

INSTITUTO INTERAMERICANO DE COOPERACION PARA LA AGRICULTURA

SEGUNDA REUNION DEL GRUPO INTERAMERICANO PARA EL DESARROLLO  
SOSTENIBLE DE LA AGRICULTURA Y LOS RECURSOS NATURALES

VILLA DE LEYVA  
Feb 1994





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וְעַתָּה תִּשְׁמַחְתָּ  
בְּלֹא כִּי

**AGENDA TENTATIVA PARA LA SEGUNDA REUNION  
DEL GRUPO INTERAMERICANO PARA EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE  
DE LA AGRICULTURA Y LOS RECURSOS NATURALES**

**Martes 22 de febrero**

- Llegada de los participantes a Bogotá
  
- 19:00 - 22:00 - Coctel Club de Banqueros, Calle 72 No. 7-64 piso 13. Tel. 341 54 20.  
Presentación del Señor Ministro de Agricultura, doctor José Antonio Ocampo Gaviria  
Presentación del Señor Ministro del Medio Ambiente, doctor Manuel Rodríguez Becerra.

**Miércoles 23 de febrero**

- 08:00 - 11:00 - Traslado a Villa de Leyva
  
- 11:00 - 11:30 - Llegada a la Hostería de El Molino La Mesopotamia
  
- 12:30 - 13:30 - ALMUERZO DE TRABAJO. Discusión sobre cambios recientes en el contexto internacional.  
Presentación inicial de Alicia Bárcena.
  
- 13:30 - 13:45 - Palabras de bienvenida por la doctora Margarita Marino de Botero, Directora de El Colegio Verde.
  
- 13:45 - 14:15 - Propuesta para una Agricultura Sostenible. Vice Ministro de Agricultura, doctor Santiago Perry
  
- 14:15 - 15:30 - Informe de la reunión anterior. Objetivos de la presente reunión y aprobación del Plan de Trabajo Básico del Grupo y Mecanismos de Funcionamiento (David Kaimowitz).

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15:30 - 16:00	-	CAFE
16:00 - 17:30	-	Presentación del borrador del documento "Riqueza, Pobreza y Desarrollo Sostenible" por David Barkin

### **Jueves 24 de febrero**

08:30 - 10:30	-	Trabajo en grupo para hacer sugerencias sobre el documento de Barkin
10:30 - 10:45	-	CAFE
10:45 - 12:30	-	Informe en plenario de los grupos de trabajo
12:30 - 14:00	-	ALMUERZO
14:00 - 15:30	-	Discusión para escoger los temas centrales del "Informe de Progreso del Desarrollo Sostenible de la Agricultura"
15:30 - 16:00	-	CAFE
16:00 - 17:30	-	Discusión sobre el contenido del texto central del "Informe de Progreso"
19:00	-	CENA DE TRABAJO. Presentación de Miguel Altieri sobre el caso de CLADES. Discusión sobre cómo relacionar el trabajo del grupo con casos específicos

### **Viernes 25 de febrero**

08:00 - 10:00	-	Instrumentación del "Informe de Progreso del Desarrollo Sostenible de la Agricultura" (taller de indicadores, recuentos por país)
10:00 - 10:30	-	CAFE



- |               |   |  |
|---------------|---|--|
| 10:30 - 12:00 | - | Discusión sobre aspectos operativos de la elaboración del "Informe de Progreso" y fecha de próxima reunión |
| 12:00 - 12:30 | - | Clausura por el doctor Edgardo R. Moscardi, Representante del IICA en Colombia. (Granja Verde).            |
| 14:00         | - | Regreso a Bogotá   |



## PROUESTA PARA EL TALLER SOBRE INDICADORES --- PRIMER BORRADOR

### Antecedentes

En la última reunión del Grupo Interamericano de Desarrollo Sostenible (GI) se discutieron las posibles actividades del mismo y se acordó una serie de productos por alcanzar. Uno de ellos es el informe de progreso sobre la implementación de la Agenda XXI en la agricultura de las Américas y el desarrollo sostenible de la misma. Dicho informe se presentará formalmente en la reunión de la Comisión de Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas y a la Junta Interamericana de Agricultura, compuesta por los Ministros de Agricultura de las Américas, en 1995.

Este informe de progreso incluirá un tema central, una sección de indicadores y un recuento por países. Se propuso que la sección "indicadores" analizara el progreso en el logro de la implementación de la Agenda XXI y el desarrollo sostenible en la agricultura, con base en indicadores uniformes, cuantitativos y cualitativos, para todos los países de las Américas.

Surgió una discusión conceptual sobre los métodos para definir estos indicadores que culminó con la propuesta de organizar un taller sobre indicadores. Por lo tanto, se acordó que el tema del taller será analizado con más detalle durante la próxima reunión del Grupo. Con el fin de hacer la discusión más eficiente y proveer algún punto de partida para la discusión, se preparó la siguiente propuesta:

### Objetivo del taller

Existe una serie de iniciativas en la región que tratan de elaborar conceptos para la definición de indicadores, o que están en el proceso de identificar indicadores. Además el tema de indicadores es muy amplio y se pueden definir indicadores a los diferentes niveles de análisis (indicadores globales, regionales, nacionales, a nivel de agroecosistema, etc.) y con diferentes propósitos.

Con el fin de no repetir esfuerzos y de focalizar la discusión, se propone que el taller de indicadores se concentrará en la discusión de indicadores para el informe de progreso.

El objetivo del taller podría formularse, entonces, de la siguiente manera:

El taller buscará identificar y uniformar criterios con respecto a la base conceptual, para definir indicadores del desarrollo sostenible de la agricultura, así como para definir indicadores específicos y estrategias de recopilación de información para generar indicadores del desarrollo sostenible. Los resultados de este taller servirán como insumo para la selección de indicadores del Informe de Progreso sobre el desarrollo sostenible de la Agricultura en las Américas y posiblemente como un documento aparte auspiciado por el grupo.



## **Participantes**

La última reunión del Grupo reveló claramente que unos miembros tienen experiencia y un interés especial en el tema de indicadores. Estas personas, entonces, podrían formar un subgrupo "indicadores" que tomará la responsabilidad del tema en el Grupo, y serán ellos los participantes del taller. Además, sería conveniente invitar a algunos especialistas en el tema, externos al Grupo, que puedan enriquecer la discusión. En este sentido, se debería pensar en personas que hayan trabajado en cuestiones conceptuales, pero también en personas que tengan alguna experiencia práctica en la recolección y análisis de la información relacionada con la sostenibilidad, como por ejemplo, funcionarios de los departamentos estadísticos del World Resources Institute, de la FAO o del PNUMA.

Para que se mantenga la característica de un taller, el número de participantes podría oscilar entre 10 y 20.

## **Duración**

Considerando la multitud de compromisos de los participantes, se propone una duración de no más de tres días con una secuencia de trabajos en grupo, sesiones plenarias y espacios para una discusión amplia.

## **AGENDA TENTATIVA**

Primer día

### **Mañana**

Apertura

Presentación introductoria: Indicadores de Desarrollo Sostenible - Experiencias y enfoques

Discusión

La idea es de que uno de los "resources persons" invitados prepare una presentación que resuma brevemente las experiencias y actividades actuales con indicadores del desarrollo sostenible, en el sector agrícola y al nivel macro.

Estas experiencias y enfoques se discutirán desde el punto de vista de su utilidad para el informe de progreso.

### **Tarde**



## **Presentación: Indicadores para el informe de progreso, requerimientos y criterios de su selección**

### **Discusión**

Uno de los "resources persons", alguien del IICA o unos miembros del Grupo presentarán unas ideas respecto al propósito de los indicadores, es decir para que deberían servir los indicadores, que tipo de información es necesario para el informe de progreso, cuales son los requerimientos que tienen que cumplir los indicadores, etc.

Una de las preguntas podría ser si ¿se quiere medir el desarrollo sostenible a través de la evaluación del estado de los recursos naturales? o si ¿se le quiere analizar a través de las acciones y sus impactos estimados?. ¿Cuáles serán las diferencias respecto a la información publicada por otras instituciones, tales como el WRI, FAO, UNDP, UICN, etc?

### **Formación de los grupos de trabajo**

Se supone que el informe de progreso comprenderá, por lo menos, dos tipos de indicadores: indicadores respecto a los avances de la implementación de la Agenda XXI en el sector agrícola, e indicadores respecto al progreso del desarrollo sostenible de la agricultura.

Considerando que no se había pensado en generar información primaria, sino que en usar, en lo posible, información existente, se debe pensar en las estrategias de coordinación y de generación de la información necesaria. ¿Quiénes podrían ser las entidades colaboradoras que puedan proveer la información? y ¿cuáles podrían ser los mecanismos de coordinación con ellas?

Por lo tanto, se propone la formación de tres grupos de trabajo que analicen cada uno de los tres temas y que preparen una propuesta al respecto. Esta propuesta será presentada y discutida durante el tercer día. Para cada grupo de trabajo, se prepararán términos de referencia y material informativo. Se podría pensar en que haya una persona que prepare una propuesta en cada grupo, la cual se discutirá en el grupo. Además, cada grupo contará con un moderador y un relator.

### **Segundo día**

#### **Trabajo en grupos:**

1. Propuesta para Indicadores del Desarrollo Sostenible a nivel macro
2. Propuesta para indicadores que miden el progreso de la implementación de la Agenda XXI
3. Propuesta para mecanismos de coordinación y estrategias de recopilación de información.



Tercer día

Mañana

Presentación del trabajo de los tres grupos y discusión

Tarde

Conclusiones respecto al informe de progreso y agenda para el seguimiento de los trabajos

Una vez que se haya llegado a un acuerdo respecto al tipo de indicadores que se usarán en el informe de progreso y sobre las formas de cooperación para la recopilación y el análisis de la información, se debería pensar en las actividades que deben seguir, para poner en práctica estas propuestas. Es decir, discutir las responsabilidades y preparar un plan de trabajo.

Clausura



**LISTA DE PARTICIPANTES A LA SEGUNDA REUNION  
"GRUPO INTERAMERICANO PARA EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE  
DE LA AGRICULTURA Y LOS RECURSOS NATURALES"**

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**ACTIVIDADES DE DOCENCIA E INVESTIGACION CONJUNTA  
ENTRE UNIANDES-IICA-CORPOICA**

**TERMINOS DE REFERENCIA**

**1. Docencia e Investigación en Economía del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales:**

Durante los últimos años ha crecido el interés en los países latinoamericanos por el manejo de los problemas relacionados con el medio ambiente, con el fin de asegurar el bienestar de las generaciones actuales y futuras. El cómo compatibilizar el desarrollo económico con el manejo adecuado de los recursos naturales no ha sido fácil para los gobiernos latinoamericanos, debido principalmente a la falta de recurso humano capacitado en el tema y a la carencia de entidades encargadas de dictar la política ambiental y velar por que las normas y disposiciones establecidas se cumplan.

La complejidad del problema plantea nuevos enfoques de investigación aún no definidos y probados, los cuales requieren del trabajo en grupos multidisciplinarios. En estos grupos el componente económico ha sido débil como consecuencia de la baja disponibilidad de especialistas en estas áreas, lo cual no ha permitido utilizar en una forma más eficiente los recursos destinados para la conservación del medio ambiente.

La Universidad de Los Andes y la Universidad de Maryland han iniciado un programa de docencia e investigación que busca llenar el vacío de la falta de análisis económico riguroso en el diseño de políticas y en el análisis de los problemas relacionadas con el manejo de los recursos naturales y del medio ambiente en Latinoamérica. Los objetivos del programa son los siguientes:

- a) Desarrollar el Magister en Economía del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales en la Universidad de los Andes, en Bogotá, para estudiantes de Latinoamérica y del Caribe.
- b) Establecer grupos multidisciplinarios con énfasis en trabajos prácticos que analicen y recomiendan el diseño de la política ambiental y el manejo de recursos naturales en forma adecuada en latinoamérica.
- c) Llevar a cabo trabajos de investigación conjunta, asesoría y apoyo a las entidades del sector público y privado de latinoamérica con el fin de hacer más



eficiente la utilización de los recursos económicos destinados a garantizar el adecuado manejo de los recursos naturales.

Las universidades de Maryland y los Andes continúan trabajando en el diseño y contenido de los cursos con el propósito de hacerle al programa los ajustes que se crean convenientes. El objetivo siguiente de las dos universidades es el de sentar las bases para desarrollar actividades de investigación aplicada que sirvan de sustento al programa académico. Por tal motivo se llevaron a cabo reuniones de profesores del Magister con directivos y técnicos del ICA, CORPOICA e IICA para efectos de poder realizar trabajos conjuntos.

## **2. Propuesta sobre Investigación en Sistemas Sostenibles de Producción Agropecuaria.**

La importancia de la sostenibilidad parte del principio de mejorar la calidad de vida humana sin deteriorar en forma irreparable los ecosistemas. Los países latinoamericanos tienen la necesidad del crecimiento económico, pero igualmente existe la presión de los países desarrollados por la conservación de los recursos naturales. El cómo afrontar la realidad de mejorar el bienestar de su población sin que se llegue al agotamiento de sus recursos naturales es una tarea importante que tienen que afrontar estos países.

Una de las principales preocupaciones que surgió de la reunión con CORPOICA fue la necesidad de definir metodologías que permitan involucrar el componente ambiental junto con los componentes técnicos, económicos y sociales en los cuales ya se tienen una mayor experiencia. Lo anterior debido a la misión que tienen los institutos de investigación de generar tecnologías que eleven el bienestar de los productores dentro de un adecuado manejo de los recursos naturales y del medio ambiente.

Una forma de buscar dar solución a estas preocupaciones surgió de la reunión realizada entre Uniandes e IICA, la cual consiste en el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación conjunta entre Uniandes, IICA y CORPOICA conducente a evaluar y monitorear algunos sistemas de producción en Colombia, con la idea de orientar mejor los esfuerzos de la investigación agrícola, la transferencia de tecnología y el diseño de políticas, en pro de una agricultura sostenible. Este proyecto de investigación se convertiría en una especie de laboratorio para la elaboración de tesis del Magister, dando énfasis no solo a los resultados esperados de esas investigaciones, sino también a los desarrollos metodológicos paralelos que permitan su utilización en otras regiones y países aposteriori. Dentro del proyecto se establecería un proceso de



retroalimentación docencia e investigación entre las entidades, que garantice un uso cada vez más eficiente de los recursos con que se cuentan.

Los pasos iniciales que den inicio a esta tarea son el de formalizar mediante un convenio el acuerdo entre las partes relacionados entre otras con las responsabilidades y recursos que aportaría cada institución. Igualmente, se requiere definir un grupo de trabajo conformado por las tres instituciones encargado de presentar la propuesta de investigación, definir líneas de investigación, y elaborar los perfiles de proyectos. En este sentido existe ya un avance, por cuanto hay un grupo conformado por los Doctores James Hanson (Universidad de Maryland), Ramón Rosales (Universidad de los Andes), Carlos Espinel (IICA) y Luis A. Agudelo (CORPOICA) quienes han venido conversando con el Dr. Edgardo Moscardi (Director del IICA en Colombia) sobre el proyecto de investigación.

