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Colonos, Agricultural Colonisation
and Production in Andean Countries

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INTRODUCTION

Although there are a number of common elements in the agricultural colonisation experiences of Latin American countries, there are also a large number of differences. Experiences have taken on various forms, processes and also results.¹ This variety has made it comparatively difficult to generalize and to elaborate on theories so as to guide government action. This does not imply though that government policy has not been based on any theoretical notion. On the contrary, and whatever the particular policies in question, it seems that over the last two decades, often implicitly, the notion of "family farms" producing for the market seems to have predominated in policy documents. The problem we are facing now is that too little has been done to verify relevance of that notion and to present alternative theoretical considerations. This is particularly serious in view of the alleged failure of government policies. If no proper diagnosis can be made of the situation, then it becomes rather difficult to evaluate policies and impossible to formulate relevant policy conclusions.

In order to contribute to this discussion, it may be relevant to examine critically the relevance of the notion of small family farmer. In our view it raises a number of doubts. First of all, no distinction is made between the 'agricultural colonization stage' per sé (i.e. the conversion into agricultural land use and its development into a consolidated unit) and the 'stage' thereafter i.e. of agricultural production. Although sometimes the period of transition is very small in most occasions there is a difficult and longer period of transition, the length of which depends upon the specific conditions of colonization and agricultural production in the area concerned.

Secondly, and regarding the second 'stage', it is important to identify the market and other factors that condition (small) farming in colonization areas. It will be argued that given the very process of agricultural development, these conditions tend to be worse than in the 'older' areas.

Whether and in what way this would affect the colono/farmer depends also on his (assumed) behaviour. What sort of market operator is s/he? What role do cash crops play. Is s/he a "commercial small farmer" or a "peasant"?

This brings us to a fourth issue, namely the question why peasants become settlers in the first place. What motivates them?

The different ways in which these three issues may be answered, give us different approximations of behaviour of the colonos themselves.

But in order to come to a more complete picture of the process it is also necessary to consider the other principle actors namely large capitalist farms and firms and the government. This then brings us to the fifth and sixth issue, namely what are the relationships between small settlers and these farms and firms and what motivates government policies with respect to each of these groups and the colonization area, and how this relates to the large national context.

Superficially what may seem to be a common cause for failure of policy, after some further analysis may turn out to have a number of quite different causes, and could even put the conclusion about failure in a different perspective.

Below we will discuss these issues in our attempt to provide elements for an analytical framework.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A HOLDING IN A COLONIZATION AREA

More often than not, one fails to make a distinction between the period necessary to establish a new holding and the

period thereafter in which that holding would be fully operational as an agricultural unit, and omits to consider the problems that may arise in that very first period. Even in cases of government directed colonization schemes in which initial mechanized land clearing has taken place, some time is needed to consolidate it as an operational agricultural unit. Since most agricultural colonization in the Andean countries is going on without such mechanized assistance, and is concentrated in (sub-) tropical lands, this initial period will be significantly longer and may stretch over a number of years.²

The first factor involved here is the question whether the colono, when arriving in the area, has resources of his own. If that would be the case, he could then acquire a holding already containing some 'tierras con mejoras' in the already more developed part of the colonization area. In this colono the initial period would be considerably shorter than for a poor colono, who would be forced to start completely from scratch on the fringe of the area, and who would still have problems of making ends meet in these initial years. Since it is unlikely that his new holding would immediately provide even minimal subsistence he would need to find other gainful occupations. The need to seek wage employment may also be considered relevant from another point of view, namely, the need to familiarize himself with the area e.g. its agricultural practices and information about unoccupied public land, etc. and to build up his own personal network of mutual support. Alternatively, he may be given tenure as share cropper or on a hired basis by a settler/colono who has already established himself in the area or has gone a long way in that direction. As will be elaborated later on, the latter may have 'excess' land, so that such arrangement may be beneficial to both.

Whatever, the distribution of these short term mutual benefits maybe, it does imply that the period of establishment of a holding of his own becomes comparatively longer for the poor colono.

