



Agri-Chains & Sustainable Development
> Linking local and global dynamics



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Linking local and global dynamics

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**Agro-ecological products qualification and certification participatory
initiatives effects of Brazilian public policies**

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Question and theoretical references

- Using theory of reciprocity in economic anthropology to analyze family farm product qualification & certification process effects
- Qualification processes protect agro-food producers from the competition distinctive of the exchange relationship in capitalist market and may reintroduce a dimension of reciprocity in the transaction (Sabourin, 2007)
- Without a regulation mechanism (articulation/translation), or a “system interface” between exchange and reciprocity practices there is no articulation, but a domination of one of the two logics (mainly exchange) and a risk of exploration and exclusion

Problem & hypothesis

- The qualification process can contribute
 - to establish a binary symmetrical relationship of reciprocity between producer and consumer
 - to generate a sharing structure (of quality, of access to market) among a group of producers.
- For that, certification mechanism should not
 - become a factor of exclusion of the access to qualification
 - exclude more consumers (by increasing product costs)
- Participative and group certification can contribute to generate such an endogenous and centripetal qualification process
- In this sense qualification/certification device may constitute a system interface between reciprocity and exchange

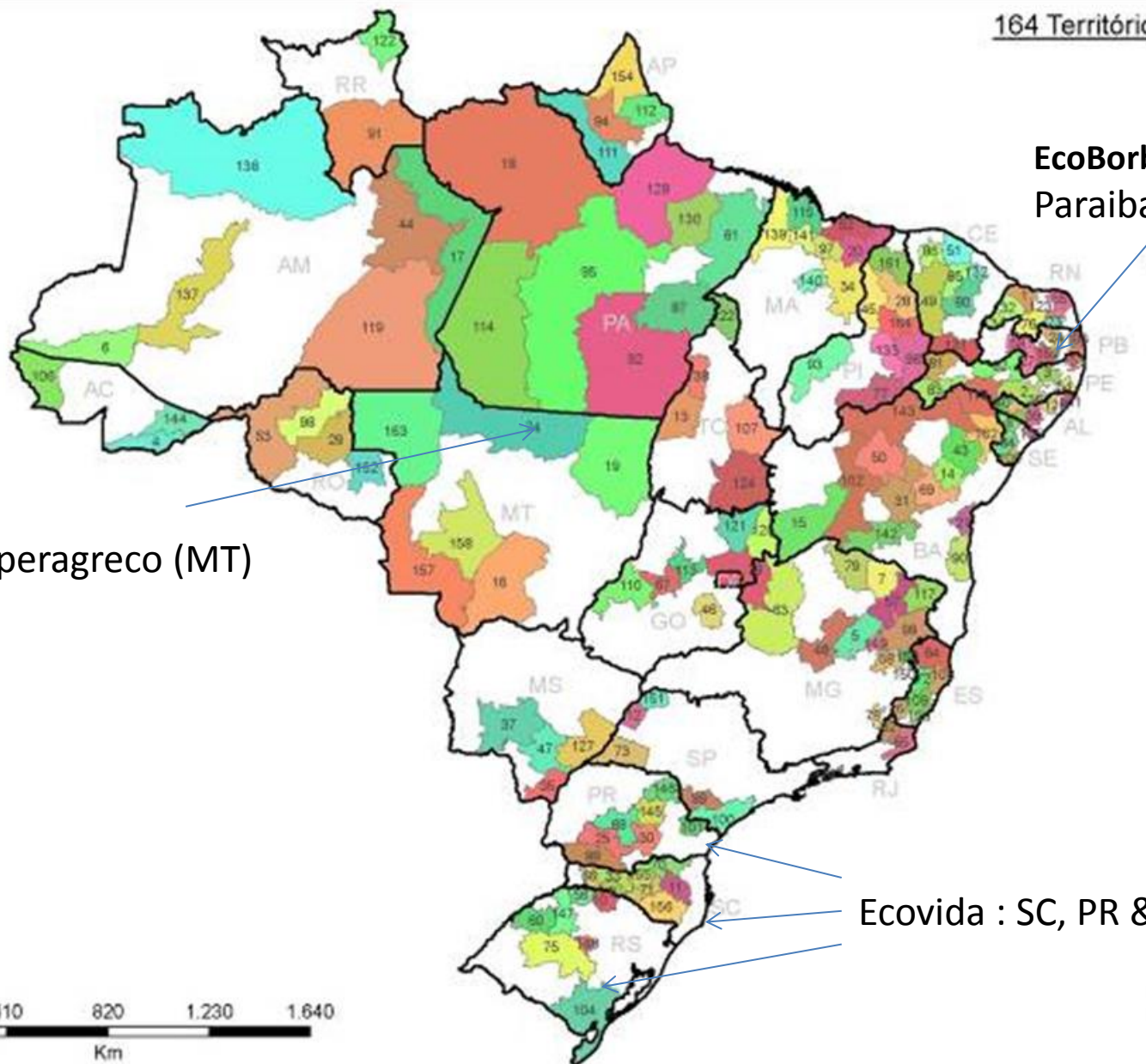
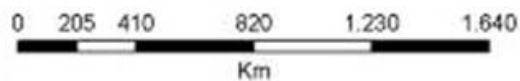
Method