### **3. Responsabilidad y Recursos de las Entidades Participantes:**

Para la elaboración de la propuesta y el desarrollo del proyecto las instituciones tendrían las siguientes responsabilidades.

#### **UNIVERSIDAD DE MARYLAND Y UNIVERSIDAD DE LOS ANDES**

La Universidad de Maryland cuenta con un amplio prestigio reconocido a nivel mundial sobre diseño de política ambiental y análisis de problemas relacionados con el manejo de los recursos naturales. Dentro del convenio Universidad de Maryland-Universidad de los Andes está contemplado la participación de profesores en actividades de docencia y trabajos de investigación conjunta. Estos nexos se harán más fuertes a medida que se vaya desarrollando el Magíster. La Universidad de los Andes estará fortaleciendo el Magíster este año con la contratación de profesores investigadores con experiencia en el tema.

Cada universidad dispondrá de un profesor (James Hanson de la Universidad de Maryland y Ramón Rosales de la Universidad de los Andes), quienes participarían en la elaboración de la propuesta, definición de líneas de investigación, elaboración de los perfiles de proyectos y en la realización de las investigaciones. Igualmente, las universidades recopilarían la información sobre los desarrollos metodológicos del CIMMYT y CATIE para la elaboración de la propuesta definitiva en Bogotá.

También las universidades se encargarían de seleccionar y apoyar a los estudiantes que irían a realizar trabajos de grado en estas áreas.



A través de facilidades de participación en seminarios y realización del Magister la Universidad ayudará en la capacitación de los profesionales de CORPOICA y otras entidades directamente involucrados en los proyectos de investigación.

Las universidades financiarán parte de los costos de la investigación mediante fuentes internas y/o fuentes externas.

#### CORPOICA:

A raíz de la reestructuración que se ha venido dando en el ICA, se crea CORPOICA con la misión de realizar principalmente la investigación agropecuaria en el país que es responsabilidad del Estado. El ICA ha venido trabajando con diferentes enfoques uno de los cuales ha sido el de sistemas de producción. Estos enfoques han sufrido variaciones y las metodologías planteadas aún no están totalmente desarrolladas y no se han probado. La incorporación del componente ambiental el desarrollo de actividades de investigación y transferencia se constituye en un aspecto fundamental que requiere propuestas metodológicas inmediatas.

CORPOICA definirá la persona encargada de coordinar con las Universidades e IICA las actividades del proyecto. CORPOICA participará en la elaboración de la propuesta, definición de líneas de investigación, elaboración de los perfiles de proyectos y realización de las investigaciones. Tendrá una responsabilidad muy importante en el levantamiento de la información a nivel regional y de campo.

#### IICA:

Las actividades que el IICA desarrolla sobre el tema de la sostenibilidad agrícola, son perfectamente consistentes con la necesidad de formación de recursos humanos en este campo, a través del Magister.

La Oficina del IICA en Colombia no tiene profesionales trabajando exclusivamente en temas de sostenibilidad, pero indirectamente esta perspectiva está implícita en el apoyo que se le está dando al SINTAP, a la organización del Instituto Amazónico de Investigaciones (SINCHI) y a las actividades en el Colegio Verde de Villa de Leyva. Aparte de esto, el IICA ha iniciado el estudio en Colombia de dos casos que involucran la incorporación de prácticas conservacionistas, control integrado de plagas y abonos verdes, para estudiar las dificultades de adopción por parte de los agricultores. Este esfuerzo es parte de uno más amplio con estudios de casos similares en Latinoamérica, que desarrolla el Programa de Generación y Transferencia de Tecnología del IICA en San José.



El IICA apoyaría el proyecto mediante la participación de expertos internacionales y la vinculación del esfuerzo que se adelante en Colombia a redes internacionales de Investigación en la materia. Igualmente, facilitaría la difusión de los conocimientos generados en estos tópicos mediante la realización de seminarios y publicaciones.

#### 4. Preparación Anteproyecto de Investigación:

Con el fin de preparar la propuesta del proyecto de investigación en Colombia sería importante conocer las experiencias que tiene el CIMMYT en México sobre diseño de indicadores de sostenibilidad, el CATIE en Costa Rica sobre trabajos de agroforestería, y el CIAT con los proyectos en programas de laderas. Hasta el momento el desarrollo de metodologías en sistemas sostenibles de producción es limitado.

El IICA ofreció el apoyo para financiar el pasaje del Dr. James Hanson a Bogotá en Marzo próximo, haciendo una parada en CIMMYT (México) y otra en IICA y CATIE (Costa Rica) para conocer los trabajos mencionados anteriormente. La Universidad de los Andes y la Universidad de Maryland se harán cargo de los gastos de estadía en México, Costa Rica y Colombia. La formalización de las visitas ya se dio a través de comunicación escrita enviada por la Universidad de Maryland a los Directores Generales del IICA, CIMMYT y CATIE.

EL Objetivo de la visita a Bogotá por parte del Dr. Janson, sería reunirse con un grupo de discusión que el IICA, Uniandes y CORPOICA convocarían para elaborar el anteproyecto de investigación. Una tarea importante de esa reunión sería la de escoger una zona agroecológica de trabajo en Colombia, que preferiblemente reuniera los siguientes requisitos: 1) ubicación geográfica conveniente en el sentido de poder viajar desde Bogotá en forma relativamente rápida y segura, 2) unos sistemas de producción que presenten algunos desafíos actuales en cuanto a la sostenibilidad de la producción, 3) unos rubros de producción agrícola y ganaderos para los cuales esa zona sea relativamente competitiva, nacional e internacionalmente, y 4) una zona donde CORPOICA, universidades y ONGs tengan alguna presencia y hayan realizados trabajos, sean de investigación aplicada, adaptativa, de transferencia, con grupos de productores, etc. Igualmente, habría que plantear como realizar el levantamiento de la información existente de fuentes secundarias y las que sean necesarias de generar, para caracterizar la zona y diseñar algunas hipótesis de intervención para los primeros proyectos de investigación.



**5. Agenda Tentativa de la Reunión de Febrero 28 de 1994**

- 1. Aprobación de la elaboración de un convenio marco entre las entidades participantes.**
- 2. Conformación de un grupo de trabajo para la elaboración de la propuesta y exploración de líneas de investigación.**



\*\*\*\*\*

**LA APROPIACION CAMPESINA DE LA NATURALEZA:  
UN ANALISIS ETNOECOLOGICO**

**VICTOR M. TOLEDO**

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LIBRO  
(DE PROXIMA APARICION)





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MEXICO:



plan

# PÁTZCUARO 2000

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INVESTIGACIÓN MULTIDISCIPLINARIA  
PARA EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIDO  
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PLAN PATZCUARO 2000

-propuestas-

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-A- [TECNICO - PRODUCTIVAS]

Creación de un sistema (computarizado) de información eco-geográfica  
Dragado eficiente  
Reforestación planeada  
Construcción de presas y terrazas  
Construcción de estanquería rústica para acuacultura  
Eficientización del drenaje  
Eficientización y ampliación de las plantas de tratamiento de H<sub>2</sub>O  
Programa de fertilizantes orgánicos  
Ordenamiento y reglamentación de las actividades agrícolas, ganaderas y forestales  
Ordenamiento y reglamentación de la actividad pesquera  
Programa de repoblación piscícola  
Construcción de corrales para el desove de peces  
Racionalización del uso doméstico del agua (especialmente en Pátzcuaro y Quiroga)  
Desarrollo de infraestructura sanitaria (especialmente en los asentamientos rurales)  
Desarrollo tecnológico de escala doméstica y comunitaria para el tratamiento de agua potable y el manejo de descargas  
Manejo eficiente de basura (rural y urbana)  
Apoyo a la producción artesanal  
Creación de talleres-escuela para artesanos  
Creación de reservas biológicas y de protección de la fauna  
Creación de un organismo coordinador de las investigaciones científicas y tecnológicas

-B-

Regulación del crecimiento urbano  
Programa integral de educación ambiental  
Re-ordenamiento de los enfoques, políticas y acciones de las instituciones gubernamentales  
Coordinación interinstitucional  
Transferencia de funciones de las instituciones federales y estatales a las instancias locales: municipios y comunidades

Impulso total al municipio

Profesionalización del municipio

Fortalecimiento de las organizaciones comunitarias y regionales

Microplanificación: Gestación de planes de manejo a nivel de comunidades, ejidos y microrregiones

Redefinición de los territorios municipales

Creación de una sola unidad de conservación y desarrollo forestal

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Creación de un consejo regional para impulsar el plan democráticamente

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**ELEMENTOS PARA UNA AGRICULTURA SOSTENIBLE**

SANTIAGO PERRY RUBIO

**1. INTRODUCCION.**

Las actividades agropecuarias juegan un papel de trascendental importancia en el conjunto de la economía nacional: su producción se destina a satisfacer las necesidades alimentarias de la población, a cubrir la demanda de materia prima de los demás sectores y a servir como fuente de divisas para la balanza de pagos del país. Adicionalmente, contribuyen a la generación de empleo -- tanto directo como indirecto--, demandan bienes de capital del sector urbano, son vitales para la estabilidad y la paz del país y desempeñan una función de complementariedad intersectorial.

A la importancia social, política y económica del sector se suma el hecho de que Colombia cuente con una larga tradición agrícola, al amparo de la cual se ha gestado en buena medida el desarrollo nacional. Esa vocación agrícola ha sido posible gracias a la variada riqueza agroecológica que determina la existencia de un alto grado de heterogeneidad productiva: en cuanto a las regiones productoras de bienes agropecuarios, a la variación en los niveles de productividad de una zona a otra y a la coexistencia de distintas formas de producción -la tradicional y la moderna-.

Paradójicamente, en el sector agropecuario se presentan elevados índices de Necesidades Básicas Insatisfechas (NBI), bajos niveles

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de inversión pública y privada, menor acceso de los pequeños productores a los avances técnicos y científicos, deterioro constante de los recursos naturales y críticos problemas sociales (tales como desempleo, analfabetismo y violencia).

Ante esta situación, la implantación de un modelo de desarrollo sostenible, con una visión integral, se presenta como un desafío mucho mayor para el sector agropecuario que para los otros sectores de la economía, máxime cuando la exigencia de la sostenibilidad está a las puertas de erigirse en una barrera no arancelaria adicional en el comercio internacional.

### 2.- EL CONCEPTO INTEGRAL DE AGRICULTURA SOSTENIBLE.

El concepto de agricultura sostenible no se limita a la visión ecológica del desarrollo, en virtud de la cual el aprovechamiento de los recursos naturales debe hacerse de tal manera que permita que las generaciones venideras también disfruten de sus beneficios. Por el contrario, la sostenibilidad exige que haya un equilibrio entre los factores económicos, tecnológicos, sociales y ecológicos involucrados en el proceso productivo.

Esa ha sido la tendencia predominante a raíz de la superación del modelo de la revolución verde, en cuya virtud se pretendía obtener constantes y mayores incrementos en la producción con base en el empleo de variedades e híbridos que requerían el uso intensivo y





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reiterado de agroquímicos para demostrar su productividad, y en la sobredimensión de la capacidad de la tecnología para superar los escollos que presenta la producción agropecuaria.

Con el tiempo, este modelo mostró claros síntomas de agotamiento, por tres razones fundamentalmente: la primera, porque las inversiones en investigación y en adaptación de tecnologías se tornaban cada día más cuantiosas y el resultado final se traducía solo en modestísimos incrementos de la productividad; la segunda, porque el uso reiterado de los agroquímicos y los costos asociados a ellos acarreaban la proliferación de graves problemas ambientales y el permanente deterioro de los recursos naturales y, la tercera, porque la generación de tecnología, por sé, no tenía una incidencia real sobre el mejoramiento del proceso productivo debido a la escasa transferencia que se hacía de ella hacia los pequeños productores.

En consecuencia, de acuerdo con esta nueva concepción del desarrollo, los objetivos primordiales de la agricultura deben ser el aumento de la disponibilidad de bienes agropecuarios, reduciendo los costos unitarios de producción; el aprovechamiento racional y eficiente de los recursos naturales conservando los ecosistemas y la diversidad agroecológica para el futuro; la distribución equitativa de los factores productivos y de los beneficios de la producción agropecuaria, procurando que la economía campesina tenga acceso a los mismos, y la generación y transferencia efectiva de





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tecnologías que ofrezcan respuestas adecuadas a las necesidades más acuciantes del agro colombiano.

En otras palabras, la nueva concepción del desarrollo, a la que viene adhiriendo nuestro país desde hace algunos años, parte de la premisa de que es posible mejorar las condiciones de competitividad en cuanto a la reducción de los costos unitarios de producción dentro del marco de un concepto de sostenibilidad integral, esto es, haciéndola económica, tecnológica, ecológica y socialmente viable en la actualidad y hacia el futuro.

### 2.1. Sostenibilidad desde el punto de vista económico.

Durante 1992 el sector agropecuario atravesó por una profunda crisis, que se reflejó en el modestísimo crecimiento del valor de la producción y en la contracción de las superficies cultivadas de productos de ciclo corto. Además de la fuerte y prolongada sequía y de la agudización de la violencia en las zonas rurales, tal situación respondió a la pérdida casi generalizada de la rentabilidad que afectó a las actividades agropecuarias y que fue ocasionada por un conjunto de factores, dentro de los que se destacan la caída de los precios internacionales de los productos que Colombia exporta y la inadecuada puesta en marcha de la política económica. Estos y otros acontecimientos pusieron en evidencia los riesgos que se corrían al atender únicamente el





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crecimiento económico de las actividades agropecuarias, sin considerar los aspectos sociales más relevantes y el manejo sostenible de los recursos naturales.

La política sectorial se dirigió entonces hacia la adopción de un conjunto de medidas que permitieran reactivar el sector, conjurando los efectos de la crisis, y que garantizaran su crecimiento sostenido y sostenible, en el marco de la internacionalización de la economía. Hacia el futuro tales políticas deben concentrarse en cuatro grandes temas --la política de comercio exterior agropecuario, la de apoyo e incentivos internos, la de conservación de la biodiversidad y la de desarrollo rural y mejoramiento de la calidad de vida de la población campesina e indígena-- dirigidos a consolidar las labores del agro como actividades rentables y duraderas, que no se limiten a la función extractiva de los recursos naturales sino que sean el eje del desarrollo integral del país.

