

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS CAPACITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZILIAN AMAZONIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to further understanding of the Local Organisations (LO) capacity for working in partnership. In particular, the paper analyses the LO nature, function and structure to be effective in working in partnership with Local Government Agencies (LGA) in the implementation of local development programmes at municipal level in Brazilian Amazonia. Through a qualitative and descriptive analysis, the paper reconstitutes the factors that influenced de LO creation; classifies the LO by their nature, level of action, identity and achievements; and points out the LO characteristics that have facilitated and/or hampered relationships with LGA. The paper's data is from the LO of the municípios of Igarapé-Miri, Ourém and Mojú located on the north-east of Pará state in the Brazilian Amazonia region. The paper shows that heterogeneous and multi-functional LO such as the Community-Based Development Association (CBDA) and the Rural Workers' Unions have a much greater organisational capacity than single or dual-function local organisations for carrying out a partnership process and to respond to family-based, small-scale rural producers' interests. They have been dominated by the better-off and those with more trained members although the poorer and less capable groups have not been excluded. One of the most significant powers of the multifunctional organisations (particularly the CBDAs and the Rural Workers' Unions) is the combination of strong intragroup ties with powerful extragroup networks at different levels — an important component of social capital. The Igarapé-Miri, Ourém and Mojú cases illustrate the impact that multifunctional local organisations such as the CBDA and the Rural Workers' Unions have on local development and governance. Without a political capacity for understanding their own role and of the role of the state in the process of development, the participation of single or dual-function LO in local development process may reinforce or simply confirm the power of the state.

Keywords: *Local Organisations. Partnership. Rural Development.*

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¹ In this work Local Government (LG) means municipal government area-based.

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to examine what influence local organisation capacity has on partnership between local organisations (LO) and local government¹ (LG) to promote rural development. It will focus on the ability of the LO engaged in networks to perform effectively in a partnership for rural development. It is argued that connections between LO and external actors have effect on LO administrative capacity, practice and political organisation that do result in valuable social capital that makes them to influence on local governance.

Any assessment on partnership between LO and LG for rural development is likely to be determined for information about them and for their capacity of interaction. To understand to what extent local organisations capacity influences on partnership with government that allow rural communities to influence on local government actions, an analysis of the type of LO engaged in interactive process and the forms which they operate are significant.

This paper concentrates on the partnership cases between local government and local organisations for rural development of the *municípios* of Ourem, Igarape Miri and Moju (State of Para, Brazilian Amazon region). It is part of the results of a broader research that aims an analysis of the relationship between local government and local organisations for rural development in the Brazilian Amazon region.

The article is organised in eight sections including this introductory one. The following section deals with the partnership definitions under the social capital and partnership literatures. The third section covers the discussion of partnership and rural development. The aim of the third section is to locate the discussion of partnership under the rural development perspective. The fourth section deals with the definition of local organisation used in this work. The fifth section describes the type and nature of the local organisations in rural Pará taking as sources the *municípios* of Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Moju. It distinguishes the type, nature and function of the local organisations engaged at local level in the interactive process with state agents for rural development. The sixth section deals with the structure of the local organisations focussing on their capacities and limits. The seventh section examines the extent to which LOs are affected by structural problems and the weaknesses that affect partnership with the local state. Finally, the eight section looks at the influence of the nature, function and structure of the local organisations on the partnership process itself.

2 PARTNERSHIP: CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS

As Vasconcellos Sobrinho and Vasconcellos (2009; 2011) show, the concept of partnership has a diversity of meaning. According to them, the most prominent conception of partnership involves cooperation, trust and synergy between individuals and organisations to achieve a common objective (VASCONCELLOS SOBRINHO and VASCONCELLOS, 2009; 2011). It evokes to relationships between two or more stakeholders that join different resources to pursue a joint approach to achieve common aims (LEWIS, 2000).

On the one hand, partnership is a form of organisation in which the control of the partners enrolled depends on the existence of trust (FOWLER, 1997; HARRIS, 2000; DOLNY, 2000) and self-organisation (HARRIS, 2000). Partnership motives are not shaped by ideas of material gain or coercion of the enrolled partners, but by a sense of common purpose supported by trust between its stakeholders that Harris (2000) suggests as ‘an ideal type of cooperation’ and Fowler (1997) as ‘authentic partnership’. Partnerships based on trust are understood as result of the networking skills and motivation of stakeholders. Partnerships focus is its stakeholders, their independence and enthusiasm on sharing values and visions to achieve a common objective. Partnership based on trust is associated with the idea of stakeholders working together for mutual benefit, voluntarily and sharing values and goals in embedded relations (OSTROM, 1997).

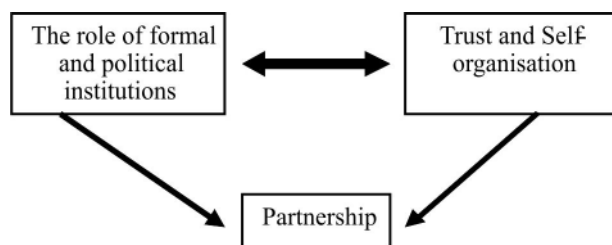
On the other hand, partnership is a result of the role of formal and political institutions (WORLD BANK, 2004; TENDLER, 1997; EVANS, 1997). It is influenced by the incentives and opportunities created by prevailing institutional frameworks and governments (HELLER, 1997). Partnership is shaped by existence of societal structure, rules, regulations and governmental actions where it emerges (TENDLER, 1997; EVANS, 1997). For this perspective, the nature of regulatory frameworks, of incentives and sanctions of supportive institutions promoting and valuing innovation influence the level and type of cooperation which prevails. Partnerships centred on institutions are related with the notion of complementarity (EVANS, 1997) between organisations under guidance by a formal structure of authority.

Both spectrums reflect the way in which thinking about partnership structure has been approached. Partnerships based on trusts evokes notion of partnership as a process (LEWIS, 2000) and resulted of a long-term relation between the actors. It emphasises sharing of principles, aims and method of working together. Partnership is an embedded relationship between stakeholders (HARRIS, 2000; OSTROM, 1997) to achieve long term objective.

Despite partnership based on trust may represent ‘authentic type’ of cooperation as pointed out by Fowler (1997), “understood as mutually enabling, interdependent interaction with shared intentions” (FOWLER, 1997, p.107), many partnership are far from the relationship based primarily on it. Levels of trust and self-organisations in any context are influenced by the incentives and opportunities created by the prevailing institutional frameworks (TENDLER, 1997; EVANS, 1997).

