

Essay (1st draft)¹

Title: “Dualistic agrarian policies and development cooperation: understanding the political economy of Brazilian agricultural cooperation with Mozambique”

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1. Introduction

Brazilian agricultural policy is notorious for its dualistic structure. Two Ministries – one mostly dedicated for promoting large-scale commercially oriented agriculture (Ministry for Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply – MAPA), another for supporting small-holder, family-based farming (Ministry for Agrarian Development – MDA) – coexist and dispute political influence and financial resources. Different civil society organizations react to this political environment engaging with their preferential Ministries. However, dialogue between those two poles of civil society or between Ministries is almost inexistent. Thus, dominant political strategy has been marked by the accommodation of two different, often contradictory, agricultural policy agendas.

This dualistic political division reflects not only how agrarian dynamics have historically evolved in the country but also how current political forces are organized. In fact, this duality does not represent a unique feature of Brazilian agricultural landscape, but points to its roots that can be traced back to earlier and ongoing international debates on rural development perspectives and how development strategies in general are conceptualized.

As pointed out by recent studies, the dualistic structure of Brazilian agricultural policy is influencing the shape of international development cooperation policy, particularly South-South Cooperation – SSC (Cabral and Shankland, 2013; Pierri, 2013). It was suggested that the pursuit of cooperation policies based on two partially opposing development views might contribute to the replication, on the external level, of Brazilian internal contradictions (Cabral et al., 2013).

Mozambique, the largest partner of Brazilian development cooperation policy, is placed in a prominent position in this regard. Through SSC projects focused primarily on technical cooperation, Mozambique has been trying to import elements of the “Brazilian model” of rural development (Chichava et al., 2013; Scoones et al., 2013). Current cooperation portfolio in agriculture is diverse, including projects that are inspired by the modernization of the Brazilian agribusiness sector, as well as socially inclusive policies targeted at the heterogeneous family farming sector.

Many of the principles, approaches and methods behind those initiatives are drawn from previous experiences of Brazilian programs, representing the intention of Mozambican officials of adapting policies already established in Brazil to their national context. However, given the enormous differences between the rural sectors of the two countries, to “import” these programs would imply crucial transformations of their nature. It remains an open question how far rural development perspectives rooted in particularities of Brazilian agrarian dynamics can be of use for projects to be implemented in totally different rural contexts, as the case of Mozambique.

This essay intends to discuss some of the challenges found in transferring elements of the “Brazilian model of rural development” to Mozambique. In particular, it discusses constraints in reforming current cooperation policy towards more emphasis on the more inclusive development agenda of family farming policy. Data and analysis are based on secondary literature and on exploratory field work conducted by the author in Brazil in the months of January and February and in Mozambique in April and May 2014. More than 50 policy-makers, representatives of civil

society and researchers were interviewed in Brasília and in Maputo, Nampula and Tete provinces in Mozambique.

The essay represents a piece of ongoing research work within the broader research project: “The changing face of South-South agricultural cooperation and investment flows: implications for governance”, conducted jointly by the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), together with local partners in Mozambique and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, Switzerland.

The paper is structured as follows. Following this introduction, Section 2 discusses, from a political economy perspective, how the dualistic structure of Brazilian agricultural policy evolved historically. Section 3 explores how this division influences the shape of current Brazilian international cooperation policy in agriculture, with the example of Mozambique. It briefly describes the theories of change implicit in some of the most important cooperation projects developed by the two countries and how these are strongly influenced by the narratives of development referred to in section 2. Section 4 introduces some of the challenges of reproducing successful rural development experiences grounded in Brazilian agrarian history, context and political configuration. Finally, a conclusion introduces elements for further study.

2. The dualism in Brazilian agricultural policy

Brazil is one of the few countries in the world – if not the sole example – where two Ministries for agriculture with equal hierarchical status coexist at the Federal administration. This arrangement is by no chance an accidental one. It is rooted in the country's history of agrarian dynamics and politics and it finds references on how the current rural development debate at the international level is structured. This section touches on two points: i) it briefly describes elements of these opposing rural development perspectives, ii) it explains how this dualistic political structure was formed in Brazil, commenting on how this arrangement has accommodated opposing political forces in the coalition government of the ruling Labor Party (PT).

