

## **Chiloé smallholdings. the evolution of an ancestral agricultural tenure in a globalizing context (isla quinchao, chile)**

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## ABSTRACT

The chilote smallholding from colonial times to the 1980s, remained intact for a long time being part of the most representative imaginary of Chiloé, both for its ways of life and the rural cultural landscape that gave rise to this traditional form of rural exploitation. However, from that decade on, it experienced a series of social, cultural and territorial transformations that continue to take place to this day, as a result of the coming of a new economic model, in which salmon and aquaculture companies are articulated in the Chilote archipelago. An example of this process is what was structured in the rural territory of Quinchao Island. In which, the agricultural property of the smallholding was rapidly modified, a dichotomy in its development became evident, on the one hand, it is presented as an institution in decline, product of the action of the salmon industry, and on the other hand, it appears as an agrarian system modernized by the revaluation of the knowledge, identity and the peasant heritage of Chiloé, complemented with the arrival of new technologies, programs, policies and governmental and international projects; managing to structure a form of survival and territorial restructuring of the chilote smallholding, which allows it to be in line with the new times that occur in this archipelago.

**Keywords:** Chilote smallholdings, Cultural expressions, Globalization, Rural tourism, new rurality.

## RESUMEN

El minifundio chilote desde la época colonial hasta la década de 1980, se conservó intacto siendo por largo tiempo parte del imaginario más representativo de Chiloé, tanto por sus modos de vida como del paisaje cultural rural que dio origen a esta tradicional forma de explotación rural. Sin embargo, a partir de esa década experimentó una serie de transformaciones sociales, culturales y territoriales que siguen dándose hasta nuestros días, producto de la venida de un nuevo modelo económico, en las que se articulan empresas salmonícolas y acuícolas en el archipiélago chilote. Ejemplo de este proceso, es lo que se estructuró en el territorio rural de la Isla de Quinchao. En el cual, la propiedad agrícola del minifundio se fue modificando rápidamente hacerse evidente una dicotomía en su desarrollo, por un lado, se presenta como una institución en decadencia, producto de la acción de la industria salmonera, y otro lado, aparece como un sistema agrario modernizado por la revalorización de los saberes, la identidad y el patrimonio campesino chilote, complementada con la llegada de nuevas tecnologías, programas, políticas y proyectos gubernamentales e internacionales; logrando estructurar una forma de pervivencia y reestructuración territorial del minifundio chilote, que le permite estar acorde a los nuevos tiempos que se dan en este archipiélago.

**Palabras clave:** Minifundio chilote, Expresiones culturales, Globalización, Turismo rural, Nueva ruralidad.

## 1. Introduction

Historically, the Chiloé archipelago has had agricultural activity as one of its main economic springs, in other words, agricultural exploitation has been conceived as one of the axes of the socioeconomic development strategy and has not been on the margin of such style of process, although certainly the physical conditions of agricultural exploitation in Chiloé are different from those present in the national territory.

Due to its insular condition, the extreme subdivision of the land, and the sense of collectivity, they shape the patriarchal customs of the different collective activities. This subdivision, which fragments the territory, provides each family with its own agricultural property, mostly small in size, in which an individual structure is recognized in the particular and collectivist in the formation of society (Mansilla, 2006).

The slow incorporation of Chiloé into the contemporary global world, which began after the 1960 earthquake, was abruptly accelerated in the early 1980s, when the marine farming industry (mainly salmon farms) installed large salmon farms in the Chiloé canals. This generated a great need for labor, giving way to a still unfinished process of proletarianization of the old island peasantry (Mansilla, 2006), these industries in the last quarter century, have made the island of Chiloé has experienced a growing articulation to a gradual process of integration to world markets, of interconnectivity and permanent flow of information, goods and services that crosses regional and national borders, generating diverse impacts on the economy and local lifestyle (Canales, 2006), presenting negative externalities manifested in environmental, landscape and socio-cultural deterioration towards local workers who do not reach expected levels of employment and remuneration due to the low qualification they possess, but which continues to be a better alternative than the economic return of their traditional production jobs (Salières, et & Le Grix, 2004). Le Grix, 2004).

