(Re)configuration of global production networks and uneven development: foregrounding the role of small-scale producers in agricultural contexts

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Résumé

La relation entre le développement inégal et la reconfiguration des réseaux de production agricole dans les pays du Sud demeure un sujet de débat prédominant dans les disciplines de sciences sociales et les cercles d'élaboration des politiques. Cet article contribue à cette littérature, en proposant d'examiner des petits producteurs locaux en tant qu'acteurs principaux jouant un rôle déterminant dans la (re)structuration d'un réseau de production mondial et la (re)production de géographies de développement inégal dans des contextes agricoles. Les auteurs déploient des concepts clés de la perspective des désarticulations – dépossession, articulation, désinvestissement, exclusion constitutive – et s'appuient sur l'étude de cas de la production d'huile d'argan au Maroc pour développer une reformulation du cadre théorique du GPN recentré autour de ces producteurs. L'article théorise le « ressourcement alternatif », la « mobilisation collective » et le « déclassement adaptatif » comme trois actions stratégiques adoptées par les producteurs, et qui se montrent essentielles pour comprendre les processus de développement inégaux dans un GPN basé sur l'agriculture.

Mots-clés : actions stratégiques bottom-up, producteurs locaux, réseaux de production mondiaux, développement inégal, désarticulations.

Abstract

The relationship between uneven development and the reconfigurations of agricultural production networks in the global South remains a prevalent topic of debate within social science disciplines and policy-making circles. This paper intervenes in this literature by proposing to examine small-scale producers as primary actors playing an instrumental role in (re)structuring a given global production network (GPN) and (re)producing geographies of uneven development in agricultural contexts. The authors deploy key concepts of the disarticulations perspective – dispossession, articulation, disinvestment, constitutive exclusion – and rely on the case study of argan oil production in Morocco to develop a reformulation of the GPN theoretical framework re-centered around these producers. The paper theorizes 'alternative resourcing', ''collective mobilizing' and 'adaptive downgrading' as three strategic actions adopted by producers from the bottom up, and are central to understanding uneven development processes in an agriculture-based GPN.

Keywords: bottom-up strategic actions, local producers, global production networks, uneven development, disarticulations.

INTRODUCTION

Uneven development remains a prevalent topic of debate within social science disciplines and policy-making circles, especially given the current economic instabilities and crises faced by the global economy, coupled with a loss of faith on the merits of globalization to reduce global inequalities and achieve sustainable development (Werner, 2019; Werner & Bair, 2019). It can be understood as a reflection of constant and contingent interactions between different forms of incorporation and exclusion in global production arrangements against the backdrop of longstanding – and emerging – forms of social and territorial unevenness in the global economy (Bair & Werner, 2011; McGrath, 2018; Werner & Bair, 2019).

The global production network (GPN) approach is an analytical corpus that has been prominently used to understand the relationship between the expansion of economic globalization and the contingent reproduction of geographies of uneven development. A primary interest point within the network literature has been to evaluate how economic actors can leverage their incorporation into global networks by 'upgrading' their capabilities to retain a higher surplus value at the local level (Hess, 2009). Consequently, international organizations (IOs) have adopted the GPN framework into their development agendas as a primary vehicle to reduce poverty in predominantly agricultural areas by linking producers to global markets through 'upgrading' strategies (Werner, 2015).

'Upgrading' in this context can be understood as a set of strategies where leverage points are identified to influence positive change for smallholder producers and enhance their position in the globalized economy (Kilelu et al., 2017). It is achieved through the implementation of development initiatives led by cross-sector collaborative transnational arrangements (Trienekens & Van Dijk, 2012; Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2015). These arrangements are typically led by multinational corporations (MNCs) that partner with international NGOs (Bitzer & Glasbergen,

2015; Glasbergen, 2018), governments (Thorpe, 2018; Akullo et al., 2018), producers and independent facilitators (Thorpe & Maestre, 2015).

While the GPN framework places a higher emphasis on the institutional and social context of production and the consequent varying power relations between relevant actors (You- Ren Yang & Coe, 2009; Barrientos et al., 2011), the narrow firm-centric focus of the production network literature has however frequently overlooked the contingent processes that produce and reproduce uneven development in the global economy (Bair & Werner, 2011a; Vicol et al., 2018, p.28). To overcome what they have coined as an 'inclusionary bias', Bair and Werner (2011a) propose a disarticulations perspective to expand the analytical applicability of the GPN framework and offer a deeper understanding of uneven development processes that make up global production.

Despite these research advancements, we observed however that the analysis of small-scale producers as primary actors in agricultural global networks remains overlooked in the GPN literature. Taking cue from Bair and Werner (2011a) and Werner (2019), this paper therefore attempts to address this limitation by examining how actions of smallholder producers reacting to (re)structuring global production networks play a salient role in shaping processes of uneven development. To do so, we deploy a conceptualization of the disarticulations perspective that we assemble in the theoretical background section below, and mobilize it to unveil the development asymmetries that occur at the producer-level in a global production network following (re)structuring mechanisms.

This paper starts from the premise that agricultural production contexts are complex in nature, where broad interventionist systems that are constitutive of rural production landscapes consistently interact with the prevailing local institutions and socio-political relations that make up rural production landscapes (Li, 2007).

To further assist our inquiry, we delineate in a case study some of the complex workings and processes in which the overlap of multiple development initiatives in the argan production network (APN) in Morocco have mediated the (re)production of uneven geographies at the regional level. These initiatives are based on the dominant market-based policy approach of linking local producers in the argan region to international markets through upgrading strategies led by a constellation of trans-regional actors. We subsequently examine the emergence and evolution of the APN in the period between 1995 and 2015, as it covers four consequential development interventions. We conducted 15 interviews with diverse stakeholders, 6 key field observations in the rural areas of Morocco and examined 77 key documents, including the intervention project proposals and field reports, to triangulate data and increase our credibility.

