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DYNAMICS AND MECHANISMS OF ENDOGENOUS DEVELOPMENT: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE SEMINAR

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Abstract:

In this introductory paper it is argued that heterogeneity in agriculture is to be understood as the outcome of different development patterns at farm-firm level. Then the concept of endogenous development is discussed and related to different mechanisms in which it can be grounded.

Keywords:

RURAL AREAS, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, MODERNIZATION, AGRICULTURE, AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES, SOCIAL CHANGE

The modernization of agriculture has, for a long time, been understood as originating from and propelled by actors and institutions external to the immediate producers in the agricultural sector itself. This specific focus was consolidated especially when modernization became conceptualized as representing essentially a *rupture* with existing practices and types of discourse as used in the countryside. Agriculture was considered implicitly as being a stagnant sector. "Getting agriculture moving" and "transforming traditional agriculture" are some of the telling titles that reflect this specific but still persistent view. Correspondingly, those farmers who turned out to be more able than others to participate in the different projects for modernization, were classified as the ones "most open to *outside* information, messages and innovations". In its turn, such an attitude was perceived as being identical to "orientedness towards urban dynamism".

This dominant sociological focus corresponded quite well with main-stream economics, in which agricultural development was essentially perceived as (re-)adaptation of farming practices to (changes in) markets and technology. While paying much more attention to regional variation, recent theories such as the one elaborated by Hayami and Ruttan, for example, still follow this deterministic model.

Accordingly, the *practice* of modernization was (and still is) shaped by sets of external interventions, mostly centralized in state-agencies aiming at introducing new organizational models for farming, new interlinkages between farming, markets and market-agencies, new technological innovations meant to replace existing techniques and knowledge, new forms of socialization and technico-economic formation and, last

but not least, new models for the definition of roles and identities for farmers and their wives.

Notwithstanding the wide differences between such sets of interventions, the deliberate effort to make these interventions as “integrated” as possible, implied, in the first place, that the degree of discontinuity vis à vis existing practices, relationships and role definitions increased considerably. Indeed, the “application” or “implementation” of such an integrated policy, more often than not, materialized as a *de-facto* rupture with existing practices: the reorganization of labour and production processes became, together with the introduction of new politico-economic schemes, an empirical, albeit highly differentiated phenomenon.

In the second place, the distance created between existing discourse and practice and the new models was highly selective: under certain conditions, in particular places and at specific moments it proved to be much easier to “apply”, “adopt” and/or “implement” particular modernization projects than in other time-space locations. The same evidently applies to the heterogeneity between farmers (regarding family situation, demographic cycle, gender relations, structure of local labour markets, local power relations, and so on). That is to say, that the practice of modernization turned out to be a highly differentiated phenomenon: modernization not only reproduced existing differences, but increasingly produced its own difference and inequalities. Modernization thus resulted in growth as well as in underdevelopment and marginalization. Consequently, the simple “repetition” of the growth-model typical for the growth-poles became, within the “less favoured areas”, an ever less convincing proposal.

In the third place, it must be stressed that since the practice of modernization revolved around the introduction of *exogenous* elements into the farming sectors concerned, agricultural development itself was reshaped into (or restructured as) an *exogenous development pattern*: dependency became internalized into the structure and mechanisms of growth and development itself - not only on a material level, but also regarding the dynamizing elements themselves.

In the fourth place, this specific emphasis on exogenous development produced a particular bias in our knowledge of the nature, scope and mechanisms of agricultural development. Specific social practices are not only (re-)shaped, at least partly, by (changes in) available knowledge and theory that are, or become part of the practices concerned. Such practices also (re-)shape the scope, structure, language, legitimacy and idiosyncrasy of the theories themselves. Indeed, on the level of theoretical knowledge on rural development, a remarkable re-distribution of knowledge and ignorance has been produced during the epoch of modernization. Considerable knowledge now exists the design and implementation of projects for exogenous development. However, on the conceptualization and analysis of endogenous development patterns, and on their impact and their potential, there is remarkable ignorance, expressing itself, among other ways, in the widely shared belief that if such

endogenous development patterns are relevant at all, their significance for resolving actual problems is minimal.

It is our opinion that this historically produced ignorance manifests itself today as one of the central features and causes of the rural and agrarian question in Europe.