The smallholding was for a long time, the means of agricultural production which remained without significant variations until the end of the 20th century. It is characterized by being a tiny family tenure. That is to say, small plots of land destined to cultivation and the raising of some animals, destined only for subsistence, which were exploited by the energy and vernacular techniques of the Chiloé peasant. Other social and economic activities complemented this traditional system of agrarian production (Cárcamo, 1985).

Small island farms began to experience changes during the 1980s, with the arrival of a new capitalist production model materialized in the salmon, aquaculture and forestry companies. This globalizing maelstrom brought with it profound and sudden changes,

transforming the patterns of rural Chiloé, causing radical generational changes such as: exodus of young rural population, low agricultural productivity, rural proletarianization, to mention the most important ones (Bravo, 2004).

At present, the decadent smallholding in Chiloé has not only survived, but has also shown that it can adapt to the challenges of globalization, through new agricultural policies of public and international institutions, which were aimed at reactivating the agricultural production of this small property by allowing its production not only for self-consumption, but also for marketing both within and outside the province. To this, we must add the impact of rural tourism, a phenomenon that occurs in the new rurality, which makes it attractive for national and foreign tourists, who see in the smallholding and its complementary activities (minga, medan, maja, etc.), a peasant way of life that has managed not only to survive but also to find a place in the complex cultural framework of the globalized world in which the country is immersed, as an interesting tourist option for entertainment and learning. Therefore, the revaluation of this small peasant production system can not only be analyzed from its traditional economic point of view, as Human Geography has commonly done until today, but also from other aspects such as social, patrimonial, touristic and cultural (Ramírez, 2016).

Finally, the research question is based on what have been the strategies of the smallholding on Quinchao Island that have allowed it to insert itself into a globalizing scenario without losing elements that are essential to the Chiloé culture?

To justify what is stated in the previous point, we have taken as a case study the smallholdings on the island of Quinchao, (Province of Chiloé, Chile). By means of desk and field work, applying qualitative and quantitative methods, we seek to expose the stages through which the smallholding has passed from the 1980s to the present. The territorial, historical, landscape, social, economic and cultural characteristics of smallholdings are described. In parallel, we have worked with the productive, marketing and tourism programs of various institutions that have included this small agricultural property that have allowed it to be revalued in these times of globalization, beyond its economic vision.

The general objective is to analyze the effects of the globalization process in the Chiloé smallholding of Quinchao Island as a traditional agricultural production system and its link with the diverse cultural, social and patrimonial expressions of the Chiloé Culture (period 1980 - 2012). It has been divided into the following specific objectives: First, to determine the aspects of the Chiloé smallholding on Quinchao Island as a traditional agricultural tenure system, and second, to identify the effects that the globalization process has had on the Chiloé smallholding, as well as the various ways in which this traditional agricultural property on Quinchao Island has been protected and/or adapted.

One of the theories that has most influenced the studies focused on the productive structures associated with the survival of rural areas (in subsistence economy), such as the type being analyzed in this thesis, is the "theory of the peasant economy" or "theory of the peasant economic unit", whose greatest exponent is Alexander V. Chayanov (1979), who studied it from its most essential functioning unit: the family. Chayanov (1979), who studied it from its most essential functioning unit: the family. The way in which this peasant or rural subsistence economy functions does not require hiring labor, since the family possesses the means of production necessary for the work of the farm and sometimes must distribute its work in craft and commercial activities (Chayanov, 1979).

The new globalized economic order generated a loss of the role of the national State, due to the growing gravitation of global economic, social and cultural processes. Since the 1990s, globalization has gained more strength in Chile, as governments have promoted and encouraged this neoliberal economic model through trade liberalization (Canales, 2006).