Our findings reveal that the continuous incorporation of producers into the APN is a cyclical, iterative process that is directly influenced by bottom-up actions – alternative resourcing, collective mobilizing, adaptive downgrading – they adopt as a response to the constitutive modes of disarticulations that emerge following the implementation of 'inclusive' development initiatives. We also find that uneven development happens as a direct result of an upgrading intervention reconfiguring the production network, which can impede the access of some producers to the resources necessary to maintain their inclusion. This paper therefore opens promising analytical venues to expand the GPN and dis/articulations research agendas by broadening our understanding of small-scale producers as primary actors in agricultural production networks. Besides, it illustrates the importance of looking at GPN incorporation as an ongoing process rather than an outcome in order to overcome the challenges of uneven development in a globalized economy.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Overview of the global production network theory

Global production networks – arrangements of spatially dispersed firm and non-firm actors engaged in the production of a finished commodity – remain a central object of academic inquiry in economic geography, international business, development studies.

Introduced some decades ago, the integration of firms and regions into the globalized economy remains an essential component of development strategies put forward by international agencies (e.g., world bank) and national policies.

The GPN framework (introduced as GPN 2.0) was formulated to help understand the patterns of uneven territorial development in the global economy (Coe and Yeung, 2015). In doing so, the authors kept with a firm-centric focus and centered the GPN framework they developed around the possible organizational strategies firms may adopt in a given context to achieve strategic coupling.

Analytical corpus of the disarticulations framework

The disarticulation perspective was introduced to expand the analytical scope of the global production network framework (Bair & Werner, 2011a). This approach relies on a processual lens (Werner, 2016) and examines uneven development as a constitutive moment in the global economy that enables the (re)formation of GPNs instead of a mere negative outcome of these networks (Werner & Bair, 2019). The disarticulations perspective further lends analytical purchase to 'explicate the layered histories of dispossession, disinvestment and accumulation that shape a region's position in global circuits of commodity production' (Bair & Werner, 2011b). In this vein,

Bair and Werner (2011a) theorize how the broader societal conditions affixed to the global economy facilitate and enable the (re)formation of GPNs.

Since its inception, the disarticulations approach has influenced the emergence of two interrelated research streams. The first one examines how the disarticulations perspective can be applied in specific production geographies. As a case in point, Bair and Werner (2011b) mobilize the disarticulations perspective to examine how uneven geographies are reproduced in the apparel industry of La Laguna, Mexico. In parallel, Debbané (2013), Brown (2013) and Wilson (2013) examine the horticultural production in the Ceres Valley of South Africa, the banana-growing region in Urabà (Colombia), and the coffee-producing region of Matagalpa (Nicaragua) respectively to gain insights into how ongoing socio-spatial differences are essential in the (re)making of geographies of uneven development. Havice and Campling (2013) draw on the disarticulations perspective to examine how uneven development is (re)produced in four canned-tuna producing island states in the Indian and Pacific oceans and its interaction with development-led upgrading strategies. Goger (2013) further contributes to disarticulations research by looking at how spatial (re)formations within the Sri Lankan apparel industry are directly influenced by domestic cultural politics. Collard and Dempsey (2013) explore the potential of the disarticulations perspective to examine ethics-political concerns in a comparative analysis of the human/non-human interactions involved in the exotic pet trade and ecosystem carbon industries.

The second stream of research is theoretical in nature, and looks at how the disarticulations perspective can influence an expanded conceptualization of the GPN framework. As a case in point, McGrath (2018) posits that uneven development is ill-defined in the GPN framework. The author therefore argues for the potential of the disarticulations perspective in offering a critical understanding of development in global geographies of production. Additionally, Werner (2016) further expands Bair and Werner's (2011a) theoretical corpus of the disarticulations perspective by

conceptualizing three interrelated modes of disarticulations that drive the processual (re)structuring of global production networks: defer devaluation, disinvestment, and constitutive exclusion.

Deferring devaluation can be understood as a set of strategies that are mobilized at the firm level to negotiate the terms of incorporation into a production network (Werner, 2016). Werner (2016) further argues that the analytical lens of devaluation offers an important corrective to the notions of 'upgrading' and 'downgrading' as it also considers how 'the new contours of social and territorial unevenness' (Werner & Bair, 2019; p. 191) shape uneven development. Werner (2016) finds workforce stratification to be a key strategy to defer devaluation. The author further considers how this notion is not a 'mere empirical outcome' (Werner, 2016; p. 462), but rather offers analytical insights into how multi-scalar hierarchies of labor in production networks are actually shaped by the (re)working of the context-specific social hierarchies of difference that 'both support and reproduce cheap labor' (Werner & Bair, 2019; p. 192).

A second mode of disarticulations is the analytical lens of disinvestment, and most commonly refers to the expulsion of regions from global production networks following restructurings in international investments or sourcing (Werner & Bair, 2019).

The third mode of disarticulations is constitutive exclusion, which Werner (2016) argues is a constitutive driving force behind global production networks (re)structuring processes. An example of a constitutive exclusion is indicated as the growing differentiation that occurs between subnational regions when some are incorporated into global production networks and others are not (Werner, 2016; Werner & Bair, 2019). Another form of disinvestment can be identified with 'struggles over dispossession' such as 'land grabbing' or limiting the access of some communities to endemic natural resources (Werner, 2016; p. 464).

Werner (2015) and Werner (2019; p. 954) further expands the disarticulation approach by theorizing the importance of 'regional conjunctures' in 'reconstructing the complex totality of

uneven development'. This concept historicizes regional change and highlights the 'constraints, contingencies and colonial legacies' that contribute to the of shaping uneven geographies (Werner, 2019; p. 948).