La política de comercio exterior debe propender por la consecución, el desarrollo y el mantenimiento de mercados para los bienes del agro, con base en una protección razonable y selectiva de la producción doméstica y en un agresivo programa de apoyo y promoción de las exportaciones. El otorgamiento de apoyos e incentivos, por su parte, debe procurar un incremento de la inversión pública en la construcción y el mantenimiento de infraestructura, en el financiamiento de la investigación y de la transferencia de





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tecnología y en el otorgamiento de subsidios selectivos a los productores, estimulando, de contera, la inversión privada en el campo. Estas inversiones son indispensables para modernizar las actividades agropecuarias y para dotarlas de competitividad, tanto en el mercado interno como en los externos. Finalmente, una política de desarrollo rural, para que sea integral, debe propender porque los campesinos tengan acceso a los factores productivos -- tales como la tierra, el agua, la tecnología y el capital de trabajo-- y a los servicios sociales y públicos, de tal manera que tecnifiquen su producción, se conviertan en empresarios competitivos, y alcancen un nivel de vida digno. Tal estrategia debe hacer énfasis en el papel protagónico que le corresponde desempeñar a la comunidad campesina como gestora de su propio desarrollo, participando en el diseño de las políticas, en la toma de decisiones y en la destinación de los recursos públicos hacia las actividades que considere prioritarias.

Sólo podrá hablarse de sostenibilidad económica en la medida en que se garantice la constancia del crecimiento sectorial, no en virtud del repunte coyuntural de algunos subsectores sino por el establecimiento de un modelo productivo que asegure la rentabilidad de las diversas actividades, que reduzca los costos de producción, que ponga freno a la degradación ambiental y que propenda por el mejoramiento del nivel de vida de la población rural.





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2.2. Sostenibilidad desde el punto de vista tecnológico.

La labor investigativa en Colombia se concentró durante mucho tiempo, y bajo el enfoque de la revolución verde, en el desarrollo de tecnologías que apuntaban a una mayor producción y a una rentabilidad por unidad de área, sin tener en consideración los efectos negativos que las mismas podían tener sobre los recursos naturales. Estas técnicas --basadas en el uso intensivo de agroquímicos y de maquinaria autopropulsada-- conllevaban elevados costos para el proceso productivo, debido a que no sólo era necesario importarlas sino que, además, requerían su adaptación a las condiciones internas, situación que no siempre obedecía a un estudio pormenorizado de las ventajas y de las limitaciones de los diferentes ecosistemas. Por otra parte, tales tecnologías llegaban más fácilmente a los cultivos comerciales que a algunos de economía campesina y, por lo tanto, su uso no fructificaba en beneficio de todos los productores.

Si bien es cierto que con esta práctica se alcanzaron algunos logros económicos, también lo es que se alteró el balance ecológico, creando un círculo vicioso que culminaba siempre en la mayor utilización de agroquímicos. Como resultado, las ventajas económicas no fueron duraderas. Su carácter efímero se tradujo en la ineficiencia de las actividades agropecuarias, en la generación de nuevos conflictos sociales y en la degradación e irracional explotación de los recursos naturales.





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Dado que la tecnología juega un papel estratégico en la sostenibilidad agropecuaria, la política sectorial debe dirigirse hacia la solución de los problemas que se presentan en esta materia. Dos son los temas que deben preocuparla: primero, la generación de tecnologías que, basándose en la utilización adecuada de los recursos naturales disponibles logre una significativa reducción de los costos unitarios de producción, y, segundo, la transferencia efectiva de las mismas hacia los usuarios.

En cuanto al primer aspecto, se debe promover el desarrollo y la difusión de técnicas tales como el control integrado de plagas, el manejo adecuado de los suelos, el empleo de biofertilizantes, la eficiente utilización de agua para riego, entre otras. Asimismo, se debe hacer énfasis en la promoción de la investigación en tecnología de punta (biotecnología, ingeniería genética, recursos naturales, etc) y en disciplinas de apoyo (biometría, biología, economía).

Especialmente importante es el desarrollo de la biotecnología dado que ella ha hecho posible la apropiación privada de los resultados de la investigación agrícola, y de la propiedad intelectual sobre los seres vivos y, especialmente, sobre las obtenciones vegetales. La posibilidad de establecer la propiedad intelectual sobre las investigaciones --que no se presentaba anteriormente pues las tecnologías aplicadas en el marco de la revolución verde no lo permitían-- que promueve el fortalecimiento de la inversión privada





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para la investigación agropecuaria tanto a nivel nacional como internacional.

La finalidad primordial de esta estrategia es generar una agricultura de bajos insumos químicos --y, por lo tanto, de bajos costos-- que incorpore los avances científicos al proceso productivo con miras a obtener incrementos sostenidos en la rentabilidad sectorial, sin provocar conflictos en la estructura ecológica. Por esa razón, el establecimiento de la agricultura sostenible debe considerar tanto las limitaciones como las potencialidades de los ecosistemas, para lo cual es necesario crear un modelo tecnológico que, partiendo de la base de un conocimiento profundo sobre las características de los sistemas agroecológicos, permita aprovechar las condiciones ambientales disponibles, en lugar de destruirlas. Los distintos procesos y programas de investigación, incluidos los más básicos, deben, en consecuencia, apoyar el desarrollo de sistemas de producción sostenibles adecuados a cada una de las ecorregiones, los cuales serán el producto de una investigación adaptativa, adelantada con la activa participación de los productores agropecuarios.

Para satisfacer la necesidad de que los productores tengan acceso a la tecnología, se creó y puso en marcha el Sistema Nacional de Transferencia de Tecnología Agropecuaria -SINTAP- y se definieron los criterios de sostenibilidad, equidad y competitividad que serán la base para el desarrollo de los proyectos. De esa manera se





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contribuirá a que las tecnologías generadas en el pasado por el ICA y por otras entidades y las que se generen hacia el futuro lleguen oportuna y efectivamente a los usuarios. Además, para lograr la pronta y adecuada prestación de la asistencia técnica gratuita se han diseñado programas de capacitación para las Unidades Municipales de Asistencia Técnica --UMATA's--, de tal forma que la prestación de este servicio fortalezca el proceso de descentralización en materia tecnológica.

La política sectorial debe hacer énfasis, también, en la participación del sector privado en la labor investigativa, fortaleciendo el proceso de creación de corporaciones mixtas de investigaciones, con el fin de promover el trabajo concertado y la racionalización y desconcentración de las funciones del Estado.

### 2.3. Sostenibilidad desde el punto de vista ecológico.

El crecimiento del sector agropecuario no puede concebirse sobre una base ambiental deteriorada. En ese sentido, el empleo racional y eficiente de los recursos naturales, se convierte en la clave de una estrategia agrícola sostenible.

En este caso, se deben considerar tres componentes: la ampliación de la frontera agrícola, el uso actual y potencial de los suelos y el mejoramiento de sus características productivas. En cuanto al





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primero, es necesario anotar que el proceso colonizador conlleva, por regla general, la incorporación de nuevas tierras a la explotación agropecuaria a costa de las áreas cubiertas de bosques. En efecto, se estima que en Colombia la deforestación anual alcanza las 600.000 hectáreas, de las cuales el 73.6% tiene su origen en la colonización espontánea, y que gran parte de esas tierras es incorporada para la siembra de cultivos ilícitos, estadísticas que resultan alarmantes dadas las consecuencias nefastas que el deterioro forestal tiene sobre la calidad ambiental y sobre el mantenimiento de otros recursos bióticos.

La sostenibilidad exige, entonces, del diseño de estrategias que organicen y racionalicen la ampliación de la frontera agrícola, que promuevan el desarrollo de sistemas de producción acordes con las peculiares características de los agroecosistemas que se van a colonizar, y que brinden a los productores alternativas económica y socialmente viables frente a los cultivos ilícitos y degradantes. Para conseguir que los productores del agro consideren dentro de sus prioridades la conservación y el manejo racional de los recursos naturales, es necesario desarrollar una base tecnológica que conduzca a incrementar la rentabilidad de las actividades agropecuarias y a mejorar el nivel de vida de la población rural.

En lo referente al uso de los suelos, la conclusión obligada en nuestro país es que la relación entre las dos principales actividades agropecuarias y el área utilizada se encuentra invertida: el mayor porcentaje de esa tierra se destina a la





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ganaderia extensiva, en detrimento de las zonas que deberian dedicarse a la agricultura, en virtud de la calidad de los suelos. Asimismo, subsisten grandes extensiones de tierra que no son objeto de un aprovechamiento productivo racional, en tanto que algunas tierras no aptas para cultivos semestrales, en especial en las faldas de las cordilleras colombianas, se usan con este tipo de siembras. Lo anterior impone la necesidad de adelantar una estrategia que, con base en los estudios existentes sobre aptitud de los suelos, se dirija a planificar y hacer más eficiente su aprovechamiento.

Finalmente, es necesario considerar el hecho de que la capacidad productiva de los suelos se encuentra limitada por factores tales como la erosión y la disminución de las corrientes superficiales de agua, como resultado de la eliminación permanente de la cobertura vegetal; el empobrecimiento biótico de los suelos, a raiz del uso intensivo y generalizado de pesticidas, y los procesos de salinización, alcalinización y compactación de los suelos, ocurridos por la aplicación de tecnologias erróneas y por el uso de prácticas agropecuarias inadecuadas.

En consecuencia, el reto para la agricultura sostenible consiste en crear sistemas productivos que sean ecológicamente viables y que conduzcan a la utilización racional y eficiente de los suelos y de los demás recursos naturales y a su preservación para el aprovechamiento futuro, con base en el empleo de fertilizantes





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orgánicos; en la puesta en marcha de proyectos de irrigación y drenaje, y en su adecuada utilización, que solucionen el problema de la disponibilidad de agua en vastas zonas del territorio nacional, y en la introducción de cambios sustanciales en el estilo de las siembras, de tal manera que se impongan las prácticas antierosivas y protectoras del ambiente.

2.4. Sostenibilidad desde el punto de vista social.

El desempleo, la pobreza, el rezago de los sistemas de producción y la violencia en el sector rural han aumentado la migración campo-ciudad y han acentuado el proceso de descomposición social del campesinado. La presión migratoria, a través de la colonización, opera también hacia otras zonas rurales provocando alteraciones económicas, sociales y ambientales que tienen un impacto decisivo no sólo en la potencialización de los conflictos sino, además, en la sobreexplotación de los recursos naturales y en la capacidad de estos últimos para satisfacer las necesidades de la población en el futuro.

Particularmente importante es la necesidad de replantear los procesos de colonización, tanto los dirigidos como los espontáneos, de tal manera que se puedan adelantar en forma organizada, sin menoscabar la riqueza natural del país y sin agudizar los conflictos sociales existentes y buscando que la expansión de la





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frontera agrícola se traduzca también en el mejoramiento económico del campo. Tal expansión debe orientarse hacia los ecosistemas menos frágiles, contar con sistemas productivos adecuados a ellos y reducir la presión colonizadora hacia los más frágiles (v.g. las Amazónica y Pacifica).

En consecuencia, el diseño de una propuesta de agricultura sostenible, además de propender por el crecimiento económico, por el desarrollo tecnológico y por la conservación y el uso racional de la diversidad agroecológica, debe buscar soluciones efectivas a los problemas que impiden el adecuado desenvolvimiento del sector rural. De esa forma, el acceso del campesinado a los factores productivos --tierra, agua, tecnología y capital de trabajo-- y a los servicios sociales y públicos --salud, educación, vivienda, acueductos, energía, etc.--, de tal manera que puedan contribuir al buen desempeño de las labores agropecuarias y alcanzar un nivel de vida digno, se convierte en objetivo fundamental de las políticas económica y sectorial. En el mismo sentido deben dirigirse los principios de la descentralización y la participación ciudadana, en virtud de los cuales las entidades territoriales refuerzan sus relaciones con la comunidad y con el poder central y el campesinado asume un rol protagónico en la gestión de su propio desarrollo, aprovechando los espacios que se crean para la participación en el diseño de las políticas y en la toma de decisiones. Sin una comunidad rural activa, participante, con poder decisorio y con conciencia sobre su futuro y sobre su





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responsabilidad con el entorno, no es posible alcanzar desarrollo sostenible alguno.

Señoras y señores:

El gran desafío que nos impone nuestro tiempo consiste en integrar en una sola visión todos los aspectos comprometidos en el proceso productivo, tal manera que de su interrelación y coordinación surja una estrategia global y sostenible de desarrollo. La sostenibilidad debe crear un modelo tecnológico que garantice una rentabilidad duradera, constante y creciente para las actividades agropecuarias, que asegure la conservación de los recursos y del ambiente y que sirva para la creación de un sector rural próspero, democrático y civilizado. Que la sostenibilidad pase de ser una palabra de nada, para convertirse en una estrategia real y tangible de desarrollo y de bienestar para todos, es el reto al que estamos abocados.

MUCHAS GRACIAS



# Fragile lands, fragile organizations: Indian organizations and the politics of sustainability in Ecuador

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## ABSTRACT

Recent discussions of resource management suggest that one of the most important factors in sustaining use systems on fragile lands is the strength of local representative institutions: rural resource management and the consolidation of rural civil society must both therefore be central concerns in any viable land use strategy in these areas. Pursuing this relationship between local organizations and resource management, the paper discusses the experiences of several Indian federations in Ecuador that occupy fragile environments under increasing pressure from processes of national and local development. These federations have sought to identify resource management strategies to resist these destabilizing forces and so allow continued Indian occupancy of these lands. These strategies have represented a constant search to protect local land rights, to assert a specifically Indian cultural identity, and to identify an ecologically and economically viable resource management strategy for Indian families. The most successful strategies to date have been those that combine traditional and modern practices in a way that responds to Indians' increasing consumption requirements and to grassroots management capacities. In doing so they have also helped strengthen the federations themselves. This empirical analysis is related to a discussion of points of contact between the debates on rural democratization and on traditional resource management, and specifically between the geographic traditions of cultural and political ecology, and the literature on agrarian movements. A dialogue between these perspectives could lead to analyses that are at once more reflective of local realities and more able to contribute to the development of viable local resource use strategies.

**KEY WORDS:** Ecuador, Fragile lands, Participatory research, Development, Local organizations, Indigenous technology

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY FOR THE REAL WORLD

The consolidation of civil society and the elaboration of sustainable resource management strategies are two of the most urgent challenges in rural Latin America (Latin American Commission on Environment and Development, 1990). This is particularly so in those fragile environments being rapidly occupied in contexts characterized by conflicts over resources (Goodman and Hall, 1990; Goodman and Redclift, 1991). In these areas it is becoming apparent that

strong local peasant organizations have crucial roles to play in furthering both local democratization and sustainable land use.

