

**Can micro coffee enterprises
create opportunities for
women? Evidence from
Coffee Micro-mills from Costa
Rica's Los Santos region,
Tarrazu coffee.**

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Context

Changes in the coffee market

- Relationship Coffee Model (RCM)
- Private family enterprises called micro-mills
- Not part of cooperative marketing structures
- Have abandoned certification

Women traditional roles in coffee

- Household space
- Women's work in coffee is an extension of their household unpaid work

Diverse Economies

- How individualised, market-based strategies can facilitate women empowerment
- To capture those more-than-economic benefits the RCM can provide.

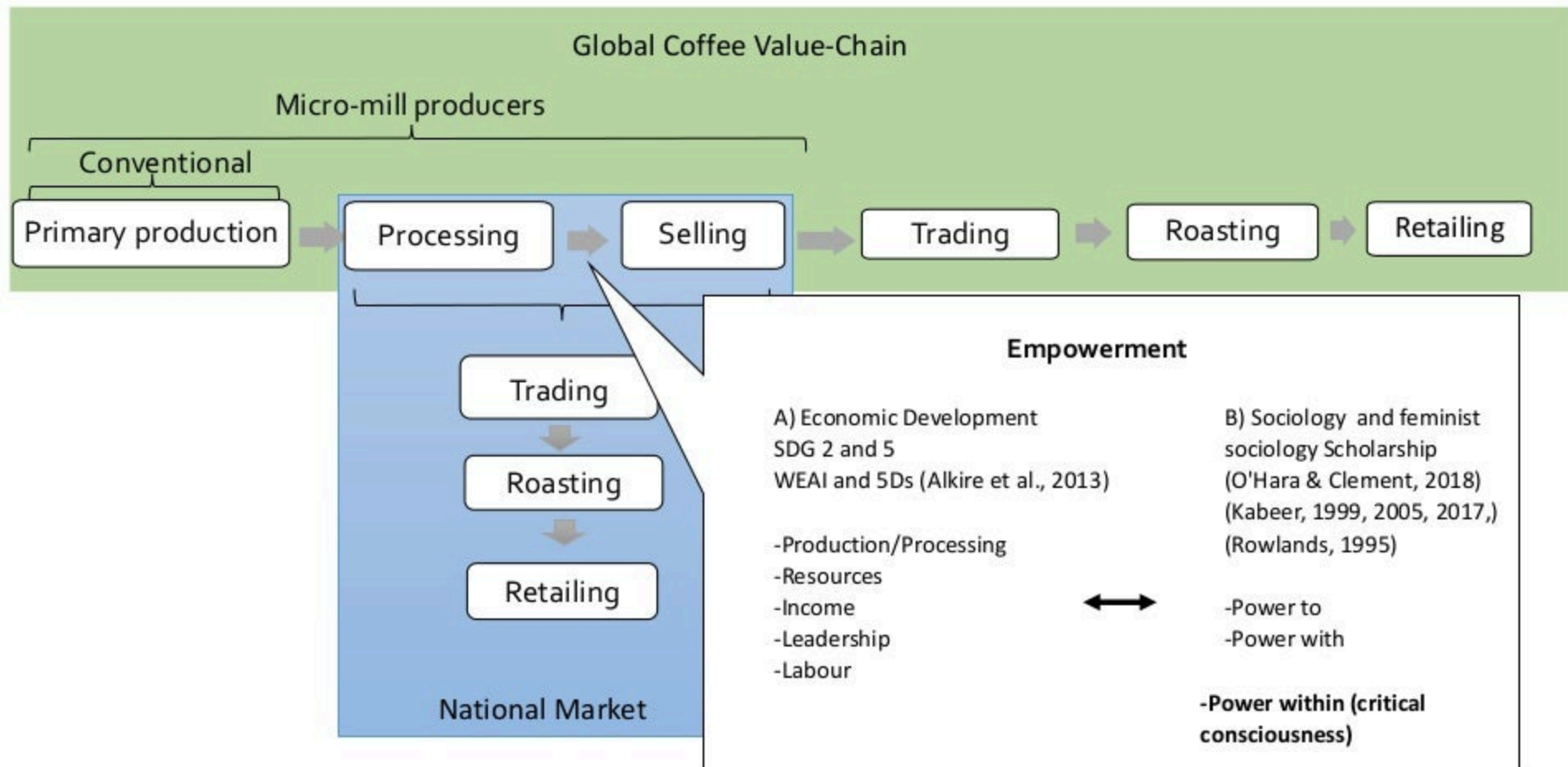


Motivation

- What are the roles of women in micro-mill households, their degree of participation and sense of empowerment in the coffee activity in Tarrazú
- To examine the empowerment process micro-mill women have gone through, not just in terms of agency, but their self-awareness of the changes they are making in their communities.
- Weak understanding of the constraints on and advances in gender empowerment at the processing, trading, roasting and retailing stages.



Theoretical Framework





Women Roles in Micro-mills



Management and accounting



Quality control of washing, drying and packaging processes



Quality control on coffee profiles



Buyers and traders negotiations



Visit national and international fairs



Control of certification schemes



Associated business for national market (roasted coffee, coffee sub-products, coffee tours)

WEAI's 5 Domains

Decision making
over processing
activities.

Ownership of
significant
resources (land)

Income and control
over its investment

Labour time and
leisure time

Leadership: public
participation and
organizations
membership.

Household
work central
to micro mills'
functioning

- “By giving them [husband and sons] clean clothes, food and a clean house, is the way I contribute to the micro-mill during harvest season. I think they have lots of work and I can help with those things.”

Processing: decision-making and autonomy

“Now I can take the decisions without waiting for them [my parents] to give me an answer [...] I do everything, from cleaning the storage building so it looks organized up to all the permits and paperwork for Icafe. I also create marketing stories to attract new clients.. I'm the one in charge of negotiations with clients. So, yes, my life has changed a lot”.

