

Trade and local development network: the case of El Cuarenteño a small coffee producing locality in Mexico

¹José Angel Carrillo Torres, ²Karla Yanin Rivera Flores, ³Pablo Pérez Akaki
¹Student, ^{2,3}Full time Professor
^{1,2} Economy Faculty, ³ Social Responsibility Faculty
^{1,2} Autonomous University of Nayarit, Nayarit, México
³ Anáhuac University México, Estado de México, México
Email – ¹jose.carrillo@uan.edu.mx, ²krivera@uan.edu.mx, ³pablo.pereza@anahuac.mx

Abstract: 'El Cuarenteño' is a small agricultural community located in the mountainous area of the municipality of Xalisco in Nayarit, Mexico, mainly dedicated to the cultivation of coffee and avocado. After Mexico's liberalization in the late 1980s, the effects of these structural changes continue to be present in the territories, mainly in rural society. With this context in mind, this work addresses the particular case of the town of 'El Cuarenteño', where local actors have been building strategies and relationships in order to counteract the effects that globalization and indiscriminate trade opening have left in their territories. This research was carried out using a qualitative and exploratory methodology, supported by the social network analysis approach, in the months of January to July 2020. The first approaches outline the existence of two strategic business models and social organization among the actors in the coffee value chain, both supported by legal figures known as Rural Production Societies or SPR. Finally, this research recognizes the importance of the organization of local actors within the territory, however, it highlights the need for a dialogue between society and government in order to guide the necessary strategies for local development.

Key Words: Coffee value chain, local development, social network analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In the late 1980s, Mexico began a process of economic liberalization, which brought with it an enormous amount of structural changes in society, politics, and the economy. The main avenues that the governments in turn have implemented have been the privatization of public companies, the indiscriminate opening to global competition, the dismantling of support and subsidies to national producers, factors by which it has been submerged in deep and repetitive crises to most of the national production plant. Only very specific branches have benefited from these policies; the great beneficiary is financial capital far above productive capital. Under these conditions, one of the sectors that has been most affected is the Mexican countryside, as well as the actors of rural society, as a consequence of the neoliberal model that is characterized by a disjointed dominance of the industry itself over agriculture and the countryside (Rubio, 2001), having the particularity of an excluding agro-export phase; although this exclusion does not represent a novelty, the deepening of it is. In this way, Cárdenas (2002) considers that the response that attracts the most adherence to the ineffectiveness of traditional development models is to promote local development.

In the wide list of sectors and crops that have been affected for three decades by the effects of globalization and economic liberalization, the one involving coffee has been one of them; the disappearance of the then Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFÉ), along with this globalizing process and the cessation of the Quota System of the International Coffee Organization (ICO) brought with it a decline in the local productive structure, as well as social and economic effects that still suffer in the small communities that continue to dedicate themselves to the aromatic. Such is the case of the town of 'El Cuarenteño', a small community in the municipality of Xalisco, Nayarit, with just 683 inhabitants, most of whom are dedicated to agriculture, highlighting coffee and Hass avocado as the main crops; It is located at 1,057 meters above sea level, with latitude 21.4574103 and longitude -105.0297795. Since 1829, when it still belonged to the "El Malinal" farm, coffee has been present for the inhabitants of the town, which until 2012 counted 226 coffee growers in the national coffee grower list, as well as an area of 643.53 hectares dedicated to this crop. However, it has been possible to observe that there is a marked tendency to reduce coffee production, which in some properties has been replaced by other crops, such as hass avocado and in some cases by persian lemon (*Citrus latifolia*).

