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**Social Equity and Mobility in the Context
of the Agricultural Reforms during the 1990s in Cuba**

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The processes increasing stratification that were associated with the crisis and reforms in Cuba have been analyzed across several dimensions: social structure, income, poverty, and territory. However, studies centered around the effects of these transformations on rural-urban dynamics are lacking. Although the rural theme has been present in the social science studies dealing with the profound transformations, particularly in the earlier years, undergone by Cuban society, the examination of the rural reality has addressed topics such as agrarian relations, community development, transformations among the peasantry, new forms of production in the area of agriculture, migrations between city and rural areas, technological changes in production, markets, etc., without ever trying to evaluate the differences or gaps that exist between rural and urban areas, which are where the processes of social stratification and equity occur.¹

The reduced presence of comparative studies on this topic, and even of the required statistical data, could be attributed to several factors: a) a long tradition of thought oriented towards assessing the processes towards homogeneity that existed in socialism, taking into account the elimination of the fundamental reasons for class-based exploitation and the high social justice content that is entailed in this project; b) the extraordinary – and probably unique one in Latin America – transformations achieved by the Agrarian Reforms and the development processes present in the rural zones during the revolutionary period; and, c) the low level of appreciation of the rural-urban dichotomy as the means to illustrate processes of equality/inequality and social stratification and equity.

It is interesting to explore this other dimension in social stratification, not only for the possibility of gaining a more complete and integrated vision of the social equity and mobility processes in Cuban society, but also for the extreme importance that the transformations in the rural sphere had during the period of establishing a new social system as well as during the more recent recovery strategies. We can say, then, that this paper has as an objective to approach the processes of equity and social mobility in its urban-rural territorial expression. More specifically, this paper seeks to examine the impact that social policies during the crisis and reform periods have had upon the urban-rural dichotomy in both social equity and mobility dimensions.

Given present debates hinging around the new areas and contents encompassed by the rural sphere, and emphasizing the inoperability of the classic dichotomy the emptying of the term ‘rural’ and the necessity of its reconstruction, the reality in Cuba presents its own particularities given its different development model even if it shows certain similarities with other contexts of social and economic insertion. Rural life in Cuba shows general characteristics matching the current global and regional context of increasing heterogeneity and diversification in the economic spaces and activities, multiplicity in socio-economic actors with respect

¹ See the contributions of Mariana Ravenet and Jorge Hernández “Estructura social y transformaciones agrarias en Cuba” (1984), and of Ileana Rojas “Sociología y desarrollo rural en Cuba” (1985). Other important contributions have been made by the working group of Universidad de La Habana led by Niurka Pérez, and their compilations (among them “UBPC. Desarrollo rural y participación” (1996), “Cambios tecnológicos, sostenibilidad y participación” (1999) and “Participación social y formas organizativas de la agricultura” (1999), as well as the work of Víctor Figueroa in the department of Economía Agropecuaria de la Universidad de Villa Clara.

to their economic activity, source and magnitude of their income, social perceptions, projects for the future, etc. This, consequently, redounds in the multiplicity and co-existence of strategies of social reproduction. Nonetheless, agricultural activities continue to be the central axis that structures the economic and social life in rural areas.

Processes of fragmentation in the social structure live side by side with processes that strengthen socio-economic differentiation while the territorial gaps have continued to exist and have even been reinforced during the years of crisis. Rural zones continue being characterized by a decrease in population due to migrations, the highest concentration of people with low levels of education and training, and the lowest concentration of electricity and fresh water services, among other social disadvantages. In the conception of development which has predominated during all of these years, the rural sphere has been assigned specific roles as provider of foodstuffs, raw materials for industry and a labor force. According to Stavenhagen, the rural community and the urban society constitute two connected poles where advances in modern urban areas have been made to the detriment of traditional and under-developed zones. A logical consequence of this model has been, to a greater or lesser degree, that those who are younger, better trained and holding greater expectations for advancement will migrate to urban zones having more development opportunities.

