, to consumption that is more sensitive to quality, ethics, personal expression, and to maintaining originality.

5. In LAC cultural heritage is often associated with very poor and disadvantaged segments of the rural population, including women, indigenous peoples, people of African descent and rural dwellers. Valuation, then, is linked to public recognition of their knowledge and skills, contributing to a rise in self-esteem and sense of citizenship. It has also been observed that governance based on community/collectivity is key as important social capital distinctive of many LAC countries. Therefore, the RTD-CI processes should include these different dimensions in addition to the economic one. Behind the identity products and services are the real actors and makers of them: people in flesh and blood, communities and their own strategies. To think only of new offerings for new markets leading to higher revenues and consequently, greater well-being, is a simplistic equation. At least in the RTD-CI it tends to stifle their prospects for a less mercantilist, more comprehensive, and more just and inclusive development.

6. In the case of women⁸ a doublespeak emerges involving risks and conservative positions. On the one hand, there are sectors that still argue that women, "being closer to nature and the maintenance and transmission of cultural values [...]", would be the primary carriers of CI. That is precisely what would be seen in typical local products, handicrafts, and tourist services, among other things, in which women's work is evident, often prominently. However, that "activism" is not accompanied- at least not across the board- by substantive changes in the redistribution of tasks within the family and community, and less by a redistribution of power. In contrast, higher income- often not complementary but rather substantive and above all permanent and safe for the family economy- that stems from initiatives for valuation of the local CI and its positive effects in other areas (greater socialization, mobility, self-esteem, increased possibilities for exchange and learning, etc.), sometimes show a negative balance. We see overexploitation in terms of workload, family crises triggered by the new roles that men and women assume and blocks that also negatively affect efficiency and innovation of CI-based initiatives. This is the case of Chiloé and the Colca Valley, for example. The banality of the association "woman-nature-culture," however, begins to wilt under new leadership and initiatives that show that elements of cultural identity, valued and renewed, can trigger transformative changes in women and their environments. The interesting thing is that these new "tracks" do not have a single social or ethnic connotation because empowered women have been found in the Mendoza oases in Argentina, in Vale dos

⁸ In the previous stage of the project, we worked on assessing progress and identifying gaps in the treatment of gender as relates to RTD. On this subject see Porras (2007) and Castro, Porras and Ranaboldo (2008). Both texts will soon be available at:
http://www.rimisp.org/proyectos/seccion_adicional.php?id_proyecto=188&id_sub=III

Vinhedos and Camino da Pedra in Brazil, the indigenous municipality of Cotacachi Ecuador and the Municipality of Concepción in Bolivia.

7. From the varied experiences in the Latin American region, in terms of cultural assets, stakeholders and institutional networks, we see that the valuation of an area with CI is not a process exclusive to indigenous peoples. While in several of the cases (Cotacachi, the Colca Valley, and Concepción to some extent) the original native base is key, in others very different elements stand out (Ukrainian and Italian colonization in Argentina and Brazil, miscegenation processes in Central America and Mexico and on the north coast of Peru as well as in Chiquitanía in Bolivia), or the indigenous population is part of a broader set of actors and dynamics (as with the Mapuche in Chiloé), or another ethnicity is prominent (African descendants in Colombia). This helps to demystify simplistic and unilateral assertions (which identify the Indian as almost the sole bearer of identity), to (re)open cultural, mental and political divides and to recognize the enormous potential of this diverse, multiethnic, and finally mestizo Latin America.

8. There has been an emergence of actors and networks dedicated to exploring development strategies based on the valuation of cultural assets in rural areas. The gender and generational elements among the leadership in these processes are clear, with women and youth taking on prominent roles. Moreover, many mayors and municipal councils are beginning to mobilize and make regulations to protect and value the cultural heritage of their towns. Actors emerge to facilitate development processes with CI, providing information and some of the services needed to make them possible. Also important are market players that create supply chains and business systems that unite supply and demand, such as specialized tourist agencies and supermarkets interested in providing “novel” products to its customers. A segment of consumers who prefer products differentiated by their origin and cultural quality emerges. This can be triggered at a breakneck pace that sometimes risks exceeding the actual capacity of assimilation of new processes by local stakeholders and in particular the poorest and most marginalized.

9. We also see the appearance of new institutions that help incorporate a CI in a product or service and communicate that quality to potential consumers. This results in, for example, designations of origin and geographical indications, used especially in cases where the items are meant to “travel,” as with coffee in some countries of Central America and Mexico and the wines in Argentina and Chile. National, subregional⁹ and regional laws are still unfocused, poorly articulated, and little known and used. It is necessary to explore further- from more mature but also more critical experiences such as the Europeans'- how these mechanisms of “traceability”- generated for increasing the value of products while protecting the cultural identity of the territories- are becoming simply and plainly marketing instruments, especially suitable for more powerful business sectors.

⁹ We refer to the Community of Andean Nations (CAN) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR). See Soto et al (2007) and Benedetto (2007).

10. We have identified interesting possibilities related to the relationship between cultural assets and natural resources in the face of the development of new strategies for enhancement of the territory's value, directly involving the native population and its knowledge, not limited to a preservationist approach. Some of these territories are located in strategic areas of biodiversity at the global level, in or very close to parks and natural reserves. This is the case of the Colca Valley of the Chiquitanía and Cotacachi, among others. This framework outlines the need to bring together initiatives, proposals, programs and policies that, in general, have diverging or at least distant approaches, and discuss- with a basis in solid empirical foundations- to what extent a development based on cultural and natural biodiversity has to follow a logic similar to production chains (examples are exploitation of the lizard, other products of the Amazon or organic products) and/or whether it should be directed towards a more territorial and integral approach where such products join together with other dynamics.