2.1 Rural development perspectives

Reasonably frequently, rural development is framed following two opposing perspectives. Even though nuances and diversity abound along the two poles, discourses and narratives often make reference to, on the one side, strategies based on large-scale capitalized and mechanized agriculture with higher shares of external inputs, higher dependency on hired labor and more international market integration, on the other side, based on small-scale family farming units, more autonomous in relation to external inputs, capital and markets.

This division is certainly not a novelty, with roots that could be traced to earlier debates on development and agricultural growth represented in the literature on development studies (Buch-Hansen and Lauridsen, 2012; Ellis and Biggs, 2001). Although relatively simplistic – indeed, world agriculture does not lack examples of integration between smallholder production systems and large-scale industrial agriculture in various ways – this duality has been repeatedly presented in several international debates on sustainability, equity, development, climate change and food security, to name a few (HLPE, 2013; IFAD and UNEP, 2013).

In terms of broader development perspectives, the large-scale view is often associated with economically liberal and modernization discourses, which support the necessity of the attraction of foreign investment and restricted State interventions in the market, besides other measures for increasing economic efficiency, in order to foster agricultural growth (Collier, 2008; Collier and Dercon, 2013).

Particularly in the case of Brazil, the globalization project that prioritized market competition over State interventions represented in the neoliberal discourse was an important factor driving the reform of agricultural interventions in the late 1980s and 90s (Chaddad and Jank, 2006). Given the export-oriented profile of Brazilian agribusiness sector, elements of these liberal narratives still find space in current political discourse, despite of the crisis faced by the neoliberal paradigm since the 2007-08 financial crisis and the competition of emerging alternative development views.

Two observations are of importance in this regard. One refers to the fact that the liberalization paradigm was more influential in the reforms of agricultural trade, food pricing policies and rural public extension than other domains of State intervention, such as public research and infrastructure. The second observation is that mainstream discourses² on agricultural development have indeed been updated in Brazil in recent years, incorporating some concerns with distributive and environmental consequences of liberal agricultural policy (Garcia and Vieira Filho, 2014). To which extent these additional concerns are incorporated challenging the market-oriented view of agriculture policy in the mainstream discourse is still an open question.

The small-scale view, on the other hand, is normally linked to more endogenous development strategies, often pointing to more State involvement in market development – such as those proposed by developmental State and developmentalism theories – focusing less on economic efficiency and assuming broader concerns with benefit distribution and social welfare (Dorward et al., 2005; Xiaoyun et al., 2012).

In the case of Brazil, earlier efforts in advancing political agendas based on the smallholder development paradigm are found since at least the post-Second World War period; for instance, with the structuralist studies of Celso Furtado (Furtado, 1969) or the left-inspired *Peasant Leagues* (Stedile, 2006). These efforts started gathering sufficient political momentum to challenge the mainstream paradigm after the re-democratization, particularly through more involvement of civil society in politics.

Given the importance of regional dynamics in the Brazilian political system, one can identify different movements in the macro-regions of the country struggling to push a smallholder-oriented agricultural policy in their localities. In the Northeast, for instance, church-based organizations, family farmer representatives and NGOs working with the rural poor started coordinating their activities in networks that would later form the Semiarid Network – ASA (da Silva, 2006). Similar efforts took place in the Amazon – and to a lesser extent in the Cerrado region – where environmental issues also played a decisive role in shaping political action.

But it was perhaps in the Centre-South of Brazil that a more structured movement pushing an agricultural agenda centered on the smallholder family unit reached more politically relevant results. Partially influenced by European studies on the multifunctionality of agriculture and emerging alternative rural development perspectives (van der Ploeg et al., 2000), a strong family farming political movement started shaping the agricultural policy agenda at least since late 1980s, demanding “specific public policies for family farming”. Gradually, mostly due to civil society pressure than by government initiative, agricultural policy began incorporating elements of these social demands, initially through instituting a preferential credit policy (Favareto, 2006). This would lead to the creation of a separate bureaucracy to deal with this new set of targeted policies, a process described in more details in the following sub-section.

² Mainstream discourses are referred here as those reproduced by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA), the private and political representatives of the agribusiness sectors and the epistemic community which gravitates around this sectors. For a good representation of these discourses, the readings of *Revista de Política Agrícola* (<http://www.agricultura.gov.br/politica-agricola/publicacoes/revista-de-politica-agricola>) and *Agroanalysis* (<http://www.agroanalysis.com.br/>) are recommended.