Typically, discussions of these organizations have focused on one or other of these processes. On the one hand, interest in their roles in sustainable resource management is related to the increasingly orthodox argument that the technological and managerial practices embedded in traditional environmental knowledge and resource use are ecologically sustainable (Browder, 1989; Denevan, 1989). Some have therefore argued that local organizations will mobilize these supposedly sustainable traditional technologies and will protect the long-term production potential

of the resources on which local livelihoods depend (Turner and Benjamin, 1991; World Bank, 1992).<sup>1</sup>

It has likewise been argued that the strengthening of local organizations is part of the more general consolidation of rural civil society that is essential to protect the still fragile steps towards democracy in rural areas (Fox, 1990). Such organizations can serve to counter the power of rural elites, to protect civil and land rights and to pressure state institutions for greater accountability and openness in decision making and administrative processes (Fox, 1990; Lehmann, 1990; Slater, 1985). In multi-ethnic societies, such as those of the Andean and Amazonian countries, organizations also constitute a means for asserting and revindicating traditionally oppressed Indian<sup>2</sup> cultural identities (Chiriboga, 1987). Finally, they can be one of the vehicles for greater popular participation in development programmes – a participation that, some claim, enhances the effectiveness and accountability of these programmes (Clark, 1991; EXTIE-World Bank, 1990).

Yet while these discussions have been conducted in largely separate spheres, the organizations themselves stand at the point where the two discussions ought to be joined: at the interface of the sociopolitical and ecological dimensions of the development and environment debate. They therefore occupy in practice the conceptual grounds engaged by cultural and political ecological research in geography. These two geographic perspectives on resource use have different but complementary emphases (cultural ecologists concentrating on the systemic and behavioural dimensions of resource management, political ecologists grappling with the external forces shaping the contexts within which decisions are made). Nevertheless, they have said little about the role of local peasant organizations in combining resource management and political negotiation.

Using evidence from Ecuador, this paper aims to fill this lacuna, and to unite these different debates.<sup>3</sup> It does so with two goals: (i) to pursue the strategic aim of elucidating conditions that favour the emergence of strong local organizations; and (ii) to help elaborate lines of theoretical and empirical enquiry for cultural and political ecology by uniting resource management and cultural politics around a specific issue: the actions of Indian organizations on fragile lands in Ecuador. By drawing threads from cultural ecology and analyses of agrarian movements, the paper investigates questions that might be asked about the resource management and socio-political dynamics of local organizations in fragile lands.

#### *The technology of sustainability – traditional resource management in fragile lands*

In their discussions of resource management, cultural ecologists have long argued that traditional practices are environmentally adapted (Butzer, 1990), because 'by virtue of their biological diversity and structural congruity with the natural environment ... they are, in essence, indefinitely "sustainable"' (Browder, 1989, p. 6). Speaking for a large body of literature, Denevan (1989, p. 22) claims '... fragile lands may not be utilised under modern systems. Development of fragile lands needs to draw upon traditional knowledge'. Traditional practices are more sustainable, it is argued, because they use few capital inputs and little fossil-fuel energy, and are less dependent on the vagaries of input markets (Wilken, 1987). They also use diversified strategies that enhance resilience (Altieri, 1987; Browder, 1989; Holling, 1973) and, if the costs of environmental degradation are factored in, traditional technologies may be more economically profitable than many modern systems (Browder, 1989).<sup>4</sup> However, it is likewise the case that the land productivity and potential cash income from these systems are low.

These arguments take on special significance in discussions of resource management strategies for the so-called 'fragile lands of Latin America' (Browder, 1989; Denevan, 1989 p. 22; Turner and Benjamin, 1991). By suggesting that these lands are particularly prone to land degradation when traditional land use systems are disturbed, many cultural ecologists imply that they must be managed with traditional practices. Many therefore argue that lowland tropical forests should be managed on the basis of indigenous practices (Denevan and Padoch, 1988) and that sustainable use of Andean hillsides should build on pre-Hispanic technologies, crops and land management practices (Erickson and Candler, 1989; Field and Chiriboga, 1984; Knapp, 1991; Mayer, 1979).

Deciding what lands are 'fragile' is, however, more problematic. At issue is whether lands are inherently fragile, or whether their fragility is an effect of particular management practices and 'pressures of production' such as market demands, population increase or taxation (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Turner and Brush, 1987). Denevan (1989) delimits and classifies fragile lands on the basis of agro-ecological qualities: slope, climate and vegetation. However, in a review of recent studies of land use on purported fragile lands, Turner and Benjamin (1991) argue that agro-ecological characteristics do not *per se* determine whether, or how much land degradation will occur.

They suggest that degradation is a result of the *interaction* between use and land qualities, and is most likely under conditions of rapidly changing land use, frontier conditions, poverty, extreme land pressures, external control of resources or decision making, conflicting incentives to land use, and aridity. Ironically, Denevan also recognizes that '... social fragility, in terms of organization, markets, prices, incomes, social relationships and politics ... can be more critical than environmental fragility' (Denevan, 1989, p. 23), somewhat undermining his own agroecological classification of 'fragile lands'.

If the use of land determines its fragility, then to say that fragile lands must be managed with traditional technologies can become tautologous – for fragile lands become defined as those lands that degrade once traditional practices are disturbed. This is hardly helpful. It is more useful to recognize explicitly that traditional technology is simply a technological response to environmental conditions under certain levels of demand and conditions of use (cf. Turner and Brush, 1987). If these conditions change, then traditional practices will either no longer satisfy new levels of demand or will themselves lead to land degradation. The appropriateness of traditional technologies thus becomes context dependent.

While not denying that much can be learned from traditional practices, the point is that traditional technologies are not likely to solve resource management problems when conditions change, as they continue to do in much of the Andes and Amazon. Thus, rather than concentrate on technology as an entry point to sustainable strategies, Turner and Benjamin (1991) focus on the conditions in which technological choices are made. Among factors that might foster sustainable land use they identify the following: rules, regulations and rewards for investment in landscape modification; sufficient well being to be able to exercise choice; security of investment; access to services and markets; local autonomy in decision making; and long term attachment to place. In stressing the importance of securing local users' land rights and strengthening local decision making power, they effectively suggest ways in which local organizations might contribute to sustainable resource management.

With this interest in local organizations, Turner and Benjamin have, as cultural ecologists, perhaps inadvertently moved the discussion towards the politics of land use and the consolidation of rural civil society.

#### *The politics of sustainability and agrarian movements*

Turner and Benjamin are primarily interested in the resource management role of local organizations. However, these organizations have many other political, cultural and social concerns. Indeed, if we are to understand how and why they manage resources in the ways that they do, then we must acknowledge from the outset that these groups (i) are not only, nor necessarily mainly, concerned with resource management; and (ii) suffer internal tensions and external pressures that can easily overwhelm them. Often by definition, their political agendas regarding land use differ from those of other groups and the state. We ought, therefore, to look more closely at the nature of these organizations.

There is a large literature on the politics of land and peasant organizations in Latin America, dating at least from the community development and cooperative movements of the 1950s and 1960s and going right through to current interest in the role of grassroots groups in bottom-up development (Carroll, 1992; Stavenhagen, 1970). We cannot possibly review all this literature here. Rather we wish to point to certain themes that have emerged in these writings that seem particularly relevant to our thinking about what local organizations can achieve in the management of fragile lands. These themes are: the political struggles over resource use within which these organizations are enmeshed and the limits on what local organizations can achieve; the role of rural organizations in strengthening rural society and making local development more participatory; the cultural politics of agrarian movements; and, finally, the internal tensions in these organizations.

A recent contribution to our thinking on these issues is Goodman and Redclift's (1991) discussion of 'the politics of sustainability' in Latin America. They emphasize that the possibility of sustainable development will always be defined in the political arena in which resource bases are contested. There are perhaps two main concerns that any such 'politics of sustainability' would bring to an analysis of local organizations and resource management: the first gives us a context within which to think about the obstacles faced by those organizations, and the second focuses on the struggles in which they are engaged.

The first concern in this 'politics of sustainability' draws on the perspectives of political economy and dependency theory to suggest how the viability of traditional resource use practices may be undermined. Stress is laid upon the constraints of social

relations – recognized, apparently, by Denevan (1989) – to which geographers, treading the political ecological path, have drawn most attention (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Watts, 1983, 1989; Wisner, 1976; Zimmerer, 1991). These factors have both analytical and strategic implications. Analytically, studies of local resource use from this perspective would have to embrace the political economic factors that have great influence over the outcomes of local grassroots initiatives (Watts, 1989) – examples would include land scarcity and poverty-induced overcropping and out-migration that in turn can lead to terrace abandonment and loss of knowledge about native cultivars (Bebbington, 1990; Zimmerer, 1988). Strategically, this perspective reminds us that the actions of local organizations will never be enough. Political and policy action at a national level remain equally crucial to consolidating civic institutions and sustainable resource management initiatives (Lehmann, 1990; Gledhill, 1988).

A second dimension to this 'politics of sustainability' looks at the actions of rural organizations within the context of these wider constraints – and would also aim to understand if and how local actions could begin to redress some of those constraints. Here, Goodman and Redclift (1991) point our analyses toward the local politics of land use and those direct conflicts between different social groups over the control and use of resources (Cleary, 1991; Nugent, 1991) – manifested most visibly in land usurpations and rural violence. Such struggles can move from the local to the national and begin to address (or deepen) more profound obstacles to sustainable land use. If they escalate to become conflicts between local groups, national groups and the state, they can begin (and indeed have begun) to influence national development policies.<sup>5</sup> As Woodgate's (1991) chapter in the Goodman and Redclift collection argues, we must also consider how local actions can change the economic relations within which peasants use land. Through formal organizations, for instance, rural populations can themselves influence resource transfers: by engaging in product processing or co-operative marketing and influencing urban-rural terms of trade (Healy, 1987; Tendler *et al.*, 1988).

Local organizations are not only resource managers but have the potential to change the wider context within which resource use decisions are made and constrained. In this regard, rural resource management links into discussions of the consolidation of rural civil society, and its relationship with the state. This is a consolidation that authors such as Fox (1990)

deem crucial if the urban-biased process of democratization in Latin America is to expand into rural areas – so that, there too, bureaucrats are held accountable, local elites resisted, and human rights respected. He comments: 'The contribution of rural civil society to democratization depends on civic associations which include democratic interest groups, self-help organizations, religious congregations, ethnic associations, and community orientated economic enterprises' (Fox: 1990 p. 10). Fox also suggests that another important sense in which these organizations could contribute to rural democratization would be by broadening popular participation in development decisions and in the implementation of local programmes.<sup>6</sup> Grassroots development studies have made similar points, arguing that rural organizations are agents of social change which take development issues into their own hands, delivering the social and developmental services that the state is increasingly unable to provide (Annis and Hakim, 1988; Hirschman, 1984).

It is helpful to delve into this literature because, at the same time as pointing to the urgency of consolidating rural people's organizations, it also points to the factors that make this difficult – factors that by implication would also undermine the effectiveness of resource management programmes in these organizations. Fox (1990) emphasizes that there are a range of 'external factors' (such as coercion and violence) and 'internal' factors that weaken rural people's organizations. These 'internal factors' include the physical difficulty of sustaining an organization in areas where distances are great and travel difficult. Other factors are the diversity in people's economic interests and ecological resources which may mean that they gain different benefits from a particular economic programme.

The net effect of these problems is to weaken organizations: 'internal democracy remains quite vulnerable because the leadership is often the only link among the dispersed and diverse member communities', comments Fox (1990 p. 10) agreeing with over twenty years of literature on peasant organizations and cooperatives. From Landsberger and Hewitt's (1970) identification of 'ten sources of weakness and cleavage in Latin American peasant movements' to Carroll's (1992) findings that rural people's organizations are prone to internal biases in their distribution of benefits of local development programmes, the message is consistent: the problem of accountability and cohesion in rural organizations is a vexed and complicated one.

This is an antidote to assertions of some authors in the literature on new social movements who claim that popular organizations are characterized by high levels of internal democracy and participatory decision making (Slater, 1985, p. 7). Other observations in this literature may, however, be more relevant to our discussion. One of the main themes that several agrarian commentators in Latin America have taken from the literature of new social movements is the idea that contemporary popular organizations are frequently motivated by a concern for a different form of development that recognizes and expresses local identities ignored by modernization and class-based political organizations (Harvey, 1991; Redclift, 1988; cf. Evers, 1985 and Friedmann, 1992). In cases where these organizations are of Indian peoples, this can become a concern to promote a form of development that respects ethnic and cultural identities (Chiriboga, 1987; Gledhill, 1988). For instance, the emergence of explicitly Indian (as opposed to peasant) organizations in Ecuador is interpreted by their own umbrella organization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), as an expression of an ethnic identity in which neither class-based peasant organizations nor public institutions showed much interest (CONAIE, 1989). However, if the organizations themselves are not internally homogeneous and are prone to capture by leaders, then we must ask whether the cultural ideals and practices that the organizations espouse are necessarily shared by the bulk of their members. This too may undermine the viability of the resource management capacities of these organizations.

These observations lead us to two issues that are of importance in thinking about the role of Indian organizations in rural resource management. Firstly, they suggest that these organizations are themselves fragile, subject to internal tensions and external pressures that can undermine their capacity to promote sustainable and equitable resource management. Secondly, they suggest that the motivations of these organizations are complex, and not only related to sustainable resource use. They might also be orientated towards protecting land rights, and making statements about the identities of Indian peoples. This complexity may lead to irresolvable contradictions that might influence their resource management strategies. What, for instance, would happen if the socio-political logic of a popular organization suggests a resource management practice that differs from the ecological and economic ideal?

Any analysis of local organizations must therefore recognize that, being at once political agents and resource managers, they may have to grapple with contradictory logics and may have very understandable reasons for pursuing strategies that seem irrational to the external criteria, ecological or otherwise, of commentators such as cultural and political ecologists. Analyses of peasant resource management should therefore accord importance to local political action and cultural identity, as well as the more traditional themes of technological practice, ecology and political economy (Bebbington, 1991). We argue that the fusion of these concerns is a prerequisite to sustainable local organizations, whose own sustainability must be central to any lasting contribution to a stronger civil society and a more accountable state in rural areas (cf. Lehmann, 1990). Organizations that consistently privilege the cultural and political over the economic, and that fail to have a significant and relatively egalitarian impact on the rural family economy, are following a flawed strategy. Similarly flawed is any cultural and political ecological analysis that understates any of these elements by emphasizing the traditional concerns of their discourse.

#### INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN FRAGILE LANDS: CULTURAL POLITICS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ECUADOR

The Ecuadorian case material comes from the tropical forest lowlands of Amazonia and from the Andean highlands. Both environments are demarcated by Denevan as fragile, with particular 'stress factors' in resource management: soil fertility, nutrient cycles and pest problems in the humid forests; and steep slopes, aridity and climatic risk in the Andes (Denevan, 1989, p. 13). Indigenous technologies were historically adapted to these stress factors. However, the context of this adaptation has changed: pressures to intensify production on Indian lands are increasing and conflicts over the control of resources between Indians, the state, colonists and larger business interests are growing.

The period since the 1960s has witnessed a steady increase in the strength and number of Indian organizations in both regions. These federations are constituted by a number of 'base organizations' (communities,<sup>7</sup> co-operatives, associations). By 1990, there were some 126 federations in Ecuador (Ramón, 1991). Many emerged as socio-politically orientated,

ethnic organizations that subsequently mounted resource management programmes addressing both political problems and pressures for the intensification of production.