Partnerships built in a formal and political environment focuses on ‘problem solving’. It means that partnerships can be built up in short time to present a solution of a particular societal problem (Lewis, 2000). It suggests being more strategic. Partnerships are self-interest relationships between those who see an advantage in them (MCQUAID, 2000, p.15) even if the partners do not share the same values, goals and ways of working together.

Figure 1: Partnership



Source: The authors

3 PARTNERSHIP UNDER RURAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

Under rural development perspective partnership assumes meaning of participation (community/people participation and social participation) and management development (VASCONCELLOS and VASCONCELLOS, 2011). In the stream of community participation, partnership is the most ethical approach to sustainable development and service delivery at rural areas. This perspective, which is normative *per excellence*, states that partnership should seek to maximize equity, inclusiveness, power-sharing and mutuality (FOWLER, 1997). However, despite its key intention of the adoption of channel to ensure the full and active participation of community members in rural programmes that affect themselves, so far there is no clear evidence that partnership as a mechanism of participation has worked effectively towards social inclusion and power-sharing (BOWYER, 2003).

In the stream of social participation, which in some way emerged in response to the previous normative understanding of partnership for powerless inclusion and power-sharing; partnership is recurrently used as an instrument of involvement of different sectors of society for promoting access

to basic needs and basic human rights for poor rural people (WORLD BANK, 2004). Also under the rationale of participation, this stream prioritises enduring relationships for strategic issues such as the combat of poverty and sustainable livelihood rather than relations for 'immediate problem solving' such as water supply or combat of health diseases. In this reactive perspective, partnership is an appropriate vehicle to address social and economic needs with the involvement of all sectors of society. It is viewed as an effective mechanism to promote the participation of the civil society in the planning and management of long term public programmes, minimising conflicts between divergent actors in favour of the society at large. However, despite some of these efforts being well-intentioned and possibly representing some current practice of multilateral organisations and international donors, it is difficult to distinguish the public relations objectives from actual practice. The nature of the social matters that partnership in this stream proposes to fight is much more complex than the mechanisms that it has offered to be used.

Under the stream of management development², partnership is an instrument to be used to reach more precise objectives typically correlated to effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness. It is treated not only as an instrument of people participation in public actions, or broadly as a way of committing society through social and economic needs, but as a form to conciliate public and private resources to carry out effectively and efficiently specific public programmes.

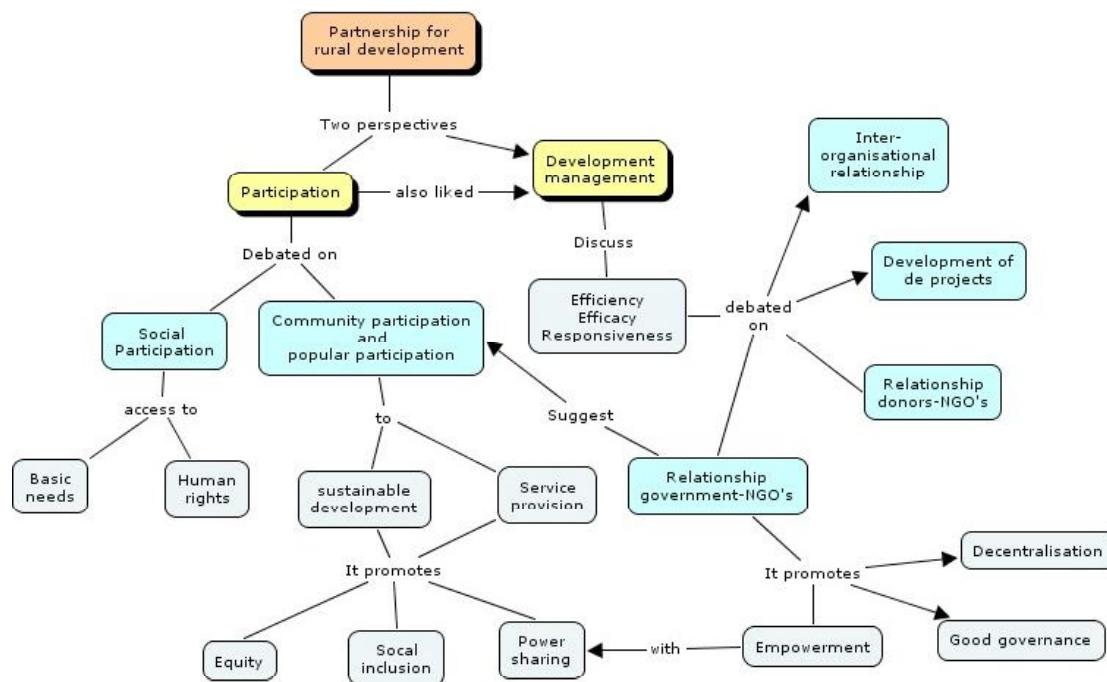
In spite of the instrumental view that partnership assumes in it, the management development stream has a set of linked threads that examine partnership in an analytical way. One thread considers particular types of relationships and purposes. It focuses on relationships between governments – NGO's and donors – NGO's. Its focus is on effective partnership. On a broader scale, it deals with the exercising of power and how it influences on partnership success. The government's and donor's power are criticised suggesting the possibility of neutral power relationship. In spite of insights about the influence of power on partnership, this interpretation does not offer alternative ways to overcome such negative issues on it or in any other development management approach. Its view suggests neutral power relationships that in fact do not happen in any reality.

A second thread deals with partnership efficiency. In this thread partnership is a strategic mechanism for resource complementarities between the public and private organisations (SELLGREN, 1990) and also a cost-efficient mechanism to carry out developmental projects with low costs and high performance (BENNET and KREBS, 1994). Partners seek out ties with others who could help them manage strategic interdependencies efficiently. However the rationales on resources complementarity and on cost-efficiency assume narrow characteristics. Partnership used as a way for budget enlargement (SELLGREN, 1990) and as a form to balance economic costs with project outcomes concerns economic ending rather than development goals.

A third set of analytic threads includes political economy and network theory. This thread examines inter-organisational relations, particularly between the public and private sectors, including civil society. Though it has normative orientation, this deals with the most rigorous identification and examination of inter-organisational coordination challenges, incentive systems, and control mechanisms and structural alternatives (KICKERT at al, 1997). They have emphasized the importance of the interrelationship between the political and the social context within networks. However, the theoretical and empirical validity of these views still need further analysis (MCQUAID, 2000). So far there is no clear understanding about the behaviour of organisations involved in the partnership for development and also how this behaviour is influenced by external actors.

² The stream of management development is generally treated under the theory of New Public Management.