Theoretical limitations in the literature

The disarticulations perspective expands the limited scope of the GPN framework by looking at the strategies of labor and regions in global production networks instead of just looking at the actions of firms in regions (Werner & Bair, 2019). Existing studies however have failed to examine how processes of uneven development are shaped by the actions of local producers reacting to (re)structuring global production networks. Furthermore, local producers are the prominent labor type in agricultural contexts, and consequently cannot be examined in the same analytical fashion as labor operating in industrial contexts (Barrientos, Gereffi & Rossi, 2011) that is prominent in existing research on disarticulations. Moreover, the GPN literature does not look at producers as primary actors within a GPN (Vicol et al., 2019).

To address these limitations, we build on the analytical framework of disarticulations developed by Bair & Werner (2011a), Werner (2016) and Werner & Bair (2019). In this sense, we build on the existing conceptual framework presented by Werner (2016) showcasing the three modes of disarticulations: deferring devaluation, disinvestment and constitutive exclusion. We further expand this conceptual framework by examining how regional conjunctures (Werner, 2015; 2019) offer deeper insights into how these disarticulation modes drive the actions of smallholder producers and, consequently, influence GPN (re)structuring processes constitutive of the globalized economy.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a qualitative (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2014), naturalistic (Guba, 1978) methodology, as it is especially suited in the analysis of processual dynamics (Heyink and Tymstra, 1993) and their evolution over time (Doz, 2011). We further favor the use of a constructivist paradigm (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2009; 2014) and adopt a longitudinal approach (Pettigrew, 1990; Van de Ven, 1992; Langley and Stensaker, 2012) to assist with our analysis of complex agricultural systems (Burgelman, 2011).

To aid in our empirical inquiry, this paper investigates the case study of small-scale producers in the argan production network (APN) in Morocco. A primary objective of this paper is to inform the seminal role of human action in agricultural production networks by producing an evolutionary weaving of rich contextual description that is constructed from multiple perspectives and viewpoints of individuals as well as the lived experiences of individuals (Ghauri, 2004; Welch et al., 2011).

Our field work was divided into two segments and took place between the 28th of January 2020 and the 7th of February 2020 in the argan region, which is located in the Southwestern part of Morocco. The first leg of our itinerary consisted of spending five days in the town of Tiznit. There, we met our first key informant and visited the small town of Tafraouta as well as the Tnine Aglou and Arbaâ Sahel villages where we conducted multiple interviews and field observations with local cooperative members and one government official. We carried out the latter half of our itinerary in the city of Agadir where we met our second key informant. While there, we conducted multiple interviews with representatives of large cooperative networks along with officials operating in local administrative and development agencies involved in the APN. Finally, we visited the village of Chtouka Ait Baha where we conducted an interview with the representatives of a local small-

medium enterprise (SME) that specializes in the manufacture of argan oil. We also carried out a field observation to investigate how this SME influences its local community.

The authors carried out 15 interviews with local actors of different backgrounds within the APN. The interviews were conducted in different local dialects, in addition to French and Arabic, and lasted between 40 and 120 minutes. The interviews were then translated to English and transcribed, generating around 100 pages of transcriptions. An overview of these interviews along with their codes are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1 : List of interviewees and their codes

Interview Code	Participant Profile	Date and Location	Duration (min)
N1	Professor at UM5 specializing in rural development.	21 Jan 2020 – Rabat	130
N2	President of the Sidi Ouagag Aglou cooperative.	28 Jan 2020 – Sidi Aglou	65
N10	Founder of the family- based Tafsut cooperative.	28 Jan 2020 – Sidi Aglou	40
N3	Member of the Tazouknite cooperative.	29 Jan 2020 - Tafraout	75
N4	President and founder of Aoumerkt cooperative.	29 Jan 2020 - Tafraout	60
S12	Founder of an artisanal cooperative.	29 Jan 2020 - Tafraout	30
S13	Local guide in Tiznit with past experience with cooperatives specializing in producing medicinal plants and essential oils.	30 Jan 2020 - Tiznit	25
N5	Regional Director of the PNSSET.	30 Jan 2020 - Tiznit	60
S14	Government official leading rural development projects in their village.	01 Feb 2020 - Arbaâ Sahel	40
S15	Key informant in Agadir who was a social activist and spearheaded many rural development projects in the region around Agadir	02 Feb 2020 - Agadir	25
N6	Representative of the UCFA Tissaliwine*	03 Feb 2020 - Agadir	95
N7	Expert of cooperative development at the OCD*.	05 Feb 2020 - Agadir	90
N8	Representative of the AMIGHA association*.	05 Feb 2020 - Agadir	120

N9	Administrative representatives of the SDA.	04 Feb 2020 – Agadir	60
N11	President and founder of EFAS.	06 Feb 2020 - Agadir	60

The authors also accessed 77 key documents that primarily included the proposals and field reports of the development initiatives that were carried out in our case study. The data analysis was performed by combining a narrative and temporal bracketing strategies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Langley, 1999) with a hybrid coding strategy (Saldana, 2016). This method of analysis has allowed us to recreate a coherent narrative of the APN's evolutionary process through the theoretical lens of our conceptual framework, that highlights the language used by our informants and thereby better captures the meanings inherent in their experiences and iterative actions (Saldana, 2016).

The APN emerged following the implementation of a series of overlapping development interventions led by diverse collaborative arrangements over a span of thirty years. These arrangements involved a wide range of actors such as the Moroccan government, international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and MNCs. Moreover, these initiatives were implemented from the top-down onto a historically configured terrain, where past governmental programs had already been enforced and effectively shaped both the cultural identities of local communities and the rural landscapes across the argan region. More so, the argan forest provided the means to the subsistence of the local population who relied on the argan tree's by-products for food, fodder and heating. In this sense, these development initiatives became entangled with complex socio-economic systems that drastically influenced the subsequent evolution of the APN following its emergence.

Furthermore, the development initiatives implemented in the APN were initially introduced to contribute towards the sustainable development of the argan forest. In fact, the local communities were considered by both government officials and IOs as the root cause behind what they perceived

as an alarming degradation of the forest. These initiatives were introduced to influence the 'upgrading' of the local communities through the production of argan oil and assist in their incorporation into the globalized market. In this sense, local communities would have an economic incentive to preserve the forest and therefore cease what they considered 'harmful' practices that contributed towards its degradation.