*From technological adaptation to Indian organizations in the humid tropical forest*

A wealth of research in Ecuador's tropical forests has demonstrated the ecological sustainability of indigenous forest management practices (Descola, 1988; MacDonald, 1981; MacDonald *et al.*, 1991). Frequently these practices hinged around the clearance and burning of small plots of forest which were subsequently planted with a polycultural system based on a mixture of native species. The plot was then left for the recovery of the forest, a process that continued to yield useful products over several years of the swidden fallow (cf. Denevan and Padoch, 1988). Fifteen to twenty years later, soil nutrient levels restored, the cycle would begin again (Uquillas, 1985). The system depended, though, on land availability, and developed with few additional pressures on production.

This management strategy has been under mounting pressures (MacDonald, 1981). At the turn of the century, there emerged the types of conflict over resources between different social groups that Goodman and Redclift (1991) take as the starting point for understanding resource management strategies. Land was taken for rubber haciendas and livestock ranching. Indians were frequently forced from their lands in order to extract rubber elsewhere (Uquillas, 1984). The conflicts intensified in the later twentieth century as both a direct and indirect effect of national development strategies.

The discovery of oil reserves in 1967 at Lago Agrio was a 'major boost' to Amazonian development (Southgate, 1991). The state mounted a strategy of national modernization based on oil exploitation, further disrupting indigenous resource management systems (Hicks *et al.*, 1990). Aside from the land taken directly for oil development, its water and noise-polluting effects damaged fishing and game resources. Different governments used credit and land concessions to encourage livestock and oil palm producers who steadily encroached onto Indian lands, particularly the more fertile areas (Uquillas, 1984).

These interventions into Indian lands were compounded by the effects of planned and spontaneous colonization. In some cases, colonists from the highlands and coast followed roads built for other

developments (Bromley, 1980). Alongside spontaneous colonization came colonists directed by state agencies concerned to diffuse land conflicts in the highlands, and to occupy land near international frontiers (Uquillas, 1984).

With colonization came land use change. Between 1965 and 1985 the amount of land planted to crops increased from negligible levels to 225 000 hectares, doubling between 1983 and 1986 alone (Hicks *et al.*, 1990). Over the same period, pastures increased from 226 000 to 484 000 hectares, and the population of the lowlands increased at a rate of 4·9 per cent per annum between 1974 and 1982 (Southgate, 1991; Hicks *et al.*, 1990 p. 2). With this increase and the unsustainable nature of colonist farming,<sup>8</sup> the agricultural frontier has advanced rapidly into the territories of the six different Indian groups inhabiting Amazonia (Hicks *et al.*, 1990; Trujillo and Granizo, 1991).

This incursion into Indian territory was facilitated by agrarian reform legislation that was designed to facilitate land transfers to the highland indigenous poor. Under that legislation, land that was used 'inefficiently' was subject to expropriation (Barsky, 1984). Colonists and public agencies have therefore argued that uncleared Indian hunting and swidden fallow lands ought be granted to colonists who will use it more efficiently (Southgate, 1991; Uquillas, 1985).

These disturbances have brought acute pressure on Indian production and cultural systems, above all by threatening land rights and resources and also through the associated impacts of acculturation and disarticulation on Indian culture and identity (Uquillas, 1984). The emergence of federations from the late 1960s, frequently with the support of priests and Indian bi-lingual educators, was a direct response to these pressures. Organizations mounted strategies that attempted to resist both the direct economic threat to Indian survival, and the perceived cultural threats of modernization (Salazar, 1981). Furthermore, the defence of land was seen as the *sine qua non* of Indian culture (without land there would be no livelihood), and was linked to other programmes of education and cultural activity, promoting particular visions of Indian identity grounded in traditional practices. Finally, the organizations also constituted a means to negotiate access to resources for services for Indian base organizations. Their actions thus combined work in land rights, direct efforts to increase Indian participation in regional and local politics, cultural revindication and more overt development actions.

The Shuar Federation was the first to form in 1964, and now includes over two hundred and sixty base organizations. This was followed by the Federation of Indigenous Organisations of Napo (FOIN) in 1969 (with around 65 base organizations in 1991), and several others, such as the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP), were formed in the 1970s and 80s (CONAIE, 1989).

The main concern of these federations has been to gain recognized legal land ownership as a means of protecting land and territorial rights (Salazar, 1981). In part, federations petitioned government to recognize that lands deemed unoccupied by the state were in fact used and owned by Indian peoples. In some cases federations pressed the state to give land titles and in other cases the federations, with advisors and outside financial assistance, have done their own land demarcation work, stressing communal ownership as opposed to the individual ownership promoted by state programmes (MacDonald, 1986; Hicks *et al.*, 1990). In some areas (such as the area of the Shuar and of FOIN), much land has been successfully titled (Uquillas, 1985). In other provinces where such organized actions began later (e.g. in Pastaza), there has been less success and, under the authoritarian, conservative and distinctly anti-Indian regime of 1984–88, titling of Indian lands was severely curtailed (MacDonald, 1986). This also reflected an apparent policy to frustrate titling in order to facilitate any subsequent oil exploration and development (Trujillo and Granizo, 1991).

These more operational (low intensity conflict) negotiations with the state have been coupled recently with more powerful, and effective, political mobilizations. In June 1990, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador called on the country's Indians to join in a nationwide uprising directed against a government that was perceived to be dragging its feet on a series of issues, among them land rights. The mobilization lasted five days and brought parts of the country to a halt. The response of the government was partial but the arm of the Catholic church committed to the indigenous poor and worried about social stability responded by creating a new fund specifically to assist Indians to buy land.

Federations remained dissatisfied with the government's response. This was particularly so in the case of OPIP which first demanded a form of regional autonomy and then, in April 1992, coordinated a mass march from the lowlands to Quito which, after days of occupying part of the city, ended in the government granting three million acres of land title

to Indian communities in Pastaza – on the proviso that oil exploration could continue on Indian lands and that the government would have rights to future oil proceeds (*Washington Post*, 20 May 1992).

While these many years of work to gain land title have represented a conscious attempt to resist the usurpation of Indians from their historic territories, they have equally reflected an effort to strengthen Indian political organization. Secure land title and livelihood were the first essential steps towards stronger membership participation in federations and base organizations (cf. Fox, 1990), and land titling was then combined with grassroots work to strengthen member organizations. As organizations have become stronger, they have indeed had a growing impact on local politics. The means of doing so have varied, including pacts with political parties, direct participation of members as elected representatives and direct protest and demonstration. The more general effect of their grassroots work has led the indigenous vote in provinces such as Napo to become influential in regional elections. Other impacts have ranged from negotiating over recent government and private development strategies and projects, to influencing the appointment of public officials. FOIN, for instance, refused to accept the appointment of a non-bilingual non-Indian as regional Director of Bilingual Education and, after normal negotiations failed, they organized a siege of the offices until the Director was replaced with a bi-lingual person.

At the same time as they negotiate for changes in state programmes, the federations go about mounting their own economic and social development programmes. To fund the programmes, they have negotiated external financing, from overseas and from the state. Federation offices are now adorned with the regalia of traditional artisanal production alongside the computers and faxes they need to undertake these negotiations. In these programmes, the federations have played roles that would be impossible for households. They channel credit to their members, facilitate the installation of infrastructure (such as storage, transport and marketing facilities, and experimental and demonstration farms) and provide technical assistance to help members alter their agricultural practices. In these different ways, they increase Indian management of, and participation in, programmes of social reproduction and local development processes.

Land work was combined with actions seen as reinforcing specifically Indian cultural identities. This

identity has been sought in 'traditional' practices and ideas, in part denying the possibility that acculturation may have led elements of these to become inappropriate to their members. Federations' actions included, for instance, recovering from oral and other histories the themes of traditional Indian practices and introducing them into teaching, music and artisanal production. One Indian musical group, the Yumbos Chahuamangos, that recovers songs in Quichua, has supported several federations in these sorts of activities.

The concern to revalidate Indian identities through the restoration of traditional practices has also influenced federations' rhetoric (though as we shall see not always their practice) regarding resource management. Federations, like cultural ecologists, have argued to both Indians and government alike for the value of traditional practices and ecological knowledge for sustainable forest management. As the Indian movement became stronger both in the Amazon and nationally, this emphasis on Indian history and resistance as a reaffirmation of cultural identity has intensified (CONAIE, 1989).<sup>9</sup>

The potential coherence of a strategy grounded in the recuperation of territory, agrarian traditions, culture, and history has not, however, been fully realized in past practice. Ironically, one reason for this has been the contradictions between the resource management models promoted by the federations in practice, and the cultural ideals pursued by them in rhetoric. The contradiction has often been forced by circumstance rather than internal circumstances – but either way the effect is to weaken the coherence of the federations.

Thus, in response to the problem that uncleared land was vulnerable to colonist possession, some federations decided that land rights and territory would have to be protected by occupying land. This led them to chose a strategy that was both understandable and contradictory. Despite their statements that Amazonian development should be based on 'indigenous' adapted resource management strategies, they promoted the colonist model of resource management – a model revolving around forest clearance. Federations thus chose to facilitate and promote among their members the development of commercial cattle ranching and, to a lesser extent, commercial agriculture (MacDonald, 1981; 1986; Trujillo and Granizo, 1991). The first experience was the rise of cattle ranching fostered among the members of the Shuar Federation and its apparent success led to efforts to repeat the experience in Pastaza, with

the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP). Subsequently, OPIP also sought to promote commercial agriculture, frequently monocultural, coffee, cacao and maize among its members.

In playing these roles as supra-communal institutions in regional resource management, federations have had positive impacts. Cattle have generated income for both families and base organizations alike – the latter using such income from collectively managed herds to fund communal projects (Salazar, 1981). Indeed, the fact that families have continued with livestock production after gaining land title shows both that in some cases it has proven profitable for producers and that these producers are not content with the simple subsistence livelihoods of the old adaptations.

Nonetheless, these resource management models have become increasingly problematic and their sustainability must be questioned on several grounds. By the later 1980s, it became increasingly clear that both the effects of soil and pasture degradation resulting from livestock development, and soil and pest problems with monoculture have often been severe, questioning the *agro-ecological* sustainability of the strategy. Furthermore, the cost of attending to these problems, and the negative impacts on both livestock and crop productivity, have undermined the *economic* sustainability of these practices. These observations are not to imply that the whole of Indian production in Amazonia has become unsustainable (though it is under pressure). Indeed many Indian families continue to maintain significant areas of forest (Uquillas, pers. comm.). The point rather is that the federations have promoted a strategy that in this region has itself not been a sustainable option;<sup>10</sup> in so doing they have in many cases undermined their own strength and legitimacy as organizations.

This weakened legitimacy stems in part from the technical problems of the strategies promoted. It is also a result of the ways in which federations organized their development programmes. Concerned to strengthen their support at a base level, federations mounted projects that did not create mechanisms to allow self-financing or to cover the institutional costs of the federation.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, as projects come to an end, so many federations find themselves still dependent on external financing. This problem remains and is increasingly recognized within the federation. 'We have not generated viable proposals for economic development, and ... now is the moment to sit down and do so ... only by gaining economic power will we gain political power',

comments one activist in the Amazonian and national Indian movement (Karakras 1991, pers. comm.).

Another problem has been that the federations suffer a certain lack of internal accountability that allows leaders to influence the agendas of the organizations in ways that are not necessarily consistent with the most pressing concerns of the membership. At times, their focus on political and cultural resistance and on conceptions of identity rooted in non-modernized practices, was often at odds with the more material concerns of the majority of the membership. A decade ago, one commentator noted that the degree of incorporation of modern ideas and aspirations among most Shuar was such that the federation's more traditional conception of cultural identity did not reflect grassroots concerns (Salazar, 1981). In 1986, MacDonald (1986 p. 13) commented that in another of the federations (FOIN) '... the well organized communities ... wanted something more from FOIN than, what they considered to be, the same tired lectures on the need to organize' (*sic*). In many respects, leaders were not sufficiently accountable to their membership for these sorts of misrepresentations to be rectified.

Having said this, there is evidence of an emerging approach to Indian identity that may find a middle ground between the calls of the past and the challenges of the present. In Napo, for instance, FOIN maintains a health programme that revolves around the promotion of traditional forms of health care insofar as they have positive impacts on family nutrition and quality of life. In resource management projects there is a clear concern to elaborate schemes combining traditional forest management and income generation in which the federation takes responsibility for the collection, processing and marketing of forest products.

Aside from internal problems, the hostile national political and macroeconomic environment has also challenged the organizations greatly, and led to inviabilities in the strategies they promoted. This was due not only to the development policies mentioned above. The authoritarian (though elected) government of 1984–88 persecuted Indian organizations as politically subversive and sought to undermine their strength by setting up parallel 'phantom' popular movements (MacDonald, 1986). Though such interference has not gone away (it re-emerged in 1990–91 after the national Indian uprising in June 1990), more important is the continuing conflict between Indian federations and the state over the role of Amazonia in national development. Under the pressure of rising

inflation and adjustment pressures, the state's search for export income is intensifying and with it the search for oil and gas. How far any Indian movement can resist this, or at least share in the income generated, must be open to question.

In short, for both internal and external reasons, the federations have had difficulty identifying and then sustaining economic and cultural projects that adequately resonate with their members' concerns. This has meant that base support for the larger political and cultural projects is weakened and the federations' legitimacy among their bases is itself not assured. As such, their role in adding cohesion and strength to rural society is also weakened, along with their potential role in local resource management programmes.

#### *Modernizing Andean resource management: cultural erosion or popular empowerment?*

A second set of experiences in the process of popular organization among indigenous rural people comes from the central province of Chimborazo where, in the 1950s and 1960s, a long history of everyday resistance on feudal estates spilled over into a more strategic and organized struggle. This was part of an increasing peasant militancy that characterized the period in much of Latin America. Partly in response to this, agrarian reform legislation was passed in Ecuador in 1964 and 1973: in Chimborazo, however, where rural militancy had been particularly strong, an additional gain was the declaration of the province as a 'priority zone' for the application of the 1973 legislation (Haney and Haney, 1989). This accelerated land recovery by Indian communities. More significantly it removed dominant political figures from rural areas. This has eased the subsequent emergence of Indian federations which have become increasingly important factors in the administration of rural development.

Most federations emerged subsequent to the land struggles – which were generally conducted at a community level, with occasional interventions from national peasant organizations.<sup>12</sup> Thus, unlike in Amazonia, the origins of the federations was not in the defence, or recovery, of land. Instead much of their initial work aimed to resist, and reverse, forms of cultural and political domination of Indians by non-Indians. Culturally, this was a domination played out in marketplaces and government offices and grounded in ideologies of Indian inferiority that were often as much internalized by Indians, as used by non-Indians to legitimate Indian exclusion from many

spheres of economic and public activity (Duby, 1973; Kleemeyer, 1992; Maynard, 1966).