In addition to the above, diseases such as rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*), which appeared in Mexican territory in 2012 (Libert-Amico & Paz-Pellat, 2018), is currently present in 62.5% of the farms dedicated to coffee in the State (Benítez, 2020) and pests such as 'broca' (*Hypothenemus hampei*) that since 1995 the first case was detected in Nayarit (CESAVENAY, 2014), have been identified as risk factors for the development and subsistence of the sector, same as at the state level provides more than 5,000 direct and indirect jobs. Finally, it is taken into account that one of the greatest challenges for the production of coffee in the territory, as well as the stability in the ways of life of the local society, is

closely related to the economic effects that come from the volatility of the international coffee prices. In this way, the present work is an approximation to the territory of ‘El Cuarenteño’, which seeks to know the forms of organization and strategies that local actors have implemented in the face of these challenges, as well as the effect of social relations between the actors of the coffee value chain with local development, as well as the sense of belonging and roots of these people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Development is a flexible, malleable concept, constantly changing along with the transformations of societies; it cannot consider itself as unique, or around absolute, incomplete or dogmatic statements, since there is a complexity in its environment determined by the context itself, the historical moment and the geographical space in which it is located (Mujica & Rincón, 2010); It is within this same complexity of development, where the different networks and relationships of local actors are woven, who in turn, according to Pérez (1995), the actors “are the true units of action of society: decision makers and executors that affect the local reality”(p. 10) and therefore, local development. Under this same logic, Barreiro (1988) refers to these subjects as engines and expressions of local development.

However, in the practice of development, the territory where it occurs is important "therefore, the aspirations and needs of the local population, their organizations and culture, as well as their institutions must be considered [...] to investigate their endogenous potentialities and those derived from the existing external dynamism" (Albuquerque, 2006, p. 40). It is for reasons like this that there is a broad interest in increasing the productivity and competitiveness of economies at the territorial level, where the networks of local actors and their social relationships, as well as their participation in the production chains, promote new opportunities within new markets. From sociology, a network is an analytical instrument that allows studying the type of relationships between individuals, their relational power and their position in it (Requena, 1989), while anthropologically “a network can be used in principle, metaphorically, to the representation of social relations between individuals”(Sánchez, 2016, p. 24). While, at the socioeconomic level, every society is made up of a system of relationships, which is made up of interdependent groups (Arocena, 2018). Finally, Arocena (2018) affirms that the production of wealth obtained from the territory is the subject of negotiations between the different social and economic groups, thus becoming one of the main pillars of the local power system. In this way, it is established that, in the search and achievement of development, the social relationships and networks that local actors establish with different groups, inside and outside their territory, directly influence local development.

3. METHOD:

This document has been prepared as a complement to a research project on the coffee producing communities in the territory of the municipality of Xalisco, Nayarit; which is characterized by having a qualitative approach and being exploratory in scope. To conclude the objective of this paper, it was necessary to carry out a social network analysis (SNA), seeking to identify and expose the social structure of the actors of the coffee value chain in ‘El Cuarenteño’. This research was carried out in two stages between the months of January and June 2020; at first, a questionnaire was applied to ten producers of the total of 226 registered in the locality, which were selected by means of a non-probabilistic, incidental-discretionary sampling. This is not characterized by being a statistically representative sample, since by itself it does not offer a representativeness of the relationships of the network that it forms. In this way, through the SNA, it seeks to know the structure of local actors within the value chain and the representativeness of the relationships they maintain.

In this way, the results obtained with the information collection instrument were processed under the SNA approach, weighing the quality of the relationships according to the frequency with which they were referred (Table 1.) and analyzing the data using Gephi 0.9.2 software.

Table 1: Weighting according to the frequency of relationships.

Frequency	Weight
Missing value	6
“Sometimes” (less than 5)	7
“Usually” (5 to 10)	8
“Monthly” (10 to 12)	9
“Always or Everyday” (12 or +)	10

The second stage of the field work consisted of selecting, according to the SNA, the most relevant and influential actors within the coffee value chain, to whom a semi-structured interview was applied. For the purposes of this work, the information treated in the SNA makes specific reference to the commercial relationships between the actors; however, the research also covers the topics of innovation, financing, access to information, public programs and

technical training in phytosanitary issues. Thus, three of the six actors who were selected to be interviewed after the SNA fall into the category of “commercialization”, while the rest are service providers and representatives of the SPR.