2.2 Formation of Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and accommodation of opposing political forces in the Labor Party (PT) coalition government

As commented before, pressure from civil society, in particular from rural union movements of Centre-South Brazil, started to influence certain aspects of agricultural policy after re-democratization. Among others, two demands were frequent during this period of political mobilization: agrarian reform and special treatment for smallholder family farmers (Favareto, 2006). As in the case of many other countries, political mobilization was inflated by major structural transformations that took place in Brazilian rural areas with the liberalization of agricultural markets in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as many small-scale farmers were going through severe economic difficulties caused by higher market competition (Schneider et al., 2004).

One of the earlier responses government had envisioned was the design of a preferential credit policy for smallholders in 1994, which would later constitute the *National Program for Strengthening of Family Farming* (PRONAF). This credit policy also became the main policy framework for supporting the sector. Although initially designed for small farms with a certain asset base, it was gradually pushed by the mobilization of rural social movements for supporting more marginal farmers (Cabral et al., 2013).

In the front of agrarian reform struggles, also in the mid 1990s, clashes between police forces and the landless that resulted in several deaths³ has forced the government to take action on land issues. An Extraordinary Ministry for Land Issues was created in 1995. In 1999, this Extraordinary Ministry was converted into the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), which incorporated the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA), the PRONAF, and other family farming policies previously operated under the Secretary of Rural Development at the Ministry of Agriculture (MAPA). In other words, throughout the 1990s, family farming policies reached a much higher degree of institutionalization, culminating in having its own bureaucratic body.

After 2002 elections, won by left-oriented Labor Party (PT), many rural movements saw an opportunity to further strengthen the family farming agenda within the increasingly diverse agricultural policy landscape. Some, however, with high expectation with the first left-oriented electoral victory after re-democratization, declared enormous frustration with the relative prudence of the first administration of President Lula da Silva in conserving and supporting an agribusiness-oriented agenda (Sabourin, 2007).

Besides economic reasons, there are good political considerations in defense of a rather conservative position of Lula in keeping strong support for agribusiness. Multi-partisan within the complex Brazilian presidential system results that even when power swings from one side to the other – from left to right, or opposite – the winning party will most likely be required to establish a coalition government with the amorphous and ideological-neutral center party Brazilian Democratic Movement Party - PMDB and other satellites. The “governability”, i.e., the

³ Two fatidic episodes are the massacres of Corumbiara (August 1995, 10 people killed) and El Dorado dos Carajás (April 1996, 19 people killed).

capacity of controlling majority at both the Chambers of Deputies and the Senate and therefore the capacity of approving laws, lies heavily in this alliance.

Since PMDB and other minor parties of similar profile have on its cadres several conservative agricultural leaders aligned with the mainstream view on agricultural development, the PT alliance with the centre results in a rather paradoxical balanced outcome. On the one hand, PT, more precisely, the left-wing faction of the party, Socialist Democracy (DS) – conserves the informal right of appointing the Minister of Agrarian Development and the political space of operating an agricultural agenda focused on smallholder family farming. On the other hand, PMDB - with the support of a more cross-party conservative agricultural political group called *Bancada Ruralista* – receives the right of appointing the Minister of Agriculture and, therefore, the political space for operating an agricultural agenda focused on the agribusiness development. Certainly, some competition between these two political forces is evident, for instance, at the level of discourses⁴ or during the negotiations of Ministry's policy budgets⁵. But more than competition, this coexistence represents the accommodation of rather opposing political forces and contradictory agricultural policy agendas.

⁴ In despite of almost 15 years of existence, many conservative rural leaders keep insisting on the argumentation that MDA should cease to exist, mentioning potential economic inefficiencies in financing two parallel bureaucracies. It can be argued, though, that the economic argument is an instrumental one, which tries to hide the real interests in incorporating the MDA inside MAPA, which is to gain political control over its policies.

⁵ The Agricultural and Livestock Plan (PAP), operated by MAPA, totaled R\$ 136.1 billion (approximately USD 70 billion), for the agricultural year 2013/14. The Agricultural Plan for Family Farming (*Plano Safra*), operated by MDA, totaled R\$ 39 billion (USD 17.6 billion), for the same period. Both budgets have evolved at higher rates than agricultural growth in the recent years, with *Plano Safra* growing considerably faster than its counterpart. For the agricultural year 2003/04, *Plano Safra* amounted to approximately 20% of PAP 2003/04. 10 years later, this proportion has risen to 28% (MAPA, 2013; MDA, 2003, 2013).