But globalization does not only occur in the economic sphere, but also goes hand in hand with changes in social, cultural, political, humanistic-social, technological and communicational relations; The incorporation of these variables is fundamental, since it also considers that the effects have an impact on the territory, especially in small and intermediate cities and/or more specifically in the communes, who enter into a process of "productive reconversion" and labor flexibility (which is the adaptation of employment to the market), the spatialization of the process and not its abstraction from the territory being relevant, thus providing a more geographic conceptualization of the phenomenon (Dirven, 2000). For Nogué Font & Rufi (2001) "globalization goes far beyond the globalization of economic relations. It inevitably embraces a whole range of aspects of our surrounding reality and our daily lives that are directly or indirectly affected by it: geopolitics, the universalization of certain languages, culture in a broader sense (aesthetic preferences, artistic movements, clothing and costumes, consumer habits) and even the homogenization of certain landscapes (especially Western ones)" (Salières, & Leufi, 2001). (Salières, & Le Grix, 2004)

In this sense, the concept of "The New Rurality" developed progressively during the 1990s as a reaction to processes related to globalization. The first of these corresponds to the debate on the sustainable management of resources at the global level. The second is related to the liberalization of the international economy and the creation of the World Trade Organization, which initiated a real change of era by integrating agriculture into the area of trade liberalization negotiations.

This conceptual change is a new way of approaching the phenomenon of "the rural" in which the case studies of this thesis are located, understanding them as processes in which both social and economic processes go hand in hand, this new concept is based on the assumption that in the rural territory other activities are recognized and set in motion, All this in contrast to "the old vision of the rural, as local, autarchic, closed, passive, with its own socioeconomic patterns and values, with a social structure based on land ownership and residual behavior, can no longer be sustained" (Urbina, 1996). In Latin America, the concept of a "New Rurality" is part of the process of profound redefinition of national public policies that has marked all the countries of the sub-continent over the last two decades. It is intrinsically linked to the processes of opening up national economies, to the creation of regional trade unions (MERCOSUR, NAFTA) and to the evolution of rural activities. This concept is part of an intellectual movement that criticizes the economic policies that are considered responsible for social and territorial inequalities in rural areas and has had both detractors and defenders, but in general, as Dirven (2000) points out, the term has become an umbrella concept used to refer to any new development in rural areas.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

In the first phase of this research, an exploratory methodology was applied, which integrates desk work with field research, linking with the Quinchao community. An updated land registry of smallholdings on Quinchao Island, published in 1985 by Cárcamo, was updated. And with this, the geographical, patrimonial, landscape and tourist aspects of the study area have been analyzed, also considering the current legal situation and the role of the various institutions and organizations that work in this type of rural tenure and associated peasant way of life. The next phase (field work) allowed us to determine the factors of globalization that have made it possible to determine the diverse expressions of small landholdings in Chiloé that coexist in the study area. Additionally, the forms of protection and revaluation of the smallholding were investigated through the vernacular heritage, peasant products and tourist services associated with rural tourism, which has allowed it to be recognized at different territorial scales as an example of the New Rurality, developed in the study area.

## **3. Results**

The insular territory of Quinchao is part of the Province of Chiloé, Los Lagos Region. The 2002 Population Census recorded a total population of 7,984 inhabitants (5.16% of the total of the aforementioned province). With respect to the spatial distribution of the population, 56.76% is located in rural entities and 43.24% in urban entities (1 city and 1 town).

