



2^{ÈME} CONGRÈS INTERDISCIPLINAIRE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

COMMENT ACCÉLÉRER LA TRANSITION ?

21-22 MAI 2015 À LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE (UCL)

Proposition de contribution :

Thématique 2. Alimentation, agriculture, élevage

Thématique 5. Modèles de la transition

Get inspired by the global South: Peasant-led ecodevelopment strategies in Nicaragua.

R. Metereau*

Summary

The current context gives forces to alternative development pathways. Some still have to be invented; others just have to be reminded. The ecodevelopment heuristic framework draws some characteristics of self-reliant, culturally adapted and environmentally sustainable *styles of development*. The Peasant-led cooperative movement in Nicaragua, organized in a multi-scale network, struggles for food sovereignty and poverty alleviation. In this struggle, peasant cooperative networks have been building their own alternative development pathways. This paper seeks to highlight the existence of an ecodevelopment project beyond the peasant-led cooperative movement. Following a qualitative data analysis, motivations for cooperation and collective action are identified. The resulting motivation panel demonstrate the presence of political and socio-ecological aims. Their structural significance for the cooperative movement is thus set out.

Key Words: Nicaragua, Peasant Cooperative Networks, Collective strategy, Ecodevelopment.

* PhD Student in Economics, Grenoble Research Centre in Economics (CREG), Univ. Grenoble Alpes, France. renaud.metereau@upmf-grenoble.fr

Abstract:

The 2008 World Development Report (World Bank, 2008), entitled *Agriculture for Development*, definitely rehabilitated agriculture and the agri-food systems as relevant gateways for the development research field. Sustainable small-scale agriculture and, more broadly, farm and non-farm activities in rural areas, are thus very important factors to alleviate poverty in developing regions (Valdés & Foster, 2010; Dethier & Effenberger, 2012). At the same time, 2012 was celebrated as the *International Year of Cooperatives* by the United Nations. The aim was to highlight “*the contribution of cooperatives to socio-economic development*” (UNDESA, 2012) and, more specifically in the context of rural poverty, to emphasize the role of agricultural cooperatives in feeding the world (FAO, 2012).

This movement gives credibility both to small producers’ abilities in the struggle for basic needs covering and poverty reduction, and to more specific and culturally adapted development pathways. It also offers a better audience to cooperative-based organizational forms of socio-economic activities (rather than only competitive ones). In other words, alternative *styles of development* are welcome for the ones who missed the train of neoliberal globalization and remain excluded from this “development” pathway. The *Ecodevelopment* project, elaborated in the 1970s by Maurice Strong and Ignacy Sachs, offers a heuristic framework for singular styles of development. It lays down the basis for self-reliant strategies. Main axes are: a focus on the fulfillment of human needs, adequacy of development pathways with ecological cycles, inclusion of historical, cultural and socio-political criteria in the design of development strategies (Sachs, 1974, 1977, 1980)

This paper focuses on peasant cooperative networks in Nicaragua, which have been building their own collective strategy for development and strive to get a greater influence on the political agenda (Damiani, 1994; Doligez, 2013).

An open disciplinary approach is adopted, which allows borrowing methodological frameworks and analytical tools from other social sciences. In this case, we achieved qualitative analyses based on data collected during a field study in Nicaragua in 2012. Eighty interviews were carried out with members of the two main peasant cooperative networks in the country. The use of a thematic organization and codification methodology (Miles & Huberman, 2003; Paillé & Mucchielli, 2012) enables the identification of several stylized facts from the interviews. In this way, we build a detailed panorama of the motivations which led those peasants to cooperate and to establish collective strategies in their struggle against poverty and the excluding process of liberal globalization (Rubio, 2001 ; Welch & Mançano Fernandes, 2009 ; Grigsby Vado & Pérez, 2009).

This contribution seeks to highlight some evidence, arising from the case study, that ecodevelopment strategies can emerge from civil society, especially from peasant

cooperative organizations, and can offer appropriate levers for the rise of alternative development pathways.

The first part of the paper describes both historical and contemporary contexts in which the cooperative movement has emerged, got structured in a multi-scale network across the country, and finally, got deeply embedded in social and cultural structures of the rural population. Indeed, the cooperative movement in Nicaragua is closely linked with the Sandinista Revolution of the 1980s (Austin & *al.*, 1985 ; Núñez Soto, 1996).

