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CURRENT INFORMATION

DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

1. ProQuest Digital Dissertations

Local organizations as terrains of struggle: Dysfunction as resistance in the cooperatives of the republic of Niger.

Order Number AAT 9507835

Borden, Therese Anne, Ph.D. *The American University*, 1991, 297 pp.

Despite the recent renewal of interest and new scholarship on the role of local organizations in the development process, long-standing 'dysfunctional' local organizations are still poorly understood. Functionalist organization theory which dominates the literature does not adequately explain cases such as the agricultural cooperatives of Niger, a state-run network of local organizations which have repeatedly failed to meet rural development objectives set by the government. The premise of this study is that some local organization dysfunction, such as that in the Niger case, are not products of poor planning or training but a manifestation of the conflict between the state and rural producers. Peasant behavior is interpreted as resistance to state initiatives. In Niger, the long-term deterioration of farming conditions and the ill-conceived 'Green Revolution' development strategy have compelled rural producers to reject official state initiatives. The cooperatives, channels through which agricultural credit, farm inputs and equipment are made available to members have become arenas of struggle between rural producers and the state. The widespread knowledge of alternative use of cooperative resources and cooperation among diverse social groups, it is argued here, is evidence that dysfunction in the cooperatives is not anti-social or criminal behavior but resistance. Members obtain program benefits through the cooperatives and often use them not to improve farm productivity but to construct an alternative development strategy – the development of the petty commodity sector, commerce and services sector. These hypotheses were tested by (a) a review of historical data on peasant-state relations, (b) a review of the data on contemporary farming conditions, and (c) an analysis of household survey data collected in Niger by the Ohio State University Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Rural Finance Program in 1986. The conclusions reached were, first, that farming conditions have deteriorated and farmers foresee a general decline of the agricultural sector for the future. Second, contemporary cooperatives were developed on the foundation of a network of local organizations created during the colonial era. The extreme unpopularity of those antecedents and the long-standing alienation between rural producers and the state undermined the legitimacy of both the cooperatives and their programs in the eyes of the peasants. Third, evidence of collaboration between diverse social groups – landless peasants, religious figures, local chiefs, better-off farmers – indicated that the misuse of cooperative resources was carried out with a degree of community consensus and therefore could be interpreted as resistance to the state. Fourth, the data showed that the cooperative program benefits were not being used primarily for raising farm productivity but to supplement off-farm occupations or were sold to generate cash income.

2. Dissertation Abstracts International

Vol. 60, No. 4, October 1999

Challenging boundaries, redefining limits: The experience of Bolivian handknitters in the global market.

Order Number DA 9924836

Page, Janet Marie, Ph.D. City University of New York, 1999, 455 pp. Adviser: June Nash.

This dissertation examines the evolution of a knitting industry in Bolivia where several thousand women produce sweaters for export. Handknitters tend to be women from rural areas severely affected by poverty, social inequality, drought and economic crisis. Productive relations within the industry are dominated by middlemen who control extensive putting-out systems premised upon keeping wages low. Some knitters have attempted to challenge their subordinate position in export knitting by organizing themselves into sweater production and commercialization cooperatives. In some cases, this grassroots mobilization cultivated a broader field of action for handknitters that became the basis for more politically and culturally oriented activities. However, grassroots mobilization and cooperation have not been sufficient to transform relationships within the industry or to significantly improve knitters' condition. In this study, I examine the history and structure of the knitwear industry and identify the factors inhibiting the successful operation of grassroots knitting cooperatives. I demonstrate how the global market for handknits plays a key role in restricting the development of cooperatives organized at the grassroots level. Yet perhaps equally significant have been cultural factors at work in the dynamics of cooperative knitwear production. I argue that the manner in which knitting employment was incorporated into the local social and economic context, the way that new social actors from international agencies and managerial members of the Bolivian bourgeoisie influenced knitters' success, and the very nature of grassroots organizing itself, led to the downfall of grassroots knitting cooperatives through a redefinition of cultural boundaries. In the process of becoming incorporated into global markets, the unity of vision and the common purpose which had provided a fulcrum for grassroots mobilization among knitters were undermined, negating fundamental premises of cooperative organization.

Vol. 60, No. 7, January 2000

Efficiency in cooperatives: A case study of the Costa Rican coffee processing sector.

Order Number DA 9938197

Mosheim, Robert Allan, Ph.D. *The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*, 1999, 129 pp. Advisers: C.A. Knox Lovell; William Darity, Jr.

The objective of this dissertation is to merge two literatures, one dealing with the optimizing cooperative, and another concerned with the notion of production frontiers and their component efficiency measures. This study applies the resulting merged model to data describing the production activities of the Costa Rican coffee processing sector.

This dissertation makes several contributions. First, a database of firm-level data on prices, quantities and internal and external characteristics for a set of non-profit, member-

owned and for-profit, investor-owned Costa Rican coffee processing firms is assembled. Second, various inefficiency effects models are employed to measure and explain cooperative performance. A variable dividend efficiency model is estimated. Finally, a Cox proportional hazard model is used to show that measured performance mattered to cooperative survival during the period covered by this study, 1988 to 1993. During this period, very low prices for coffee prevailed in the international market.

Unbalanced panel data frontier methods are used. The functional forms for these models are chosen by means of generalized likelihood ratio hypotheses tests. The inefficiency effects in the various models are: size, organizational type, degree of competition, level of development and experience. Farmer size is modeled as a restriction in production since non-cooperative firms tend to favor larger producers, while cooperatives do not. It is shown that although the cooperative policy of free and voluntary membership imposes a restriction in production, other factors such as size and a lesser degree of competition faced by cooperatives in input markets outweigh this inflexibility.

Unlike several other studies of cooperatives, Costa Rican coffee-processing firms are found to be more efficient than non-cooperative firms by even, measure except scale efficiency. This is hypothesized to be due to a combination of horizontal and vertical integration economies, an attenuated property rights structure and a mitigated principal-agent problem. By means of formal tests the study finds that efficiency variation in the various models does help explain output variation in the sector and that this can be explained in terms of the hypothesized explanatory variables.