3. Brazil – Mozambique agricultural cooperation

In a context of growing interest from other developing countries in the successes of emerging economies, Brazil seems particularly attractive for those willing to leverage their rural sectors. Among others, transfer of research and technologies for tropical agriculture and policy instruments addressing food insecurity by connecting smallholders to markets are an important part of the Brazilian portfolio of cooperation projects with African and Latin American countries (Câmara Interministerial de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional - CAISAN, 2013; Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada - IPEA and Agência Brasileira de Cooperação - ABC, 2013).

These cooperation policies do not take place in a political vacuum. Indeed, recent studies have been pointing out that the duality described in the previous sections influences the shape of Brazilian development cooperation policy in a number of ways (Cabral and Shankland, 2013; Pierri, 2013). This seems to be extremely relevant given that internal contradictions, such as the coexistence of two opposing agricultural policy agendas, can potentially be exported along with the transfer of technologies and technical support (Cabral et al., 2013).

This section discusses these points in light of three of the most important cooperation projects developed by Brazil and Mozambique in agriculture: ProSavana, More Food International and PAA África.

3.1 Cooperation portfolio

Brazilian development cooperation in general lacks a clearly structured centralized strategy (Leite et al., 2013; Milani, 2014). The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) assumes a coordination and management role and provides some strategic orientation. However, given its lower political profile in Brazilian public bureaucracy, subsidiary hierarchy⁶ and consequently financial restrictions, it has difficulties to take the lead in designing comprehensive strategy mandates. It results that different government agencies have been operating cooperation programs following their lines of reasoning, whenever requested in the demand-driven process of cooperation supply.

Given the dualism of the agricultural policy landscape describe before, it seems reasonable to infer that cooperation programs in agriculture are strongly biased by the development perspectives assumed by the two different political groups previously mentioned. As stated by Pierri (2013) p. 72, “While Brazil’s dominant discourse at the level of UN Rome-based agencies ... and in plurilateral initiatives such as G20 revolves around the ‘family farming for food security’ motto, the country’s technological and research capacity for large-scale capitalist agriculture is made available whenever requested in bilateral or trilateral arrangement, whether for biofuels or food crop production, particularly in Africa”.

⁶ ABC locates between the third and four levels of Federal bureaucracy. It is a section belonging to one of the nine Subsecretaries within the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE).

It has been assumed (Dyer, 2013), therefore, that cooperation in agriculture has been influenced by: i) an agribusiness development model, which focusses on technical and research cooperation coupled with higher involvement of the private sector, and ii) a family-farming model, which does not deny modernization strategies for increasing productivity of small-scale farmers, but also assumes the importance of building differentiated smallholder-targeted policies and institutional structures for addressing food insecurity (Leite, forthcoming). Not surprisingly, this mirrors the internal duality mentioned in section 2.

A more detailed look at the most important cooperation projects sheds some light on this debate. In terms of scale and number of institutions involved, three programs outstand:

- i) ProSavana: a triangular cooperation between Japan, Mozambique and Brazil, aimed at developing agricultural research capacity and the economic development of Nacala corridor, in the Northern region of Mozambique;
- ii) More Food International – Mozambique (MFI-Moz): a bilateral program which combines preferential credit for the import of Brazilian agricultural machinery, coupled with technical assistance on the development of family-farming supportive policies; and
- iii) Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA Africa) – Mozambique: a multilateral program involving Brazil, Mozambique, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which intends to promote local food purchase from smallholders for school feeding.

3.2 ProSavana's theory of change and model of development

In the past two years, ProSavana has been subject to outstanding interest of several stakeholders, including many researchers (Ekman and Macamo, 2014; Ferreira, 2012; Fingermann, 2014; Funada Classen, 2013a, b; Jaiantilal, 2013; Nogueira, 2013; Nogueira and Ollinaho, 2013; Schlesinger, 2013). It has also been under critical scrutiny of local and international civil society organizations (2013; ADECRU, 2014; Justiça Ambiental, 2012, 2013a, b; Paiva, 2013; UNAC, 2012; UNAC et al., 2013; UNAC, 2013). A comprehensive analysis of this program, including the reasons and issues that generate the enormous controversy around it, is out of the scope of this paper. However, in order to analyze how rural development theoretical conceptualizations influence program design, it seems important to revisit some elements of ProSavana's theory of change.