It is difficult to establish what the average length of the period would, as it depends on a number of factors. Apart from the ones just mention, it depends on the amount of family labour and what feasible (permanent) agricultural activities are both from an economic and technical point of view. Whether these are land extensive and/or yeilding a low per acre income, and whether there would be other barriers to their growing, would be key questions that need careful consideration. Afterall they may explain why so many poor colonos do not even survive this initial period. For instance, the more land extensive agricultural production would be, the more hectares need to be cleared, improved and prepared for productive use. Hence more labour needs to be invested in the holding. Given the fact that the colono would have to rely mainly on his own labour and that of his family, this initial period would be comparatively lengthened. Similarly, if tree crops would be the main cash crop then this period would als become longer. The length of the gestation period of the investment which this labour implies, thus may vary from case to case depending on these factors.

Finally, though not necessarily and always intentionally, often government policies and regulations create additional difficulties. In an attempt to avoid land speculation and to achieve agricultural production targets, regulations concerning legalization of landtitles are drawn up, which stipulate that a minimum proportion of the land needs to be in productive use before legalization of a claim can be considered. Similar regulations are often found with regard to access to official credit. Both mitigate against the poor colono and lower his chances to survive this first period. Indebtedness incurred in this first period

may seriously affect his chances of becoming a small agricultural producer.

The above may lead us to the conclusion that there may be a gap or conflict between labour intensive colonization (i.e. requiring a comparatively large amount of labour per hectare and little capital) and more capital intensive and/or land extensive agricultural production. In order to be able to appreciate the importance of such a gap, it is necessary to analyze in greater depth the conditions of and for agricultural production in the area.

CONDITIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN COLONIZATION AREAS

Elsewhere, for the case of Caquetá, Columbia I have tried to argue that even if the colono would be able to survive the initial 3 to 5 years his difficulties would not be over (Helmsig, 1982a). Although each year a further plot would be cleared so that a surplus of food crop - above subsistence needs - would appear, the latter will not continue to grow but soon reaches a peak and will start to decline. The reason being among other, that the natural fertility of the land under cultivation becomes exhausted. The land unsuitable for further crop-production is then prepared as grassland for livestock. The proportion of grasslands thus increases of time.

This pattern is due to a combination of factors. First of all, soil quality. In most Andean countries, though clearly not in all,³ the land that is presently under colonization or still unutilized is marginal in terms of quality. This means that the productivity of the land (physical yields) is much lower. Although some cost components would on a per hectare basis also be lower in the colonization area e.g. land rental, it also implies that more hectares would have to be grown to yield the same (absolute) level of income in comparison to the

situation in the older established area with better quality land.

A second factor concerns the role that agriculture in the colonization areas plays in terms of output markets. Some colonization areas have received enormous stimulus due to their potential for export crops. The kind of export staple has often a decisive influence on the evolving pattern of colonization and development.⁴ Plantation crops like banana, rubber have in the past contributed as much to the rise as to the decline of colonization areas, and moreover tended to have an enclave-like pattern of development. More recent crops like 'palma africana' are not much different in this respect. Given the technological barriers of entry, small agriculturalists are unlikely to participate directly in their production. Given the already noted enclave like character which results in few local linkages, also the indirect effects, in terms of local demand for food and agricultural raw materials, would be limited to support the development of local non-export orientated agricultural production. Finally, and particularly in case of inferior soil qualities such export agriculture would be more subject to the 'vagaries' of international markets due to its marginal role in such a context. Summing up one could say that even if the first factor does not apply, then still the agricultural opportunities for 'colonos' would be limited.

A different situation is likely to emerge when agricultural production in the colonization area is developing within the context of the domestic market. Particularly, when the crops involved do not have to compete with agricultural production elsewhere in the country.⁵ Not only is this a rather exceptional case but also are the opportunities for small producers limited because of the competition of large scale producers (see below). The more likely situation within and internal market context is the one in which there is an outward displacement of

agricultural production from the 'agro-heartland regions' towards new colonization areas as domestic demand for food and agricultural raw materials increases and new crops are introduced in those regions. Less profitable crops are then displaced to the agricultural periphery (less fertile, but cheaper lands).⁶ The increasing intensity of agriculture in the former regions and the importance of the extensions of the agricultural frontier in the periphery are in this context two sides of the same process.⁷ In such a case, however, a new colonization area would still have to compete with production from other already long settled regions. In this situation one would have to introduce a further dimension, namely the spatial one, so as to assess the opportunities for small producers. The familiar land use theory of Von Thuenen serves to illustrate a basic issue in this respect.⁸ One of the main principles of this theory states that for each crop or agricultural product, the farmer's income varies with distance from the market center due to transport costs. For each crop a net income per ton/ha curve can be identified. These curves are different from each other due to different prices ton/ha for each crop, different ton/ha production costs, and different gradients due to difference in transport rates, resulting in intersections of the curves. Assuming 'rational economic behaviour i.e. maximising net income, a specific land use pattern emerges. Those products with high net-income per hectare will be produced near the market center, while products with lower net income/ha will be found in the outer rings. Thus, under the strict assumption of an isotropic plane, one may conclude that in terms of income distribution the nearby farmers, thanks to a locational rent, are better off than the ones in more distant areas.