Figure 2: Partnership under rural development



Source: The authors

In order to mark out the concept of partnership that will be used in this paper underpinning the different meanings that it takes on the literature two key characteristics are assumed. Thus, for purpose of this paper it is argued that partnership (a) is shaped for the role of formal and political institutions even though trust and self-organisation remain important and (b) it is a strategy for management development, which means that partnership is a long-term duration approach.

4 SETTING THE BACKGROUND OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

The background of local organisations has been associated with rural development literature from the early 1980s onwards. Local organisations were conceived as non-profit organisations created for the purpose of promoting rural development activities in an intermediary role between rural residents and both Government departments and the private sector (UPHOFF, 1982; ESMAN and UPHOFF, 1984). The definition of LOs put forward by Esman and Uphoff (1984) was to support an analysis of reasons behind rural development programmes in certain Asian countries. Since then, the concept has been an important factor in shaping the nature and direction of the debate on rural development in different parts of the world (UPHOFF and ESMAN et al., 2001; KRISHNA and UPHOFF et al., 2002). In the Esman and Uphoff theories, and followed since then by many other authors such as Fox (1997), Munsoor (2003) and Vasconcellos Sobrinho (2009), local organisations were identified as an intermediate sector that played a relevant role in the rural development process independent of the agencies of the state. By definition, 'local organisations' do not include local Government organisations. Firstly, local Government organisations are not 'membership organisations' unless referred to a local committee. Secondly, the majority of so-called 'local Government organisations' have operated more as local administrators of municipal, regional and federal organisations rather than as independent actors in development tasks. Thirdly, the level of bureaucracy where local Government organisations operate is more relevant than the make-up of their own organisation (ESMAN and UPHOFF, 1984, p.59).

Distinguishing local organisations as separate entities from the units of the state as well as from purely social and/or cultural associations is highly important. However, the concept can still not be used in an undifferentiated manner because included within this category are units whose scope and functions are extremely diverse (ENGBERG-PEDERSEN and WEBSTER, 2002, p. 4). It

therefore needs to be used with a degree of adaptability and flexibility which matches its diversity of contexts, particularly at different local geographical levels.

For the purposes of this paper, the concept of the LO brings within its ambit all LOs active in different sub-sectors of the rural system, including grassroots as well as intermediary organisations (CARROLL, 1992). LO in this paper comprise all local membership of non-governmental organisations functioning in a particular geographical and political region, producing goods, services, information and political relations for local development. They play political, economic, social and environmental roles in an integrated perspective of development. This definition is based on the understanding that all local grassroots as well as intermediary organisations, fit in the interconnected mesh of the local development process (FOX, 1997).

5 TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL ORGANISATIONS RESEARCHED

The previous section highlights that there must be a degree of adaptability and flexibility that matches the diversity of contexts where local organisations operate. Thus, the research which this paper derivates was able to classify the local organisations researched into seven groups following the classification existent in the literature about rural organisations and NGOs with some degree of adaptability (ESMAN and UPHOFF, 1984; CLARK, 1991; CARROLL, 1992; FOX, 1997; FOWLER, 2002). The difference is that both grassroots organisations and intermediary organisations were considered at the same level of importance because of their role in local development networks. The typologies established relate to organisations that are accountable to their members and are involved in development activities. There has been evidence of relevant roles that social, religion and cultural local organisations play in Middle Eastern countries (MUNSOOR, 2003). However, these were not considered in this work because in Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Moju these organisations were not directly involved with actions for local development. The following classification shows the various types of local organisations in the studied areas. The local organisations were classified as: (1) Community-Based Associations – CBAs; (2) Community-Based Development Associations – CBDAs; (3) Rural Workers' Unions; (4) Farmers' Unions; (5) Fishermen's Unions; (6) Cooperatives; (7) Women's Associations.

A common distinction between formal and informal local organisations was not made typologically as the degree of formalisation is better treated as a variable cutting across all other types. The cases covered included only formal groups because direct involvement with development activities was a criterion for consideration. This study did not identify informal groups involved with development activities in the *municípios*. However, the community-based associations include formal as well as relatively informal associations (organisations that are not legally constituted, but are now rectifying their legal situation).

Community-based associations (CBAs) are area-based organisations that bring together all or most of the people within a community to promote its development. Most of them are single community-based and have the sole function of attaining credit for agricultural production. They were created in the 1990s to access resources from regional and federal Government. Of the 9 local organisations surveyed in Ourém, 19 in Igarapé-Miri and 14 in Moju, this study observed that 5 associations of the first, 12 associations of the second and 9 of the third have only had meetings with their members to discuss financing. The study identified that the emergence and proliferation of the majority of CBAs in the region is a result of the credit policy. More precisely, the growth of the number of CBAs is a result of the establishment of the FNO, FNO-Special and PRONAF funds. This indicates that the nature of these organisations is an 'interest' (UPHOFF, 1982), and in practice means that they have exclusively economic ends.

[...] the number of associations grew during the time that BASA provided grant aid and loan [...] the BASA required the creation of associations [...] there were only three associations before the BASA credit [...] after that, the number of associations increased to 36 [...]. Leader of a local organisation in Igarapé-Miri.

This research identified that CBAs created before 1991 have primarily a religious, recreational and/or social focus. However, there are exceptions such as the Mutirão organisation in Igarapé-Miri and 25 de Julho in Ourém. These organisations were both created in 1990 and do not have socio-recreational or religious ends. On the contrary, they are examples of community-based development associations (CBDAs) with community-development ends in each one of the studied *municípios*.

Both Mutirão and 25 de Julho focus on development by cooperation and direct self-help. These associations encompass multiple functions such as support for education, assistance for agriculture, training in production management and collective market access. Equally, issues such as environmental preservation, market orientation and political capacity-building are concerns of both organisations. With external support, Mutirão and 25 de Julho carry out community development projects that involve production, new technologies, training, environmental preservation, collective access to market and other issues. This indicates that in spite of a predominance of associations with economic interests (interested exclusively in credit access) at community level, one cannot make generalisations for all community-based associations that exist in Pará.

This study identified that the CBA and CBDA share some characteristics with the Rural Workers' Unions. Like the Rural Workers' Unions, the CBA and CBDA bring together small-scale, family-based rural producers independent of their land situation (documented landowners or not). This is an important issue since land property is a feature that distinguishes rural producers including farmers, rural workers, peasants, *colono* and settled (*assentado*) (COSTA, 2000). In practice, there have been some mixed definitions in international literature about who works in the rural sector in Amazonia, where there is a prevalence of the use of terms small and large farmers.