Development initiatives within the APN are considered an all-inclusive development-led achievement that benefits all the local communities in the argan region. This is primarily advertised by the national government and the IOs who participated in funding these initiatives. Involved MNCs also promote the social and environmental success of the APN as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agendas. To this effect, the situated context of the APN case study provides us with a rich backdrop to assist us with our research inquiry.

FINDINGS

Setting the stage for the impending globalization of argan oil: dispossession of the tree

The first dis/articulations process pertinent in understanding the (re)structuring of the argan oil GPN is the local communities' dispossession of the argan tree by the colonial administration with the annexation of the argan forest under the regulation of the 1917 Moroccan Forest Code in 1925. To ascertain control over the local tribes and legitimize their access to lands and resources within the region, the colonial administration declared the necessity of implementing an addendum to the forest code that specifically pertained to the argan forest, to save it from what they perceived as severe degradation from indigenous abuse (Boulhol, 1952). Initially accommodating subsistence production of local populations, forest lands were subsequently confiscated and adapted into modernized large-scale agricultural fields geared towards market-integration production (Davis,

2007). Additionally, local communities' access to the forest's resources was limited to collecting dead wood, fruit picking, livestock grazing and chopping of firewood (Legislative Text, 4th of March 1925).

The rapid development of urban cities during the colonial era and the shortage of fuel in 1917 led to the destruction of thousands of hectares of argan lands (De Ponteves et al., 1990). The increased demand for fuel during the first World War intensified pressure on the forest due to the exceptional quality and high calorific value of the argan tree's wood, which was exported to France and Spain (Nouaim, 2005). The urgent need for charcoal production further grew during World War II, when the colonial administration harvested wood and exported it to France (Nouaim, 2005), further accentuating the forest's degradation.

The colonial period culminated with an increase in 'orderly, homogenized landscapes of modernized agriculture' (Davis, 2000; p. 192), which served as a basis for the modern agriculture in the post-independence environment (Davis, 2000) that is still observed today. It is important to note however that the participation of the rural populations in the degradation of the forest has not been recorded until it had already become alarming during the colonial administration (de Ponteves et al., 1990).

First articulation of the argan region into the globalized economy

The first articulation of the argan region into the globalized economy was a direct result of the implementation of two multistakeholder development initiatives. In what follows, we refer to IP-A as the collaborative arrangement that was initiated in 1995 between the German Corporation for International Cooperation, commonly known as the GTZ, and the Office of Cooperative Development (OCD). On the opposite hand, we identify IP-B as the collaboration initiated in 1998 between the Chemistry Department of the University Mohammed 5 (UM5) in Rabat, and the

International Development Research Center (IDRC). Both initiatives started from the premise that a shift towards a market-integration production of the argan forest's resources was a necessary strategy to convince the local communities to cease their destructive usage of the forest. The subsequent integration of the argan region into the globalized economy was therefore set in motion by a development narrative that promoted the participation of local women as the primary producers of argan oil to supply the global market.

The establishment of cooperatives was a salient component of this narrative. As a case in point, IP-A actors aimed to preserve the ancestral production method and established cooperatives that specialized in producing argan oil intended for a culinary usage. The collaboration of IP-A actors also facilitated the access of cooperatives to the National Office of Sanitary Security of Food Products (NOSSFP) certification that ensured that the argan oil they produced was safe for consumption. Moreover, the support of IP-A enabled the establishment of UCFA Tissaliwine in 1999, a producer union that federates the cooperatives funded by the initiative. On the opposite hand, IP-B actors relied on scientific research to implement a mechanized process of argan oil extraction through the establishment of semi-mechanized cooperatives. IP-B actors further sought to scientifically prove the dermatological values popular in the local folklore to market it as a cosmetic oil in the near future.

1.1.2. Constitutive exclusion in the emerging argan oil global production network

Despite the support offered by IPs -A and -B to facilitate the inclusive integration of local cooperatives into the globalized economy, meeting market regulations remained a challenging obstacle for many. A salient requirement for a producer of argan oil to achieve quality and certification standards of production is by adhering an established cooperative.

Membership requirements were stringent. A key development strategy was the empowerment of rural women through the creation of women's cooperatives. To ensure the quality

and ethical sourcing of the raw material, customary access to forest resources was mandatory to gain membership in a cooperative. The privatization of agriculture in the region that dispossessed many local communities of their arable lands in following the structural adjustment interventions of 1983 however, made it so that very few actually held usufructuary rights. Also, women seeking employment were required to reside in the same village where the cooperative was located, which limited working opportunities for women coming from neighboring communities (Damamme, 2005).

The stringent requirements adopted by the development initiatives presented further challenges to the integration of local actors into the emerging argan oil GPN. Collaborating actors in both IPs assisted cooperatives in their early conception by offering training and capacity-building classes to their members necessary to learn to operate independently of transnational actors and integrate the globalized economy. Training courses were essentially offered to cooperative members, resulting in the exclusion of other small-scale producers from reaping any potential benefits of the emerging APN.

Early cooperatives were strategically established around large urban centers to avoid the weak infrastructure dominant towards high altitudes (where remote villages are located) and thus facilitate their access to the emerging export routes for argan oil. In this sense, small-scale producers outside cooperatives were prevented from accessing lucrative markets, therefore leaving them in a position where they were excluded from reaping the benefits of the APN.

Furthermore, the social difference constitutive to the argan rural landscape has also influenced the terms of incorporation of woman as small-scale producers in the region. As a case in point, patriarchal traditions and dominant gender inequality norms made it difficult to convince most communities to participate in the development of the early cooperatives. Of the few participating women, many unexpectedly quit since they couldn't reconcile their working schedule

with their household duties. Others were forced to leave because their husbands just couldn't accept their wives' shifting socio-normative role from family caregivers to working mothers earning a wage.