However, as already noticed, many of the underlying assumptions do not hold in reality. There is no uniform size of farm holdings, soil quality, nor is there a perfect

substitution of crops etc. Nevertheless, this theory has some relevant implications. One could argue that due to unequal competition between small and large farms, the former have to contend themselves with those crops that yield lower net-incomes per hectare, than potentially might be achieved given the distance from the main (urban) markets. However, in the (distant) periphery the number of feasible options i.e. crops yielding a positive net income per hectare, is even more reduced than in the center, resulting in a greater competition in the same crops from large farms in the same area. Furthermore, it could be argued that the large farms in the periphery, due to economies of scale are able to reduce their production costs per hectare such that compared with small farms in the same area, they receive higher net income per hectare. To this one could add that due to the superior bargaining power of the large farms, their farmgate prices for outputs (inputs) are likely to be higher(lower). One conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that small scale (permanent) agricultural production is comparatively more difficult in the periphery.

Below we will further discuss the relations between small and large producers. Focussing for a moment therefore, only on small producers in this inter-regional dimension (settled agricultural areas versus more distant colonization areas), it seems relevant to conclude that to achieve a given agricultural income is, in various respects more difficult for small colonos in more distant colonization areas compared to the situation that is faced by colonos in areas that are closer to main (urban) markets. First of all, there are fewer feasible options. Secondly, these tend to be more land using, thus requiring more labour initially invested in land clearing and preparation and thirdly it is more likely that there will be direct competition from large scale farms.

In the transition from pure colonist to small producer, the settler may go through an intermediate phase in which his chances of failure are very high indeed. Often, few will survive given the greater structural disadvantages of small scale agricultural production in the colonization area. Heavily indebted small producers become an easy target for land speculating merchants and capitalist farmers in the area.

COLONO AS A MARKET OPERATOR

In the previous section we have still maintained the implicit assumption that small producers are market operators. The question that needs to be discussed now is what kind of market operators they are. Schuurman (1979) quite correctly raised this issue. His contention with regard to government colonization projects in the Amazon Selva is that these have "started from incorrect assumption about the way in which colonists organize their production. In our opinion this production is organized along the lines of the so-called peasant economy" and that governments "adhere to the false notion that the colonist is a small capitalist and as such organizes his production according to capitalist logic" (Schuurman, 1979: 29). Before discussing his and other propositions, it is useful to dispel another often held belief, namely, that subsistence production would imply an autarchic household, in which case there would be no market contact whatsoever. Although indeed, poor colonos spend the greater part of their 'income' on food - a large portion of which might be grown on his own holding -, still there would be considerable food and non-food (monetary) expenditures. This implies that, in all cases, cash crops would have to be grown in order to pay for these. The fact that these have to be grown, does of course not do away with the first issue raised. To this

we will turn our attention now. This question seems to focus on the kind of market behaviour i.e. how one reacts to market changes. Schuurman in his already quoted article claims that Chayanov's propositions regarding a separate peasant economy are also relevant for the analysis of agricultural production in colonization areas.⁹ The aim of a peasant production-cum-consumption unit is to satisfy basic consumption needs of the family. The level of activity over and above this level depends on the balance between the 'additional demand satisfaction' and the 'drudgery' of the extra labour it involves (labour-consumer balance). If satisfaction of subsistence needs is endangered by a lowering of market prices or otherwise then the peasant will work more (increase self exploitation) i.e. either expand production on his own holding or on rented land even if the latter would imply above average land rental.

At the same time, the fact that family labour is unpaid and that there are no profits to be made, would imply that a peasant producer would be able to accept lower prices than a capitalist farmer.

