

THE SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE NATIONAL PARK OF CABAÑEROS

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I. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of social capital is not new. In recent years we have witnessed an important boom in the use of this term, especially in regard to its relationship with economic development (Wiesinger, 2007). The first contemporary analysis of social capital was made by Pierre Bourdieu in the 80s, and he linked it with other kinds of capital. Currently, the different approaches to analyze social capital distinguish between two broad types of definitions of the concept: structural definitions and cultural definitions; the first ones lie more in the context of sociology, and the second ones would be within the field of science. (Herrerros y de Francisco, 2001). Undoubtedly, the interest that social capital raises resides in its potential contribution to the improvement of the results of the economic activity, and hence of the processes of economic development in a region.

Despite disagreements about the term social capital, it seems widely accepted the idea that there are certain characteristics of social relationships, social trust, institutions, or social norms accepted by a community that will determine that a given territory achieves successful economic results.

In the context of disadvantaged rural areas, the potential to explore the relationship between social capital and the development processes seems even greater, because the social capital acquires an unexpected value due to the deficiency or absence of other factors of regional competitiveness (i.e. economic capital, infrastructures of communication, human capital, lack of skilled labor, etc). The competitive advantage of rural areas resides in the resources that Bryden (1998) calls “immobile”: social, cultural, environmental capitals and local knowledge. Since the 80s, the theory of endogenous development intends to act in depressed areas (Stöhr, 1981), by discovering more flexible forms of organization of production (Scott, 1998), incorporating economic analysis networks (Johannisson, 1995), understanding that innovation reflects an evolutionary process (Maillat, 1995) and recognizing the cultural and institutional components (North, 1986). In order to be more

inclusive, and always with the presence of a strong external funding (Buciega, 2004), attention was paid to rural diversification, to the bottom-up approach, to local initiatives, to the support of local companies and the capacity of local people, their participation and involvement (Esparcia et al, 2002). The use of the concept in the framework of the LEADER initiative has been linked to the responsiveness of the whole population treated as a differentiated agent of each of the individuals that integrates it. To achieve this goal they have tried to improve the skills of the community, encourage new forms of organization, stimulate new ways of linking groups and public institutions and help both individuals and organizations achieve greater flexibility and adaptability to changing situations. In practice this has meant supporting the development of individuals and groups within their own communities. This perspective is committed to strengthening rural communities by supporting the acquisition of confidence of its own people as well as the strengthening of the knowledge and skills they have, not to mention the ability to work together. In the European Union this type of approach has been channeled relatively successful by the LEADER community initiative, and it is important to remember that it is held at the request of GAD (General Agricultural Direction) since 2007 under the unique rural development fund. In other words, the essence of the LEADER program could be characterized, in part, as the creation of various forms of social capital that could benefit the whole community. Moreover, in the framework of Agenda 2000, development is only possible within the respect to environmental conservation. Following Serrano (2008), the proliferation and priority location of protected natural zones in rural mountain and disadvantaged areas, inevitably raises the need to coordinate regional and environmental planning as well as rural development. According to Corraliza (2010), a protected natural area is a “geographically defined area which is declared as such and it is though regulated and managed to achieve conservation objectives”. However, protected natural areas are seen as instruments to revitalize local economies in marginalized rural areas becoming basic tools for socio-economic development of their areas of influence.

II. OBJETIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In relation with the facts stated so far, this paper aims to analyze the social trust at Cabañeros National Park (Ciudad Real, Castilla la Mancha, Spain), to know the context of confidence between agents and institutions, as well as to detect the level of territorial identity the population has about their municipality, natural area and supra-territorial scales and how all this has influenced the territorial development of the Park. It also aims at evaluating the social networking in the selected space by identifying relationships and social interactions between different local actors and checking the existence of formal networks through associative relations, as the highest expression of social networks. To ensure that there is homogeneity among all the studies of case of the research project on which this article is inserted, the socio-economic areas of influence analyzed should represent 85% of associated natural areas. So we have selected municipalities to reach that figure, taking into account the following criteria: to include municipalities with 100% of their area in the PNA (Protected Natural Areas); in case of not achieving the minimum established, to incorporate municipalities with more than 10 % of the area within the PNA, and if that still does not cover, to add those

municipalities having between 10-5% of the area within the PNA. In the case of Castilla-La Mancha, and more specifically Cabañeros National Park, we selected four municipalities in the province of Ciudad Real: Alcoba de los Montes, Horcajo de los Montes, Navas de Estena and Bullaque Retuerta and two in Toledo: Hontanar and Navalucillos. This made a total population of 6,115 inhabitants. Currently, more than 55% of the park is public, the rest is privately owned. In order to know to what extent social capital plays an important role in the processes of development of this area, we should be able to establish instruments that allow us to measure them correctly. Several authors from different disciplines and methodological approaches have established indicators to measure each of the dimensions of social capital. Possibly it has been the great amount of items included under the definition of social capital and its clear reference to social relations and processes which has promoted a greater use of qualitative analysis techniques instead of the quantitative analysis ones. Studies based on analysis of data obtained from interviews in depth are more frequent than those including the most complex econometric analysis or network analysis. In this sense, and with respect to the organization and methodology used in our research, apart from the systematization of the available quantitative information, including bibliography and statistics, we have worked mainly with methods and techniques of social research and qualitative techniques of socio-territorial analysis. Regarding the selection of the sample for analysis, the study of organizations in our case focuses on social groups (civil partnerships) and institutions (corporate bodies in the PNA). To do this we have chosen a Stratified Simple Random Sample (SSRS) of all associations in each PNA, in our case from Cabañeros, with a confidence level of 95% and a sampling error of 5%.