Second dis/articulations wave: growing popularity of argan oil in the global market

The second dis/articulations process of the argan region was a direct result of the restructuring of the argan oil GPN to achieve an export-oriented production. Two additional multistakeholder development initiatives with contrasting objectives were consequently implemented to rearticulate the argan region into the globalized market. In this respect, we refer to IP-C as the collaboration between the Social Development Agency (SDA) and the European Union (EU) while part of the larger MEDA program. The IP-C was instrumental in implementing the Argan Project (AP) to the emerging APN from 2003 to 2005. In contrast, we refer to the collaboration between the Moroccan government and multiple development partners, including the World Bank, as IP-D. This IP introduced the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) project to the argan region.

The IP-C initiative aimed to provide the resources needed by existing argan cooperatives to create export routes for argan oil. In this sense, and to complement the development objectives of IPs -A and -B, IP-C actors sought to organize a production network that ensured profits trickled down to members of the cooperatives. The premise was simple: creating a network of women cooperatives federated under cooperative unions and economic interest groups (EIGs) that would directly supply argan oil to international consumers. To achieve this end, IP-C actors offered federated cooperatives additional training in production quality and traceability standards which

made them eligible for the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification[1]. Tissaliwine technicians regularly collected samples that were examined in state-approved laboratories to ensure consumers of the high quality of the oil produced by cooperatives comprised within their union. Additional training of cooperative members included literacy programs of basic calculus, language lessons (French and classical Arabic), and lessons on desirable structural organization forms that meet sustainability development goals set by the United Nations (UN). Members who expressed interest in undertaking the administrative or financial affairs of their cooperatives (i.e., president, vice-president, treasurer, sales manager) were offered special training to match their leadership aspirations. Last, lessons on the importance of the preservation of reforestation activities of the argan forest were also an integral part of the educational training of all cooperative members.

Next, the implementation of IP-D was pioneered by the Moroccan government and focused on financing the cooperative system in all the agricultural subsectors of the country. The government was highly influenced by the initial 'success' of the early argan cooperatives and the potential profits that could be generated to benefit additional small-scale producers and their families around the region. To this end, IP-D allocated some financial grants to help create new state-subsidized argan cooperatives, where non-usufructuary rights holders could establish their own cooperatives or become members of a state sponsored cooperative located in their villages. Finally, to ensure pre-conditions of small-scale producers' inclusion in the APN, IP-D helped state-subsidized cooperatives obtain the local NOSSFP certification as a guarantee for consumers that the argan oil produced by these cooperatives was safe for consumption (Pereira and Santos, 2018).

[1] Which is granted by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and facilitates the access of federated cooperatives to international market channels.

Asymmetric development of the cooperative model

Unlike their federated counterparts, state-subsidized cooperatives lacked the material and knowledge resources to access the export market and were constrained to limited local and regional distribution channels, with sales typically geared towards tourists passing through the area. Furthermore, due to the stringent nature of international certification regulations and the state's inability to provide them with ethical sourcing and product quality training that meet the expectations of European end-consumers, state-subsidized cooperatives couldn't adhere to the market requirements imposed on producers to advertise the argan oil they extracted as a cosmetic product. Running a successful cooperative requires that a collective entrepreneurial spirit is shared by its members. Unfortunately, the educational background of rural women in Morocco is usually limited to an elementary level (at best) and aspiring cooperative members therefore lack the business know-how needed to operate a cooperative at a profit. Managing production and keeping the cooperative's adobe up to code to obtain the necessary certificates and documentation needed to operate legitimately is another serious challenge for many state-subsidized cooperatives. Since the IP-D initiative primarily targeted isolated producers typically located in villages in high altitudes. These areas are prone to weak road infrastructure and accessibility to running water and electricity can be challenging for most.

These limitations influenced the emergence of an asymmetric cooperative network in the argan region where many factors played a significant role in determining the competitive advantage of a cooperative in the market.

Third wave of dis/articulations in the argan region

Dispossession of argan oil in the global market

While the popularity of argan oil hadn't skyrocketed until the late 1990s-early 2000s, MNCs based in France and Spain and operating in the pharmaceutical industry had already started sourcing it as a genetic ingredient in the early 1980s in the formulation of anti-aging cosmetics.

On their first attempt of exporting argan oil as a cosmetic product to France, the UCFA Tissaliwine were summoned by the national customs office that deals with import-export and were informed that a French MNC had a legal trademark on argan oil. Consequently, the union cooperatives weren't allowed to use the word "argan" on the packaging of their argan oil and were unable to go forward with the export.

Furthermore, despite the observance of customary rights, many foreign companies at the time could still import them and extract argan oil in their production units.

> *Can you believe it? These companies had all the resources to meet quality standards, and they could produce much larger quantities of argan oil. They used to sell them with the label "Argan Oil-Made in France" or "Made in Spain". N8 (2020).*

Rearticulation into the global market: the PGI certification

The final dis/articulations wave we look at is marked by the introduction of a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) certification to cement the international authenticity of the argan oil produced by small-scale producers and incidentally saw a proliferation of actors operating within the APN.

Here, we refer to IP-E as the collaboration between the AMIGHA and the Regional Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives in Aquitaine (RFACA) aimed towards overcoming the

export challenges faced by (federated and state-subsidized) cooperatives by establishing a PGI certification for argan oil.

Devaluation of argan oil production

First, federated and state-subsidized cooperatives were both experiencing an increased competitive pressure from the growing number of MNCs operating both within an outside of the argan region. Since they had the resources needed to achieve economies of scale and diversify their production lines, it didn't take long for these companies to nearly monopolize the domestic and international market of argan oil. Despite the assistance of the previously established development initiatives, all cooperatives were unable to retain a competitive advantage to compete with MNCs. More so, MNCs invested heavily in R&D initiatives to create better equipment for a more streamlined and efficient production than that of cooperatives. For instance, the equipment used by cooperatives required between 2 to 2,3 kg of argan kernels to extract 1 liter of oil. MNCs however, developed machines that only required 1,85 kg of kernels for a 1-liter output, which not only enabled them to save costs but also to produce more argan oil than cooperatives.