Rural organizations were not alone in such work. As in Amazonia they frequently worked with, and drew inspiration from, their links with both the liberation theological and evangelical churches, sharing beliefs in the equality of rights between Indians and non-Indians. The provincial office of the national literacy programme (PNA) also played an important role in the early emergence of the federations. Receiving international development assistance for its pro-Indian work, it was able to act with considerable autonomy from government. Much of the work that led to the emergence of the federations, and then characterized their own early work, revolved around the PNA's programmes of bi-lingual literacy training that had as their main objective the revalidation of certain Indian cultural practices and forms of organization. Most obvious in this was the emphasis on the value of Quichua as a language and of the community as an organizational building block for a range of other programmes. Similarly important was the use of educational techniques that conveyed not only literacy skills but also addressed the notions that Indians had social and cultural rights that they should demand of government. One measure of the cumulative significance of this process of cultural revalidation is the often-heard complaint from non-Indian government workers in Chimborazo who claim that indigenous people are far more exacting now than they ever were before. Another indicator might be the emergence of community based groups playing Quichua music, and their performance in local federations' meetings, in much the same way as the Yumbos Chahuamangos play in federations' meetings in Amazonia (cf. Kleemeyer, 1992).

Federations and their supporters have combined such politico-cultural action with attempts to strengthen indigenous capacities to gain better public services for communities. This occurs at two levels. Firstly, federations dedicate much effort to strengthening the internal management and negotiating capacities of base organizations by forming leaders and providing training in land and community legislation, accounting and administration. One indication of the results of this work are the queues of poncho-clad community presidents, briefcase in hand, who can be seen every day in the offices of public utility agencies in Riobamba, the provincial capital. The traditional dress, the poncho, marks the claim that as Indians, their communities have a right

to receive services such as water and light; the briefcase tries to suggest that the communities have not only the right, but also the administrative expertise to work with public agencies in the installation of such services.

At the same time, however, federations do much of this negotiating themselves. Some such negotiation has been directly with the state, the federations essentially absorbing administrative costs and facilitating member community access to public resources. One federation, the Union of Peasant Organizations of Cicalpa (UOCACI), has helped channel public resources to many of its 37 communities for rural electrification, health care, sanitation and minor road building. UOCACI's primary task in this has been to establish contact and then press the agencies to respond with continual visits and letters to their offices. (Indeed, in the course of a year of field work in this region done by one of the authors, the secretary of UOCACI more often seemed to be in meetings in Riobamba than in his home community.) The federation also organizes community labour contributions to programmes and in the case of electrification has been responsible for some of the subsequent local administration of the scheme.

In other cases, as in Amazonia, federations began to negotiate their own funds direct from international donors. With these they have begun to deliver services to their members (Bebbington, 1992). One of the main uses of these funds has been to establish resource management projects, mainly in agricultural development, in their member communities. While educational programmes dominated much early work in federations, these agricultural programmes have become prominent since the mid-1980s. Unlike in Amazonia, these projects were not orientated toward the protection of land rights (which already had been largely won); but, as in Amazonia, they have been influenced by conceptions of cultural identity, and by internal weaknesses in the federations themselves.

These resource management strategies have had to find adaptations to sloping lands ranging from 3200 metres to over 4000 metres above sea level, where population is increasing and seasonal out-migration is intensifying. Agriculture is rainfed, with periods of summer drought; climatic risks are high and topsoils are easily disturbed. Furthermore, even within communities, and certainly within the federation, there is much variation in the quality of land owned by different families. The administrators of federations have responded to this challenge with different proposals

for how they might support family resource management strategies. Yet, despite these differences, they have all claimed that their response was directed to protect indigenous cultural practices. The logic behind their resource management work thus built on their earlier activities in cultural revitalization – albeit in different ways.

Some federations launched agricultural programmes that aimed to promote the use of native Andean crops and the use of organic production techniques. Aside from the unacceptable economic and ecological implications of agrochemical and new crop technologies, such processes were also rejected as culturally inappropriate. The revalidation of native crops was equally deemed a revalidation of a certain conception of Indian tradition. Yet these concerns have encountered little interest at the grassroots where they were often considered impracticable, either because families lacked the land to support enough animals to produce the manure for organic fertilization, or because farmers lost the crops which were not sprayed with pesticide. These technical options were also generally unattractive because native crops commanded low prices in the market place.

Other federations followed the modernization path, launching programmes in which they provided technical assistance, seed of non-native crop varieties and subsidized agrochemical inputs to members – a programme design largely following the administrative models of public sector rural development programmes (Bebbington, 1992). Yet this rush to modern technology was not seen as a cultural sacrifice so much as a necessary reaction to the increasing inviability of traditional practices of low capital input in response to increased pressures on production in this environment. Indeed many leaders of federations comment that, rather than the modernization of technology, the main factor undermining traditional practices in the communities is seasonal migration. The absence of family members weakens the domestic unit. Similarly absence from the community weakens social participation in a series of the more routine community activities – such as community work sessions, the weekly assemblies that underlie local administration, and the games of volley ball that mark the end of many days – that give the sense of local cohesion and identity. If modern technologies could increase incomes and so reduce migration, the argument went, all the better for the preservation of the more important aspects of local culture. Identity came less from resource management practices than from the forms of life that they helped sustain. Thus, as in Amazonia,

so too the federations in Chimborazo chose to promote the technologies of the cultural other (as opposed to indigenous technologies), as part of a programme aimed at protecting local identities and practices (Bebbington, 1992).

Despite this reasoning, however, it is far from clear that these strategies will be the basis for either a sustainable local resource management or for stronger local organizations. Modern technologies yield a significant pay-off only under certain agro-ecological conditions. In this particularly eroded environment, soil loss on unterraced slopes means the benefits of using fertilizers are reduced, and will continue to be so until such erosion problems are addressed. The benefits of the support offered by the federations are therefore mainly felt by those who have better lands and in particular those who own footslope and valley floor lands with water close by and who can grow horticultural crops, such as onions, for which there is a better market. For the majority of families who own very small farm units, benefits of income and yield from applying fertilizers do not generate sufficient income significantly to reverse migration pressures. Meanwhile, for all involved, the currency devaluations of structural adjustment programmes are leading to dramatic increases in the cost of agrochemicals at the farmgate.

For the federations, these programmes have also brought problems suggesting that they are not necessarily going to strengthen the organizations. Initially, the delivery of subsidized inputs and free technical assistance enhanced the legitimacy of the federations among their members. Over time, however, it became apparent that the federations commanded only enough resources to support programmes that had negligible impacts at a family level. Worse still it became clear that the benefits of the support they offered were unequally distributed. This was in part an effect of agro-ecological variation, as those farmers producing under certain micro-environmental conditions gained more than the majority. However, the unequal distribution was also an inevitable effect of resource limitations in federations. UOCACI, for instance, a federation of 37 member communities with an average of 40 families per community, could not possibly attend the needs of all these families. The effect has been that service delivery has often been concentrated among those communities that were closer to the federation's central office, and that were the home communities of the bulk of the federation's administrators and staff. Consequently, the programmes begin to

lose legitimacy – and with them so too do the federations.

This weakness tends to have a self perpetuating effect. It has led to splintering within the popular organizations in this region of the highlands, as member organizations of the federations break away to negotiate their own projects. This loss of interest undermines the coordination of activities among local groups. Obviously, this weakens the possibility of coordinated participation of Indian populations in regional development strategies and makes it far easier for external agencies to pursue their own programmes and to avoid being genuinely held to account.

In UOCACI's case, several development agencies are now operating in its member communities and refuse to coordinate with the federation. In one case, several communities are withdrawing from the federation essentially because they have received the visitation of a development project funded by a private Ecuadorian organization 'X'. They compare favourably the support X can offer with the limited help they feel they receive from UOCACI. Furthermore, they argue, the new project is attractive because they will handle it directly – unlike the projects with UOCACI that they feel were controlled by a core group of communities who dominate it.

The reason for this breakaway, however, is also related to X's own agenda. X ultimately decided it did not wish to work with existing federations in that part of Chimborazo because *they* had *their* own agendas and this would upset the programmes designed by X. In going to work in those communities, X not only retains its independence but contributes to the further weakening of UOCACI.

For our argument, the conclusions from this experience are several. Firstly, once again it is evident that the resource management strategies of the federations are influenced by a concern for cultural identity but, once again, the use of modern technologies can be congruent with a wider concern to endorse and protect local identities. Secondly, the federations' sustainability is challenged by external pressures (e.g. currency devaluations) and internal tensions stemming in part from an imperfect accountability within the organization. The weaknesses also seem to stem from the development model adopted by the federations. The decision to pursue a strategy of delivering subsidies to their members is fatal. Not only is it fatal because it cannot possibly be sustained but also because members come to evaluate the federation on how much they can gain from it

and, when a better option arises, they go elsewhere. This not only weakens the federation, it weakens rural civil society. As organizations splinter and multiply it becomes that much more difficult for local people to influence the development agenda. For if external institutions want to work in a particular way, they do not have to look very far to find a set of clients who are willing to accept a new set of subsidies on these new terms. In the meantime, a coordinated grassroots development remains a vain hope.

#### *Organizing modernization: towards a sustainable and locally controlled development?*

The prior cases are illustrative in several senses. Instead of adding to the already long litany of 'failures of modernization', they suggest that local organizations intentionally promote modernized resource management practices as a 'second best', but necessary, response to existing circumstances. They do so as part of strategies that aim to protect the conditions allowing the partial reproduction of Indian culture, to strengthen the presence of Indians in regional power structures and to increase incomes. In the above cases, internal incoherencies and political economic pressures ultimately undermined the viability of these strategies. In doing so, they have weakened the local organization as well.

This need not always be so. The Foundation of Organisations of Salinas (FUNORSAL), in the highland province of Bolivar, is a case of a successful, federation-managed resource management strategy that has improved family incomes, and has strengthened the federation of 23 base organizations in such a way that local control of, and participation in, development administration has been enhanced. As in Chimborazo, its challenge has been to develop a regional resource management strategy for high altitude (over 3500 metres), sloping, windswept, cold and dry lands.

Not all the reasons for the success at FUNORSAL stem from the development model pursued by the federation: special historical factors in the zone have also been important. In the struggle for land, an alliance emerged between Indians and non-Indians against estate owners. This union of different ethnic groups continued. When the federation finally formed, it was able to unite both ethnic groups in a common commitment to local development. Thus Salinas is marked by less ethnic domination than is Chimborazo, and so this issue did not absorb the early actions of local organizations. Instead, from the early 1970s, development activists committed themselves

to identifying a viable programme of local development. In addition, by the 1960s and '70s there was a relatively high level of education, a factor favouring broad participation in the administrative tasks of many local organizations.

Furthermore, demographic pressure at the time of land subdivision was less than in Chimborazo. On average, families received lots of 15–20 hectares. Although local income levels were still extremely low and (as in Chimborazo) periodic out-migration was perceived as a serious social problem, the larger farm size has offered greater potential for accumulation than in Chimborazo. This potential began to be realized after an international organization did a study of the dairy sector in the 1970s and identified Salinas as a potential area for development. From this information, local organizations and the church (which, as in the other cases we have considered, played an important role in forming and consolidating the regional federation of base organizations in Salinas) hatched a vision and strategy for a grassroots development based on the modernization of the dairy sector. The church facilitated access to technical assistance and to resources to finance this process. The fact that the harsh conditions and geographic isolation of Salinas apparently discouraged multinational dairy companies from entering the region increased the possibility of a locally controlled process of development.<sup>13</sup>

The church was also instrumental in developing the concept of an organizational structure to manage such an economic development. Growing out of earlier failed experiences with cooperatives, the church sought a form of organization that would combine the economic logic of a cooperative (with joint savings and loans schemes, redistribution of surplus, joint marketing, etc.) with the cultural logic of the traditional form of organization, the community. Out of this came an approach based on community economic enterprises and savings and loans cooperatives which in 1983 were aggregated into a federation, FUNORSAL.

The resource management strategy in FUNORSAL was, as in the other cases, aimed as much at a social problem (out-migration) and a social goal (to strengthen community and regional organization by reducing migration), as at a simple concern for sustainable development (Soria and Illingworth, 1989). The programme has revolved around centralized collection of peasant milk production, and its processing into quality cheese. The twelve existing factories producing cheese are located in communities and are

the joint property of the families in the base organizations. Their operation, however, is coordinated and administered by the federation of base organizations. The federation is also responsible for the subsequent marketing of the cheese. This has provided families with an assured and significant income source, as an above market price is paid for the milk. Factory profits are not divided directly among members but are distributed indirectly through the higher price paid for milk and through subsidization of loans to members for the improvement of their livestock among other things. In early years they were also used to finance community services. The federation provides technical assistance to families in cattle and pasture management.

This model of the federation as the axis coordinating the collection and processing of locally produced inputs has since been reproduced in other activities (textiles, processed meats, timber processing, etc.) and the federation now has fifteen productive enterprises. Many of them represent a deliberate attempt to break existing marketing chains controlled by non-local traders paying low prices and then to reorganize the terms of producers' relationship with the market through producing processed, quality local products and negotiating higher prices through the federation. Others represent efforts to supply local needs through federative enterprises and so prevent the entry of external capital – thus, for instance, the federation produces and supplies materials necessary for house building, and the furniture to put in those houses.

In controlling and administering these activities, the federation constitutes an institutional form that captures and recycles profits in the region, as opposed to forms controlled by non-local capital which would inevitably transfer some or all of their profit out of the region. Some of these resources are used to finance the federation itself – a form of local reinvestment for institutional development. Just as significantly, these activities and this reinvestment have created new income sources, increased demand for on-farm labour and directly generated some 286 new jobs in factories that process the products of the region and that are administered by the federation and its member organizations. This direct job-creation is complemented by an indirect employment generation that has had the effect that the high out-migration rates of the 1970s, when twenty-five per cent of the population migrated seasonally, have now been reversed. A sample of ten per cent of the families in the village of Salinas showed that all of them had

ceased seasonal migration as part of their livelihood strategies. Similarly significant have been the 76 per cent decline in infant mortality, and the 55 per cent decline in overall mortality rates.<sup>14</sup>

The strength and legitimacy of the federation with its members stems from the recognition that it is a central economic resource for their family economies. In Salinas there is little tendency for base organizations to separate from the federation (unlike in Chimborazo). All negotiations with external agencies, including the state, are conducted via the federation. This facilitates a locally controlled coordination of regional development activities. It is now difficult for state and other development agencies to do anything in the region without first receiving the approval of the federation (Torres, 1991). Indeed, in one case where a base organization tried to work directly with an international non-governmental organization, FUNORSAL presented an ultimatum: either the project would be coordinated by the federation, or the base group would have to leave FUNORSAL. The base group chose to stay.