First, it has to be acknowledged that ProSavana was initially highly inspired on Prodecer, a Japan-supported program implemented from the 70s in the *Cerrado* region of Brazil claimed to be one of the important driving factors of the *Cerrado* agricultural transformation (Fingermann, 2014; Funada Classen, 2013a). Prodecer invested heavily on transferring technologies for large-scale soybeans based agriculture, with the aim of supplying Japanese demand, in a development model that is still today a reference on agribusiness-oriented agriculture. Certainly, to affirm that ProSavana is inspired on Prodecer is different than to say that ProSavana is a reproduction of it, as some have claimed (Ekman and Macamo, 2014). Mozambican specific conditions – for instance a much higher population density and a peasant-based economy in most of the program's target zone – force a certain degree of adaptation of ProSavana initial ideas. But it

does shed some light on the imaginary that was initially envisioned by program officials, which is the development of agribusinesses such as those today found in the *Cerrado* region of Brazil.

Second, as it can be clearly identified in several evidences – ProSavana’s Concept Note, interview of officials, public statements, alignment with Mozambican Strategic Plan for Agricultural Development – PEDSA (MINAG, 2010), among others – two key elements form the core part of ProSavana’s theory of change: i) a clear market orientation as the main force of transforming the currently peasant-based economy into a “modern” economy; ii) the necessity of incorporating agricultural technology to rapidly increase productivity and assist this structural transformation.

Indeed, smallholder farmers are supposed to be part of this structural transformation, i.e., one cannot simply state that this is a program focusing only on large-scale farming. But how they are supposed to be included is the relevant question. Current proposals rely on contract farming and cluster-based agricultural growth, raising some important concerns with smallholder autonomy and as protagonists of their development trajectories, as some authors have been suggesting (Nogueira, 2013). Also, the market orientation of the program clearly locates the roles of the private and public sectors within the program, as stated in a recent article published by one of the stakeholders: “public investments by national government and international donor agencies seek to realize a suitable investment climate for farmers and private companies” (Tawa et al., 2014, p.4).

3.3 MFI-Moz and PAA Africa theories of change and model of development

Different than ProSavana, MFI-Moz and PAA Africa have been receiving much less attention from researchers so far. This does not inhibit a contextualization of their implicit theories of change within certain development perspectives. The origins of the two programs tell a great deal about which development trajectories they intend to support. If in the case of ProSavana, stakeholders have been quite cautious in stating that the program is not a simple reproduction of a previous Brazilian experience, in the case of MFI-Moz and PAA Africa this is exactly the opposite.

To a great extent, the MFI-Moz represents an extension, to the international level, of a nationwide program initiated as a response of MDA to the 2007/08s food price crisis. It carries the same name and it operates through similar instruments, such as the provision of machinery at below-market interest rates. Obviously, important reconfigurations took place when designing its international dimension. For example, instead of financing the machinery directly to the farmers through a bank agency, as in the case of the national version, Brazil signs a preferential credit line with Mozambique, which is used for the acquisition of Brazilian machineries. Moreover, MFI-Moz it is even referred by officials themselves as an extension of the national program.

The same can be affirmed for PAA Africa. Food purchasing policies targeting at family farming were initiated in 2004 and, given its recognized success, became important cases for potential policy transfer (Chmielewska and Souza, 2010). As with MFI-Moz, reconfigurations are evident when the programs are adapted into Mozambican context, but PAA Africa does represent

intentional reproductions of Brazilian experiences pushed by those political actors aligned with a smallholder family farming oriented agenda for rural development.

In terms of theories of change, MFI-Moz does not deny modernization strategies for increasing productivity of small-scale farmers (Leite, forthcoming). Indeed, preferential credit for machinery acquisition could also fit more agribusiness oriented development perspective. But two things are claimed to distinguish the program from this perspective. First, the scale – only machineries adapted for small-scale use are being financed under the program⁷. Second, the coupling of the credit instrument with technical assistance for the design of family-farming supportive policies. How far the economic dimension suppresses the technical assistance dimension of the program seems to be a relevant question in better positioning the program within broader development discourses.