In attempting to understand the relationship between socio-structural changes and the processes of social mobility and equity in the rural zones, and given the ever-present correspondence between disadvantaged groups and rural zones, we could ask ourselves: what is it that society demands of the rural sphere in its conception of sustainable development? To explore the causes of inequality and the role that social mobility plays is a methodological requirement of paramount importance in the design of policies seeking greater levels of equality.

Methodological elements

The category “**rural population**”, as a social construct adopts distinct contents in different contexts depending upon the adopted criteria, something which often brings about making comparisons with dissimilar contents and erroneous interpretations. One of the most used criteria is the one based upon the population size, which compares rural population with that living in towns of less than 2,000 inhabitants. This criterion is generally combined with others which adopt particular definitions of what rural means; such as the proportion of the economically active population that is occupied in the primary or agricultural sector; availability of infrastructure services; administrative definitions; population density; conglomeration of houses or the distance to some important city acting as a reference point. In most cases, national statistic and census government agencies are tasked with defining the concept of rural population at the national level even though the power to define urban population (and by exclusion rural as well) sometimes remains in the hands of provincial governments. As a result, the same concept can sometimes express different boundaries.

Cuba’s National Statistics Office (*Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas*) generally uses population density and infrastructure elements – a decisive one being electrification – despite the fact that what is rural is also established by excluding what is urban. Thus, rural population is that which lives in dispersed or isolated homes; in towns with less than 2,000 permanent residents; or towns that having more than 2,000 inhabitants do not fulfill one of these nine conditions: streets and buildings laid out in an orderly fashion; public spaces (parks, plazas or pedestrian areas that permit rest, recreation and social exchange on a permanent basis); public lighting; water supply; sewage system; medical services; educational center; restaurants and commercial enterprises; public telephone, mail and telegraph services; and radio and TV coverage (ONE, 2002: 20-22).

Studies on rurality and on development and poverty evidence a strong correlation between concepts such as inequality–social exclusion–poverty–marginalization and social mobility, putting in the center of the analysis

the positions of the different groups in the social structure in the context of structural opportunities², the evolution of gaps amongst groups, the tendencies in social mobility and the character of social policies. In this line of studies, inequality is considered to be a cause of poverty which, in turn, implies a condition of exclusion since poor people cannot gain access to the goods and services generated by society, a condition which retards their ability to develop or make progress. In the words of a noted Cuban investigator, those groups whose “decision-making capacity to determine their own conditions in life, defend their own identities, etc. has been systematically taken away end up being marginalized, into anomie and escapism.” (Acanda, 2002: 57)

Like many other concepts, **poverty** has been historically centered on economic dimensions and has been inseparably associated with low personal consumption. However, its characteristics have been also recognized to extend to other elements like “capital” which households can utilize (such as educational capital), security, social consumption, empowerment and leisure time (Atria, 2004). Our study tries to incorporate the notion of poverty into a pattern of inequalities which, in their widest expression, extends from the individual-family plane to the nation-world plane as a result of government policies. Given the existence of universal social services which guarantee massive access to services which are most important for life and human dignity, poverty in Cuba is not associated with exclusion and neglect but, rather, with the generation of sufficient income to satisfy basic necessities for the individual and family. However, given the well-understood multi-dimensional and complex nature of poverty, its causes and forms of expression vary tremendously in different contexts. In the literature on rural poverty, the vulnerability of the population is associated with the amounts of capital that they have (physical, human, infrastructural, institutional), natural disasters, markets and public policies (Hasan, 2001:5-7).

Another group of concepts which must be addressed are **equity/inequity** and **equality/inequality**, which are values towards which modern societies aspire to move. The concept of **equity** goes hand in hand with **equality** of opportunities. A society strives for equity when it works to suppress legal barriers as much as economic and social ones, and to compensate for the inequalities that are preventing the realization of individual potentialities. In turn, inequalities are often classified as attributed (gender, ethnic group, generational) and distributive, the factors that are implicit in the particular developments that surpass the levels of socially accepted inequality (includes distribution of income and inheritance – physical as well as knowledge and abilities, and access to information) (Atria, 2004: 9-10). In this context, the role of social policy is to recognize the differences while avoiding social exclusion.