Enhanced equipment also translated in a much larger production capacity than cooperatives that could reach upwards of 18 tons of argan oil per month. Moreover, federated and state-subsidized combined, only make up between 10% and 12% of argan oil sales while the rest of the market is captured by MNCs. For instance, 700 tons of argan oil were reported export office by to have been exported by private actors in 2014. by. In contrast, federated cooperatives have exported around 120 tons of argan oil in the same year, while state-subsidized cooperatives continued to be excluded from the globalized market.

Devaluation of argan oil production influenced a renewed constitutive exclusion process of many local producers in the region. For instance, only one cooperative has obtained a Fair-Trade certification. Many SMEs located in the argan region and specializing in the argan oil extraction have multiple international certifications, even if some of them do not have the PGI certification. For instance, Zit Sidi Yassine, a small SME operating in Essaouira, has obtained numerous international certifications such as EcoCert, Qualité France, BioSuisse, and AB Agriculture Biologique. Another example is Argan Aouzac, which has international certifications such as Fair Trade EcoCert, Fair for Life, USDA Organic and Pays de l'Union Européenne. With the exception of the Targanine EIG, who has obtained both a Fair Trade and USDA Organic certifications, and the UCFA Tissaliwine, who has obtained the EcoCert label, most cooperatives do not possess international labels.

Moreover, out of the 300 argan cooperatives currently existing only 50 have obtained the PGI certification, all of which were federated. State-subsidized cooperatives are also subject to fluctuations in demand of argan oil in the domestic market. To remain in business, many cooperatives started harvesting additional lucrative plants such as the moringa plant: "argan isn't as popular as it used to be, especially in Morocco. It has actually become difficult for us to sell as much argan as we used to in the past. Trust me, if we were reliant on selling argan oil, we wouldn't be in business for very long. (N3)". Other cooperatives have taken to preparing various types of flour and couscous grains.

Producer-level strategies: a continuous (re)integration process

Strategic action 1: alternative resourcing

The dramatic increase in demand for argan oil following the globalization of its production resulted in a proliferation of producers in the argan region. It is therefore necessary to identify these actors

and the strategic actions they adopt in their (re)integration of the argan production network to better understand the dynamics of GPN (re)structuring.

The development initiatives behind the establishment of the argan oil GPN were designed to suit the supply needs of the global pharmaceutical industry and the increasing preference of international consumers for ethically sourced products. In a close cooperation between international agencies and the national government, a straightforward supply chain was crafted to designate federated cooperatives as the primary producers and exporters of argan oil. A parallel development initiative spearheaded by the state (IP-D) paved the way to the creation of a contrasting cooperative model that lacks the resources, capabilities and general entrepreneurial know-how displayed by federated cooperatives.

We identified in our research between three types of state-subsidized cooperatives we have termed: “community-led”, “family-oriented” and “modern-based”. Due to the limited accessibility to the federated cooperative network, regional women -with (and without) experience in argan oil extraction- wanting to earn a wage and contribute to their households integrated the GPN by establishing or joining a state-subsidized cooperative. Community-led cooperatives were established by young, educated rural women who sought to contribute to the socio-economic development of their villages and improve the livelihood of their communities. They are typically all-women enterprises where all members own shares and fairly distribute the profits amongst them. Educated members rely on the business and marketing skills they acquired from university to create lucrative market channels for their cooperatives’ products. They are also the most likely of the three to access export routes. The more successful community-led cooperatives allocate a part of their profits to donate to school supplies to local children as well as support small businesses around them.

Family-oriented cooperatives are typically smaller than their community-led counterparts. As the name suggests, these cooperatives are established by women from the same family to commercialize their home production. In promoting their argan oil as a small family business venture, these cooperatives are better positioned to tap into domestic markets they couldn't otherwise access as individual, isolated producers.

Modern-based cooperatives are generally semi-mechanized and are also better equipped to access larger distribution channels. They can be gender-inclusive and employ men with experience or knowledge in trade and local market trends to help the cooperatives better compete in the argan market.

To respond to the fluctuating demands of argan oil, state-subsidized cooperatives diversified their production by making non argan-derived products as well all the while using their presence in the argan oil GPN to attract customers and create additional distribution channels. To do so, some cooperatives relied on the culinary knowledge of their members and began making couscous grains and different types of flour that became popular in the area. Others took to producing additional endemic lucrative plants or highly consumed foods of exceptional quality that enabled them to access the domestic market where urban consumers felt they couldn't find that in supermarkets (mass-produced products) so they jumped on the opportunity to buy the coop things because they felt they were more delicious.

Additionally, labeling argan oil as a cosmetic product requires a PGI certification that most state-subsidized cooperatives don't possess (either lack of money or they don't see the point of getting it). As a workaround, these cooperatives simply differentiate between a culinary usage with "roasted argan oil" and cosmetic usage with "non-roasted argan oil" on their packaging. This differentiation refers to the extraction procedure where culinary oil is made from roasted argan kernels and the cosmetic one from raw kernels.

To further strengthen their position within the argan oil GPN, EIG Targanine (a small producer network that federates 6 cooperatives in the argan region) relied on scientific experimentation to diversify their production with other potentially lucrative argan tree by-products. More precisely, Dr. Charrouf and her team at UM5 conducted additional scientific experiments to test for other argan tree by-products that could potentially be used as cosmetic ingredients for the skin (Evrard, 2010; BASF report, 2015). As such, the research team found that the argan tree leaves and the pressed-cake resulting from argan oil extraction had skin tightening and anti-aging chemical properties (BASF, 2015). To this end, the Targanine EIG has been supplying BASF with pressed-cake for a higher than market price (BASF, 2015).