The theory of change of PAA Africa is relatively clearer to locate within development discourses. PAA Africa in Mozambique represents an example of Home-Grown School Feeding – HGSF (IPC-IG, 2012), which draws from the notions of “structured demand” or “demand-assisted” agricultural growth. The rationale behind the program suggests that smallholder farmers cannot engage in fair market integration because of structural market failures in the input, transportation and technology/knowledge systems. As Sumberg and Sabates-Wheeler described (2010): “by ‘structuring’ demand in a way that makes it easier, less risky and more profitable for small-scale farmers to engage with markets, and by providing an array of complementary services (training, credit, access to technology)”, these programs are used to integrate small-scale farmers into markets in facilitated terms. The focus on public support for the establishment of a smallholder-based rural development agenda is then clear in this case.

⁷ The implications that small-scale in Brazil might signify large-scale in other agrarian contexts – such as in Mozambique – is an important debate.

4. Challenges in advancing a socially inclusive family farming agenda in Brazil – Mozambique cooperation in agriculture⁸

The previous sections have elaborated the characteristics of the current dualism in Brazilian agricultural policy and how this dualism has shaped development cooperation partnerships between Brazil and Mozambique. It was commented that one of the features of this cooperation is the role of different perspectives on rural development strategies in influencing program design. Another aspect is the influence of “successes of a Brazilian model” of rural development, be it the case of more agribusiness or be it in the case of more family-farming oriented programs.

If policy design is enriched by development imaginaries, policy implementation is constrained by real world practicalities. This section 4 introduces some of the challenges of reproducing these relatively successful rural development experiences grounded in Brazilian agrarian history, context and political configuration in such a diverse social setting, as the case of Mozambique. Three points are explored: i) successes of a “Brazilian model” are very relative; ii) contextual pre-conditions for relative successes are not found in Mozambique; and iii) the promotion of a socially inclusive agenda faces some relevant constrains.

4.1 Relative successes

The three previously introduced cooperation programs – ProSavana, MFI-Moz and PAA Africa – are frequently associated with claimed successes of Brazilian policy experiences. References to the economic development of the agribusiness sector are often found in the narratives of both Brazilian and Mozambican officials operating ProSavana, for instance. The successes of national versions of More Food and PAA are normally taken for granted in the cases of MFI-Moz and PAA Africa.

There are a number of reasons to challenge simple conclusions in this regard. In the case of the agribusiness model, the enormous environmental and social impact caused by expansion of the agricultural frontier in the 1970s to mid-2000s in Brazil is relatively well-documented (Mueller, 1992). Social exclusion, rural-urban migration and land concentration in certain areas of the country are another set of negative consequences normally associated with the formation of the modern agribusiness sector (Canuto, 2004). The critical views are vast and they originate from a myriad of perspectives. The debate whether the economic development generated with the growth of the agribusiness sector compensates its socio and environmental impacts will certainly continue for many years to come.

Cautiousness also needs to be applied when accepting complete successes in the case of family farming policies. Given the immense heterogeneity, the terminology “family farming sector” itself denotes much more political connotation than sociological correspondence, some have argued (Navarro e Pedrosa, 2011). Indeed, in despite of already three generations of rural

⁸ This section should be seen as an introduction to some of challenges in advancing a socially inclusive agenda in the Brazil-Mozambique agricultural cooperation. First, this is a non-exhaustive list of main constrains. Second, it is expected that the discussions within the Nestor Kirchner Scholarship activities would substantially improve further elaboration of the arguments introduced in this section.

development policies in Brazil (Schneider et al., 2010), a vast number of smallholder farmers are still completely unassisted by the public policies that could support development trajectories. Favareto (2013) speaks of three categories of family farming: a consolidated, intermediate and peripheral family farming. The last category denotes those families which hardly generate any income from farming and that are strongly dependent on social support policies.

4.2 Contextual pre-conditions for relative successes

Specifically in the case of Brazil, successful rural development experiences were dependent on a number of pre-conditions that at a first sight are rarely found in the Mozambican context. Policies targeted to improve family farming, such as the case of PAA for instance, built on the intensive cooperation between State agents with an active and dynamic civil society (Chmielewska and Souza, 2010). These organizations have managed to surpass their roles as merely watchdogs, significantly influencing policy design and implementation. Their interaction with State agents was possible due to the institution of participative consultative bodies within the administration, such as the National Council for Food and Nutritional Security – CONSEA.

There are few reasons to believe that similar conditions can be found in the Mozambican political context. Relationship between civil society and government has been rather conflictive in the last past few years, as the mobilization contesting ProSavana indicates. Besides, civil society itself is relatively weak, some have argued, being mostly urban-based movements with low representative base and highly dependent on northern aid resources. Exceptions do exist, but it seems reasonable to conclude that the configuration of civil society and government relationships assume totally different configurations in Mozambique than in Brazil.

