Project Transitions

From "matter" to "resources", exploring spaces for bifurcation out of entrenched multi-rentier economies in the LAC region (case studies in Colombia, Haiti,...,...)

De la matière (première) aux ressources :
Trajectoires d’Etats rentiers en Amérique latine

Draft proposal

for a comparative research and training program, to be implemented by a network of Colombian and other LAC researchers

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Introduction

- Several years of experience, i.a. with Géraud Magrin (UMR Prodig, Paris I), with whom we convened the Network for Applied Research on Mining, Oil and Gas Activities (NARMA) (since 2005)

- Within the wider literature on resources, conflict and post-conflict, this research proposes: a. to improve our understanding of the intents of transition from unequal, often violent rentier-, to redistributive, productive- economies in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and b. to train resource persons able to provide advise and act in transition processes, specifically in the rural areas.

- Objective of this presentation: receive your comments and generate interest for your participation in eventual future project activities.
Theoretical Framework (1) «systems», resilience, stalemates, trajectory

• The first ideas: systems, stalemates (“impasses”)

• Earlier work in Colombia allowed to deepen our understanding of “Low governability systems” (a notion developed by Matus, 1987)

• Low-governability systems: socio-political and economic systems characterized by long periods of varying levels of intensive conflict and thus uncertainty, where horizontal cooperation strategies have failed, where none of the actors is able to generate cohesion or impose his views on the others and where structural coupling relationships (Maturana and Varela, 1992; Varela, 1983, 1989) between competing actors create multi-stable equilibria based on mutual interdependencies (van Vliet, 1997, 241).

• This approach nears the arguments displayed by Nazih Richani (1997, 2002, 2005) in his analysis of stalemates and the "war systems”.

• Trajectory, path dependency
Based on earlier arguments developed by Becht and Belzung, World Resource Management (1975) - who argued that no resource is "natural" -, Claude Raffestin (1980) insisted on the importance of distinguishing “matter” from “resource” (Raffestin, 1980).

e.g. crude, a mineral, land; versus : oil, a diamond, a given land use.

Raffestin then suggested four types of actors in the M-R arena:

1. those who only control matter M;
2. those with only the capacity to transform matter M into resource R;
3. those who control M and also have capacity to transform it into R; and
4. those who do not control M and neither have the capacity to transform M into R.

Each M-R arena has a specific configuration of actors.

Each transition implies a modification in that configuration.
Theoretical framework (3)
revenues and «rents »

- From M to R : revenues, small or massive
- Massive flows of revenues and the 4 dimensions of the “resource curse” : (conflicts; the tendency for political regimes to become authoritarian; the economic impact of the so called "dutch disease"; the cumulative negative social and environmental impacts)
- From M to R : in some cases revenues include rents
- Rent = revenue that is not the result of labor (application of energy or information) by the actor whom receives it (Magrin, Voyage en Afrique Rentière, 2013)
- Caution : not all revenue = rent!
Theoretical framework (3) : from a wider interpretation of «matter» to multiple rents

• Based on Auty (Auty, 2007), we pursued Raffestin´s analysis by considering that "matter" could be considered not only as referring to "objects" like minerals or vegetals, or even entire ecosystems, but also to "situations" : poverty, natural disasters, biodiversity, climate change, a control on a specific point of the territory, a conflict or any "problem".

• This reinforced the possibility to consider the existence of other flows of rents which may be considered as as many types of "matter M", to be potentially transformed into “resource R”) (Auty, 2007, van Vliet and Magrin, 2009, Magrin, 2013; Magrin and van Vliet, 2014; van Vliet, 2015).

• Example from Agadem, Niger
L’arène extractive d’Agadem : deux rentes, deux constellations d’acteurs et un Etat doublement rentier?

- Rente de conservation
- Rente pétrolière

Conservation → Action → Matière

Biodiversité → Espace convoité

Utilisation → Brut
Theoretical framework (3)  
matter, resource : autoreferential notions

We acknowledge that the definition of what matter or a resource is, depends on each actor’s situation: matter and resource are auto-referential notions, which mean that we have to situate ourselves.

Thus, when situating ourselves in a production value-chain - whatever the product-, what is considered as a resource for one actor may become matter for the next in the value production chain.
These first three elements improve our capacity to analyze a given system (the trajectory). But how then to perceive and analyze the signals of the transition:

- from one « system » « to another »?
- from a « low governability system » to a governable system?
- from a « war system » to a « non war system »?

...The debates on trajectory and critical junctures in institutional history (specifically the very stimulating analysis in Cappoccia & Kelemen, 2005, 2007)...
Theoretical approach (4)  
trajectory versus critical juncture

Indeed, while we acknowledged the relevance of the four dimensions of the debates around the "resource curse", we were nevertheless not at ease with the idea of trajectory (or "unmovable path dependency"), which the notions of "resource curse", or “low governability system” convey (van Vliet, Magrin, 2009).

• Idem for Richani’s “war system”? 
Theoretical framework (4) trajectory versus critical juncture

The notion of critical juncture (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2005, 2007), helps to question implicit hypotheses in the standard literature on resources, rents and their impacts and introduce the question of “transition”, that is the end of one system and it’s transformation into another (van Vliet, Magrin, 2009).

In this specific setting the notion of critical juncture will be utilised to describe:

- an observable change in the internal resource base and/or in the environment of an (actor or) organisation,
- which substantially broadens the range of options available to that organisation and
- increases the potential reach of the decisions eventually taken by that organisation (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2005).

- Resource base: power, legitimacy, financing, knowledge, know-how, information, organizational capacity, time, space, etc (Matus).