Although one may appreciate and can elaborate further this in the form of a decision making model (e.g. Schejtman, 1975 and 1980); One should at the same time recognize its limitations, namely that decisions are assumed to be made in isolation. Particularly, if one would take into account that "The peasant household functions as a small production unit of extremely limited resources, greatly subject to the powerful forces of nature, the market and the state." (Shanin, 1972). Its survival (and mobility) depends not so much only on the biological cycle of the unit (Chayanov), as much as also on these factors. To these one should add that the first one, nature, may indeed cause much random oscillations in the chances of survival of the colono.¹⁰ The second factor, the market, is much less of a randomly determined one.

As we have elaborated in the previous section a number of elements tend to make small scale production comparatively more difficult. Finally, and with respect to the influence of the state, one may add, that often the colono has also little bargaining power. As it will be argued in section 3.7, more often than not state policies discriminate against the colono.

The colono-producer is above all a small operator, having very little bargaining power in the various markets. As his weakness in one market is carried over into the other. For instance a desperate need for credit forces a colono to accept usury rates which in turn may force him to sell his crop as soon as, rather than as dear as possible. Along the same lines, but in reverse, the position of the merchant/trader is strengthened.

It is this weak position, further worsened by relations of debt, which may force the colono to act differently. For example to continue to cultivate annual cash crops instead of tree crops, although this would lead to a faster depletion of the natural fertility of his holding.

Given these difficulties one may be tempted to ask why do the colonos then come to do what they do in the first place? We will consider this first before turning to the relation between the colonos, other groups and the state.

MOTIVATION OF THE COLONOS

Generally it is argued that the main motive of the colono to migrate to the colonization area are the conditions in the regions of origin, particularly the lack of access to land.¹¹ This lack of access may be due to a combination of factors; on the one hand a generalized (demographic) pressure on the land within the peasant economy, and on the other, the expansion of capitalist large scale farming, and its further encroachment upon the traditional peasant economy, through the dissolution or elimination of traditional forms of production and increased prices of land. The result is migration, either to the cities or to other

and newer agricultural areas, including colonization. Another, though often related, reason is to escape intense civil conflict, as in the case of 'La Violencia' in Columbia during the late forties and fifties.

Yet most studies show that the proportion of settlers who remain on their colonized holding is invariably low.¹² Almost all authors find higher desertion rates on government sponsored projects in comparison with spontaneous settlement. Under the (implicit) assumption that the motivation of the colono is to settle permanently, this is then considered as indicative of failure. One then attempts to discover its economic and/or social causes including deficiencies in the planning of these projects. Although indeed this may be quite relevant to do, there are also other relevant questions which follow from other assumptions concerning the motivations of the colonos. Often indeed, the prime motivation of the landless peasant is to acquire a piece of land of his own, on which he can build up a meagre but independent existence. But it is important to emphasize that the desire for land often concerns the acquisition of a piece of land in his own village or region. Reasons for this are various and relate the socio-economic and community environment, interaction with which is a key element in securing his livelihood. In other words the migration to the colonization area is not permanent but temporary. By means of colonizing, the colono aims to generate savings with which he hopes to acquire a piece of land in his own village or area. This is not to say that he will achieve his aim, but it puts the problem in a different perspective.

In this case the colono does not aim to become a permanent small producer, but rather to capitalize on the land he has cleared.

Finally, there are also intermediate situations in which the colono may be/become permanent but in a part-time capacity. This may be preferred either to reduce the uncertainties of establishing a new holding in a colonization

area or be part of an attempt to diversify agricultural activities and to spread risk over various but in terms of labour inputs and/or ecology complementary holdings (e.g. existing highland and newly colonized lowland holdings in Ecuador).

RELATIONS AMONG GROUPS

Generally, the colonos are not the only ones in or migrating to the colonization area, but there are a number of other factors and activities taking place or developing in the area. Only very rarely these are 'empty' ones.

It may be useful to distinguish here between (a) relations with other holders of land in the same area, and (b) relations in the sphere of the organization of production. This distinction, though to a large extent overlapping in the sense that the former have a great impact on the latter, enables us to consider colonization per sé and agricultural production separately.