In its most general interpretation, **social mobility** is understood as the movements of individuals among the structural divisions in a society (according to occupation, income, qualifications, territory, prestige, etc.), and is part of the construction of hierarchical inequalities constructed on the strongest elements which configure the socio-economic differences that act upon each society. By showing the inter-relationships among socio-structural, economic and political processes in a society, social mobility constitutes an important key to characterize a society. It is particularly useful during periods of readjustment or accelerated socio-economic changes which generate a reconfiguration in the social classes by showing the origins of new advantageous or disadvantageous positions (Espina, 2000:6). The tendencies in social mobility clearly demonstrate which sectors and individuals benefit from the changes, and to what extent this corresponds to the equality norm that that has been socially accepted in the existing political system.

The usefulness of these concepts in this study lies in the possibility to assess the emerging processes taking place in Cuban society under the influence of the crisis and reform. As a research strategy, in this study we have chosen to explore the processes of social equity and mobility along urban-rural dimensions in two stages. The first one compares indicators, and demographic, economic and social variables as well as the

² Opportunity context is understood to mean the set of systemic, institutional and structural factors which converge upon a concrete place and historical moment.

evolutionary trends of the distances or gaps between rural and urban areas. The fundamental technique consists of the analysis of secondary information that may characterize in a macro perspective the urban-rural dichotomy apparent in the structures of population, occupation, income, schooling, material conditions and the predominant characteristics of social mobility in two distinct moments: before and after the decades of the 1990s. Utilizing techniques that allow for the capturing of primary information, the intention is to carry out a second phase of this research that will delve deeper into the characteristics and factors associated with the social mobility processes (individual and families), the subjective image of socio-structural placement and social mobility, as well as the insertion strategies and social reproduction. This study elaborates on the processes of equalization/ differentiation in the urban and rural zones based upon the evaluation of certain indicators (population, sex, age, schooling, occupation, infrastructure conditions) during a period before the crisis of the 1990s (1981) and a following period (2002), and uses this data to interpret equity processes in the Cuban development model.

Rural Zones: The new context

The definition of what is rural today is very different from what was so deemed 20 years ago. This represents a challenge for rural areas, particularly the ones in the so-called Third World which concentrate the ugliest parts of development. In recognition of these new characteristics and tendencies in our rural societies we find what is known as a 'new rurality'. Communities change their spatial limits marked in time and space, local areas become overrun or depressed in terms of population due to changes in the demographic and occupational tendencies, the economic profile of certain zones are reconfigured with the emergence of new economic activities and changes in productive systems and in traditional forms of production, the subjective world of the population also becomes more complex and modified.

Regional specialists on the new 'rurality' agree that the concept must be defined and their arguments for that are that great transformations in rural areas have occurred in the last few decades, there are growing levels of heterogeneity in rural areas and there are accelerated dynamics found in agrarian processes (Giarraca, 2001:11-12). They advocate that the concept of what is rural should be separated from census definitions which often limit the classification to the fact of whether or not they are municipal capitals, neglecting population density, basic infrastructure and the intensity of ties with the *surroundings*, all of which are essential for social knowledge and transformation.

The assumption of sectoral specialization which has often characterized both rural and urban areas has lost ground before the multiplicity of functions, not only agricultural but also associated with industry, tourism, services, cultural, and the formation of hybrid structures at the regional level which sustain the conception of a new 'rurality' while, at the same time, blur the limits that had marked these two zones. Among the elements common to the majority of countries in Latin America which find themselves in this new scenario, we can highlight the decline of agriculture, the intense urbanization (due to the mechanical movement of the population) and ruralization (due to the living conditions) of urban areas, the coexistence of different and polarized levels of technology, the changes in collective demands and the growing social exclusion. Faced with the challenges of free competition, small farmers working on marginal lands and having limited access to education, technological progress, communications and information, are in great disadvantage.