- Comparative study of **three Brazilian alternative qualification and certification systems** of family farm products:
 - Group External Audit Certification EAC (Ecocert Brazil) with Cooperagrepa, agro-ecological cooperative (Mato Grosso)
 - Ecovida Participative Certification Network (Santa Catarina)
 - Agro-ecological markets group co-certification experience (Paraiba)
- **Comparative grid**
 - social and institutional trajectory of each initiative
 - 4 key elements of quality control:
 - checking means,
 - certifier organization functioning,
 - means of communicating quality
 - certification costs

EcoBorborema
Paraíba

Cooperagreco (MT)

Ecovida : SC, PR & RS



Group certification by way of external audit (Cooperagrepa MT & Ecocert)

- Ecocert/Cooperagrepa group (50 farmers)
- Checking means
 - External expert inspector in organic prod.
 - Evaluation activities of technical compliance
 - High, stringent standard, but always centralized.
- Certifier organization: Ecocert Brazil
 - ISO 65, separation between inspection and ...
.....centralised certification decision
 - 10 farms samples /year,
- Costs: 700 reais/year per farm (instead of 1000 for individual Ecocert EAC)

ECOVIDA Network Participative Certification (NPC)

- Checking means
 - Evaluation of social compliance
 - 2 quality control check: meetings with peers and technicians trained in agro-ecology + ethical committee's "visits" = technicians, farmers and consumers from an external environment.
- Certifier organization: ECOVIDA Association
 - certification decisions by peers' reviewing within the frame of the core of the network or group
 - ISO 65
- Costs: 90,00 R\$/year (3 days of work per family)

Co-certification : Agro-ecological producers association (Paraiba)

- 5 Agro-ecological markets in Borborema region of the Paraiba + 1 producer association (35 -50)
- Checking means
 - Farmers are commissioned to pay regular visits to each producer and check his culture processes, technical patterns and the nature of inputs used.
 - Each farmer may find himself switching from evaluating to being evaluated.
- Certifier organization : Agroeco producers Association
 - mutual (or reciprocal) co-certification process, free of charge & not increasing production costs (low income consumers).
- Costs: One day work/year (30 reais)



Comparison & discussion

Each systems can be treated as a logic as well as a specific language.

- External Audit Certification:
 - high and stringent registration level
 - Technical compliance assessment
 - external inspections in order to reduce the risk of opportunism
 - by centralizing the certification decision taken on the basis of the inspection documentation forms supplied by the certifier.
- ECOVIDA & Agro-ecological Markets
 - Evaluation of “social compliance” to a mutual objective of a quality culture system and transformation process of the product
.....both formal and informal agreements made to reach this objective.
 - Decentralized certification decision gives rise to sanction mechanism when the agreements made within the group have not been respected;
 - for ECOVIDA process, consumers are also enlisted in the certification decision.
- Certification system should lead to reducing the asymmetry of information, fraud or opportunism.
 - The three systems all fulfill this goal with no significant differences in terms of results,
 - large difference in terms of costs and processes : participative and co-certification are quite cheaper.

Lessons & perspectives

- Capitalist exchange market sets the homogeneity of firms' standardized certification against heterogeneity procedures or NPC & OCS registration modalities.
- By the fact, EAC has difficulties to translate the diversity of production systems and conditions (diverse social and cultural realities of different *terroirs*)
- Assets and limits of certification by social compliance.
 - It can't substitute completely technical compliance.
 - producer's opinion as peers and that of the consumers as judges, are essential.
- The Brazilian law about production and marketing of agro-food organic and ecological products has integrated in 2003 three modalities of certifications allowing the national label SisOrg :
- **External audit certification** is realized by a public or private entity accredited by the MAPA. It must answer to all international criteria and procedures, adding to the technical norms asked by Brazilian legislation.
- **The NPC system or Participative Guarantee System certification** ask: i) a participative certification system including producers, consumers, technical assistance or other interested people"; ii) in this system, a Participative Evaluation Organization of Conformity (OPAC) is considered responsible of the certification process if accredited by the MAPA;
- **The OCS certification** system

Thanks, Gracias, Merci, Obrigado

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