To establish the PGI certification of argan oil, the AMIGHA elected a team of representatives from their organization to approach the regional government for assistance. The PGI was unprecedented in the country and the procedure to establish it as an official certification to recognize an ancestral commodity was therefore unknown in the country. It was however well-known in Europe. The government officials approached by the cooperatives therefore assisted them in securing a meeting with the EU's ambassador in Rabat to seek financial and technical support to help them establish a PGI certification for argan oil. To secure funding, the AMIGHA representatives prepared an extensive presentation where they presented the growing success of the federated model network and illustrated key challenges they faced in their quest of becoming global suppliers of argan before presenting arguments as to why a PGI certification could strengthen their position in the global market. Through this meeting, AMIGHA secured a fund of 2 million euros from the EU and were able to connect with and enter a partnership with the Regional Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives in Aquitaine (RFACA) to benefit from the organization's experience in implementing a PGI certification.

The RFACA and government officials provided additional organizational support to AMIGHA and federated argan cooperatives by appointing NORMACERT in 2009 as the official and sole certifying body of PGI argan in Morocco. This organization is accredited by the EU and can also award eligible cooperatives with the BIO label. NORMACERT also ensures that all traceability procedures have been enforced by each cooperative seeking to acquire the PGI/BIO certification.

With their activism to establish argan oil as PGI commodity, federated cooperatives were able to reclaim cultural ownership over argan oil as a product that is uniquely theirs, while their authenticity as legitimate global argan oil producers was further strengthened.

For instance, the addition of the PGI/BIO label on their packaging led to an increase value of argan oil produced by federated cooperatives. For instance, a 250 ml bottle of argan oil for cosmetic purposes sold within a PGI cooperative to individual customers could cost upwards to 500 MAD (65 CAD).

We further identified an additional type of local producer whose integration into the argan oil GPN played a salient role in influencing (re)structuring processes of the GPN. We started with identifying social enterprises that operate locally and establish social funds for the communities working for them to help them achieve social benefits. For instance, Argan Aouzac provided clean, running water and helped improve the road infrastructure of the five villages the enterprise closely works with. also provides women in the villages with ewes they can breed for either food or making wool for rug weaving. It was founded by a foreign national who has been living with the local communities since 2006 and set up an argan oil pressing facility in the Taroudant province. Argan oil is extracted from the kernels the company supplies from the communities' women, who are in turn paid a fair price for their labor. EFAS is another social enterprise that operates in a small village outside of Agadir. It was founded in 2006 as well by a

native local who sought to improve his community's development and assist women reap some of the argan trade's profits. Development actions led by the enterprise include facilitating access to schools to all the village children by implementing a bus school and providing them with school supplies and textbooks. It also helped the women employed in the shell crushing activity access better healthcare and drug insurance.

On the opposite hand, industrial-based companies focus on the mass production of argan oil to rapidly respond to the high demands of the oil and rely on an entirely mechanized extraction process to do so. They aren't concerned with the socio-economic development of the region and their business strategies are veered towards maximizing their profits. They also have the financial resources to purchase and operate industrial mechanical oil presses with large extraction capacities allowing for scale economies. They can sell high quality cosmetic argan oil for 30 USD/liter, i.e., a significantly lower price than PGI-certified cooperatives.

Strategic action 2: collective mobilizing

To ensure a continued access to technical and organizational resources necessary to retain a strong position in the argan oil GPN, federated cooperatives syndicated into a producer's association network locally known as the ANCA. This mobilization of federated cooperatives was an essential steppingstone into the establishment of Moroccan Association for the Geographical Indication of Argan Oil' in January 2008. More commonly known as the AMIGHA, its primary mission was to push for the establishment of a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) for argan oil. Together with the ANCA, both organizations influenced the creation of a legislative environment that supported the designation of argan oil as a PGI commodity. Through their collective actions, the organizations generated public awareness of the problematic that is foreign actors taking undue credit of an ancestral heritage of not only the region but the country as a whole. A legislative bill

was enacted soon afterwards that illegalized the export of argan kernels to foreign MNCs where the extraction (and its subsequent generated added-value) would take place outside of the country and its region of origin. Moreover, the IP-E collaboration was itself a form of collective mobilizing since it was organized from the bottoms up by AMIGHA representatives, as opposed to the previous IPs which were all implemented from the top down.

In addition to the AMIGHA and the ANCA, three new producer associations were established in 2011 with the Moroccan government's assistance. First, the 'National Federation of Usufructuary Rights Holders' (NFAU) was created to integrate the usufructuary rights holders located in the eight provinces of the argan region. As such, the NFAU ensures that holders of usufructuary rights have an active voice in the APN and are thus included in decision-making processes related to future development interventions that could be implemented in the region. Next, we observed the establishment of the 'Moroccan Association of Argan Producing Companies' (MAAPC) that integrates the local SMEs that have joined the APN following the rising global demand of argan oil. The MAAPC was also established to continuously cooperate with argan cooperatives and as such contribute towards enhancing their capabilities as technologies evolve and demand for argan oil increases over time. Last, the 'Moroccan Interprofessional Federation of the Argan Sector', locally known as FIMARGANE, integrates the argan producer associations in the region; that is AMIGHA, ANCA, NFAU and MAAPC; and was as such established with the primary mission of ensuring the inclusion of all local argan oil producers in the APN.

In addition to enabling them to create direct linkages with foreign MNCs, their activism for a PGI certification allowed federated cooperatives to participate in international fairs such as the 'Journées Portes Ouvertes' in Bordeaux in 2010 and the Berlin Green week and the Paris International Agricultural Show in 2011. This helped further increase the popularity of argan oil

produced by women-led cooperatives abroad, as well as raised awareness of the importance of purchasing products where the packaging indicates the PGI label to directly support these producers.