Economic liberalization through privatization and structural adjustment to reduce the fiscal deficit has been translated not only in lesser amounts of state intervention in rural affairs, but also in the dismantling of organizations which traditionally dealt with the agricultural sector. This has made rural development more difficult, especially at the local level. Reducing or withdrawing public services has been noticeable in areas affecting rural life, such as social expenditures (in education and health), financial system, infrastructure and key agricultural services like technology. In these areas, as the demand for investment in human capital, credits, communication and investigation increases to address the need for improving rural competitiveness, the opportunities of the rural population to access these services has decreases. In addition, in the present strategies for social policies in rural areas we see a dangerous reproduction of general attributes , such the

masking of the loss in responsibility that should be credited to social institutions through a discourse of social participation and self-governance.

Impacted by global phenomenon such as free trade and the new conception of the role of the state (Echeverría, 1998), rural zones show the following general trends in their evolution:

- With the loss of the primary and secondary sectors, rural areas become service oriented;
- Accelerated urbanization process which do not correspond to their economic and social development. In fact, it is the region with the fastest urbanization rates;
- Accelerated emigration to overseas locations, particularly of the working-age population;
- Transformations in the structure of the family with the relative increase of children and older people as a consequence of the migration process;
- Sustained decrease in the relative weight of the Economically Active Population in agriculture (from 42% to 24% between 1970 and 2000);
- Relative decrease in agricultural employment in favor of non-agricultural occupations among rural households; and,
- Growing urbanization of the labor force in the agricultural sector due to the decrease in the number of members in rural households who are employed in agriculture and the increase of agricultural workers living in cities.

The increase in agricultural production in Latin America during the 1990s following the formula given by the Washington Consensus³ was led by the enterprises and producers who were best equipped for exporting. The reforms did not help small farmers and adversely affected the producers of foodstuffs on account of low-priced imports. As a result, small farmers have lost their lands, rural poverty and unemployment as well as inequality have all increased.

The case of Cuba

Rural development strategies implemented in Cuba, particularly for agriculture, have succeeded greatly in areas where the rest of the Latin American and Caribbean countries have not: in the strengthening of the peasantry and the reactivation of agricultural systems. However, it is not possible to avoid the historical factors related to Cuba's status as a dependent economy in the capitalist system, its insertion into the global economy, nor the imperfections found in the country's planning processes for development.

From the triumph of the revolution and as a result of Cuba's active social policy, great social differences and relationships of exploitation which had ensured the worst living conditions for the majority of the population resident in rural areas and that had concentrated illiteracy, malnutrition, and extreme poverty were eliminated during a brief period. The systemic character of the rural development policies that were implemented by the revolution in the first decades enabled the rupturing of the social and economic structure formerly in place in rural areas and the transformation of the Cuban peasant into an individual with economic security and obvious improvement in quality of life. Some of these policies included access to land and means of production, economic stability, extension of health, education and cultural services, construction of infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, housing, child care), and modernizing agricultural production through mechanization and specialized knowledge.

An important (and most recent) milestone in the evolution of the peasantry and rural zones is given by the transformations in agriculture implanted with the crisis and reforms of the 1990s. In synthesis, these transformations were based on diversifying the land ownership regime, establishing a free market in agriculture, allowing new forms of compensation for producers where the results of his work were adopted as

³ Among them, to remove commercial barriers and obstacles to foreign investments, financial liberalization, privatization, deregulation, and reforms in the tax and property regimes.

a metric, and technological changes oriented towards the use of appropriate technologies⁴ to enable sustainable agriculture, all of which denote important differences from other adjustment models implemented in the area.

In the international approach on the topic of rural disadvantages, abundant studies analyzing the causes pinpoint the existence of discriminatory policies against the producers and the precariousness of the “capitals” which they possess. Solutions, thus, concentrate on advocating changes geared to generating opportunities for the rural population, with markets occupying a preponderant space in official investigations. In the Cuban context, however, the weak presence of conceptions of development based on sustainability and self-development, endogenous growth and socio-economic actors as agents of local change appear to have more argumentative force in understanding the territorial inequalities and rural disadvantages. In the following sections, we analyze a few dimensions which illustrate the evolution in Cuba of the urban-rural dichotomy during the last two decades.