The proposed methodological tool for the collection of information has been the use of survey and interview. The survey includes different kinds of questions to understand the types and levels of confidence, sense of belonging and social participation proposed in the conceptual-analytical framework, and it is elaborated with closed questions to facilitate the analysis and comparison between the PNA's and their territories. It is just a set of items presented as affirmative statements or judgments to which surveyed people are asked to show their reaction in choosing one of the four points on a scale. It consists of 13 questions with 92 items on the Likert scale, being built mainly by polytomous ordinal qualitative variables that in this study consists of closed questions at four levels (1-2-3-4) (Hernandez et al, 2003; Lopez and Juarez , 2004; Chimi and Russell, 2009). Although this method dates back from the early 30s, still today it remains as one of the most popular and valid. In addition to this type of issues, it has also been included an open question (question 7) to verify the most representative elements of the PNA and other dichotomous question (Question 11).

Ultimately, a total of 25 standardized surveys were also applied. They were complemented by two semi-structured interviews made to qualified informants, in this case the director and keeper of the Park and the manager of Local Action Group to whom their responsibilities provide them with an enriched insight and often with a wide diachronic analysis capacity. There were also questionnaires made by telephone to a sample of the population, organizations and institutions linked to the territory, members of collegial bodies and all associations located on the municipalities in the Area of Socio-economic Influence (ASI) of the Park that agreed to collaborate on the research, by means of which we attempted to collect information on levels of confidence, social networks and norms and standards of community behavior.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The cause-effect relationship between social capital and development is far from being clear. The existence of a rich social capital is not the only “pre-requisite” for development, but it would have the dual capacity to be a resource that could mobilize other resources (i.e. economic, political and cultural capitals) to generate or expand the economic, cultural, political and social “benefits”, taking into account their dialectical relationship.

Some authors argue that the recent and profound economic and political changes favored by multinationals and governments have affected the attitudes of citizens towards their governments and society as a whole (Portes and Landolt, 1996). However, it is possible that the government action could not only lead to a decline of social capital, but also to its increase, this is precisely the objective of rural development programs that have emanated from both the EU and the Central Administration. Focusing on our case of study, Cabañeros National Park, in the context of strategic trust and confidence regarding the future of their region, the individuals interviewed and surveyed show themselves to be optimistic and their confidence is due to the belief that their actions can influence the environment, and that the companies in their territory are feasible in a high percentage.

With respect to the normative confidence, the population shows itself as essentially entire and educated. Confidence in groups and institutions is clearly unconditional in respect to other institutions like the family or the police, showing a certain mistrust when it comes to other institutions forming the territorial administrative framework; this increases in centrifugal order, i.e. , the city hall, the community, the county council and the regional government. Nevertheless, the UE is well regarded with high confidence levels perhaps by the knowledge that the development programs are financed by its funds. There are high rates of satisfaction on the Park management; there is a high percentage of the population that believes that the Park management bodies are efficient, accessible and operational. In terms of cognitive confidence, the work of the collegiate body of the National Park is highly valued by the population of Cabañeros, not only by the members of the Patronage, but also by the associations; however, the town halls of the municipalities in the area do not reach the expected level of satisfaction regarding their management, but the regional government is the worst valued in this respect, perhaps due to the control that it makes of the initiatives of development in the area. If we focus on the sense of belonging, we observe strong family and territorial ties on the local values and on Spain as such, as compared with the territorial values; the fact can be explained by the lack of regional tradition in Castilla-La Mancha. The institutions that display the greatest identity power of adherence are the family roots, the region, the province and the country (Spain).

In regard to the effects caused by the PNA, the majority of the people surveyed believe that the declaration of the Park as such has allowed the increase of the economic aids to the inhabitants of the area, to improve their possibilities, to augment its recreational use and also to enhance the touristic development of the National Park. First the declaration as Natural Park and then of National Park has led, undoubtedly, a social openness of the territory, which has gone from being known through the debate about its possible militarization to be a natural area of recognized reputation, highlighting the natural and landscape values which preserve the ecosystem. Thus, the declaration has certainly had positive aspects, but

also some shadows. Among the advantages, it can be mentioned the “social discovery” of this region and the acquisition of its own identity. To the benefits for the territory we can add initiatives coming from the European funds, which are promoting a progressive economic change towards the outsourcing of the area, some predominantly related to tourism and environment. This has involved, along with grants from the National Autonomous Park, a major improvement in the standards of living of the population. However, all municipalities within AIS have been constantly losing population with the consequent aging of the citizens and the lack of generational replacement, a process related to the lack of specialized health services and especially the lack of job expectations. The city halls and the tourism businessmen remain concerned about the problems of managing the public use and the exploitation of the area, and put in tourism a great part of their expectation of the development of the region.

The Park management bets on the seasonal controlled visit. In any case, the permanent existing disagreements on the use and management of the National Park have resulted in events like that Natural Resources Management Plan is annulled by Constitutional Court while Master Plan of Use and Management, after a decade of processing, proceeds without being approved. Regarding social networks, there is a low rate of association and different behaviors between members of collegial bodies and those of the associations. The degree of politicization of the formers explains their higher rate of attachment, highlighting the category of NGO's, while for the members of associations the dominant categories are the cultural associations and the associations of youth, women, and retiree. The population has certain apathy when they have to take action and try to remedy the problems of their region. All the stated above so far leads us to assert that confidence in collective action depends on the role played by the State in terms of responses to individual and collective needs. The main function of the State at the local level is to provide public services, because the lack of public services generates a community that does not rely on collective action and, therefore, the desire to build social capital appears to be very weak. Consequently, when a community is poor in social capital, the State or the Public Administration should provide a better level of infrastructure, facilities and utilities, in order to create a climate of confidence in the collective action.