- A “critical juncture” does not necessarily give way to a new trajectory.
The research question

Two dimensions

• Methodological: how to improve our perception and understanding of **critical junctures** in a context of potential **transition** from unequal, often violent multi-rentier- to redistributive, productive- economies in the Latin America and the Caribbean region? Which variables and which linkages do we need to consider?

• Operational: Which implications for action?
Hypothesis

1. Models and variables which are probably relevant to describe past trajectories may be unfit to understand the moment of potential transition. (the challenge in these modeling intents is to “open these models” and most probably, to devise new ones, in order to read eventual “critical junctures” in the studied countries).

2. Any transition will probably require structural shifts in the M-R arena’s described by Raffestin, including shifts in the composition of the relative resource bases and the relative share received by the actors in the value chains.

3. “Rentier economies” = portion of rents superior to x% of PIB. Capture by elites, concentration, redistribution improbable, (what is the legitimacy of a redistributive claim?)

4. “Productive economies” = portion of rents inferior to x% of PIB. Potential redistribution within the value chains, based on labour and fair share between labour and capital
Hypothesis

Variables that might be relevant for the understanding of critical junctures described above will probably be of a multidimensional nature (political, social, economic, financial, environmental, ...,...).

4. The literature on institutional history will probably be our first and main provider of variables and linkages for the understanding of critical junctures / transitions / crisis. It may be relatively blind on issues like rentier economies and their possible transitions.
Approach: linked case studies in LAC

- Comparison of **critical junctures**
- Processes / Situations / Territories / Value chains / Countries.
- Objects should show signs of a critical juncture as defined above (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2005, 2007).
- In a first phase, in order to build and sharpen our tools for analysis, we have chosen to start our work by working on the case of Colombia.
Potential transition in Colombia

- Beyond the end of war, reallocation of the resource bases, and thus reallocation in the matter-resource arenas. Issues: participation in public decision making, financing of the public policies aiming at the needed reduction of inequalities. The latter involves, in particular, reallocation of revenues and rents, at the local, regional and national level.

- One of the challenges in the transition to a non- or less-”war system” is the implementation of two agreements discussed in Havana: the first concerns the return of millions of displaced rural producers and settlers to their lands; the second concerns a spatial allocation between larger estates, agro-industries and family farming.

- The intents of (re)construction of linkages within the value chains between smaller producers, large estates and agro-industries will then have to be closely scrutinized.
Methodology for operational research: training through field research

1. Network consolidation

2. Organisation of a launching work shop with motivated and able researchers. Agreement on potential approach, main research questions, work packages and responsibilities; agreement on the structure and argumentation line of a book. Review of the costs and identification of sources of financing (financial and technical partners).

3. Revision of literature and simultaneously, proposal writing and networking with financiers (in view of financing the field work).

4. Conception of research training modules (maestria, postgrado and or PhD level) (training of junior researchers)

5. Field work at various levels; structured and semi-structured interviews, identification of variables and their relationships, discussion.

6. Qualitative, quantitative, spatial, temporal modeling
Methodology (2)

7. Continuation of the research training events (postgrado and/or phd level)
8. Workshop for the preliminary discussion of results
9. Elaboration of preliminary versions of the chapters by the authors (and co/authors)
10. Preliminary version of the book
11. Policy Seminar for the presentation and discussion of the preliminary version of the book
12. Finalization of the training through research programme
13. Updating formation modules
14. Elaboration of the final version of the book
15. Restitution and discussion of results
In- and outputs

• **Expected scientific outputs**
  - Training and teaching: contributions to research seminars for post graduate students. Examples of modules: 1. Antecedents of the literature on rentier economies; 2. Modeling the violent rentier economies (low governability, the war system, ....) and their trajectories; 3. The need to go beyond the modeling of trajectories: challenges in modeling the critical juncture; 4. Understanding the challenges of governing the transition.
  - A collective book (Governing the transition from unequal, often violent rentier- to redistributive, productive- economies: a comparative analysis in X countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region).
  - Co-authored articles in recognized national and international reviews.

• **Disciplinary inputs**
  Political economy, political science, sociology, anthropology, geography, multidimensional economy, law, organization theory, agronomy, value chain analysis, systems approach, operational research.
Members of the network (+-30)

**Colombia.** 12 senior researchers, Nacional /Departamentos de Antropología y Ciencias Políticas); Valle (Facultad de ciencias sociales); ICAN; Javeriana (Grupo de investigación Estado, conflictos y paz, Departamento de Ciencia Política); Andes (Departamento de Ciencias Políticas); Pontífica Bolivariana, Medellín (Ciencias sociales); Tadeo Lozano; Distrital...

A research network with connections to resource persons in other Colombian centers: Luis Carlos Burbano (Director of a think tank specialized on governability issues), Mariano Useche, Francisco Ruiz (Thinktanks); FUNDSI (4)

**Haiti** : 3 researchers, Université Quisqueya, Université Nationale, Notre Dame,..

Other universities (in the periphery in each studied country) : 8 researchers, to be identified.

International: Cirad, University Paris I, Kean University,..., ... 3 researchers + ...,...
Other contacts made

• Colombia : UNDP, FAO, BID (Bogotá and DC), WB (Bogotá and DC), AFD Research, CIDH, Ford F., Consejeria de Paz, asesores Consejeria de Paz.

• Haiti : UNDP, BID (Port-au-Prince), FONRED...
Next steps

• Step 1. Formulation workshop: design of a consolidated project by the network of researchers (Colombia, Haiti), +-June 2017 (with participation of potential financiers).
• Step 2. Negotiating co-financing from national and international financial partners.
• Step 3. Implementation ...