▪ **Urbanization and migration**

The degree of urbanization existing in Cuba ratifies the country’s tendency towards reaching demographic maturity. In 2004, the proportion of the population who lived in urban concentrations was 75.6%, with an increase of 2.1% from 1989, and 6.0% with respect to 1981 when it was 69% (see Table 1). The growing urbanization of Cuban society has been affected by both the concentration of the rural population that has enabled the improvement of the economic and social infrastructure in the least developed zones and with that, in many cases, the reclassification of a rural population as urban; as much, as well as by the strong migratory currents toward cities. This pattern along with the replacement of the generational substitution of farmers (to replace those who emigrate or grow old) with those coming from other social sectors, pose an important set of demands for policymaking (see Table 2).

Studies by Cuban specialists at the Centro de Estudios Demográficos (CEDEM) of the Universidad de La Habana, using the National Census of Internal Migration (*Encuesta Nacional de Migraciones Internas*), carried out in 1995, draw attention to the characteristics of the urbanization process and rural emigration that existed in Cuban society during the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s (Montes, 2003). It was characterized by the absolute growth, although at an annually decreasing rate, of the urban population; the negative balance in the migration of the rural population, the prioritized emigration of the rural component that was dispersed, and the reinforcement of the settlements in the denominated Franja de Base⁵, as the principal receptors of the rural population where 40% of the urban population is concentrated. These studies show that a more homogeneous migratory pattern that concentrated migrations from the rural zone in the “franja de base” and the major rural settlement, which were probably favored by the success of the cooperative movement, took place between 1970 and 1981. In succeeding periods, there was much more diversity in movement and an exodus towards the urban zones and overseas destinations. For the following period between 1981 and 1995, 67% of the exodus of the dispersed rural population moved to urban settlements, while 29% leaves the country and 4% departs towards concentrated rural settlements (Montes, 2003: 23).

As a consequence of the crisis during the 1990s, new migratory currents are produced in both directions and, thus, territorial planning loses its relevance⁶ insofar as migration is concerned, even though the movement is

⁴ This concept alludes to strategies which encompass all technological alternatives and all types of inputs and equipment in order to satisfy predetermined prerequisites. Some call this “technological pluralism” or “combination of technologies”, which include ox plowing and genetic engineering. The topic is developed further in “Cambio Tecnológico y Campesinado en la Agricultura Cubana” presented by the author at the XXV Congreso de LASA (unpublished).

⁵This encompasses urban and rural settlements which do not maintain administrative functions.

⁶The creation of the Plan Único for economic and social development adopted in the mid 1970s was geared to guarantee equal development for the different regions of the country and the elimination of the differences between the rural and urban zones. It achieved certain stability in the migratory currents from the rural zones.

primarily from the most disadvantaged sectors towards the more developed ones, mainly Havana. From the end of the 1990s, and as a consequence of the measures implemented to strengthen agricultural production and the new law approved in 2000 which limits the residential entry into the capital, there was an important movement of rural workers back towards rural zones and their consequent reduction towards the capital. In fact, during the period under consideration until 2002, and as the rural population continues to decrease, we observe a decrease in the migratory rhythm, although the data must be studied cautiously when comparing it to that contained in other sources (Annual Statistical Reports and Census). By 2004, the tendency of decreasing rural population is reverted with a growth of 42,000 people between 2002 and 2004. For 2004, the growth rate in the rural zone was 6.7 per one thousand inhabitants, while the urban zone experienced a negative growth rate of 0.85 per one thousand (Anuario Estadístico 2004) (see Table 3).

Several institutional studies have pointed out that since the beginning of the 1990s, workers have been returning to agricultural tasks. This has been denoted as “*recampesinización*” (an increase in the number of peasants), which characterizes the reforms implemented for this sector during the last quarter of last century. A recent investigation in the province of Granma delves deeper into the internal structure of the emerging groups in the agricultural sector, and reveals that more than a fourth of the UBPC members and 43% of the members of the peasant cooperatives of Créditos y Servicios were previously state workers and not necessarily employed in the agricultural sector. This means that a redistribution has occurred from certain sectors (state workers, intellectuals, unemployed and even the peasants) towards the new “niches in the agrarian social structure” (Leyva, 2006: 83-85).