Moreover, members of the CBA and CBDA are as heterogeneous as the communities involved. The common characteristics that members share are their place of residence and their conditions as small-scale, rural producers. There is a considerable mix in ethnic backgrounds, religious and economic situations depending on the locality; however these variables do not define any type of local organisation in the areas researched. This research identified two communities in Igarapé-Miri composed predominantly by those of indigenous ethnic backgrounds; however, this characteristic does not define their associations. This is an important issue to differentiate between the CBA and CBDA in the researched areas and grassroots organisations located in indigenous or *quilombolas* (slave descendents) areas of Amazonia.

Rural Workers' Unions (Sindicatos dos Trabalhadores Rurais - STR) are *município*-based. The Rural Workers' Unions are on the bottom level of a hierarchy that is composed at regional level by a federation organisation (Federação dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura - FETAGRI-) and at federal level by a confederation organisation (Confederação dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura - CONTAG). The Rural Workers' Unions are multifunctional, from registering rural workers (the various categories of wage labourers, peasants and small family farmers) for retirement purposes, political discussion of land reform, to working on mechanisms for rural credit and infrastructure.

The history of the Rural Workers' Unions in Pará and in Brazil as a whole dates from the 1960s when the federal Government supported the creation of these organisations to organise, control and defend the interests of the rural workers (NORA, 2003). Rural movements against farmer exploitation mainly in the south, south-east and north-east of Brazil pressed the federal Government to create a law to protect and organise rural workers (*ibid.*). However, in Pará, most of the Rural Workers' Unions were created and maintained until the end of the 1980s for farmer landowners, middlemen and/or agricultural businessmen (TURA, 2000).

The predominance of small-scale, family-based rural producers in the rural areas of Pará (This study identified that 82.09% of rural properties had less than 100 ha and absorb 86.4% of the total rural labour) indicates that the Rural Workers' Unions' in Pará differ from the Rural Workers' Unions in the south and south-east of Brazil. Rather than a prioritisation of interests of rural employees (as is the case of south and south-east rural unions), the Rural Workers' Unions in Pará are concerned mostly with landholdings (documented and not documented) for small-scale, family-based production (although they do not exclude employees of large/medium farmers). Apart from their role of class

representation, the Rural Workers' Unions' tasks in Pará involve discussions on land and policy of credit reform, training, proposals for rural education, health and forestry management.

Farmers' Unions (Sindicatos dos Produtores Rurais - SPR) are also *município* area-based with links at regional (Federação da Agricultura no Estado do Pará - FAEPA) and national (Confederação da Agricultura e Pecuária no Brasil - CNA) levels.

The current configuration of the Farmers' Unions in Pará dates from the 1980s and differs from the Farmers' Unions created in the south and south-east of the country (TURA, 2000; DALLA-NORA, 2002). The Farmers' Unions in the south and south-east of Brazil date from the 1930s (then called the 'Rural Unions') when they were created to protect larger farmers' interests in coffee production (DALLA-NORA, 2002; MARTINS, 2003).

Farmers' Unions in Pará were created or reformulated when agrarian elites lost political control of the Rural Workers' Unions at the end of the military Government (1965 – 1985). With the growth of the Rural Workers' Unions and their political power controlled by the small-scale, family-based, rural producers there was also the creation of organisations for the protection of large farmers and/or large landowners' interests (as was the case in Igarapé-Miri).

What differentiates the members of the Rural Workers' Unions and the Farmers' Unions in Pará is not property, but farm size and the labour employed on these farms. While large farmers are characterised by their number of employees, the small farmers use family labour as the main workforce. The Farmers' Unions include landowners with large (and medium) businesses, large areas, legal ownership of land and labour provided by rural employees. Conversely, the Rural Workers' Unions include the employed rural workers and small-scale, family-based rural producers with small with (generally) no legal ownership of land, where the labour is provided by family members.

The Fishermen's Unions (Colônia dos Pescadores) have a similar structure to the workers' unions. They also are *município*-based with links at regional (Federação dos Pescadores do Estado do Pará - FEPA) and national (Confederação Nacional dos Pescadores - CNP) levels. They are multifunctional and their functions vary from fishermen's registers for retirement, political participation for credit mechanism reform and control of fishing activities to protect rivers, sea and fish stocks.

Combining fishing activities with agricultural cultivation is a common characteristic of a great number of fishermen in Pará (FURTADO, 1987). As a result, a great number of agricultural workers or peasants registered with the Rural Workers' Unions are also registered with the Fishermen's Unions.

Cooperatives can be distinguished from the other local organisations by their economic and market orientation functions. All of the four cooperatives researched (two in Igarapé-Miri, one in Ourém and one in Moju) in this study are manufacturing and marketing cooperatives. This study identified their creation in order bring together small-scale, family-based, rural producers for market competition. As the level of action is multi-communitarian, they work with rural producers (and production) from different communities. This kind of organisation has an economic end and despite links with the CBA, CBDA and Rural Workers' Unions, they are open to working with different communities of the *município* or other areas. By its function, these cooperatives also are organisations of economic interest.

Women's Associations are defined by their encouragement of the participation of the women in predominantly male-dominated economic, political and social activities. This study identified that they are not defined by financing and boundaries as are community-based associations, or by local development as are the unions, or by pooling of economic resources as are cooperatives. They are concerned with political, social as well as economic interests and with public as well as private goods. However, because of their exclusive focus on rural women they are less inclusive and functional than other organisations.

The types, functions and characteristics of the local organisations above identified present different levels of power for relationships between themselves and/or organisations of the state. Observations in field work identified that local organisations with simple or dual functions are extremely dependent on the multifunctional organisations or units of the state in terms of information, administrative knowledge, and resource-mobilising capacity. Organisations of interest (CBAs) have a smaller resource base on which to draw as their sole resource is members' fees. Multifunctional organisations (CBDA and Rural Workers' Unions) have more potential for mobilisation and the use

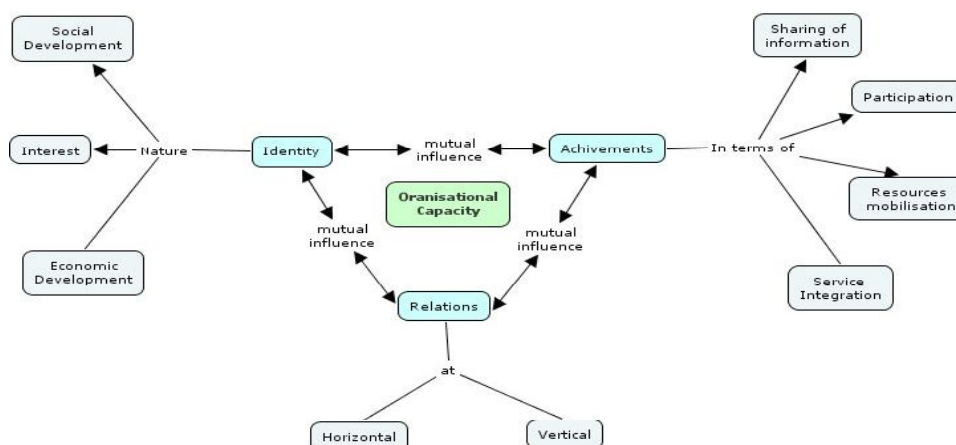
of resources, either their own or those they can get from others, including NGOs and the state. What counts in actual cases is whether a single or multifunctional local organisation can capitalise their potential in carrying out partnerships to achieve local development.