4. RESULT:

4.1 Coffee, local actors and their relationships

During the last ten years in Nayarit there has been a discouragement and reduction of coffee production; starting with a constant uncertainty of the price of grain on the stock exchanges, which translates into an unstable price paid to the producer. Another of the identified factors is closely related to the presence of diseases and pests, directly related to the age of coffee plants and agricultural management that generate the appropriate conditions for their proliferation, reducing the productive capacity of the plants. One of the most important unknowns that this research has sought to reveal is that which tries to identify the actors that in the territory can be facilitators of change and development processes, under this logic it has been possible to sketch a network of actors that are integrated within the coffee value chain of the community of "El Cuarenteño"; mainly within the activities of collection, transformation and commercialization of grain. It was through field work and interaction with coffee producers that three subgroups could be identified within this network (Fig 1.), which is part of an even larger local network composed of 30 nodes (actors) and 69 edges (relations).

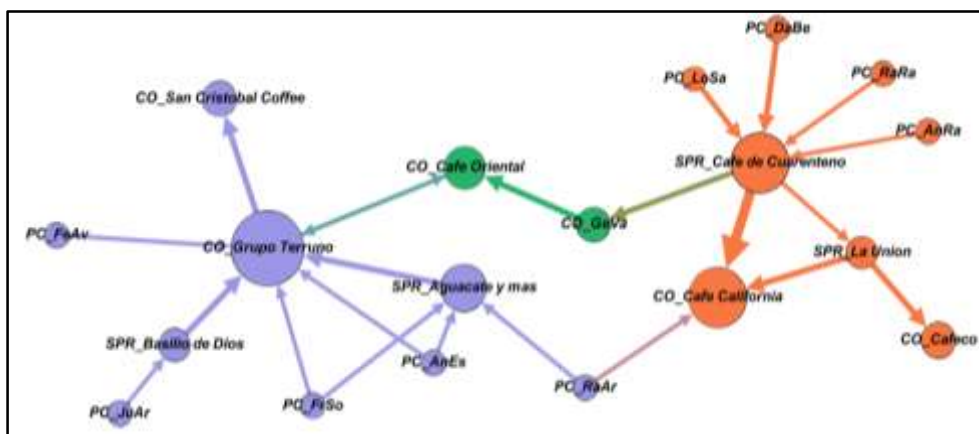


Figure 1. Trade network of coffee value chain in “El Cuarenteño”.

In the previous figure it can be clearly observed the existence of three groups that comprise the commercial coffee network in ‘El Cuarenteño’, in which 19 actors are integrated, from producers, traders and SPRs; the dynamics of the production and commercialization of the value chain at the local level is established by the Rural Production Societies (SPR), which comprise the majority of coffee growers. In Mexico, according to the National Agrarian Registry, rural societies are associations made up of subjects of social law, in order to coordinate productive activities, mutual assistance and commercialization in their agrarian nuclei (National Agrarian Registry [RAN], 2018). Despite being a community that does not reach 700 inhabitants, only in this town there are three companies, of which two have a formal relationship in terms of marketing with a single trader (CO). It should be noted that, the statutes of the SPR dedicated to coffee in Xalisco, establish a commercialization agreement between the partners (coffee producers or PC) that make them up and the SPR itself, the latter being in charge of the collection, processing (wet or dry) and marketing of the entire harvest of its partners. The analysis of social networks yielded the results that allowed the construction of the graph in figure 1, where it can be seen that the actors with the greatest influence are those whose respective node is in a larger size; this is due to two factors (Table 2); the first, the number of actors who referred them through the questionnaire (indegree), and the second, the quality or weight of these relationships (weighter indegree).

Table 2: Most influential actors by number and weight of relationships.