▪ **Rurality Index⁷**

The urbanization process which characterizes the accelerated demographic transition in the country can also be expressed by the decrease in the rurality index, which descended 5.7% between 1981 and 1989, and 10% by 2002. According to this indicator, the most rural provinces are the four lying in the eastern section of the country (Granma, Las Tunas, Guantánamo and Holguín) as well as Pinar del Río. However, it is interesting to observe the movements produced during the period being studied. For instance, the rurality index had decreased in all of them, with Holguín being the most urbanized province. The national trend is far from homogeneous and three provinces (La Habana, Ciego de Ávila and Isla de la Juventud) report an increase in the index, which is considerable in the case of La Habana⁸ (see Table 4).

Although more detailed analysis are needed to understand this, we can guess as an explanation the socio-economic conjunction that is established by the food crisis of the 1990s and the measures that were adopted then which included the reduction in taxes in the sale of foodstuffs in the capital. This combined with the limitations established to prevent migration for permanent residence purposes may be motivating workers to move out to the rural areas of Habana.⁹ The provinces with the highest rurality index (Granma, Guantánamo, Las Tunas, Pinar and Holguín) reveal a high degree of congruence with those that report the lowest Human Development Index (HDI) (Granma, Guantánamo, Santiago, Las Tunas, Pinar and Holguín). This is further evidence of the inverse relationship that exists between rural living and the socio-economic development of the population¹⁰ (see Table 5).

⁷ Rural population divided by urban population, multiplied by 100.

⁸ Investigation results, which include those of Laura Enríquez, of Berkeley University, corroborate the strong presence among the workers dedicated to agricultural production – fundamentally those belonging to the UBPC in the province of Habana, of workers originating from other provinces, particularly the eastern ones (Enríquez, 2005: 43).

⁹ Studies alert the determinant role that the reception of immigrants from other parts of the country into particular zones has played upon the inequality process. These new arrivals inhabit areas of inferior construction and elevated density, or promote the construction of “new spaces” which are very precarious in terms of the material conditions, especially of the house, the communal surroundings and the quality of the infrastructure (Iñiguez L y Everleny O, 2005: 6-7).

¹⁰ Investigations that in 1996 and 1999 constructed the Human Development Index for each of the provinces (Martínez, 1996:87 and Martínez, 1999: 166-167), reveal a disadvantageous situation for those provinces with greater proportions of the population in rural areas.

- **Composition by gender**

Although the proportion between men and women are fairly balanced in Cuba, rural zones maintain a higher masculine presence which has been fairly constant through time and across all the geographical zones. The masculinity index (number of men for every 100 women) indicates a greater degree of equality in the composition by gender in Cuban society. The biggest transformations have occurred in rural zones (the number of men has decreased) which translates into a further balancing in the gender structures between these zones (see Table 6).

- **Structure by skin color**

Although the Cuban population is basically white and their proportion in both urban and rural areas (65%) is fairly similar, the group of urban blacks is always higher than in rural areas whereas in the case of mestizos this is reversed (see Table 7). The tendency in society is for the number of whites and blacks to decrease in favor of the number of mulatos, something which is logical in a society that has broken down the barriers conditioning the opportunities available to people on the basis of the color of their skins. Still, this process seems to have occurred at a faster rate in rural zones, perhaps echoing an observation by José Martí who indicated that this process of racial fusion would start among the poorest social groups. In the period being considered (1981-2002), the proportion of blacks decreased while that of mestizos increased in both zones. The slight sub-representation of whites in the urban zone in 1981 disappeared by 2002, while their over-representation in the rural zones was reversed to under-representation. In general, we observe different dynamics in the proportions of different groups in both zones which point towards a ‘darkening’ population in the rural zone.