With respect to the study on the ownership of smallholdings in Chiloé, conducted by Ramirez in 2014, it indicates that by 1961, Quinchao had an area destined to traditional smallholdings equivalent to a proportion of approximately 65.6%, this according to data obtained from the O.E.A. Aero photogrammetric study, which was executed by IREN and CORFO and the interpolation made with other cartographies from years prior to 1980. With the previous action, other percentages are obtained such as the presence of native forests in 23.16% and the town of Achao occupying 6.2% of the total of Quinchao, the rest of the percentage is divided into beaches, lakes and meadows present. While, for the year 2014 each smallholding classification covers about a third of participation in the Island, those lands that fit within the traditional classification reaches 25.7% being located in areas close to the inland sea, the lands that are within the transition category have a larger surface with 34.8% and modernized a percentage close to 30%, the latter are located in the central part of the Island. The distribution of these categories in the territory is closely related, as indicated by the photographs taken in the vicinity of the salmon and aquaculture centers, which have provided employment for the local people, allowing them to finance the purchase of machinery, and being part of those who are favored by credits and the presence of roads that connect them with the rest of the Island, linked to this then we obtain a second coexistence which is the importance of accessibility, being the main road network the one that divides the last two categories, allowing the traditional smallholdings to have small and narrow roads. Currently, the smallholding brings together a considerable group of producers, where different realities coexist and their development depends on the environment in which they are inserted. The consequences brought about by the globalization process directly affect this agricultural production system, but their degree of impact is also differentiated according to the category in which the farmer finds himself; subsistence or producer with entrepreneurial potential. Depending on this, the possibilities of development and objectives are very different from one another (Venegas et al, 2007). However, the main need of the farmers, which is their common factor, is the need to improve the development instruments to help reduce technological differences, as well as to achieve greater access and quality in the transfer of knowledge and its management. Improvements in yields, soils, irrigation and farm management are possible thanks to credits provided by organizations such as INDAP, Banco Estado, companies in the field or farmer credit cooperatives, which are located in the different localities of Quinchao Island (Dirven, 2000).

Each farmer is responsible for the integration he/she obtains from the regional and national market, being important the capacity for entrepreneurship and innovation that he/she has. Such capacities must be encouraged through incentives (money) so that these people take "calculated risks", promoting behavioral changes in the way of cultivating

and producing, permanently advised by support mechanisms that provide the elements these farmers need.

According to the information obtained in Quinchao, there are a total of 36 programs, assistance and credits granted by various institutions to small farmers to enhance and adapt the production of their farms, and in parallel these benefits seek to generate and promote awareness of the heritage and culture of the rural community of Quinchao, providing incentives for the implementation of activities to promote rural tourism in its various categories.

Most of the programs do not operate under a single criterion, since two or more classification criteria are identified in this research. The graph shows a total of 19 programs aimed at criteria that seek to promote production, social development, culture, heritage and tourism on Quinchao Island linked to smallholdings. These criteria allow us to observe the system that this form of production has generated over time. Here we find mainly local development programs, such as the various demonstrative units, traditional, religious and gastronomic festivals, various enterprises and support for artisans. This is followed by the economic, productive and social development criteria, especially for women, including input credits for the production of the property, training, consulting and irrigation programs with a total of 11 programs in favor. This is followed by the criterion covering productive development with a total of 5 programs for productive alliances, water bonus, a variety of irrigation and drainage studies and technical advisory services (Ramírez, 2016).

Finally, there is a social development and legal assistance program aimed at consolidating land tenure, allowing the resolution of legal problems of the population and the distribution and/or inheritance of land (Ramírez, 2016).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Firstly, the Chiloé smallholding can still be considered as a vernacular expression in the territories of traditional and rural societies (peasant economies). Its cultural way of life has allowed the rehabilitation, conservation and management of spaces and the development of the expression of the Chiloé peasant culture.

From the point of view of the New Rurality, the modernization of the smallholding in Chiloé has generated different socioeconomic models, whose common feature is the attempt to take advantage of this production modality to develop the numerous uses that it makes possible. This has led to the singularity of this type of agricultural property being seen as a potential for the tourism and service sector.

Based on the above, the positive results that are being obtained on Quinchao Island, through participatory management of small farms, through projects and programs that have indicated that these agricultural production areas should be strengthened or

potentially recovered, so that management measures are aimed at solving environmental conservation problems while addressing production and social needs in an integrated manner.

To conclude, it can be argued that the Chiloé smallholding has manifested itself as a manifestation of the emerging Heritage and Rural Tourism that has not only made possible the recovery of the infrastructure and the associated peasant way of life, but has also provided resources to the local population (economic, social and cultural) and can serve the development of each locality and community benefited by its revaluation.

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