Label	indegree	weighted indegree
CO_Grupo Terruno	6	48
CO_Cafe California	3	34
SPR_Cafe de Cuarenteno	4	33
SPR_Aguacate y mas	3	21
CO_Cafe Oriental	2	17
CO_Cafeco	1	10

CO_San Cristobal Coffee	1	10
CO_GeVa	1	9
SPR_La Union	1	7
SPR_Basilio de Dios	1	7

These weightings on the relationships maintained by local actors in the value chain are subject to the opinion of the same individuals. Through this first approach, using the SNA as an analysis tool, a social network of actors participating within the chain was built; the utility and results obtained through this tool are reflected in the structure built by the aforementioned links and actors; social structure through which power is exercised within this agribusiness at the local level. This first moment of the research served as the basis to know the main links of the coffee growers who, as already mentioned above, for this work only those that correspond to the marketing network are analyzed. However, the network built with the information reflects the relevance and influence that few actors maintain within the value chain.

4.2. Sense of belonging. Producer or farmer?

One of the unknowns present during the development of this research has been to try to glimpse what is the relationship that local actors maintain with the territory and the crop associated with it. The sense of belonging does exist, however, according to some of the interviewed subjects, this root and belonging to the crop is closely related to the contribution or economic benefit they obtain from it. In order to clarify this doubt, it was necessary to emphasize the reason or reasons why they began to work with this crop (Table 3), as well as the reasons why even in times of economic uncertainty in the sector, they continue to dedicate themselves to coffee (Table 4).

Table 3: Main answers about question 38.

Q. 38 What is the reason why you are dedicated to coffee?	
Actor	Answer
PC JuAr	"It's financial aid and everyone has more coffee here"
PC DaBe	"Tradition and family heritage"
PC RaRa	"Because it is complemented with avocado cultivation"
PC RaAr	"By family inheritance"
PC LoSa	"Because it is the only thing and because you already have the plants"
PC FrSo	"Because one already has it, it was inherited from my parents"
PC AnEs	"It's a local tradition, it was the only job there was before"

Table 4: Main answers about question 45.

Q. 45 What do you think is the main reason farmers continue to produce coffee?	
Actor	Answer
PC JuAr	"By tradition and habit"
PC DaBe	"We have a very fertile field for cultivation, climate, height and everything, so that it is on its own"
PC RaRa	"because it is an extra entry of income"
PC RaAr	"almost by inheritance, because it is not business"
PC LoSa	"by tradition, by inheritance of the soil"
PC FrSo	"the coffee is going to give you to stay in what there is another crop"
PC AnEs	"By tradition, it hurts us to let it disappear"

It is very common to find that the responses of the actors are similar, most agree that the main reason why they began to work with this crop is because it was inherited from their parents or grandparents, who were previously farm boys, themselves who later founded where is now known as the 'El Cuarenteño' ejido, as well as other towns close to the latter, this agricultural activity being the main source of income in the first years since its foundation.

However, in the last decade, there is a marked trend towards the reconversion of crops, mainly replacing that of coffee with hass avocado plants; although the main reason is economic, however, it is not unique, as we will see later, and it needs to be weighed with other elements. The prices paid to a producer for a kilogram of ripe coffee (cherry) are between 6 and 7 Mexican pesos (0.26 to 0.32 dollars) and this usually allocates approximately 50% to pay the cutters, while for a kilogram of Hass avocado classified as 'first' is usually paid between 18 and 26 Mexican pesos to the producer (0.81 to 1.18 dollars). This inequality is even more marked when the amount of processes and operating expenses involved in transforming the coffee cherry to roasted coffee is analyzed; not all producers have access to the 'benefits'

where the grain is extracted from the ripe cherry, much less equipment to roast their coffee. Reasons why many of these choose to only sell their harvest without transformation even when the payment received for it is minimal, since they complement their income when they commercialize other of their crops. Even under these difficulties in terms of economic conditions, coffee producers continue to work the land; either because of a special affection towards that crop that in its best times allowed the development of its town, because of the tradition that was inherited in conjunction with the possession of its properties, or simply because the harvest seasons between one crop and another they allow to maintain an income flow for the families that depend on them.