In this sense the dynamic has been such as to aid the consolidation of rural civil society, which itself is an important ingredient in deepening the process of rural democratization (Fox, 1990). In turn, one reason for this is the transparency of the organization itself. Staff are held closely accountable to other members through a range of regular training programmes. Accounting courses are offered every four months by the federation. By widening the possession of knowledge and expertise in accounting and administration, these programmes increase the capacity of non-staff members to challenge and scrutinize the actions of elected and staff members. Each community now has, on average, three graduates of FUNORSAL's higher grade accounting courses. Similarly there is a regular round of meetings to monitor the federation and staff and para-technicians are elected in secret ballots from lists of candidates selected by the communities. At the same time, the logic of the organizational model, revolving around production and marketing rather than the distribution of free or subsidized inputs, protects the organization against claims that it is distributing its resources inequitably.

It is also interesting to note that, perhaps as a result of this stronger accountability, the federation has addressed itself primarily to the economic concerns of families and engages little in a radical Indian politics. The strategy for coping with pressures of production on these fragile lands is one which emphasizes the incorporation into existing Andean practices of

modern administrative methods and a firm integration into the market. The cultural gain is that, in offsetting migration, the strategy has strengthened regional cohesion and identity. Here the basis of strengthening cultural identity hinges around increasing the likelihood that people can make a living in the locality and so stay there.

This appropriation of modern agricultural and administrative technologies has enhanced local incomes and underlies the emergence of a very strong local organization and a potentially sustainable intensification of production in a very fragile part of the high Andes. While problems of overgrazing have emerged as a result of rapid intensification, the federation has begun to respond to this by protecting certain areas with forestation programmes. Equally, problems of economic sustainability have not been fully addressed: the federation is still dependent on external funds but there has been success in achieving self-financing of dairy activities.

#### CONCLUSIONS: INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND THE CHALLENGE OF FRAGILE LANDS MANAGEMENT

The pressures for land use change in the Andes and Amazonia have meant that Indians have not sustained production systems based on traditional technologies. Moreover, the nature of many of these pressures makes it evident that any attempt to mount a resource management strategy for these lands must address political and economic conflicts that arise both nationally and locally. The sustainable development of fragile lands and the consolidation of rural civil society are therefore part of the same problem. By extension, perspectives from cultural ecology, political economy and the literature dealing with agrarian movements should equally be part of the same analysis.

Indian federations in Ecuador have engaged in local politics and resource management in ways that are interrelated. They have, in differing ways, mounted strategies that sought to question and redress forms of socio-cultural and economic domination. They have also, again in different ways, tried to find strategies that make statements about, and contribute to, the strengthening of Indian cultural identities and practices. Such initiatives have helped redress the balance of regional power structures in several ways. They have helped transfer state-held resources to rural areas, they have strengthened community-level capacities to continue negotiating for access to

those resources, and they have stimulated an Indian assertiveness that makes public agencies' work slightly more demanding than it was before. At the same time, through demonstrating their abilities to administer development, they have questioned certain assumptions about Indian social and intellectual inferiority. In all these ways they have fostered changes that have strengthened the capacity of rural people to demand more of the state and to play a greater role in local development actions and decisions.

The federations' responses have not, however, always been coherent or sustainable, and the organizations have shown signs that they are as fragile as the lands their members manage. In part this is due to the federations' still weak internal democracy. This can lead to certain biases in their distribution of the resources they control and has, in several cases, led them to pursue cultural strategies with which their members, primarily concerned with economic support, do not identify. This internal political fragility is aggravated by a financial fragility: organizations have failed to find means of increasing their financial autonomy. The combination of these factors leads to organizations whose strength fluctuates and whose role in helping consolidate rural institutions is therefore equally unstable. This in turn reduces the capacity of rural society to be more coordinated in its elaboration of development proposals and in its engagement in negotiations with external institutions who try to pursue their own models of development.

It is important to note that the federation that has gone the furthest towards consolidating itself and its position as a legitimate and powerful representative in local politics, FUNORSAL, is the one which has been able to devise a resource management strategy with the greatest potential to be sustainable on ecological, economic and organizational fronts. It has also achieved a relatively transparent and participatory internal administration. Furthermore, it is the federation that has crossed the environment and development divide with the bridge of locally controlled modernization and market integration. FUNORSAL suggests to other Indian federations a model in which modern technologies and administrative techniques can be managed by an Indian federation in such a way as to increase local possibilities for rural accumulation, strengthen local organizations and move from non-modern to modernized resource management without triggering a process of land degradation.

Nonetheless, just as the fragility of land is not only due to characteristics of the land, so the fragility of

these organizations is not only an internally generated problem: it also has much to do with the 'rough and tumble of peasant political economy' that political ecologists have stressed in their own work on peasant resource management (Watts, 1987, p. 223). For instance, the strength of FUNORSAL owes much to the relative lack of political conflict in Salinas. Conversely, the past experiences of the Amazonian groups testify to the negative effects this 'rough and tumble' can have upon federations' actions. The future may be no less difficult as adjustment induced pressures to develop oil and other export income earning ventures are leading to externally controlled development of Amazonian resources. The simple existence of Indian federations will not necessarily mean that local concerns will influence decisions on resource extraction: the politics of sustainability is played out on both local and national terrains.

To return to geography: how might these experiences inform the approaches of cultural and political ecologists? Evidently, many indigenous organizations are dealing with lands that are fragile in the sense that their sustained use in a manner that is economically rewarding and acceptable to Indians cannot be achieved through orthodox production based on high external inputs. On the other hand, cultural ecologists and other proponents of indigenous agricultural systems must similarly understand that traditional resource management may not perform adequately under new local expectations and demand pressures. In the search for resource management strategies, attention must not be focused narrowly on the ecological consequences of production: it must also embrace its economic viability and the political and organizational contexts that facilitate or hinder sustainable strategies. In turn, certain political ecologists must accept that the nature of the environment being used does matter: in some cases (as in Salinas) it can enhance the possibility that local responses will have positive effects; in other cases (as in Chimborazo) local environmental variation can mean that the programmes of local organizations, and the effects of market integration and modernization favour certain families and not others. The Ecuadorian experience also illustrates that local organizations make choices that can lead to successful impacts easily overlooked in the pessimism of political economy. The way in which these elements are played out is all too important for local populations and environment alike – inappropriate resource use, environmental fragility and organizational fragility are intricately intertwined.

## NOTES

1. More pragmatically, local organizations are also seen as replacements of state institutions whose capacity to regulate resource use continues to weaken under the pressures of public sector cutbacks (Doureajanni, 1991; World Bank, 1992).
2. Although the word 'Indian' has had derogatory implications in Ecuador, we use it because indigenous people are once again applying the label to themselves in their current social and political activity as an assertion of their historical identity.
3. Research was done by the authors between June and September of 1991, supported by the Inter-American Foundation. It involved analysis of archives documenting the trajectory of a sample of 10 Indian federations, field visits, interviews with elected members of the councils of the organizations, and ethnographic work in communities that are members of these organizations. The analysis was then discussed in two formal workshops with Indian leaders, development organizations and academics. The analysis also drew on each of the authors' prior research in the highlands and lowlands. We are especially grateful to Billie Turner, the referees and the editor for their challenging comments on the paper. Other comments on the paper from Jorge Uquillas, Simon Batterbury, Jutta Blaert and Tanya Schwartz were also helpful.
4. Other authors would question whether all such modern practices are in fact unsustainable.
5. An obvious example has been the escalation of the conflict between Brazilian rubber tappers and national interests; others, less publicized, are those between the Organisation of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza and the Ecuadorian government over local land rights and that between the Chimanies and loggers which became a conflict between the Chimanies and the Bolivian government.
6. A discussion of the nature of democracy is beyond the limits of this paper and, without defining what we may mean by it, we cannot make rash claims that rural organizations contribute to its consolidation. However, the elements that Fox (1990) emphasizes – respect of human rights, broader popular participation in development processes, and the strengthening of mechanisms through which bureaucrats can be held accountable – would all seem important contributions to something we might call democracy.
7. Although we use the term community, it should be noted that the literal Spanish translation of the word, 'comunidad', is used to refer to informal local organizations, with the word 'comuna' being the term reserved for the legally recognized form. However, given the additional ideological significance of the word 'commune' in English, we have used the word 'community' to refer to 'communas'.
8. The Ministry of Agriculture in Ecuador estimates that 84 per cent of Amazonian soils are unfit for crop or pasture production.
9. In 1980, the Amazonian federations decided to create an umbrella organization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Amazonian Ecuador (CONFENIAE). In 1986, the national level Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) was created.
10. Smith *et al.* (1991) have argued, however, that pastures can be sustainable in Brazilian Amazonia.
11. Tendler *et al.* (1988) note that this is a frequent problem in cooperatives and that many such projects show early successes as they start up but encounter difficulties when the challenge of self-financing arises.
12. The national organizations that were particularly important in this period were the National Federation of Indians (FEI), and the National Federation of Campesino Organisations (FENOC). Both had class-based analyses of the agrarian problem in Ecuador and were closely linked to the Marxist left.
13. In other regions of the Ecuadorian and Peruvian Andes, Nestlé and Carnation have dominated the dairy sector and have served to channel local surplus accumulation out of the regions in which they operate.
14. It would be inappropriate, however, to claim that these reductions in mortality are only due to FUNORSAL.

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# La vía ecológico-campesina de desarrollo: Una alternativa para la selva de Chiapas

**E**l campesinado histórico o contemporáneo siempre ha protagonizado dos tipos de luchas: las clásicas demandas por la tierra (luchas agrarias), y más recientemente, las luchas por mantener el control de sus procesos productivos (luchas económicas). En su monumental obra (*El Campesino Traicionado*), J.P. Powelson puso de manifiesto cómo en la mayoría de los casos el reparto agrario no logró resolver la situación campesina en los países tercermundistas. Aun con un pedazo de tierra (o un fragmento de naturaleza), el campesinado del Tercer Mundo continúa personificando su casi eterno rol de sector social explotado. Ello surge de numerosos mecanismos de coerción: estrategias productivas, créditos, bajos precios, insumos, tecnologías. De aquí que en las últimas décadas, los ideólogos de la resistencia campesina hayan promovido un nuevo tipo de lucha: las luchas económicas.

La historia sin embargo no termina ahí. En varios ensayos recientes he mostrado que si bien las luchas económicas constituyen una forma más avanzada de lucha, estas son aún insuficientes. La razón: se requiere de una reformulación radical de las maneras como se concibe y se "moderniza" el proceso productivo campesino. El "control del proceso de producción" puede resultar aparente si el campesinado acepta sin cortapisa alguna la estrategia de desarrollo rural que la sociedad dominante le ofrece (y le impone) bien envuelta en papel celofán y con una tarjeta que dice "desarrollo". La demoledora crítica que la ecología política ha hecho en las últimas dos décadas de los sistemas productivos impulsados desde la modernidad, ocultan en realidad un conjunto de mecanismos que conducen irremediablemente a dos situaciones: la destrucción de las culturas campesinas (sus conocimientos, prácticas productivas y formas de organización) y la dilapidación de la naturaleza (suelos, recursos hidráulicos, diversidad biológica y genética, ciclos y equilibrios ecológicos). Se requiere pues de un tercer tipo de lucha de carácter ecológico y cultural, que resuelva en definitiva la situación del campesinado como sector dominado.

## El caso de la selva de Chiapas

**E**l presente ensayo está dedicado a defender la idea de que en la Selva de Chiapas y específicamente en la Región de Las Cañadas, existe un movimiento social indígena notablemente avanzado, que hasta antes del conflicto escenificaba ya, aunque de manera incipiente, lo que hemos identificado como un tercero y más avanzado tipo de lucha. La Región de Las Cañadas es el espacio donde se preparó, se gestó y aun se mantiene lo que es ya el conflicto social más importante desde la revolución agraria de principios de siglo. En efecto, una revisión de la historia de las luchas campesinas en esa región del espacio chiapaneco, muestra la existencia desde hace dos décadas de una exitosa organización comunitaria y regional; que ha

transitado de las luchas por la tierra a las luchas económicas y de éstas a nuevas demandas ligadas con la protección de la naturaleza (representada por la Reserva de Montes Azules) y la defensa de la cultura indígena. Por ello, el proceso de pacificación y de impartición de justicia que obligadamente debe seguirse, no puede quedarse ni en el solo reparto agrario, ni en la sola preocupación por los fenómenos económicos. La radiografía de la lucha de las comunidades indígenas de la región ponen en evidencia la existencia de una conciencia avanzada que las sitúa a la vanguardia del movimiento campesino del país y del mundo.

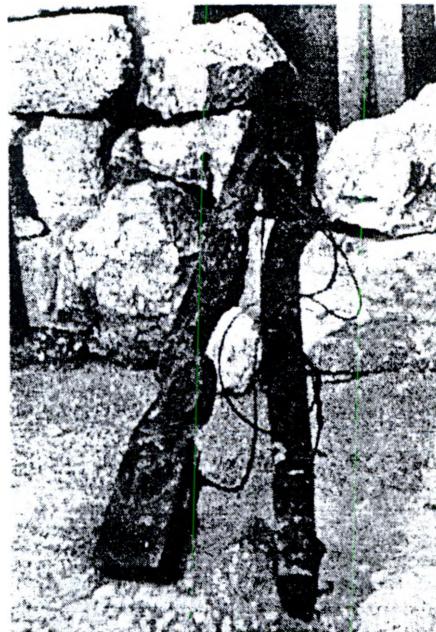


Foto de José Antonio López

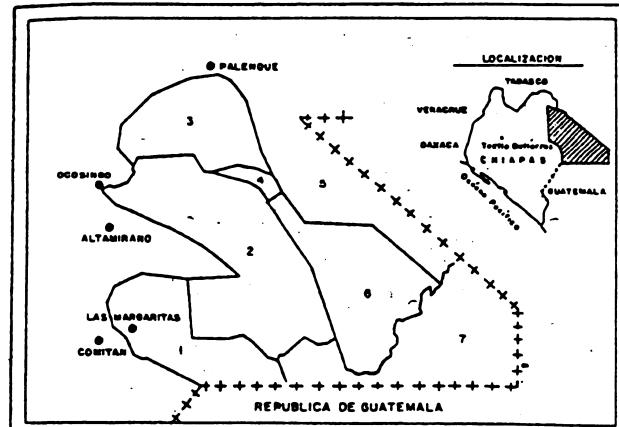
## Las Cañadas: una región indígena buscadora del desarrollo sostenido

**A**ntes de ser el escenario central del actual conflicto, la Región de Las Cañadas fue el teatro donde las comunidades indígenas escenificaron a través de sus organizaciones sociales, una dramática batalla por el desarrollo social y la producción. Esta batalla resulta extraordinaria si se piensa que tuvo lugar en una región geográficamente aislada del resto del país y muy poco comunicada a su interior (actualmente sólo existen cuatro caminos de terrazas, 37 pistas de aterrizaje y un sinfín de veredas). Colonizada desde hace cuatro décadas por grupos de indígenas tzeltales (principalmente), choles, tzotziles y tojolabales, provenientes de los Altos de Chiapas y de otras regiones, Las Cañadas es una de las cuatro sub-regiones de la Selva Lacandona, y la principal vecina de la Reserva Biológica de Montes Azules (véase mapa). Nuestros estudios vinieron a mostrar, además, que esta región con una intrincada orografía constituye una de las porciones ambientalmente más complejas de México, contenida de una riqueza biológica extraordinaria:

Debemos a N. Harvey la investigación más acuciosa sobre el origen, la evolución y el estado actual de la lucha social en la Región de las Cañadas. De la revisión de este estudio se extrae una panorámica indígena regional muy diferente de la que han venido manejando la mayoría de los analistas del actual conflicto chiapaneco, más basados en lecturas generales o en impresiones antiguas ya deformadas por el tiempo. Una apretada síntesis de la historia social de la región extraída del estudio de Harvey y otras fuentes permitirá demostrar lo anterior.