Strategic action 3: adaptive downgrading

The integration of aforementioned industrial companies influenced the emergence of another type of local actors. These actors aren't "producers" per-se, they however deserve a special mention due to their influence on GPN (re)structuring processes and reinforcing of uneven development dynamics in the region. Here, we refer to intermediaries as the actors who supply industrial companies with the raw material. Since they need to respond to international market regulations, the companies adhere to the strict traceability requirements of sourcing the raw material to extract the oil. To do so, they partner with these intermediaries who have created tight networks around the argan region where they supply argan directly from communities with access rights to healthy trees and rigorously document the sourcing of argan to further cement the high quality of the oil extracted by the companies.

The raw material supplied in this operation is the argan kernel that has recently been extracted from crushed argan fruit shells by women belonging to these communities. More so, these communities are typically located in remote, isolated areas that are difficult to access and are making them inaccessible to integrate more ethical GPN integration routes. They are subsequently trapped in their dealings with intermediaries since they don't have access to the necessary resources that would help them sell their raw material supply for a fair market price. Women, who constitute the primary labor force in extracting argan kernels in the argan GPN, are therefore paid much less in these situations than their counterparts in cooperatives.

Cooperatives that are also located in harder to access villages can sometimes end up in captive relationships with intermediaries to remain integrated in the argan GPN. Since they lack the financial means to set up small structures to develop cosmetic productions, struggling cooperatives started selling their produce to these intermediaries who send their trucks to gather all the argan oil they extracted and sell it for upwards to 300 euros/liters. The profits generated from these sales don't trickle down to the cooperatives in question.

DISCUSSION

In what follows, we show how this research contributes to the GPN literature and the growing research on the disarticulations perspective. Existing disarticulations research has primarily been restricted to examining how uneven development processes are (re)produced from the theoretical perspective of formal labor in regions affixed to global production networks. Previous research has also mainly examined the processes of devaluation and disinvestment, while the concept of constitutive exclusion has only recently been theorized (Werner, 2016). Our research therefore helps informing these limitations through our selection of the APN case study, which has allowed a greater application of disarticulations and the subsequent expansion of the analytical scope of the perspective.

The APN case study helps expanding the conceptual lens of disarticulations as it allows its examination against the backdrop of an agricultural context that is embedded in a complex rural production landscape which was reconfigured following a succession of overlapping development schemes. In this sense, the APN reflects the reality of rural landscapes in the Global South and therefore offers a more appropriate contextual setting to investigate how processes of uneven development are (re)produced around the small-scale producers operating within it.

Moreover, we mobilized the lived experiences of local actors we gathered in our field investigations to examine how development interventions were implemented over time to target small-scale producers and, subsequently, (re)produce the uneven development production processes that (re)structure the APN. In this respect, we move beyond the firm-centric perspective that is usually adopted in GPN studies, and place argan small-scale producers at the center of our analysis.

Furthermore, the analytical framework we employed has been essential in the reconstruction of the evolutionary and incorporation processes within the APN that shape uneven geographies. Through our analysis, key local producers bottom-up responses to the inclusion challenges emerged. Producers adopted these responses to remain included in the APN, which thereafter influenced the organizational change of the APN over time. Therefore, we argue for the elaboration of an analytical framework that would facilitate the study of small-scale producers as primary actors in agricultural GPNs.

In our research, three key bottom-up responses emerged as a local response to the challenges identified in each phase: collective mobilizing, alternative resourcing and adaptive downgrading. We refer to collective mobilization as the action where local producers respond to a set of challenges by coming together as a group to enhance their conditions and position in the APN. Alternative resourcing is when local producers look for alternative ways to remain included in the APN such as obtaining new financial and technical resources. Last, unintentional downgrading is when producers are forced to move to performing low-value activities to remain included in the APN, like selling non-argan products in argan cooperatives.

These actions are essential in influencing a cyclical process that (re)structures the APN and (re)produces uneven development. This further indicates that small-scale producers are primary

actors that play a significant role in the (re)structuring processes of GPN and consequent uneven geographies of production.

Furthermore, 'adaptive downgrading' as a strategic response contributes to the GPN literature because it offers insight into how the GPN framework can help informing issues of uneven development. Per the literature review, the GPN framework was introduced as an analytical framework to examine how uneven development happens in GPNs. However, the GPN framework falls short in explaining the uneven development that happens in agricultural production in the Global South (Vicol et al., 2019). To this effect, our case study can help fill this gap in the GPN research agenda. When local producers engage in adaptive downgrading, they automatically move to low-value activities where they usually remain captive in asymmetrical relations that become too challenging to overcome. Moreover, when adopting this response, producers fail to create the resources they need to renew their livelihood upgrading. Consequently, adaptive downgrading leads to the creation of low-value activities which in turn enacts a new 'schema' of uneven development in the APN.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper presents the evolutionary progression of an agricultural GPN, and as such, provides a broad and enriched overview of how uneven development processes occur at the level of small-scale producers. It further expands the GPN literature by proposing an analytical framework that builds on the disarticulations perspective and theorizes three key concepts we termed as 'alternative resourcing', collective mobilizing' and adaptive downgrading'. This paper contributes to mainstream GPN scholarship by presenting small-scale producers as primary actors that play a role as instrumental as formally recognized economic actors in the (re)structuring of production geographies and (re)production of uneven development processes.

This research also presents some limitations. As a case in point, the use of a single critical case study may limit the generalizability of the findings presented in this paper. A possible avenue of future research could therefore be to test the applicability of the analytical framework we developed in different agricultural contexts to address this limitation.

Next, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted our original field investigation itinerary. We had originally planned for a two-part field investigation: one where we would collect the first set of data, and the second where we would return to the field for further information and clarifications from old and new participants depending on the findings emerging from the analysis of our first dataset. An additional potential avenue of future research could therefore examine if the pandemic influenced the (re)structuring of the APN and further (re)produced uneven development geographies in the argan region.

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