4.3 Strategies and organization in the territory.

The forms of organization at the local level that correspond to the activities related to the cultivation of coffee can be divided into two categories. The first refers to the formation of rural production societies through which tasks of grain collection, transformation into processing (dry or wet), training, access to public programs and coffee marketing are carried out. While the second category involves the 'ejido' and all the individuals who are called 'ejidatarios'; This social structure corresponds more to a public administration and form of local government, in this way, it influences public activities for the inhabitants of the locality, although it also serves as a means of control and information for the 'ejidatarios'. However, each of them manages the internal forms of organization in its own way. For this specific case study, the strategies that the SPRs have in each of them were analyzed and compared, specifically in the areas of beneficiation and commercialization of the grain. Likewise, the strategies of those producers who are not part of any society and who identify themselves as independent are analyzed.

The first strategy is the organizational and business model of the *Society of Coffee Producers of El Cuarenteño SPR de R. L.* It is at a first level (local), SPRs like this have great influence and importance in the ways of working on the crops in which they are focused, in this way, in the same locality there can be as many SPRs as are convenient. In the specific case of coffee, for the SPR there is a 'second level' or regional entity, which integrates all those that share interests and statutes in the territory of the municipality of Xalisco, this is the *Union of Rural Coffee Production Societies of Height of Xalisco Nayarit USPR de RL*. Among the activities that both the SPR and the USPR have are the collection of mature coffee during its harvest in the facilities of its benefits, in this case in which it corresponds to the town of 'El Cuarenteño', which are later processed according to the requirements established by the USPR (Fig. 2).

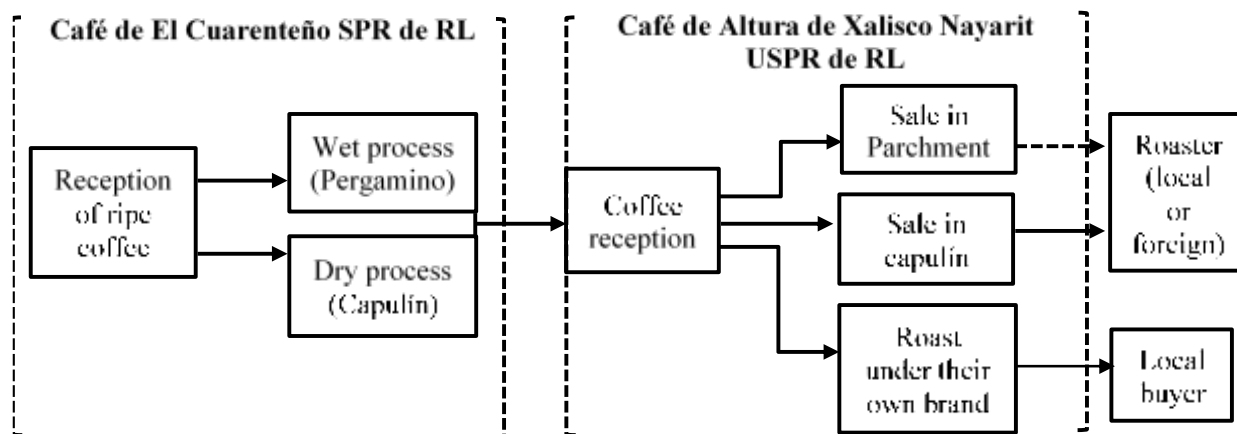


Figure 2. Coffee production chain within the USPR.

The figure 2 graphically describes the processes and activities according to the corresponding entity. The coffee harvesting and pulping processes are carried out in the same place, and are subsequently collected by the USPR and transported to the warehouses where they are prepared for sale to roasters or to roast under their own brand.