Starting with the first set, several holders can be identified. First of all, these areas often are inhabited by indigenous groups. The very process of colonization by large capitalist farms as well as by poor colonos constitutes a threat to their existence in an ecological, economic and socio-cultural sense. Furthermore, the fact that the law restricts the 'protection' of their (communal) rights only to the thus designated smaller areas, means that the indigenous population can only assert some (individual) land-rights by becoming colonos themselves, which produces a similar result, as it also undermines the bases of their traditional livelihood. Conflicts between colonos and indigenous groups usually relate to the land question, but are also an expression of wider antagonisms between two different 'modes of live'. Generally, these conflicts play more strongly on the expanding fringes of the colonization

area and occur particularly during the first period of establishment a holding.

A similar conflict over the land arises often with big companies that hold vast tracts of lands for the study, exploration or exploitation of mineral and other natural resources (e.g. forestry).

Whereas the relation with the above two other holders is clearly conflictive in the sense that they dispute the colono's claim on the land, this is definitely not always the case with capitalist farms in the area. The same applies to agro-companies in labour intensive agricultural exploitation of natural resources, e.g. wood and rubber. These companies may permit temporary settlement so as to ensure an adequate supply of and control over labour. The colono then becomes a semi agricultural labourer.

In the case of capitalist farming, the colono may be needed not just only as an agricultural labourer. Particularly when the area is peripheral in terms of the quality of the soil and of the distance to the market, land and labour tend to be used rather extensively. However, land needs to be colonized and to be made ready for agricultural production. It is here that the colono plays, an essential role, willingly or unwillingly, such depending on his own motivation.

In as far as the second set of relations is concerned, one may ask whether there is any difference in the kinds of agrarian relations in the colonization area and the ones that characterize the settled areas. Quite naturally it would be extremely difficult to give a general answer, as there are also considerable variations within the settled areas. Nevertheless, some observations can be made regarding the specificity of areas in colonization. The very fact that new land is being incorporated, gives the agrarian structure a more open character. There is still some scope for mobility not only at the top but also at the lower end. How much and for how long depends essentially on the role the colonization area plays in the context of national development.

The phenomenon of 'desertion' of holdings should also be seen in this context of this mobility at the lower end. In order to explain this, it is necessary to go back to the dynamics of the colonization process. Generally the colono will not complete the colonization of his own holding, but will sell his holding long before all the land has been cleared and converted into agricultural use. The very simple reason is that he does not generally have enough capital resources of his own (or access to it) to finance the production of cash crop or livestock. Thus, after some years he will sell his holding which now contains 'tierras con mejoras'. By selling the labour invested in the land through colonization activities is converted into capital savings.

This process in part sustains itself in the sense that 'older generation' colonists would appear as buyers of holdings which in this way come for sale. Other buyers would be newly arriving not-so-poor colonos, speculative merchants and capitalist farmers who aim to expand their holdings.

Having finished in the above way a first cycle of colonization, he may move to the outer fringe of the colonization area in order to start completely anew with another cycle of colonization. Particularly if the colono aims to acquire a holding of his own in his region of origin this may be decided as it is improbable that the savings obtained from the first cycle of colonization will be sufficient to purchase even a minimal holding in his region of origin, in view of the large differences in land prices. In this case, he continues to be a 'pure' colonist but with the difference that he now has accumulated considerable savings. A second pattern would be as follows: the settler, rather than beginning anew on the outer fringe, prefers to buy out another nearby settler who owns a holding with still a very large proportion of uncleared land. Since this holding will cost less than the amount for which he sold his own,

he is also able to finance the agricultural activities. In this case he is a combined settler-farmer (a second generation settler). A variation within the second option (particularly in case of older generation settlers) would be to diversify activities. The savings constitute working capital for small or local trade, or enable the purchase of a boat, jeep or lorry, with which the colono aims to service his local area. Eventually, and if successful in these non-farm activities he may after a number of years decide to leave his primary occupation altogether and move to town.¹³

The reasons for choosing the second option may be various. First of all, the tremendous hardships of frontier colonization itself, particularly of starting anew at the outerfringe, signify a heavy drain of human energy. Moreover, in subsequent first cycles of colonization, the colonist may also not be able to count on his family labour if grown-up children leave the household. Finally, the need to increase or only to secure a more stable, annual monetary income necessary to sustain the household, may induce him to opt for the second kind of option.

Whatever the actual choice is being made, the point that concerns us here is that the group of small settlers themselves is by far not a socially homogeneous group.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Generally two objectives are identified in the policy documents on colonization and settlement. First of all, the aim to increase agricultural production so as to cater for increased national demand or to obtain - often much needed - export earnings. Secondly, to contribute to solve the social problem of minifundio, landlessness and rural poverty.