- **Structure by age**

The structure by age in the urban and rural populations does not exhibit differentiated behaviors, with nearly two thirds of the population falling between 15 and 59 years, and 20% to the youngest group (less than 15 years). Although this indicator shows a general aging of the population, the youngest group is always sub-represented in urban zones and over-represented in rural zones; whereas the oldest group shows the exact reversal of this situation. Both cases are the typical demographic situations for these zones. An analysis of the dynamics of these trends over time demonstrates that the gaps in terms of the relative weight of age groups tend to decrease in both zones. If the relative weight of the youngest group in both zones was 6.8% in 1981, by 2004 this was 2.8%. In the oldest group, the difference decreased from 2.4% to 1.9%. In the proportion of senior citizens, the rural population almost equaled the urban one. As this convergence also occurred in the youngest group, we confirm the trends towards equalization between the structures in both zones as an expression that the living and working conditions have drawn nearer for both population groups (see Table 8). Another way of expressing the narrowing in terms of the age structure in both zones is the dependence ratio¹¹, which has seen a significant reduction in the rural zones, even though it always has been greater, to the point of nearing the national average (see Table 9).

- **Structure by education**

It is well known that the existence of free and universal education generates vast possibilities for social mobility to citizens of the most diverse social origins. They can reach positions based primarily on merit and their own capacities and not on other factors such as social background and economic position. Nonetheless, we are cognizant that even the most democratic designs for education do not guarantee the maximum development of all individuals and social groups because another set of factors denominated “contextual

¹¹ This ratio expresses the relationship between the non-working age population (younger than 15 and above 60) and the working age population.

conditions”, which include variables based on territory, families and social networks, constrain the process and condition different social mobility guidelines.

Even though educational inequalities constitute an area which should be intently explored as part of the processes of social equity and mobility in Cuba, the studies for this workshop are limited to illustrating the group dynamics in the social structure according to the educational level. It is important to note, however, that we face severe limitations due the absence of the educational variable by residential zone from the census and the statistical annual reports. We can only use the data derived from the Encuesta de Migraciones Internas carried out in 1995 by the Centro de Estudios Demográficos. With this sole source of information, our study confirms that the policies implemented in the area of education have resulted in an educational structure in rural zones which corresponds to the behavior of the national structure, which is characterized by a greater concentration of the group having mid-level and secondary school. However, those groups with the lowest levels of instruction (incomplete and primary school) are over-represented in the rural areas while those with the highest levels of instruction (mid-level and higher education) are under-represented. All of which results in the rural population having a greater social disadvantage (see Table 10).

▪ **Structure by occupation**

Occupational behavior is not differentiated between the two zones (97% in both cases). This is also the case as well in the structure by gender and skin color even though mulatos tend to have higher unemployment rates (3%) in both males and females and across both zones (see Table 11). An analysis of the structural changes by occupation that occurred in the rural zone cannot be separated from the profound transformations experienced the agriculture and cattle sector, which were produced by the crisis and consequent adoption of measures to combat it.

Multiple studies dealing with this problem demonstrate the considerable destabilization that occurred in the productive systems of the agricultural sector due to their high degree of technical content and their dependence on foreign assistance (García, 2005). A figure illustrating the size of the impact might the drop of 52% in the aggregate value of the agricultural products in comparison of the drop of 35% in the GNP that happened between 1989 and 1993.

Among the measures adopted from 1993 to reactivate the agriculture sector, the following can be highlighted:

- ***Creation of the Basic Units of Cooperative Production (Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa) (UBPC)*** based in the large state enterprises which implicated a change in the ownership regime of land and the management of resources. By the end of 2006, it was reported that 1,567 UBPC existed (Granma, 2006).
- ***Delivery of lands for use (not in ownership) to those interested in making them productive*** (217,243 beneficiaries in 2006) (Granma, 2006).
- ***Opening of the free market*** for production of foodstuffs once the delivery commitments to the wholesale state enterprises have been met.
- ***Opening to foreign investment.*** Today, multiple enterprises with foreign capital are operating in the cultivation of tobacco, citrus, rice and vegetables.
- ***Rise in the purchase prices of the production in the sectors.***
- ***Development of urban agriculture.***
- ***Application of systems to stimulate the receipt of foreign exchange*** for production dedicated to import substitution and exports.

The most evident impacts of these measures have been the increase in the groups associated with agricultural production which went from 22.2% to 26.5% between the years 1981 and 2002 (see Table 12), in particular the cooperative group (due to their incorporation into the UBPC) and private farmers. At the same time, the

cooperative and private farmer sectors have increased their participation in the sale of products to the state, going from 29% to 35% between the periods 1989-1990 and 1998-1999 (ANAP, 2000).

