

Embedding brands and labels in the culture of territories

This communication questions the link between quality labels or brands of agri-food products on the one hand and the culture of a place on the other. In other words, it seeks to assess how and to what extent the labelling process intervenes in the social construction of a territory and the resulting creation of market value.

A simple typology can be determined from the nature of the quality of the products:

1°) The product/culture link at the service of standard or generic quality:

In this case, the reference to place is absent or very weak and can apply to many different territories. Let's take an example: a variety of apricot produced in the south of the Drôme (France) called "l'orangé de Provence" refers to the Mediterranean climate and landscape (ostensibly photographed on the packaging), however the quality of the product remains standard, the price is not set by the producers but on the international market. In this case, the geography of the place (history, know-how, cultural habits, etc.) remains purely illustrative and allusive. The place does not exude any particular value that could have been included in the product. We are in the presence of an objective quality rent (QR), i.e. linked to the conditions of its production and not to any specificity. The label does not mention the origin but can take into account the objective quality (red label, organic quality).

2°) The label with territorial reference :

Here, the reference to the territory is more clearly explained and to the objective quality rent is added a "typicity" of the product which refers to the particularly adapted "terroir". In the European area this is the case for PGI (Protected Geographical Indications) and especially PDO (Protected Designation of Origin). The origin therefore implies an objective quality (organoleptic quality, compliance with specifications) but also a subjective quality (reputation effect linked to the place, heritage effect, etc.). We are then in the presence of a territorial quality rent (RQT) where territoriality is underlined by the specificity introduced by the cultural and heritage effect. TQR combines both types of quality and transfers a cultural market value into the product. By becoming territorial, the product metamorphoses and distinguishes itself from the standard product.

However, it is possible to find a product labelled with a territorial reference that benefits from the transfer of cultural value to better sell its product but without any return on the development of the territory itself. This is the case of the walnut of Grenoble which uses the reputation in perfect disconnection with the other activities and products of the territory.

3°) Labels with territorial reference and site offer :

Finally, there are labels that characterize leading products that will combine with other products or services to create a hybrid production of goods and services that contribute to territorial construction. In this case, RQT is fundamentally based on the capacity of the territory to identify a territorial specificity that can structure activity. We will propose the example of olive oil from Nyons (Drôme) which, from the obtaining of the PDO olive oil in 1994, has restructured the local economic offer around the leading product, oil, and also products such as wine, spelt flour or goat cheese, services such as green tourism (rural lodgings, bicycle paths, visits to oil mills) and

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[Bernard Pecqueur]
 [University of Grenoble], [France]
 Forum Origin, Diversity and Territories
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natural amenities (landscapes, climatic amenities). This ensemble, which sets the essentially rural territories in motion, constitutes a "basket of goods". The AOC olive oil has been a trigger that opens up the possibility of developing the whole territory without automatically guaranteeing it, but we can see that in the latter case, the cultural mobilisation of a territory's heritage resources can be a powerful lever.

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