According to the investigation, the coffee producers that integrate these companies have as a requirement, to deliver their entire mature harvest without any transformation in the facilities of the local SPR, where in turn they are paid according to the value of the bean in the market. However, according to the interviewed producers, after the sale of all the company's coffee, there is the possibility of receiving another payment according to the contracts that the USPR has been able to specify, with the mutual agreement of deducting from it the operating expenses required for its sale. As it is possible to observe in fig. 1, according to the individuals surveyed, this organization has very strong ties in marketing with two different companies, which are the ones that establish the necessary conditions for production.

“... Is a company from Guerrero called CAFECO. And really [...] 80% of all our production was being consumed [...] by at least almost all buyers, they all want capulines or they want parchments ...” (E01, February 11, 2020). This model of organization and management of production that is carried out through the SPR and the USPR, has existed since the end of the 90s, where the common denominator is the sale of coffee in volume without any differentiation.

However, under this organization and commercialization model, innovation, as well as entering new markets for differentiated coffees that result in better economic income, is very complex. This can be explained by observing the percentage of collection that only one organization has had for more than two decades. Translated to the SNA, this corresponds to a strong bond, which, although it results in a stable and lasting relationship, also limits what has already been commented, the access to new economic opportunities not only for the USPR, but for all partners involved in the territory.

Although this form of organization in terms of marketing has its restrictions for some producers, there are others who seek to improve their economic income by processing their coffee as 'dry or capulín' on the roofs of their own houses and selling it to other intermediaries in another price. This second organization model stands out mainly for integrating those producers who identify themselves as independent. However, the producers who identify themselves as independent are also those who "advance" within the value chain by seeking better opportunities, some of them not only sell mature or dry coffee, but also roast their coffee and sell it in retail (Fig. 3).

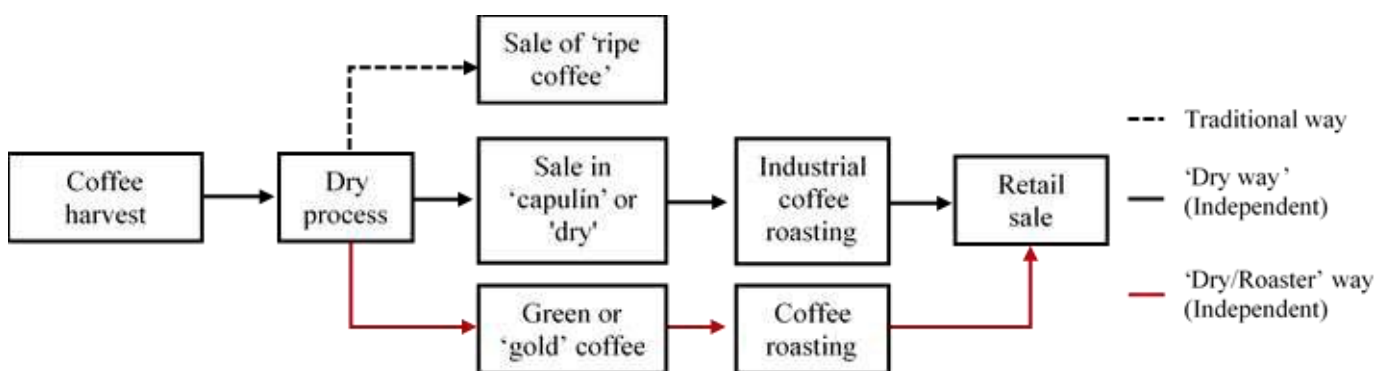


Figure 3. Organization and marketing model of independent producers.

The producers who work in this way are mostly not part of any organization or SPR. However, this does not mean that it is exclusive, as some respondents indicated that not all the producers that make up the SPR strictly follow its statutes, information that was corroborated in subsequent interviews. According to these, the companies that make up the USPR have an average of 40 to 100 producers, however:

“... But they only give us about twenty or thirty producers. Let's say that like half and the other half it sells for different ways [...] some parts are sold to others [traders], depending on how the price of the coffee is...” (E01, February 11, 2020)

Unlike the previous SPR, as well as the second type of organization identified, the actors that make up *Productos del Campo Café Aguacate y Más S.P.R de R. L* and *Basilio De Dios Ortega del Cuarenteño S.P.R. de R. L*, they have a different way of working and organizing (Fig. 4). These two SPRs, which are also located in the same town, follow the same processes and forms of work, this because they are part of a group named 'Grupo Terruño Nayarita' (GTNAY), which is, at the local level, the intermediary, collector and exporter of the grain of all the partners that make it up.