Casi todos los conocedores de esta región coinciden en señalar al Congreso Indígena realizado en San Cristóbal en 1974, como el evento que indujo la organización campesina. Hacia 1976 se crearon tres uniones de ejidos en la región, los que en 1980 dieron lugar a una primera organización regional: la Unión de Uniones Ejidales. "Hacia fines de 1980 —señala Har-

FIGURA 1.



Mapa de La Selva Chiapaneca mostrando la región de Las Cañadas

SÍMBOLOGIA	
■	SELVA CHIAPANICA
●	CABECERA MUNICIPAL
—	LÍMITE INTERNACIONAL
○	LÍMITE SUBREGIONAL
—	SUBREGIONES
1 1 1	CAÑADAS DE LAS MARGARITAS
1 2 2	VILLES Y CAÑADAS OCOSINGO
1 3 3	ALTAMIRANO.
1 4 4	ZONA NORTE
1 5 5	CORREDOR DE SANTO DOMINGO
1 6 6	COMUNIDAD LACANDONA
1 7 7	RESERVA INTEGRAL DE LA BIOSFERA "MONTES AZULES"
1 8 8	MARQUES DE COMILLAS

Dibujó: Cortés Mota



habitando (en 1990) esta zona del país, perteneciendo a 23 culturas diferentes. Con presencias de varios cientos de años en los territorios ocupados, las comunidades indígenas que no han sido todavía impactadas (y en su caso transformadas) por los programas de modernización que terminan convirtiéndolas en unidades especializadas de ganado, maíz, cítricos, plátano, hule o algún otro producto, adoptan una estrategia basada en la combinación de lo agrícola, lo pecuario y lo forestal que cubre un doble propósito: asegurar la autosuficiencia y generar productos para el mercado (alimentos y materias primas para las ciudades y la industria). La figura 2 muestra los resultados preliminares de una minuciosa investigación ecológico-económica en una comunidad de indígenas totonacos cerca de Papantla, Veracruz. Ello ilustra un microcosmos campesino donde continúa aplicándose la estrategia indígena del uso múltiple. En efecto, se trata de una comunidad rural que, mediante mecanismos aún desconocidos, logró mantenerse al margen de la modernización promovida por planes estatales y federales de desarrollo, créditos bancarios o acciones de organismos gubernamentales o privados.

Como lo muestra la figura 2, la típica familia campesina con siete miembros, emplea 418 jornales de trabajo al año para manejar su minifundio de 8 hectáreas que es el predio promedio en la comunidad. Este esfuerzo lo dedica al trabajo en la milpa (que es un policultivo con maíz y hasta otros 20 cultivos), el huerto familiar, la recolección de leña, la producción de vainilla, la extracción de diversos productos forestales y el manejo del potrero. En este contexto destaca la milpa con dos ciclos productivos al año y sobre todo el potrero con 8 cabezas de ganado por hectárea. Esta última cifra hace que el potrero indígena produzca de cuatro a ocho veces más que los predios de los modernos ganaderos veracruzanos, mediante la integración del forraje verde derivado del maíz y otros cultivos y el manejo adecuado de los suelos del pastizal. Vista desde el espacio, ésta y otras pocas comunidades indígenas del centro de Veracruz aparecen como islas policromas que son el resultado de mosaicos productivos formados por vegetación forestal de diferentes edades, milpas, áreas agroforestales y potreros. Esto es así porque desde hace tres décadas el paisaje del centro veracruzano, que en el pasado constituyó un vergel de diversidad biológica y genética, comenzó a transformarse en un inmenso mar



Foto de José Antonio López

de pastizales para la ganadería extensiva.

En el balance ecológico-económico, la familia indígena alcanza lo siguiente: un superávit productivo con excedentes de maíz y venta de leche, carne en pie, vainilla y algunos productos de la selva; logra la autosuficiencia energética (a partir de la leña) y alimentaria (con productos de la milpa y del huerto familiar, y la compra de algunos productos); afecta mínimamente el equilibrio ecológico local y regional y, de paso, contribuye a conservar la alta biodiversidad tropical mediante las áreas forestales (que representan entre el 30 y 40% del territorio).

Lo anterior se ha logrado sin mayor ayuda técnica, sin créditos y con un uso mínimo de insumos externos. Pero también mediante la actualización y adecuación de una estrategia milenaria y, sobre todo, a través del ejercicio de una democracia comunitaria que se expresa de dos formas: (1) por el reparto equitativo de los recursos que pertenecen a la comunidad entre todas las unidades domésticas y familiares que la integran y, (2) la toma de decisiones colectiva y consensuada mediante las asambleas del ejido. Ello supone la aplicación de mecanismos que evitan el acaparamiento, el caciquismo o la predominancia de lo individual sobre lo comunitario.

Si a alguien hay que otorgarle un premio nacional de ecología estas son las comunidades indígenas como la aquí descrita, que sigilosamente logran evadir las mareas modernizadoras para ser autosuficientes, proveer a la población urbana de alimentos y otros productos, y contribuir al mantenimiento del patrimonio biológico y ecológico del país. ¿Cuántas comunidades como esta existirán aún el territorio mexicano?

Todas las condiciones parecen estar dadas en la Región de las Cañadas, para que una estrategia similar a la descrita sea aplicada, reproducida y difundida. Los datos del censo regional levantado indican que cada unidad doméstica o familiar de las comunidades indígenas manejan predios de 10 a 12 hectáreas que incluyen milpa, potrero, cafetal, selva secundaria y a veces un huerto familiar.

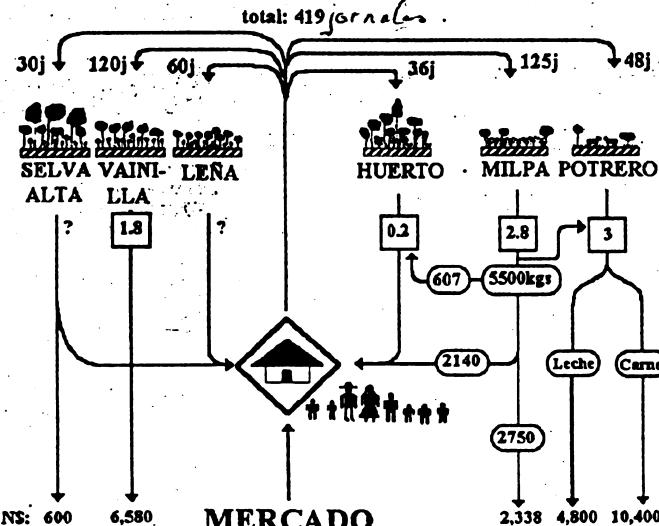
Las condiciones por supuesto son algo diferentes. Habrá de entrada que implementar una adecuada red de caminos para promover la compra y venta de productos, ordenar los títulos de propiedad, realizar investigación aplicada en íntimo diálogo con las comunidades y crear un sistema regional de ordenamiento ecológico.

#### Hacia un neo-zapatismo ecológico

**E**n la tierra donde se domesticó el maíz y otras cien especies más de plantas, y donde la cultura milenaria está aún presente en los 3 millones de unidades productivas campesinas (ejidos y comunidades) que usufrúan los recursos del que se considera el tercer país biológicamente más rico del mundo, se debe tener algún tipo de ceguera, para no vislumbrar que la vía más importante de una modernización rural duradera (especialmente en el centro y sur del país) es la ecológico-campesina. Si los sectores ilustrados de la nación y quienes han gobernado los últimos años el país han permanecido insensibles y hasta contrarios a esta propuesta, un movimiento social compuesto por cerca de 90 organizaciones esencialmente indígenas comienzan a llevarla, por sí mismas, a la práctica. Este es el caso de comunidades forestales de Michoacán, Quintana Roo y Oaxaca, de cafetaleros orgánicos y no orgánicos del sureste, de las comunidades de pescadores de varios lagos, etc.

Con los actuales sucesos, la historia agraria de México de alguna forma parece repetirse. Lo que no parece ser igual son las rutas que sigue el desenlace. En 1917, Emiliano Zapata y el movimiento que representaba, fue incapaz, no obstante haber triunfado militarmente, de ofrecer al país un programa de modernización que lograra combinar las legítimas aspiraciones del campesinado mexicano con los intereses igualmente legítimos del resto de la población. Hoy los tiempos son otros. La crisis ecológica de escala planetaria provocada por la expansión del capitalismo hacia todos los rincones de la tierra, comienza a revalorizar el papel del campesinado en tanto posee formas adecuadas de manejo de la naturaleza. Hoy el país tiene la grandiosa oportunidad de ofrecer al mundo una fórmula en la que el desarrollo de una región en conflicto se resuelve de manera adecuada y en la perspectiva de una modernidad diferente. Esa que garantiza una vida digna para las comunidades indígenas locales, el abasto que los habitantes urbanos requieren, el respeto por la cultura, la historia y la naturaleza y, en fin, la supervivencia de la especie y del planeta.

#### FIGURA 2. Economía ecológica del modelo familiar indígena (8 hectáreas)



Balance ecológico y económico de una familia promedio en una comunidad indígena totonaca en Veracruz. Las cifras son anuales. La investigación fue realizada por B. Ortiz dentro del proyecto sobre comunidades indígenas del trópico húmedo de México (CE-UNAM y Fundación Ford) bajo la coordinación del autor. Diseño: M. Jurado.

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**CLADES: INSTITUCIONES MIEMBROS DE LA ASAMBLEA GENERAL**

**INDES -Instituto de Desarrollo Social y Promocion Humana**  
Luis Saenz Pena 277-50. piso of. 10/1110  
Buenos Aires - Argentina

- Para enfrentar los desafios del desarrollo rural sustentable CLADES a creado una red de colaboracion inter-institutional que incorpora una gama amplia de disciplinas y expertos mediante la participacion de universidades, agencias donantes, centros de investigacion y ONGs. CLADES mantiene convenios activos de colaboracion con:

- Center for Latin American Studies, University of California, Berkeley
- International Plant Protection Center, Oregon State University
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Environment and Natural Resources Group

- Agroecology Program, University of California, Santa Cruz
- Asociacion Latinoamericana para la Educacion Agricola (ALEAS)
- Institute of Food and Development Policy, Food First
- y convenios con mas de 30 Universidades Latinoamericanas

**Colaboracion Inter-Institucional:**

**Consorcio Latino Americano sobre Agroecologia y Desarrollo**

**SEMTA -Servicios Multiples de Tecnologias Apropiadas**  
Calle Alfredo Azcaratz 2675 (SOPOCACHI)/Casilla 15041  
La Paz -Bolivia

**AS/PTA -Assessoria e Servicos a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa**  
Rua da Candelaria, 9 -6º andar/ 20091-020  
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**CET -Centro de Educacion y Tecnologia**  
Traiguen 2260-B Providencia/ Casilla 16557 Correo 9  
Santiago -Chile

**CETEC -Corporacion para Estudios Interdisciplinarios y Asesoria Tecnica**  
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**IMCA -Instituto Mayor Campesino**  
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**CAAP -Centro Andino de Accion Popular**  
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Apartado 173-B Quito -Ecuador

**CECTEC -Centro de Educacion, Capacitacion y Tecnologia Campesina Manuel Dominguez 1040 c/ EEUU y Brasil/**  
Casilla Correo 1730 Asuncion -Paraguay

**CPCC -Centro de Promocion Campesina Cordillera**  
Dr. Pino 1975 Caacupe -Paraguay

**CIED -Centro de Investigacion, Educacion y Desarrollo**  
Apartado 11-0104 Lima 11 -Peru

**IDEAS -Centro de Investigacion, Documentacion, Educacion, Asesoramiento y Servicios**  
Apartado 11-0170 Lima 11 -Peru

**Un plan de trabajo de un grupo de ONGs Latinoamericanas para la promocion de un enfoque agroecologico en el desarrollo sustentable de la agricultura campesina.**



## *CLADES y sus objetivos:*

- Desde su creacion en 1989, CLADES ha estado creando y difundiendo opciones agroecologicas para campesinos y capacitando profesionales y tecnicos de instituciones comprometidas con la agricultura sustentable.
- CLADES sirve como un eje institucional que coordina un programa de investigacion participativa, education y intercambio de informacion entre las ONGs miembro, las cuales a sus vez difunden las contribuciones de CLADES en sus espacios regionales y nacionales.
- El objetivo de CLADES es formar rapidamente una "masa critica" de tecnicos y agricultores con una base agroecologica, fortalecer las capacidades institucionales, influenciar las agendas de investigacion y los curriculos universitarios en la linea de la sustentabilidad, proveer consistencia cientifica al proceso de innovacion tecnologica, asegurando asi la diseminacion rapida y masiva de la agroecologia en los sectores rurales pobres.

## *Actividades del CLADES:*

### *Productos y avances de CLADES:*

- Promocion de cursos teorico-practicos de agroecologia y topicos especificos tales como manejo integrado de plagas, conservacion de suelos, agroforesteria, conservacion in-situ de germoplasma, producion animal, etc.
- Capacitacion masiva a traves de un curso de educacion a distancia sobre agroecologia.
- Publicacion de la revista bi-anual *Agroecologia y Desarrollo*, manuales tecnicos y readers sobre agroecologia, y de materiales audio-visuales.
- Proyectos colaborativos de investigacion entre ONGs y universidades.
- Capacitacion de profesores universitarios para promover cursos de agroecologia en las universidades agrarias.
- Demonstracion de soluciones locales a problemas agricolas especificos en centrales demonstrativas y/o en proyectos en campos de agricultores.
- Capacitacion de mas de 300 profesionales y tecnicos latinoamericanos en agroecologia
- patrocinio y realizacion de mas de 25 cursos regionales y/o nacionales sobre diversos aspectos de la agroecologia
- publicacion de 20 readers, 5 libros, 3 manuales, 1 slide-show y 1 video sobre agroecologia
- publicacion de 6 numeros de la revista *Agroecologia y Desarrollo*
- financiacion y ejecucion de 28 proyectos colaborativos de investigacion
- participacion en decenas de congresos y conferencias regionales e internacionales sobre desarrollo agricola sustentable
- Coordinacion de un curso a distancia piloto en la zona Andina para mas de 200 tecnicos.



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