Also the expansion of commercial agriculture and the agricultural frontier to the Brazilian central savannahs required some pre-conditions. Not only adaptation of technologies and consistent public support was important, but also the existence of vast tracts of sparsely populated land ready to be “grabbed” by migrant farmers expelled by land concentration in southern Brazil. (Cabral et al., 2012). In the case of Mozambique, both factors seem very rare. The figure of the migrant farmers, with a certain level of knowledge of modern agricultural technology and ready to take risk is inexistent. Sparsely populated land ready to be grabbed exists in some parts of the target area of ProSavana, but land has proven to be a very conflictive issue in Mozambican politics, also the mobilization against ProSavana has shown (Radio Moçambique, 2012).

4.3 Constrains in advancing a socially inclusive agenda in Brazilian-Mozambican cooperation

The large-scale commercially oriented dimension of the Brazil-Mozambique agricultural cooperation has been receiving far more political attention than the smallholder dimension. As an indication, ProSavana is the biggest trilateral cooperation program in the whole portfolio of ABC programs (Nogueira and Ollinaho, 2013). This, in despite of recognized potentially environmental and social negative impacts and the much more socially inclusive character of the policy dimension focused on smallholder family farming. Factors found both in the Brazilian and in the Mozambican current political contexts help to explain this statement.

In the case of Brazil, ProSavana has triggered attention from a number of agribusiness investors, who saw opportunities for entering Mozambican land and agricultural market (Nishimori, 2012). So far, these investments have failed to materialize, but they did act as support for the program leveraging its political importance, particularly on its initial phase.

But it is perhaps on the Mozambican side where the bigger constraints for advancing an endogenous family-farming based agricultural agenda are found. Just as it is stated in the current strategic plan for the agricultural sector, PEDSA, as very similar to the narratives around ProSavana, Mozambican government officials currently have a clear favorite which development trajectory they would like to support: a market-oriented agricultural sector, which is able to transform the peasant-based economy into a “modern” economy. Both external capital and agricultural technology have a key role in this process. This can also be identified in the design of MFI-Moz within Mozambique, where the interviews made clear that the real interest in participating in the program lies on acquiring the machinery at preferential prices only. The technical support for designing comprehensive policy packages for supporting smallholder family farmers are clearly a rather supplementary option.

One specific factor of assistance in understanding the market-oriented modernization focus relates to a certain degree of frustration with standard northern-south cooperation projects. As some officials have assumed, certain aspects of these projects are forcing them to try alternatives, such as: i) the small scale under which many of these projects operate, ii) its limited periods of interventions, such as 2 or 5 years, and iii) the low level of sustainability and the dependency created by these aid interventions are driving the government to look for south-south alternatives.

5. Conclusion

This paper introduced some of the challenges faced by Brazilian and Mozambican policy-makers in their cooperation in agriculture. It explored how different perspectives of rural development are reproduced in the current political configuration of the agricultural policy agenda in Brazil. And it described how these different perspectives of rural development influences the shape of the cooperation policy between the two countries. More specifically, it indicated some constrains for reforming the current cooperation policy towards more emphasis on the more inclusive development agenda of family farming policy.

The analysis of the Brazil-Mozambique development cooperation projects in agriculture shows some common challenges in the intent of reproducing relative policy successes from one socio-political context to another. Policies are, to a large extent, deeply embedded in context, history and configurations of political power. If these are not taken into account, we face the risk of accepting a rather technocratic and neutral view on how policies are designed and implemented.

To incorporate contextual and political economy elements in the analysis of cooperation policy could serve to advance the current knowledge on Brazil-Mozambique development cooperation. Aiming to reform this policy towards a more socially inclusive rural development agenda, some topics for further attention emerge: i) to understand the reasons why Mozambican government officials are currently opting for a clear market-oriented, private-sector driven development trajectory; ii) to locate, with more precision, how – and if – the peasant farming sector of Mozambique can be dynamically integrated in this market-oriented strategy without losing autonomy or even assuming a protagonist role in policy design and implementation; and iii) considering the adverse political context in Mozambique, to identify and jointly elaborate pragmatic choices that can be implement by those stakeholders supporting the family farming agenda.

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