In the second part of the paper, we present the main findings of the data analyses carried out during the field study. A motivational panorama is presented. It compiles motivations in three categories: economics-based motivations; organizational or technical motivations; socio-political motivations.

On the basis of the previous analyses, the third part of the text seeks to underline that the contemporary cooperative movement in Nicaragua carries an alternative development project. The collective strategies implemented to reduce poverty are not just resulting from the sum of individual economic interests for cooperation. Of course, income rise in rural households is a short-term priority for peasants. Nonetheless, however much central they can be, economic-led motivations (“*to sell better*”; “*to achieve a new market*”; “*to integrate the value-chain*”; etc.) are not exclusive. The panel of motivations for cooperation is wider and overcomes economic boundaries to address social, cultural and political aims. On the basis of this panel, we intend to present Nicaraguan peasant cooperative strategy as an ecodevelopment project. In that sense, Nicaraguan peasants join other « *peasant-led socio-political movements [who] have constituted themselves as the most dynamic forces pursuing systemic social change* » in Latin America (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001: 110).

References:

Austin J., Fox J., Kruger W., 1985, “The role of the revolutionary state in the Nicaraguan Food System”, *World Development*, vol. 13, n°1, p. 15-40.

CEPAL, 1999, *Efectos sociales de la globalización sobre la economía campesina. Reflexiones a partir de experiencias en México, Honduras y Nicaragua*, CEPAL-ONU, July, 88 p.

Damiani O., 1994, “Collective Responses to Crisis: Agricultural Cooperatives and Intermediaries in the Post-Sandinista Nicaragua”, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Urban Studies and Planning*, 32 p.

Dethiera J. J., Effenberger A., 2012, “Agriculture and development: A brief review of the literature”, *Economic Systems*, vol. 36, issue 2, June, p. 175–205

Doligez F., 2013, « La Fédération des Coopératives Agricoles du Nicaragua entre capital économique et pouvoir politique », *RECMA, Revue internationale de l'économie sociale*, n° 328, p. 48-62.

Figuière C., Metereau R., 2013, « Ecodeveloppement et souveraineté alimentaire : Quels

- enjeux pour le Sud ? », *Revue Francophone du Développement Durable*, n° 2, Octobre, p. 45-67.
- Grigsby Vado A., Pérez F. J., 2009, *Estrategias Campesinas frente a los efectos estructurales de la Globalización en la Agricultura y el Desarrollo Rural*, Nitlapan-UCA, June, 214 p.
- Miles M. B., Huberman A. M., 2003, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, De Boeck, French second edition, 626 p.
- Núñez Soto O., 1996, *La economía popular asociativa y autogestionaria*, Cipres, Managua, 295 p.
- Pailé P., Mucchielli A., 2008, *L'analyse Qualitative en Sciences Humaines et Sociales*, 2ième édition, Armand Colin, Paris, 315 p.
- Petras J., Veltmeyer H., 2001, "Are Latin American peasant movements still a force for change? Some new paradigms revisited", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 28, n° 2, p. 83-118.
- Ranaboldo C., Schejtman A. (eds), 2009, *El valor del patrimonio cultural: territorios rurales, experiencias y proyecciones Latinoamericanas*, IEP, RIMISP, Estudios de la Sociedad Rural, n° 35, Lima, Perú, 412 p.
- Rubio B., 2001, *Explotados y excluidos. Los campesinos latinoamericanos en la fase agroexportadora neoliberal*, Plaza y Valdés Editores, UACH, México.
- Sachs I., 1974, « Environnement et styles de développement », *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, n° 3, p. 553-570.
- Sachs I. (ed.), 1977, *Pour une économie politique du développement*, Flammarion, France, 307 p.
- Sachs I., 1980, *Stratégies de l'écodéveloppement*, Éditions Économie et Humanisme, Paris, 140 p.
- Solà Montserrat R., 2008, *Estructura económica de Nicaragua y su contexto centroamericano y Mundial*, Managua, HISPAMER-UCA
- Valdés A., Foster W., 2010, "Reflections on the Role of Agriculture in Pro-Poor Growth", *World Development*, vol. 38, issue 10, October, p. 1362–1374.
- Welch C., Mançano Fernandes B., 2009, "Peasant Movements in Latin America: Looking Back, Moving Ahead", *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 36, issue 4, July, p. 3-8.
- World Bank, 2008, *Agriculture for Development*, World Development Report, New York, 424 p.