Unfortunately rarely priority is indicated and almost always it is assumed that both can be achieved simultaneously. This however may be doubted. In order to demonstrate this, let us consider each separately.

Starting with the latter, these policies may respond to the social conflicts over the land in the settled part of the country. In this case the agricultural acts a 'safety valve' for these social conflicts (Katzman, 1977 and Schuurman, 1978). Instead of engaging in land reform, a new areal outlet is provided for the expansion of the peasant economy. Alternatively, the government policy may respond to the need of capitalist agriculture to expand. Here a distinction needs to be made between a situation in which small scale farming can profitably respond to this and situation in which it has no definite advantage, and consequently it 'competes' with large scale farming exclusively based on wage labour. Furthermore, it should be recognized that in case the colonization originates from large scale farming, it requires labour to be attracted to the area. As the general social conditions of outlying areas may not be particularly attractive for labour to settle, the settlement of small family farms is a way to ensure a permanent labour supply. Consequently, government policies of colonization may be directed to cater for this need. Thus, to summarize, government policies of colonization and settlement, though they are nominally claimed to be designed for the rural poor, may have been motivated by different political and economic circumstances (and combinations within these). This in itself has considerable implications on the degree of 'success' or 'failure' of the schemes and projects that have been implemented with respect to that 'target group'.

In this context it is illuminating to discuss one of the outstanding and recurrent themes on colonization and settlement policies and planning, namely the issue of 'government directed' versus 'spontaneous' colonization (sometimes appearing as assisted versus unassisted). This issue seems very pertinent indeed since many have concluded that despite government assistance 'directed' colonists are not better off, if at all, than 'spontaneous' colonists.

Or in slightly different terms that directed projects have a lower chance of reaching the consolidation stage, than spontaneous settlement (Nelson, 1973). Recently, Schuurman (1978) in his study of colonization projects in four Andean countries, and Druand (1980) in his analysis of colonization in Ecuador and Colombia, arrived at the same conclusion. Both concluded furthermore, as also others before them, that government policy should support agricultural colonization indirectly instead of engaging in very expensive and little successful colonization project (cf Schuurman, 1978: 101/2). It is clear that there are all sorts of relevant practical planning problems related to directed colonization schemes which reduce cost effectiveness and which reduce the degree of 'success' of the projects per sé. Indeed and in the narrow sense, one might draw the first above-mentioned conclusion. After all, why bother so much and waste effort and resources if the same result can be obtained with less effort and resources? However, neither this argument nor the second aforementioned conclusion may be relevant if the directed colonization policy of the government aims to induce a migration flow and bring about spontaneous colonization. Thus, a small number of directed settlement projects, well publicized in the settled part of the country, is a way to induce such a spontaneous flow. This role of directed colonization in relation to spontaneous colonization has rarely been studied in Latin America. Elsewhere, for instance in Indonesia, the official standpoint is that the transmigration settlement programme serves such a purpose (e.g. Hardjono, 1977). If this would also apply to Latin America - something that may be questioned, in the sense that the 'excess' rural population problems is less relevant - then it is not either directed or guiding spontaneous colonization, but rather the two together, with only intertemporal changes in emphasis in policy.

A second situation in which the conclusion may be questioned in a wider sense, is when the government directed colonization projects served to attract labour into the area, where the spontaneous colonization is explained in the context of expanding large scale farming. The implied irrationality of government policy and the failure of the projects in the narrow sense acquire now a different meaning. A simple comparison between directed and spontaneous colonists should be replaced by an analysis of their function of labour supply for the large scale farming in the area. Finally, if the underlying motivations of government policy is not to 'direct' and induce labour migration, but to develop family farming, then the following questions need to be answered: 1) Is small scale family farming viable in the area concerned and in the face of the presence of large scale farming. and 2) what is done (or not done) by the government to 'protect' small scale colonists during the early phases after arrival up to the development of their holdings as viable family farms? Also here the question is not directed versus spontaneous family farm settlements but these together versus large scale farming.

At this stage some preliminary conclusions can be drawn. One is that the issue of directed versus spontaneous colonization has a danger of being overly simplistic and of diverting attention away from the real issues of the role of government policy of colonization in the wider perspective of agricultural development in the country.

