

## **Proximity Phenomena and the Agro Alimentary Local System: the Case of Santa Cruz de Turrialba, Costa Rica**

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### **Abstract**

Based on the principles of proximity, and after the proposal of the Porter's "cluster", the "industrial districts" from Marshall and the discussion of the economist Capechi and Becatini, a new concept for the analysis of the concentrations of rural agro industry was developed. (Requier des Jardins, 2000)

The concept of SIAL (Agro Alimentary Local System) and its analysis methodology from Requier des Jardins, CIAT and PRODAR was applied to a concentration of small and micro enterprises in Costa Rica. In the surroundings of the Turrialba volcano in Costa Rica, a culture of cattle raising and dairy products elaboration has been developed for over a 100 years. As a result, in this area a conglomeration of rural agro industry (RAI) can be identified. It involves about 175 small industries of cheese produce. Some of these small enterprises are traditional cheese making industries and while others are small factories of the inductive RAI type; although, they exhibit a very deep differences between their technology and organization.

This methodology made possible to establish the existence of a SIAL around this RAI's concentration. The existence of proximity phenomena, in this small area, that promote the endogen rise over the externalities of the human capital, was a first confirmation. This proximity also allowed for close interpersonal, formal and informal relationships developed between all the different groups of actors in the "territory" of the SIAL and the capacity for information transfer at the internal level. In this new vision of "territory", the culture and common history of the SIAL play a more important role in its construction, than the geographic boundaries.

A "social capital", in the small area of the Santa Cruz de Turrialba, was identified as the result of the social relationships between the main actors (Cheese Industries) and the other actors that are involved in the cheese production and commercialisation. (KILKSBERG, B. 1999)

The main actors in this group have identified some advantages and disadvantages of the concentration. This information along with the SWOT analysis, provide alternates options to develop this SIAL. All the elements present in the SIAL, like the passive and active advantages, are the basis of the "activation of that SIAL". By conducting a Workshop (with all its actors), with the purpose of developing an Plan of Activation for the SIAL.