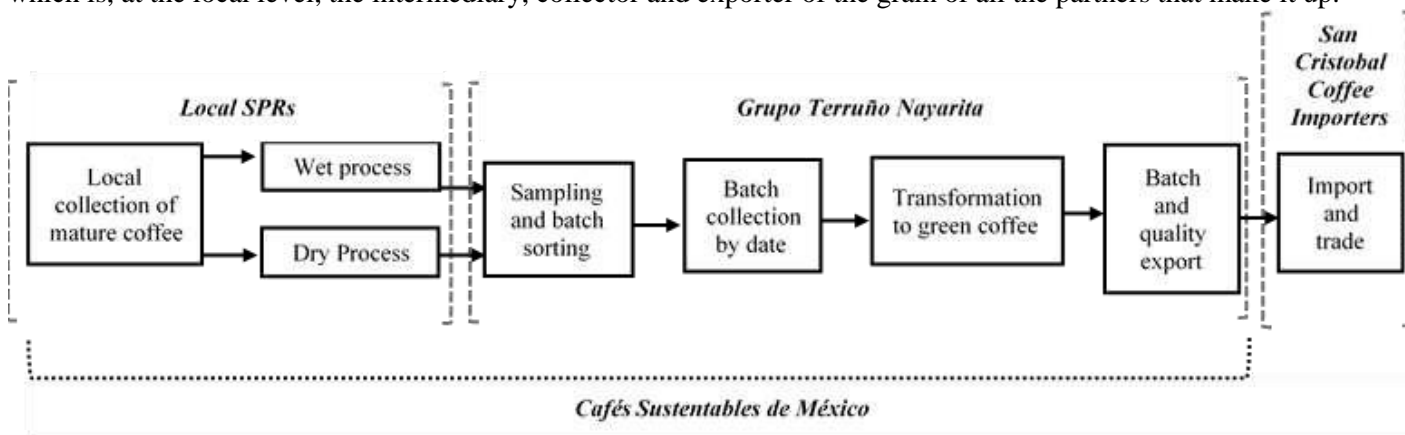


Figure 4. Coffee production chain with Grupo Terruño Nayarita

The forms of work, organization, as well as the processes that are integrated in this model are different than in the previous two. According to the information obtained in the field, since 2013 it has formally integrated the SPRs of 'El Cuarenteño' as its partners and functions as a collector and exporter of harvested coffee; where the management of processes and contracts is carried out by 'Cafés Sustentables de México'.

This organizational model, unlike the previous one, focuses on seeking to harvest and sell ‘specialty’ coffees in foreign markets mainly. Under this logic, the producing partners of ‘El Cuarenteño’ obtain higher incomes than those of a conventional coffee. According to the actor interviewed, the payments to producers are in three moments. The first of them is when the coffee is collected in the locality, where prior to the bean harvest a price is set in relation to the stock market and the coffee market, which is submitted to a vote and agreement with the representatives of each society that integrates GTNAY. This first payment is usually similar or higher (in cents) to that of traditional coffee collected by other intermediaries; however, it may or may not receive adjustments when the stock market rises or falls in the price of grain.