“Decisions must be taken together [...] I have always said there must be equality, but for some things no—for example, mechanical issues. My husband is the one that knows about it. However, there are many situations I lead decisions—for example, the roasting types. Many times, I think my ideas are better. I tell him and what we do is [use our ideas] to complement [each other's]”.



Income: Control over the use of income

“I do not like to beg for money. I’m very happy about having my own income. Most of the money [I get from selling] roasted coffee is for the kids’ university. The rest is for **my personal expenses and a little goes to the house expenses** [...] I also have my own things. **I don’t have to ask my husband** for a body cream or a shampoo”.



Leadership: speaking in public and group membership.

“When I began, I used to go to coffee meetings and there were only men. Now it is different because Tania is there too. But, in the beginning, there were not even young people (...) Us women, we are opening our own spaces in coffee. There are families that don't have sons and have a micro-mill; women have been the ones embracing those roles”.





Empowerment that is transformative

Empowerment has to do with the many ways they have become self-aware of recent changes in their agency in coffee

It refers to:

- New skills acquired
- The gratification of being acknowledged by people in the coffee sector.
- The satisfaction from sharing their knowledge
- The opening of doors for women in the coffee sector



Power-within

“Has helped me to notice I can take challenges and I have been able to keep ahead with them [...] we don't fear anymore to do certain things. I used to limit myself, but now challenges are different [...] I compare myself to my twin sister, she tells me she does not understand how I'm so brave to do all of these things. She still keeps a low profile as a housewife, she is not even able to go to the grocery store alone.”

Conclusions

- **Women involved in micro-mills have reached significant advances in WEAI's five domains and demonstrate critical consciousness.**
- **The RCM has opened opportunities for women to be part of the national and international Coffee Value Chain**
 - **Value adding activities are an important option for women in coffee**
- **Women have take the lead of activities that are highly skilled**
- **A qualitative approach to women empowerment in agriculture allows to understand better gender roles transformations (Power within)**
- **DE approach in the context of specialty coffee production affirms the contribution of women's economic strategies and non-paid activities to the household and family enterprise.**