6 STRUCTURE, CAPACITIES AND LIMITS OF THE LOCAL ORGANISATIONS RESEARCHED

The literature (UPHOFF and ESMAN et al., 2001; VASCONCELLOS SOBRINHO, 2009b) has demonstrated the need to emphasise the degree of difference between the capacity levels of organisations involved in local development in networking and influencing decision making. Thus, to look at how local organisation structures are formed and the process that takes place within them is significant. To assess how power is granted to LOs and their constituencies and how active participation is fostered within them, it is essential to understand how they are able to achieve results, to deal with other actors and to respond to development issues (FOWLER, 2002a). It is also important to understand the limits and internal characteristics that affect their relationships with other actors (ZADEK, 1996; RITCHEY-VANCE, 1996; FOWLER, 2002), particularly with the local state.

One of the major structural elements for analysing an organisation's performance is to use the concept of organisational capacity (FOWLER, 2002). Although organisational capacity is a concept that is still unclear (JAMES, 1994), the current use of the term implies that capacity can be understood as a number of basic abilities, together with the means and relationships through which to express them (FOWLER, 1992; FOWLER et al., 1992; FOWLER, 2002). Analysis of the NGO sector in Africa (FOWLER, 1992; FOWLER et al., 1992) indicates that to be effective three principal areas of ability are required. These are: an ability 'to be' (that is, to represent members' interests); an ability 'to do' (that is, to achieve members' aspirations and claims); ability 'to relate' (that is, to manage external interactions while retaining autonomy) (*ibid.*). When combined, these three areas of organisational ability determine the overall performance of an NGO as well as their structure. The following figure is a schematic presentation of how organisational capacity was analysed in this study to determine which group of organisations is more effective to represent the interests of vulnerable rural people.

Figure 1: Organisational Capacity Schema



Source: The authors adapted from Fowler (2002).

The examination of LOs in Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Moju points to large differences between them in terms of achievement and the quality of social relations. This reflects on their relationship with the local state. What can be said is that much of these differences are related to their identities that in turn are related to the historical circumstances within which LOs emerged, and the context and the level of action where they have operated.

The Community-Based Associations of the *municípios* researched are organisations of economic interests (ESMAN and UPHOFF, 1984). Here they are called economic interests because they were exclusively created to get credit from FNO, FNO-Especial and PRONAF. They have very limited planning for their own and resources as the management of these organisations are very restricted. In practice, this reflects the structural problems inherent in the organisations from the start, especially their rapid creation by the departments of the local Government as well as the lack of sustained external support.

The organisation leader has control of all bureaucracy and responsibility. The *municípios* of Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Moju did not have a CBA with shared management between its members. A lack of commitment from members of an association suggests that members do not recognise these organisations as able to represent other interests apart from credit access.

As a cause and effect of members' lack of involvement with their CBA, the only provision of services that this type of organisation can offer is information sharing. Even resource mobilisation is provided either by local Government or by the Rural Workers' Union.

The community-based associations developed neither the internal nor the external relations to become effective in terms of social capital, to develop a self-reproducing collective commitment for the organisations. Consequently, they are very isolated and the only links that they have are with local Government bodies or local Rural Workers' Unions.

Community-Based Development Associations (CBDAs) (three in Igarapé-Miri and two in Ourém) have more capacities to achieve the interests of rural people. Of the five CBDAs researched, four of them have their own planning, projects and resources and offer services such as training, sharing of equipment and support for projects in terms of technology and administration.

In the CBDA, the control of bureaucracy is not concentrated on individual leaders, the members of association have important roles in leadership and the structure of decision making is based on participatory assemblies.

One of the greatest strengths of these organisations is the internal and external links with other associations, and with regional, national and international NGOs. This suggests that these organisations are indeed carrying an important form of social capital on which to build.

The capacities of these organisations are linked to their creation since most (four of five CBDA examined) of these organisations were created with external financing support and with a political and economic orientation. These organisations are much less dependent on local Government sponsorship and receive organisational support from other sources. It makes a difference in terms of power and consequently when these organisations build relationships with different agents of the state (VASCONCELLOS SOBRINHO and VASCONCELLOS, 2011).

Both the Rural Workers' Unions and the Fishermen's Unions have a complex web of relations with external actors. These relations include political links with federations, confederations and political parties, regional, national and international NGOs, Government bodies, universities and research institutes. Taking into account that networking is an essential component of the concept of the social (PUTNAM, 1993) network relations suggests that the unions pursue the highest level of social capital in rural areas.

In Igarapé-Miri, field work observations indicate that the unions appear as having administrative, financial and human capacities. The field work survey identified that they have offices, staff, computers and external consultants to deal with land conflicts, and this gives them a high level of the rural population's affiliation. 19.5% of the rural population are linked to the Rural Workers' Union. In Ourém however, observations demonstrated that the Rural Workers' Union has financial capacity limits, particularly because of a low number of affiliated members (515 members, 7% of the total rural population). Moju has similar situation of Ourém.

The compulsory forms of member participation offer possibilities for management with their own financial resources. The strong horizontal and vertical links offer more possibilities for the Rural Workers' Unions and the Fishermen's Union to scale up their requirements (FOX, 1997). However, a factor which in some way limits both the Rural Workers' Unions and the Fishermen's Unions in the

municípios is a radical political orientation. Despite the importance of political orientation; the radical views of both the Rural Workers' Unions and the Fishermen's Union makes it difficult to work closely with the state.

[...] the trouble is that in some way the Rural Workers' Union believe that it is superior [...] people from the Rural Workers' Union consider that they are above other communities in terms of representation [...] actually they are more politically organised, however they centralise everything, they want to be head of everything that concerns small rural producers [...]. POEMA staff member, Igarapé-Miri.

Field work observations confirm the initial hypothesis that there was a notable difference in political capacity between the Rural Workers' Unions and the other associations. This is because the Rural Workers' Unions reveal higher organisational capacity in terms of participation, consultation with the grassroots and dissemination of information about decisions and linkages. The rural workers' higher level of participation implies an important sense of accountability and community ownership. Interviewing people in the communities, one noted the high level of the Rural Workers' Unions' credibility with the powerless people inside the rural communities.

