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# **AGRI-FOOD TOURISM AND TERRITORIAL APPROPRIATION. THE CASE OF WINE TOURISM IN CENTRAL MEXICO.**

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# Challenges for the New Rurality

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In a changing world

Proceedings from the  
7th International Conference on  
Localized Agri-Food Systems

Editors  
Paulina Rytönen & Ursula Hård

COMREC Studies in Environment and  
Development 12

# Challenges for the New Rurality in a Changing World

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## Agri-Food Tourism and Territorial Appropriation The Case of Wine Tourism in Central Mexico.

Humberto Thomé-Ortiz<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract – The State of Queretaro in central Mexico is a major producer of cheese and wine, whose production is associated with the legacy of Spanish colonization. It is an agro-industrial complex and tourism destination, located an hour and a half from Mexico City, the fourth largest megacity in the world. Taking advantage of the location, wineries and the local Ministry of Tourism developed the Wine and Cheese Route, which because of its originality is shown as an effective tool for local marketing. Wineries that make up the route are heterogeneous, ranging from multinational companies to small sized family businesses. All wineries contribute to the creation of a bucolic imaginary about the territory, which attracts thousands of visitors. The main beneficiaries of tourism are the largest producers of wine, which are better able to offer leisure services.**

Keywords: Mexican Wines, social imaginary, ownership of the territory, urban consumer.

### INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

The rise of wine tourism in Queretaro is part of a larger process of economic and social restructuring of rural areas in central Mexico. In addition to the regulation and provisioning services that rural areas provide to society, it highlights the importance of cultural services such as tourism that are highly appreciated by the inhabitants of large cities.

This opens the way to a new distribution of the territory where the natural, cultural and symbolic capital are appropriated in many different ways. Multifunctionality of territory and pluriactivity of actors reveal the growing complexity of disputes over local resources.

Productive transformations of rural areas, associated with tourism, are based on the reconceptualization of rurality, stylization of rural resources and the development of new capabilities.

All of these aspects in turn are linked to the possession of economic, cultural and social capital that enable the conversion of agri-food resources into tourism products (Thomé-Ortiz, et.al., 2015; López y Thomé-Ortiz, 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> We appreciate the support of the research project "Evaluation of the recreational dimension of wild edible fungi, their socio-economic interest and prospects for rural development", funded by the National Council of Science and Technology of Mexico.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze the mechanisms that the actors involved in wine production, deploy to appropriate local resources through tourism. According to the above, the following questions are asked: 1) What Actions are developed for tourism appropriation of wine territory? 2) Who are the main beneficiaries of tourism?

### METHODS AND SOURCES

This case study is an ethnographic research that collected data on the appropriation of material and symbolic resources for this wine producer territory for the construction of a development strategy based on tourism. Data were analyzed from the traditions of food anthropology and rural sociology. During the period 2013-2015, fieldwork was conducted through the systematic study of the eight wineries that make up the route. 16 depth interviews and observation techniques, involving profuse photographic record of the study units, there were applied. The wineries surveyed represent 100% of all wine companies, integrated to the route.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND ORGANISING CONCEPTS

The analysis of the emergence of wine tourism addressed in this document takes as its framework the rural transformations based on the multiple functions that acquires territory in the context of Globalization (Aguilar, 2014; Knickel and Renting, 2000).

Some studies on tourism development of agri-food systems show the impact of recreational activities in the reorganization of the territory (Arzeno and Troncoso, 2012).

Therefore a critical perspective of the transformation of rural areas is needed. Particularly in the case of the emergence of tourism historical and causal analysis of redistribution of local resources (Rubio, 2006) is needed. This is to have the basis for a balance of socio-economic impacts caused by new activities.

### BACKGROUND

The wine tourism in Queretaro is the result of the alliance between wine producers, tourism operators and government officials, which focused on the strategic position of the territory and given the existence of a large tourist market see the possibility of putting wine production in value through tourism as it has done in other parts of the world.

Despite the relative success of the wine route, related to the increase of tourists in recent years, it may be mentioned that this was not the result of a collective action, but a business opportunity in which each actor develops strategies independently.

This route exists only as a tourist brand, but does not reflect the articulated organization among

the different local actors and is not based on a quality strategy linked to the territory.

#### RESULTS

Eight wineries participating, actively, in the tourist brand of the Cheese and Wine Route were detected. Of these eight companies one is transnational, five are medium-sized companies and two are small family businesses.

Of the eight wineries only two have a leading position in the tourism sector, absorbing over 85% of the tourist market. This is a transnational Spanish company and a Mexican company of medium size, which given their financial and human capital are the ones who have shown greater ability to integrate in the tourism business.

The main strategies to tap the wine production system as a tourism product are: fragmentation of space, stylization of material resources, the narrative of the production processes and the representation of the food chain. All these aspects depend on the availability of economic and cultural capital, so are the companies with a dominant position who have better opportunities to take advantage of tourism.

Table 1.

Winery	Type	Tourist Offer	Benefits of tourism
Freixenet	Transnational	Guided tours, festivals and corporate events	High
La Redonda	medium-sized business	Guided tours, festivals and corporate events	High
Azteca	medium-sized business	Guided tours and festivals	Medium
Los Rosales	medium-sized business	Guided tours, festivals and corporate events	Medium
Del Marques	medium-sized business	Guided tours	Marginal
De Cote	medium-sized business	Guided tours, festivals and corporate events	Medium
San Patricio	Small family business	Guided tours	Marginal
Tequisquiapan	Small family business	Guided tours	Marginal

#### CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that tourism related to wine production in central México is an ambivalent activity, which clearly benefits transnational corporations, from the tourist use of the symbolic capital of the territory, which is a common good of all producers, which eventually generates tensions between representativeness and consensus on the use of wine heritage.

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