"... every week the company delivers its cherry and we give it the amount they collected, but they continue to own the product." (E05, July 28, 2020). The second moment is located between the months of May and August, where according to the changes in the international price of grain, the payment is adjusted taking in reference the differentials of each price change in relation to the first payment. Finally, once the lots are exported and commercialized in the specialty markets, a third and final payment is presented. They call this last price adjustment a ‘prize’ and it consists in that, according to the score obtained by the coffee when tasting (84 pts or higher), a ‘quality prize’ is awarded, or if it was a harvested coffee by women and sold under this context, it also receives a higher income, as if it comes from an organic farm. In this way, the income that producers can obtain at the end of the commercialization processes, can range from 12 to 19 Mexican pesos (0.54 to 0.86 dollars) per kilogram. This way of working allows building ‘weak’ but at the same time varied commercial ties, the same as with this dynamic of differentiated markets and coffees, it does not limit access for new customers, in addition to allowing a constant and varied flow of information. Finally, as can be seen in Fig. 1, the commercial strategy followed in this model is oriented abroad, however, it does not neglect local and regional links. This can be seen in the relationship it maintains with the intermediary CO_Cafe Oriental, where the latter, in turn, is linked with the producers of other companies through CO_GeVa.

Finally, these collaborative business models benefit only the members of their societies, leaving aside all those producers who, by their own decision, have chosen to work individually, associate with other organizations or in some cases, integrate into other processes of the company. value chain. However, the forms of adaptation and resilience of the actors are oriented by the economic benefit they can obtain from their crops. In this way, coffee producers look for new options to supplement their income by intercropping or associating crops on the same farms, however, in some cases, the paths they have taken have as measures to change their crops for others that represent better economic opportunities. This is how the landscape that used to contain large tracts of coffee is now changing mainly to Hass avocado, although in some cases also to Kent mango or Persian lemon.

5. CONCLUSION:

These business or organization models between producers are an example of the adaptive strategies that they have had to take in the face of the economic and social challenges derived from the structural changes that, even 30 years later, continue to suffer in rural society and Mexican agriculture. Strategies at the local level do not ignore global events but, on the contrary, adapt to these contexts and challenges by incorporating the value of the territory and its endogenous resources. Strategies, which are necessarily differentiated since they respond to various processes carried out in the territories, where experiences are worked on in a particular way by different community groups and where the knowledge derived from them drives the construction of new diverse strategies. Those set out in this document are a clear example that it is necessary to weigh the needs of the actors in relation to the value of the product. The importance that the SNA has had in this study is directly related to the need to identify not only the social structure of the value chain, but also the social dynamics of the actors that comprise it; In this way, it has been possible to reveal the hierarchy of power within the network and how they are imposed on the needs of the primary link in the chain. The formation of the groups within the network is characterized by having links with more than two decades of existence, strengthening the ties through trust between the actors and the results obtained. All these strategies and organization models have the same need in common, which at the same time turns out to be comparable to a challenge; the absence of a State policy generated with and from the territory. This distance between the realities and daily life of the local society with the State, has allowed the strengthening of some economic groups that take advantage of this situation for their own interests; in some cases, disrupting the development of the territory and local society. However, the needs of local society and the territory lead to what has been analyzed in this work, the generation of collective strategies that make use of the combination of endogenous potentialities, and of these economic and power groups in the absence of that has been commented. Qualifying these strategies as successful or not is complex; In the first place, due to the secrecy that some of these organizations keep about their volume and income data, which it was not possible to access during this work. And secondly, the limited availability of the authorities to document and analyze the local effects of this sector. However, when comparing the benefits that staying in one strategy or another have brought about for producers, it has been possible to appreciate that, under the GTNAY scheme of differentiated markets, coffee growers have increased

their economic income or at least not they have required investing more resources than necessary. In addition to increasing the technical training of producers on the management and conservation of coffee plantations.

Finally, it should be noted that many of the challenges of rural societies could be counteracted with the combination of self-management by local society, such as the one reviewed in this text, sharing responsibility and actions with suitable policies focused on the territories; It is not a matter of seeking to solve the problems of the localities with generalized assistance programs, but of a dialogue between the State and local actors that allows agreements, actions and responsibilities of both parties, all aimed at the benefit and local development. The aim is that such policies respond to the efforts already being made, in order to achieve access in more favorable conditions to other spaces in the chains.

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