On heterogeneity as entailing specific expressions of endogenous growth

There is considerable heterogeneity in European agriculture, which reflects a wide range of development patterns, some of them indeed very dependent on "external" forces, others to a considerable degree grounded on "local" interests, perspectives, resources and types of discourse. It is evidently impossible to ascribe this wide range of patterns to one and the same dominant set of "driving forces" located in markets, agrarian policy and technology development. Agrarian development is never a simple derivative of the latter - understanding the dynamics of agrarian development implies a careful analysis of the social relations of production, as located in town-countryside relations, in the intersection of agriculture into local, regional, national and international economies (which usually involves particular institutional patterns and linkages), in the historically produced landscapes, in local culture, in the reigning family patterns, etc. These social relations of production not only determine and therefore structure the way farming is to be *related* to markets, technology and policy, but also they imply a frequent negotiation, adaptation and/or transformation of the goals, instruments, tendencies, directives and rationale contained in markets, technology and policy. That is, one and the same set of market conditions, technological packages and agrarian policies might well lead to a considerable variety of *responses*. Consequently, heterogeneity as an expression of the differentiated development trends, will be reproduced.

Heterogeneity in agriculture is a multidimensional phenomenon. One of the criteria we can use to analyze at least part of this diversity is the degree of autonomy or dependency, that is to say, whether development is more endogenous or more exogenous. It is evident that endogenous development is not to be defined in ideal-typical terms as being *exclusively* founded on local resources, nor exogenous development *only* as entailing external elements. What empirical research indicates is that both contain a specific *balance* between "internal" and "external" elements. What turns out to be decisive is that, in the case of exogenous development patterns, *it is the outside or external elements that compose the conceptual model from which the eventual utility of local resources is judged*. If the latter "fit" with the former, they are integrated according to the rationale of the already established model. If not, they will increasingly be considered as outdated, worthless and/or as a "hindrance" to change. In endogenous development patterns, on the other hand, a different balance is to be encountered: *It is the local resources, as combined and developed in local styles of farming that figure as the starting point as well as the yardstick for the evaluation of the eventual utility of "external" elements. If the latter may be used to strengthen both the specificity and the vitality of local farming styles, they will be internalized (often after a careful "deconstruction" and "recomposition" so as to guarantee the maximum fit with*

local conditions, perspectives and interests). If no “fit” can be created, the external elements will remain what they are, that is “outside” elements.

The very different balances contained in different development patterns are highlighted in the research carried out in the Barroso area in Trás-os-Montes, Portugal (see papers by Cristóvão, Pereira, Oostindie). It shows, in the first place, that global concepts such as endogenous and exogenous development, can indeed be operationalized so as to capture the specificity of the local context as well as the diversity in development processes. Secondly, this research stresses that the essential differences between development patterns are, so to say, *hidden* in the subtleties of the balances contained in the diverse patterns. There is indeed a remarkable contrast: It is clear that the socio-economic and ecological *impact* of the agrarian development patterns discussed by Cristóvão *et al.* differ enormously, but the “balances” contained in the patterns that make for these huge differences, seem to differ only in subtle ways.

Dr. Huillet, in his stimulating paper, identifies for us some of these “subtleties”, which in part relate to the not yet disentangled dynamics between central regulation and local response. Simultaneously, we have to acknowledge that the very fact that so many important, sometimes even decisive processes, balances and interrelations do emerge as “subtleties”, is strongly connected to the general ignorance of the dynamics of endogenous growth. Professor Benvenuti discusses this phenomenon in his paper, while professors Slee, and Thomsom attempt to clarify some theoretical aspects and discuss particular methods for getting to grips with the empirically important features of endogenous growth.

Knowledge is possibly one of the most important “assets” (or “resources”) involved in the practical struggles, negotiations and transformations from which specific endogenous development patterns emerge. It is also (that is “adequate knowledge”, which in its turn points to the methodology to elaborate it) possibly one of the most important “assets” on which any discussion for strengthening endogenous development should be grounded. Consequently, several chapters are oriented to the issue of knowledge.

Knowledge plays a crucial role in the “social construction” of specific development patterns. Rural development is *not* a simple derivative of so-called “structural conditions” (this of course does not deny empirical differences in the degree to which development processes are dependent upon conditions going beyond the reach of local actors, etc.), nor the outcome of external intervention (Long and Van der Ploeg, 1989). On the contrary, it is the highly varying result of complex interactions among different actors and institutions, situated at different “levels”, each having their own specific “project” regarding the way in which “development” should be realized. Taken together these actors and institutions compose, as it were, an *arena* in which some actors create coalitions whilst others actively distance their practices from each other. The *localized* nature of each of these arenas then makes for the overwhelming heterogeneity that is to be found in European agriculture.

