

# *les dossiers* d'**AGROPOLIS** INTERNATIONAL

*Expertise of the scientific community*



## Societies and sustainable development

*Contribution of the social sciences*

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# Public goods, policies *and international regulations*

**A**griculture, in all of its forms, represents a major global challenge (food security, poverty alleviation, renewable resource management, fossil fuel depletion, climate change). International competition, liberalization and decentralization policies underpin the development of international flows, prompting reorientation of activities and farms, and thus restructuring of territories and sector-oriented agricultural dynamics.

Tools developed by Agropolis International teams to analyse agricultural and rural dynamics help to account for: (i) the integration of sustainable development dimensions, and (ii) the linkage of decision scales and levels. At least one of the following phenomena now applies to all local situations:

- globalization dynamics, characterized by the development of companies and powerful integrated agrifood subsectors
- the slow, uncertain and deficient emergence of 'global governance' of resources and global challenges
- local dynamics that enable territorial governance systems to be implemented in a decentralization and local resource management framework, often counteracting with global issues.

With public policymaking for the agricultural sector and the emergence of international regulations, it is essential to focus research on public policies so as to gain insight into: (i) the shift in national regulations towards multilevel polycentrism, (ii) the inclusion of sometimes contradictory dimensions, and (iii) the restructuring of political systems.

'Scaling', 'multilevel' 'global' are conceptually important terms. International/multilateral standards, schedules and commitments may already be set, but it is always local systems that supply the global public goods targeted by these coordinations. Analyses should thus correlate international processes that produce diagnoses, standards and objectives with local development situations in the framework of national systems. Such multilevel analyses can generate insight into linkages between different stakeholders with varied legitimacies and interest, power and knowledge relationships within each of these systems. Since many stakeholders, sites, objectives and conditions are involved in these systems, it is essential to combine many case analyses with interpretations and transversal analyses concerning the development of standards and public policies. Then it is necessary to gain insight into the behavioural and rhetorical standards associated with sustainable development, and their impacts on local management of projects, actions and sectoral policies. The character of relationships between international provisions and those of local and national interest and power would warrant analysis. Assessment of natural resource management conditions highlights gaps or complex linkages between the global and local aspects because the 'governance' of each territory is specifically tailored to local conditions. The importation of standards should not be judged impartially, but rather considered with respect to actual power relationships within territorial 'concrete action systems'.

A set of action domains (ecosystem conservation, fighting poverty, etc.) is grouped amongst the international standards listed under the expression 'sustainable development'. This has given rise to complex cooperation/conflict games and restructuring at the fringes, interstices and margins of sectors, organizations and domains. This questioning of the sectoral architecture by the transversality induced in the sustainable development concept is the result:

- (i) of economic internationalization, (ii) of the increasing weight of supranational policy levels and donors in the application of standards in problem definitions, (iii) of the challenging of former types of regulations between the centre and the periphery involving a rearrangement of the relationships in polycentric and multilevel forms and enhancement of the status of observation and analysis of territorial stakeholder configurations. Governance should be questioned with respect to this latter point, by accounting for the economic, social and political aspects of these new scales of action and their dynamics. The consultation and mobilization conditions of stakeholders and institutions through local democracy promotion initiatives are central to this issue. Transversal analysis is effective for assessing the restructuring of institutional and power relationships between the different public action stakeholders, under the effect of the integration of the action domain and the sectoral strategies adopted with respect to cooperation and conflicts.

Literature on transitions in political systems, especially democratic, favours a developmentalistic analytical scheme. A new system would replace the former one according to the 'one best way' democratization scheme. Most studies on changes highlight that hybridization occurs between inheritance and innovation since these changes involve uncertain interlacing of long-standing public action positions and practices on the one hand, and unfinished innovative tinkering on the other. The hybridization hypothesis shows the more or less conflictual combination of constraints associated with inherited political choices with new globalization requirements and social changes in the societies considered, especially those introduced by sustainable development issues. It also highlights the processes involved in policymaking 'change dynamics' such as in power relationships. These recompositions are reflected by the compartmentalization of social, institutional and political regulations. The territorialization of projects mobilizes stakeholders beyond just national or federal/federated considerations. It structures local action configurations around specific projects supplemented with interpretations of international procedures. All of these phenomena mark an increase in 'partial systems' of regulation of public problems, leading to the fragmentation of societies in both developing and developed countries. We hope to gain further insight into political changes in this direction. The presentations of units conducting research on reshaping public policies highlight that the contributions concern resources, as well as stakeholders and regulations.

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