Challenges ahead

Based on the overall results of the first phase of the project and, in particular, of the major trends found in the research, we identified some core challenges that must be met to encourage wider, deeper, more sustained and far-reaching RTD-CI processes.

At first, we find that there are different types of areas (see Box 2) in terms of the relationships between cultural heritage, activities based upon it and territorial processes of economic, social and environmental development. Areas such as Otavalo in Ecuador, the Colca Valley in Peru or the corridor between Puno and Cusco, where much of the economic and social life revolves around CI, do not compare to territories such as Chiloé where cultural activity has decreasing importance compared to industrial salmon farming, which is gaining space on the island. Nor is the artistic and intellectual tourism of visiting the Music Festival of Chiquitanía in Bolivia equivalent to the mass tourism arranged by big multinational chains that go to the industrial fishing coast of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil. We need therefore to know more about these different dynamics and contribute to the design of differentiated policies and investments that take into account that linking CI to development in rural areas is not just about finding ways to "marketize" or "sell tradition." The big challenge is how to start conceptualizing and implementing a vision of development that does not impose a single cultural model exclusively associated with economic wealth but rather encourages development based on multiculturalism and biodiversity.

Secondly, we note that there are numerous micro-initiatives of development with CI, often in the same space. However, there are very few cases where such initiatives manage to spread throughout the country, diversify and achieve a dynamic and critical mass to influence the broader processes of development at the local level. In part this is because many of the actors in CI development processes are small community organizations, relatively isolated rural municipalities,

Box 2

Initial Classification of Territorial Dynamics in their Relationship with Cultural Identity Dynamics*

Type 1. Territories focused on the valuation of cultural identity

These are territorial dynamics in which CI-based activities- absolutely central to the territory- are conducted by actors with different motives and negotiation skills, with power relations and asymmetric exchanges between the parties involved: for example, areas in which tourism based on CI is the dynamic activity but the leadership role is taken on by travel agencies detached from small farming and handicraft initiatives, such as in the Colca Valley in Peru.

In this type of configuration a win-win arrangement is feasible, since both parties depend on the valuation of territorial CI and of its maintenance and enhancement over time.

Type 2. Territories and Contradictory Dynamics of Local Development

These are dynamics in which the growth of the local product depends in large measure upon the dynamic core unrelated to CI, in a territory where there is a multiplicity of micro, small and medium-sized activities based on this identity. The links in the non-CI dynamic core tend towards the labor market and other effects of the demand arising from their participation and externalities (positive or negative).

In this type of regional dynamics, the agents of each of the areas do not have common motives that allow them to build bridges and thus their relationships can move from indifference to conflict. Examples of these situations are Cotacachi (Ecuador), with the presence of mining companies and Chiloé (Chile), with the salmon companies.

Type 3. Territories that "recreate" a cultural identity

This is a configuration in which the dynamic activity (the generator of economic growth) is increasingly based on CI, even if it has to be "recreated" in the territory. Therefore, the objectives of reducing poverty, increasing equity and improving environmental sustainability are directly linked to the effects that existing or future incentives have on this dynamic core.

There are situations characteristic of areas that produce goods with a designation of origin or other traceability mechanisms in foreign markets (wine, spirits, coffee, etc.), linked to various forms of tourism (for example, in Vale dos Vinhedos in Brazil, the Mendoza oases in Argentina or differentiated coffee producing areas in Central America).

* Developed primarily by Schejtman, Ramírez, Berdegué and Ranaboldo.

NGOs, local school teachers, etc., and not enough attention is paid to involving public or private investors to a greater degree. Moreover, conflicts arise, for example, between local communities with CI and some internal and external actors, particularly as regards issues of access to and use of natural resources. It is necessary to design strategies and methods to encourage and facilitate- on a minimum shared foundation- development processes with CI on a regional basis and to make them appropriate to different local conditions and their regional and national environments, avoiding simply copying the experience of Europe or other world regions.

And finally, there is still no regional (Latin American) space where the various actors working in this area can talk, systematize their practice, learn from one another and cooperate in solving common problems. The spaces created by the first phase of the project are a step in that direction, but are still far from forming a regional player capable of challenging areas of public policy and opinion formation or of guiding investment flows towards development. There is a demand and willingness to invest in initiatives for dialogue, shared learning, integration and regional collaboration, articulating various actors such as social and cultural organizations, entrepreneurs, regional operators, and development project leaders at international, intellectual and political agencies.

We seek to analyze these three challenges in the second phase of the project, called "Rural Land Development with Cultural Identity", always with the collaboration of the Ford Foundation. At the same time, we are strengthening and consolidating the network of public and private contributions.¹⁰

This book is part of the effort to link the new phase with the above, via a thread of continuity and a deepening of the relationship between applied research, development of territorial capabilities, and the endeavor to impact public and private decision-making forums.

I am pleased to institutionally and personally thank the authors of each article for the summarization effort made for this publication, which required that valuable information be cut;¹¹ Mary Fonte and Alexander Schejtman for their excellent effort in the analysis and interpretation of all cases; Schejtman again for his valuable collaboration on the global edition of the text; Jaime Urrutia, on his reading and his key role in these processes as Director of the Regional Center for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL); and Carolina Porras, a young and proactive collaborator on the RTD-CI project as well as a valuable support confronting the challenge posed by the general structure of the text. Finally, we are honored that the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP) has assisted in the editing, publication and dissemination of this volume.

¹⁰ For information on the new phase see: www.rimisp.org/territorioeidentidad2

¹¹ Complete information may be found at:

http://www.rimisp.org/proyectos/nuevas_subsecciones.php?id_proyecto=188&id_subseccion=56