Endogenous development patterns: an agenda for tomorrow's agriculture

In comparative research all over Europe it has been shown that it is possible to identify, in highly different settings, the specificities of endogenous development processes. That is, in specific areas of the Netherlands, in the Barroso-area in Portugal, in Andalusia in Spain, in Emilia Romagna and Umbria in Italy and elsewhere, endogenous development time again emerges as an original and promising solution in which the globalizing context (the increasingly supranational markets and centralized Community Policies) is matched with the specificity of local and regional patterns and perspectives. Underlying the highly specific and localized nature of endogenous development processes, there seem to be a number of similarities, i.e. a common ground that might be fruitful in terms of rethinking the future of Europe's agriculture, that is: the "reordering of priorities", as discussed in the chapter by Lowe, Murdoch and Ward.

One of the central findings belonging to this "common ground" is that these objectives, which at a general level and in theoretical debates emerge as being quite antagonistic (e.g. containment of growth, improvement of levels of income and employment in the countryside, achieving sustainable production methods, the preservation of nature and landscape, raising the quality of products and services, strengthening regional competitiveness, etc.), organically combine and mutually reinforce one another in some specific empirical settings. Wherever an inquiry into endogenous development potential has been carried out, specific *styles of farming* have been identified, each having a particular empirical constellation in which the above mentioned objectives coincide to a degree that contrasts sharply with the record of the "surrounding" styles and farming systems. Evidently the actual and/or potential impact of these specific farming styles as far as regional development (especially in marginalizing areas) is concerned, is closely interwoven with this specific feature. And finally each of these "promising" styles (e.g. the artisanal Chianina-breeders in Umbria, the "greedy farmers" in the Netherlands, cattle-breeders revitalizing the use of *baldios* in the Barroso-area, etc.) contains distinctive forms of interaction between the "locality" on the one hand, and central regulation and globalizing contexts on the other.

The foregoing implies that at least a considerable part of the design for tomorrow's agriculture should be derived from a careful analysis of *empirical* heterogeneity and the different styles of farming contained therein. But that is just one part. What is equally needed is the elaboration of methodologies for *strengthening* endogenous development processes.

Towards methodologies for strengthening endogenous development patterns

Several papers in this collection contribute to a discussion of the many aspects concerning the practicalities of strengthening endogenous development processes. These papers can be grouped into specific areas. Rural policy is one such area. For example, Portela and van der Dries give specific details regarding how rural policy is to be transformed from imprinting pre-established models upon specific socio-economic settings, into a new approach that basically functions as *support* for local perspectives

and solutions. They base their discussion on the study of the revitalization of farmer-managed irrigation systems in Portugal. Doctor Picchi draws upon his vast experience of regional policies in Emilia Romagna in order to indicate several other promising (and already tested!) intervention policies and practices aimed at the reinforcement of local perspectives and development trends. Lowe, Murdoch and Ward discuss the institutional side of the question, whilst Dr. Huillet's paper locates this search for a new methodology in the core of the rural developments problem facing Europe. Together with elements from other papers, these contributions can be taken, we believe, as important cornerstones for the elaboration of a methodology for policy-interventions aiming at strengthening endogenous development patterns.

Another highly important area concerns the creation of new interlinkages among production, transformation and consumption - interlinkages that will allow for an optimization of styles of farming according to their own, internal logic and rationale. Ventura and Van der Meulen's paper addresses this issue directly, while it is discussed indirectly in many of the other papers.

Linking agronomic and technological research to the practice of endogenous development composes yet another strategic area for which new methodologies are to be elaborated. This is not only a matter of redefining research agendas. The methodology, the scope and the institutional links between researchers and farmers are equally at stake. This area is addressed and discussed in several papers, among which are those of Novales, Cano and Remmers, of Roep, of Ester Portela, and of Antonello and De Roest. They present a range of highly interesting methodological and institutional innovations which, taken together, may be seen as a major step towards new research and design methods. The experiences and practices to which these papers refer, range from Spain to the Netherlands and from dung to Parmesan cheese. Hence, saying that their approach is firmly grounded, would be somewhat of an understatement.

A fourth important area regards the crucial role of specific actors and social forces (such as farmers' movements) in the consolidation and acceleration of endogenous development processes. This area will be discussed in the papers of Koehnen and of Sevilla Guzmán, Lopez Calvo and Salas among others. As the title of the latter refers, important historical and contemporary lessons are to be learned.

Taken together, the indicated areas - policy, marketing, research, and social forces - constitute the main fields requiring new methodologies so as to strengthen endogenous development patterns. Overviewing the papers, I think it can be said that some headway has already been made in this direction.

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