Secondly, the argument that government instead of engaging in directed colonization projects, should support spontaneous colonization, may be either built on a false premise as to the motivation of the government policy or if not, i.e. if the real aim is to create viable small farms, then direct intervention may be needed but in different fields e.g. not providing colonists with an indicated holding, but rather to intervene in the market of land transactions.

CONCLUSIONS

It seems reasonable to conclude that it is rather difficult to capture the behaviour of the colono and the process of colonization with the stereotype concept of family farmer.

Government policies in this respect may have suffered from an inadequate diagnosis or at least a too simplistic one. Secondly, and for whatever deeper reasons, expectations as to the policy outcomes were often exaggerated and to an extent unfounded in view of the number of and variation in the kinds of difficulties encountered by both colono and the state when implementing these policies. These difficulties go far beyond farming per sé and concern micro, macro and regional dimensions of the colonization process. In this respect it is important to point the potential gap or conflict between labour intensive colonization and land extensive and/or capital intensive agricultural production. In so far as agricultural production in the colonization area is concerned, it is useful to distinguish between cash crops for export and for the domestic market. Independent colonos generally have little access to export crop lines, certainly if not assisted by specialized government or semi-public agencies. Moreover, uncertainties as regards prices make these unattractive as main staples for small colonist producers.

With regard to the domestic market these uncertainties will be less dramatic, but also there remain structural disadvantages of small production, particularly in peripheral colonization areas.

Directly related to this issue, is the one of the market behaviour and the general motivation of the colono. There are various reasons to question the stereotype view of (capitalist) market behaviour of the colono. It may however be counterproductive to put another instead e.g. a 'chayanovian peasant'. Factors internal to the peasant household as well as external ones (e.g. little bargaining power in the market and viz. the state), may explain why colono acted or reacted differently

than one might have expected on the basis of either stereotype behavioural logic. Furthermore, colonos may not necessarily aspire permanent settlement in the area. This also would affect quite naturally their production and market behaviour.

Whatever the concrete context of a colonization process, it seems reasonable to conclude that the agrarian structure in such areas has a much more open character. Because additional land is being incorporated there is scope for social mobility not only at the top but also at the lower end of the agrarian structure. This does not mean that the idyllic notion applies of an 'open frontier' where democratic values and institutions are born (Turner's thesis regarding the role of the frontier in North America). Quite on the contrary, colonization processes often involve violent struggles for land. The fact that in the case of Columbia, the colonization areas have become and still continue to be main strongholds of rural guerilla movements is of significance in this respect (e.g. the FARC in Caquetá, the ELN in Darién/Uraba and Medio-Magdalena).

After having reviewed the activities and actors in and the main market and geographical factors conditioning the colonization process, government policies were discussed. Though these are generally claimed to be in favour of the rural poor, they are often motivated by different political and economic circumstances and considerations. The criticism that quite correctly can be levied against government directed colonization schemes, however, should not lead to an abandonment of direct government intervention. Rather, not only instruments but also the objectives of government intervention need to be considered so as to come up with more adequate and feasible policy proposals.

NOTES

1. See Nelson (1973); Becker (1980); Babira-Scazzocchio (1980), Schuurman (1978) and Katzman (1977).
2. For Columbia it is estimated that in the first year some 3-5 has are cleared. This figure would decline over the years. The total hectarage of what is an average sized holding would then take 5-10 years.
3. Bolivia (Santa Cruz) and parts of Western Ecuador are exceptions.
4. For a general argument about the importance of the kind of export stage for development, see Hirschman (1977).
5. A clear example in this respect has been the agricultural colonization in Santa Cruz, Bolivia (sugar, cotton).
6. Bert Helmsing, 1982b, "Agriculture and Industry in a Regional Perspective", ISS Working Paper no. 4, The Hague.
7. In the literature often considered as alternative options (e.g. World Bank, 1978). This may sometimes be a too simplistic representation.
- 8.
9. Schuurman, while accepting the microeconomic decision-making model of Chayanow, rejects his macro framework, cf. p. 241
10. Environmental degradation, caused by the colonization process itself, may result in more frequent 'natural' disasters.

11. Cf. Medina de Ruiz, 1971.
12. For literature see Helmsing, 1982 (a).
13. Very little research has been done so far on urbanization and the urban economy in colonization areas. For Brazil see Volbeda (1982).

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