[...] the union [Rural Workers' Union] is the only one [organisation] which is concerned about us [...] we have a great land problem to solve and the union has met with a lawyer to represent us [...] the union has also contacted some politicians to help us in solving the problem [...]. Head of CBA, Ourém.

While the Rural Workers' Unions reveal a higher organisational capacity, the Farmers' Unions are more influential in regional politics. This is because the Farmers' Unions have established robust political networks with regional agencies. Leaders of the Farmers' Unions have been part of the political group (PSDB) that has administered the State of Pará for many years (1994 – 2006 and 2011 - 2014); this makes them very confident in their influence.

[...] I have a good relationship with the Rural Workers' Union [...] this is very interesting, because sometimes they [STR leaders] want to put me away [...] I do not care, they [Rural Workers' Union leaders] 'eat out of my hands' [...] everything that happens here is offered by the state, for instance courses, who decides? [...] it's me [...] I do not fight with anyone; I do not need this [...]. Head of the Farmers' Union, Igarapé-Miri.

Historically, the Farmers' Unions and/or their members have been a critical factor in tracing rural politics in Pará (FERNANDES, 1999). This suggests that these organisations also have an important form of social capital. However, the greatest question has been the reconciliation of their interests with the small-scale, rural producers' interests.

Of the four cooperatives analysed, three were examined in more detail, one in Igarapé-Miri (COOPFRUT), one in Ourém (COMAG) and one in Mojú. They were selected because they were created (COOPFRUT and COOPED) or restarted (COMAG) during the time that partnership was more actively carried out in the *municípios*.

The three cooperatives focus on providing economic services to members. COMAG is structurally linked to the local Rural Workers' Union, which in turn focuses more on issues of representation and politics. While this overlap helps keep the actions of the two organisations relatively consistent, it also leaves the identity of COMAG uncertain. There is a mixing of roles whereby COMAG is simultaneously a social enterprise concerned with production and marketing and also a representative organisation willing to speak out on the socio-political issues that affect its members. This close link between the Rural Workers' Union and COMAG was encouraged by the 1980s *município* rural movement as happened in various rural areas of Pará. However, the *município*'s small-scale, rural producers have dedicated greater efforts to consolidate COMAG rather than the rural movement organisations.

COMAG's links with the Rural Worker's Union distanced the cooperative from the local state that had always seen the Rural Workers' Union as opposition. COMAG alone has not been able to increase its own requirements and get support from other organisations to carry out its activities.

COOPFRUT and COOPED are independent from the Rural Workers' Union although they had emerged alongside the rural movement in the *municípios* of Igarapé-Miri and Moju respectively. COOPFRUT was established by a collective action between the local state and seventeen Community-Based Associations. Local Government contracted the NGO POEMAR which was linked to the Federal University of Pará to look at the cooperative's feasibility and implementation. POEMAR's plan combined the establishment of *açaí* (a regional fruit from palm trees that grows in areas of *várzea*) cultivation and processing with technical and marketing assistance.

As a result of the regional financial programme and the local plan, rural communities located in the areas of *várzea* began to specialise in *açaí*. According to BASA (2002), 771 finance contracts were for *açaí* production between 1992 and 2005

The cooperative began to receive regional bank financing (2000) and increased rates of POEMAR's direct technical assistance. This led to conflict between the local state and the Rural Workers' Union because both local Government and Rural Workers' Union wanted to control the cooperative and to politically dominate the results. Consequently, both local Government and the Rural Workers' Union abandoned the cooperative before its consolidation. POEMAR was the only support that the cooperative had when this study's field work was carried out. In spite of the financial and managerial problems that the cooperative has experienced, its role in bringing powerless *açaí* producers to market and in controlling the price of *açaí* for this population has been significant.

Examination of COMAG's, COOPFRUT's and COPED's organisational capacity revealed several key differences between them. The differences extend from managerial capacity to social relations with external actors. However, the differences relate more to social relations with external actors than to managerial capacities. They reveal fragile managerial capacity, although COMAG has more information organisation and control, and is more democratic and participative in terms of decision making.

This examination of cooperatives corroborates the understanding that organisational capacity involves more than managerial capacity (BEBBINGTON and CARROLL, 2002). COOPFRUT's and COOPED's weak administrative and technical capacity and resource endowments owe much to its close links to POEMAR. Despite its dependence, the presence of POEMAR beside COOPFRUT and COOPED has not led to the cooperatives being excessively influenced by ideological political entities or to it losing its focus on powerless rural people. It also has helped COOPFRUT to get grant aid and links to alternative trade organisations at regional and national levels. The growing complexity involved in introducing new markets may encourage the organisation to be more independent. However, the absence of a political ability to deal with financial troubles from regional and federal banks has not enabled the cooperative to consolidate further. The cooperative needs to exert extra political pressure on the regional Government in order to gain help for some of its more serious issues. At critical moments, enterprise organisations need the political power of representative groups to defend rights, to negotiate adverse macro policy frameworks and so on (BEBBINGTON and CARROLL, 2002, p. 266). However, the critical issue for these cooperatives is to find a good balance between economic functions and the political support that is required.

The Women's Associations are very weak in political and administrative terms. They do not have offices, staff, equipment or even document files. They are dependant on the Rural Workers' Unions' infrastructure and the single provision of services for their members is information sharing. In spite of the external support obtained for their creation, they do not have management resources.

The Women's Associations developed neither the internal nor external dimensions of social capital to develop a collective commitment to rural development. Taking account of social capital as a network and the importance of trust (PUTNAM, 1993), the Women's Associations do not have links with actors outside the *municípios* and are not recognised by the female, small-scale, rural producers that are not directly involved with Rural Workers' Union. This disappointing situation indicates structural problems intrinsic to the organisations due to their creation by the Rural Workers' Unions for political purposes. The following table gives a general picture of the LO, identity, links and the quality of the relationships.

Local Organisations: Nature, Level of Action, Identity, Links and Quality of Relationships

Local Organisations	Nature	Level of action	Identity	Achievement	Links	Quality of relationship
CBA	Interest	Community	Interest in financing.	Resources mobilisation. Sharing information.	None	None
CBDA	Community Development	Multi-community	Integrated community development.	Resources mobilisation. Sharing information. Participation. Services integration.	Internal and external links with other associations. Regional, national and international links.	Strong
Rural Workers' Unions	Local Development	<i>Município</i>	Class representation and local development.	Resources mobilisation. Sharing information. Participation. Services integration.	Internal and external links with other associations. Regional, national and international links.	Strong
Fishermen's Unions	Local Development	<i>Município</i>	Class representation and activity development.	Resources mobilisation. Sharing information. Participation.	Internal and external links with other associations. Regional, national and international links.	Medium
Farmers' Unions	Local Development	<i>Município</i>	Class representation.	Sharing information.	Regional and national political links.	Medium
Cooperatives	Economic Development	Multi-community	Production and market.	Sharing information. Service integration.	Internal and external links with other associations. Regional, national and international links.	Weak
Women's Associations	Interest	<i>Município</i>	Interest in gender.	Sharing information.	Internal links.	Very Weak

Table: the authors
Source: field work

Examinations of the organisational capacity of LOs located in Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Majú indicates that multifunctional organisations such as the CBDAs and the Rural Workers' Unions have more achievements, relationships and consequently greater organisational capacity. One factor which distinguishes the CBDAs and Rural Workers' Unions from other organisations is the presence of links with external institutional actors at different levels. This indicates that the strong local organisations are those that have received sustained support from and maintained long-term relationships with other actors, in particular external NGOs. The CBDAs and the Rural Workers' Unions embody an important type of structural social capital that is weaker in other organisations. In Pará, the CBDAs and Rural Workers' Unions strive for municipal forms of collective action (economics, political, natural resources management) that facilitate more coordinated forms of engagement with Government, civil society and market actors.

7 LOCAL ORGANISATIONS' STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS AND WEAKNESSES

The most relevant structural problems in local organisations found during research are those that result in weakening the organisations. These problems include dependences, ineffectiveness, misconduct, exclusion and conflict between political and economic organisations as examined below.

Dependence or subordination can be defined as the result of either local Governments or outside actors or their staff, exercising superior power, or more cogently it reflects the price of relying on the resources provided by local or regional Government agencies or even external actors (ESMAN and UPPHOFF, 1984; AHMAD, 2006). This research identified three kinds of dependencies as more prevalent in the areas studied which corroborate with the majority of the literature that analyses performance of local and grassroots organisations (ESMAN and UPPHOFF, 1984; MUNSOOR,

2003; AHMAD, 2006). These are: dependence on local Government, dependence on powerful local organisations and dependence on outside agencies assisting the organisations (which include dependence on financing organisations). These will be considered in turn, though they are not always separate. There are community-based associations that are dependent on local Government and banks; outside factors that affect cooperatives and Rural Workers' Unions; federal Government agencies that affect Rural Workers' Unions, and many other possible combinations.

Of the 9 local organisations surveyed in Ourém, seven were created with support from local Government. Local Government provided resources for documentation and assistance for organisational structure. In Igarapé-Miri, of the 19 local organisations surveyed, 15 were created with *Prefeitura* support and from other local Government agencies. All of these organisations are CBAs. These organisations depend on either the *Prefeitura* or EMATER for documentation maintenance (registers, bank credentials, etc). In practice, these associations are extremely vulnerable to pressures and co-optation from local state agencies.

Like dependence on local Government, there are associations that depend on the Rural Workers' Unions for their tasks. In Ourém, at least four CBAs were created with STR support. In Igarapé-Miri, six associations have dependent links with the Rural Workers' Union. In practice, the Rural Workers' Unions created and supported these CBAs to balance the political space with the *Prefeitura*.

The CBDAs are the most active associations in both Ourém and Igarapé-Miri. In both cases, the CBDAs were created from external support (international and/or national NGO and members of the Catholic Church). However, none of the five CBDAs (three in Igarapé-Miri and two in Ourém) identified have been able to carry out their work without outside agency support.

[...] for while we were stopped [...] we are waiting for new support [...] we had support from PRORENDA but it has finished [...] there is some possibility of a project from FANEP, but I do not know [...]. Head of CBDA, Ourém.

The cooperatives are also dependent on outside agencies. As explained in the previous section, COOPFRUT and COOPED are dependent on POEMAR in administrative terms. COOPFRUT's financial resources were and are still being negotiated and managed by POEMAR. COMAG still needs external support and for the third time COMAG has been wound up.

In any case of dependence, local organisations do not have the capacity to act on their own initiative. In practice, they become less effective in articulating the needs of their members, in mobilising self-help, in managing local resources, and in providing reliable feedback on programs or projects. Because of their dependence on either local Government or the Rural Workers' Union, field work observations indicate that the CBAs are fairly passive. Finally, due to their wider networks, the CBDAs and the unions have more mobility. Like the cooperatives, they still need external support to improve their organisational capacity, but this must be done while decreasing dependence at the same time.

Other widespread and consequential problems confronting the local organisations are lack of political, organisational and/or technical skills. This is of particular concern for the CBAs. LO lack of organisational and technical skills is in some sense linked to the low levels of conventional education of their members (25%, 30% and 35% of the LO leaders interviewed in Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Mojú respectively were illiterate) and the fact that they had very little experience of formal associations. Of the total of local organisation leaders interviewed, 40% in Ourém, 40% in Igarapé-Miri and 30% were managing a local organisation for the first time. Lack of political skill is related in its turn to the nature of the organisations. As most of the community associations (in this case all associations classified in this work as CBAs) were only created to get credit for agricultural production, there was no emphasis on other skills from the organisations themselves or from the organisations that supported them.

Field work observations in the three *municípios* indicate that the unions, CBDA and Women's Associations have a smaller deficit of political, organisational and/or technical skills (these issues are also less frequent in the CBAs supported by the Rural Workers' Unions). These organisations have had a political orientation and organisational capacity building by external actors and so these skills have been considered important to improve effectiveness.

What this study reaffirms is that the smaller the organisation and its experience of bureaucracy, less importance they give to their own organisational skills. The less an organisation has political skill the less they promote participation of lower status, powerless rural people (GITTELL and VIDAL, 1998).

Local organisations leaders' misconduct is also a great factor of local organisation weakness. Visiting the community of Limão in Ourém, this researcher identified a misunderstanding between the community association leaders. There had been a recent (2004 – 2008) appropriation of association resources for leaders' personal use and/or for the benefit of their families. Some leaders had deceived the interests of the membership for personal profit, conspiring with politicians and officials. Funds had been diverted from organisational to personal purposes, ranging from subsidized loan to provision of equipment and services.

Not surprising, the discourse of the communities' members show that corruption and infidelity is not uncommon between their associations.

[...] the human being is complicated [...] when the association does not involve money, everything is fine [...] but when there is money involved behaviour changes [...] the trouble is that we do not have anyone to trust [...] when you pay attention they [leaders, politicians] sell themselves [...]. Community member (Limão), Ourém.

Recognition of corrupt practices however, discredits the association, destroys the morale of members and results in its failure. Dishonesty is a problem that raises a series of other issues for the organisations. One such issue is the misplacing of credibility as stated in the quotation above. The critical issue is that without the members' trust the organisation will never be able to become powerful. The other problem is the easy possibility of cooptation of LO leadership by the local state. In a process of partnership, the organisations that face dishonesty lose credibility and are easily co-opted by state agent officials.

Cooperatives have a greater impact on rural incomes than any other type of local organisation. By dealing with markets collectively rather than individually (which would have been too difficult), these organisations have secured new channels through which members sell their products, have added value to products and have improved product quality. Taking the example of COOPFRUT in Igarapé-Miri, it has improved their members' access to and position in new markets.

[...] before the implementation of the [cooperative] COOPFRUT the small-scale, rural producers depended on the middleman and the price that he wanted to pay [...] nowadays they [small-scale, rural producers] have options [...] because of the cooperative the price of *açaí* is secure [...] nowadays any one middleman pays less than the cooperative pays [...]. POEMAR staff member, Igarapé-Miri.

However, cooperatives do establish some membership requirements, such as type of production, minimum quantity of production to be offered and the quality of the product based on production and harvest. For instance, *açaí* (main product of COOPFRUT) can be easily contaminated and requires special care during harvesting. If the rural producer does not follow a minimum standard, COOPFRUT does not buy his/her produce. Consequently, only certain parts of the local communities are members and are able to benefit from the services provided by the cooperatives.

The limits on inclusion in economic organisations like the cooperatives point to a recurrent theme across the board: the complex relationship between economic and political organisations. Economic organisations tend to be less inclusive, although they do build linkages among producer groups in different communities (BEBBINGTON and CARROLL, 2002). Political organisations tend to be more inclusive in principle (FOX, 1997); although in practice they tend to be exclusive if grassroots members do not follow their political orientation. However, during shorts periods when base organisations face emergency needs they mobilise behind their political organisations more extensively than they would for the more social enterprise-oriented organisations.

External organisations have interacted with local organisations and influenced their agency since the 1980s, when small-scale rural producers were excluded from the policy of regional development. External organisations, particularly political organisations such CUT and PT and federations such

as FETAGRI, FEPA and CONTAG focused on supporting the Rural Workers Unions in terms of political capacity building. In that period, external organisations' influence was predominantly to reinforce the unions in the political sphere and to change their focus from social assistance to active socio-political participation.

From the 1990s onwards, external NGOs such as MANI TESE, FASE and PRORENDA increased their scope in various *municípios* of Pará and particularly in the north-east of the state where Ourém, Igarapé-Miri and Mojú are located. These NGOs, in combination with the unions, helped form the CBDA and the cooperatives. In the first half of the 1990s, external NGOs helped rural communities to build associations to represent the interests of vulnerable people through the implementation of community development projects.

From the second half of the 1990s onward, in the three *municípios*, external actors (FASE, PRORENDA, FANEP, UFRA, POEMAR, GESPAN, UFPA) have supported the CBDAs and the unions with financial resources, technical assistance and with capacity building. This latter is centred on younger people and emergent leaders, aiming to engage them in a culture of trustworthiness in and around the organisations to help local organisations to become more effective. Indirectly, professional capacity serves as a counterweight measure to reduce local organisation weaknesses such as misconduct.

However, there is a difficult balance to strike between the excessive influence of technical training and directing the local organisations in favour of local social relationships. For example, COOPFRUT's emphasis on technical issues and the market has left cooperative members feeling that the cooperative has abandoned its commitments to the social movement and the smaller strata of rural producers. In cases where there is insufficient counterweight to the leadership from the base such as in the community of Limão in Ourém, the presence of experienced technical people serves to offset the possible emergence of corrupt, partisan or inadequate forms of resource allocation.

The presence of certain types of external actors such as universities and research institutes has also exerted a form of moral accountability: members feel more comfortable with local organisations that have some links with universities and research institutes. This is because the presence of these institutions is seen by members of communities as a guarantee that resources will be used more efficiently as well as adhering to principles of democracy and competency.

However, the above observations are not meant to imply that local organisations must always be supervised by an external actor, nor that external actors are inherently any more transparent or honest than the leadership of a local organisation. Rather, the analysis suggests the value of a form of synergy, in which relationships between local organisations and external actors can elicit greater results for the local organisations.

8 CONCLUSION

Results of this study show that heterogeneous and multi-functional LO such as the CBDA and the Rural Workers' Unions have a much greater organisational capacity than single or dual-function local organisations for carrying out a partnership process and to respond to family-based, small-scale rural producers' interests. They have been dominated by the better-off and those with more trained members although the poorer and less capable groups have not been excluded. One of the most significant powers of the multifunctional organisations (particularly the CBDAs and the Rural Workers' Unions) is the combination of strong intragroup ties with powerful extragroup networks at different levels — an important component of social capital.

Stronger local organisations (the CBDAs and the Rural Workers' Unions) have received sustained support from and maintained long-term relationships with other actors, in particular with external NGOs, universities and research institutes. This is not to say that such longstanding relationships are healthy in every sense. They may at times involve a paternalistic or dependent culture in which the external actor never lets go and fails to support the development of capacities within the organisation so that it may be more self-reliant. The relationship between the cooperative

COOPFRUT (and COOPED) and POEMAR is an example of this. Organisations that have not had longstanding stable support have fared less well. In particular, they have not developed the administrative capacity or linkages to deal effectively with development, as in the cases of all the CBA that were created with support of the local state and the Women's Associations founded with support of the Rural Workers' Unions. Despite their strong regional and national links, the Farmers' Unions have failed in a development sense due to their weak achievements in terms of results and the representation of their members.

The Igarapé-Miri, Ourém and Mojú cases illustrate the impact that multifunctional local organisations such as the CBDA and the Rural Workers' Unions have on local development and governance and then on partnership process. The case is largely descriptive, however. More specific measures of the different dimensions of social capital and organisational capacity in local organisations are needed if the notion of organisational capacity is to be acted on more strategically by those interested in understanding and supporting their role in local social transformation. However, the study paints a picture of the local organisations that have the organisational capacity to represent family-based, small-scale rural producers in a partnership for local development process. It means that without a political capacity for understanding their own role and of the role of the government on partnership between LO and LG in the process of development, the participation of CBA in rural development process may reinforce or simply confirm the power of the state. The fact that the CBA are closer to the people in the communities does not guarantee that these organisations represent the interests and priorities of the powerless. The administrative weakness in most of the CBA and the presence of misconduct in some of them are facilitative factors for certain leaders' cooptation by agents of the state. Consequently, the participation of a CBA in a local development committee is not a guarantee to recruit rural powerless people for partnerships in rural development planning and development.

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