In the occupational structure at the national level, the group of workers employed in private property organizations went from 7% to 16 % between 1981 and 2003, while the land farmed by cooperatives went from 1% to 7% as a consequence of the creation of the UBPC from former state-operated lands farmed through collective agriculture and the consequent loss of state workers (see Table 13). Although the private worker sector includes a heterogeneous mixture of workers including the self-employed, employees of foreign enterprises, associations and foundations, its real nucleus is the peasantry including peasants belonging to the Cooperativas de Créditos y Servicios (CCS) and other private farmers.

The ownership structure of agricultural land has been dramatically modified in the last ten years. Of course, the movements that we see in the social structure follow the changes seen in the ownership structure of land (see Table 14). While the state administered 75.2% of the agricultural lands in 1992, it only administered 34.7% by 2002 and the non-state sector augmented its control from 24.8% to 65.3%. The creation of the UBPC in the lands previously controlled by the state is the fundamental variable which explains this evolution. The private forms of ownership and management have gained importance particularly after the lands were delivered to farmers for development and after the return of family members to agricultural tasks. Another not so desired behavior which characterizes these transformations (given my particular understanding of the social structure in agriculture) is the proportional loss of the peasants in cooperatives which is also expressed in absolute numbers and the rest of the indicators: units of production, associates and land. This behavior is seen in the cultivation of sugar cane, tobacco and coffee (see Table 15).

▪ **Income**

Income is another interesting indicator which helps to evaluate the improvement and worsening of social positions for groups working in agriculture. Considerable changes in the structure of income took place from 1990 and 92 as a result of the transformations of land ownership relations and the displacement of farm workers towards the non-state sector of the economy. A growing rise in incomes is evident in the private sector, particularly with private farmers who double their relative weight, whereas those groups associated with cooperatives experience a gradual reduction.¹²

In summary, we can observe clear tendencies in the occupational structure of rural zones:

- Growth in the number of workers in the agricultural sector of the national economy.
- Loss in the number of workers in state-owned farms.
- Growing importance of the cooperative forms of production due to the appearance of the UBPCs.
- Decrease in the number of cooperative farmers (tied to the Cooperativas de Producción Agropecuaria), with equivalent reduction in the number of associates, cooperatives and lands.
- Emergence and sustained growth of those farmers who use state-owned farms.
- Strengthening of private farmers in their numbers as well as in their share of lands and incomes.

▪ **Changes in the quality of living**

Although this topic is rather extensive due the number of indicators which characterize it, and despite the absence of data that would permit an urban-rural division for analysis, some elements related to infrastructure may illustrate the trends as the population moves towards more or less advantageous situations. The number of houses in urban zone is three times as many as those existing in rural areas, something which corresponds to a larger share of the population living in cities. However, the average number of inhabitants per house is

¹² For more information regarding the evolution in the structure of income during these years, consult the works produced by Viviana Togo.

slightly better in rural zones. It may appear that this indicator points to better conditions for the family in the rural areas, but that cannot be decided until other indicators are evaluated as well for their impact on the quality of living conditions.

According to the 2002 census, the number of houses and population that benefits from water services in both zones reveals a more disadvantageous situation in rural areas and, at the same time, the narrowing over time of the urban-rural gap (see Table 17). If the gap was 54% in 1981, by 2002 it had been reduced to 42%.

During all the years before the crisis, the efforts oriented towards improving the living conditions of the rural population sought to make greater investments and target increased outcomes for these areas, precisely because they were coming from a more disadvantageous condition. The analysis published by PAHO and WHO in 2005 regarding running water and sewage points out that the marginal increase in the number of people benefiting from these services during the decade of 1980-1990 was greater in rural zones, where the number of beneficiaries receiving sewage services went from 250,000 to 550,000, and the number of beneficiaries with running water went from 343 to 1.098 with the greatest improvement seen in the concentrated rural sector. This illustrates the orientation of social policy towards the equalizing of living conditions across zones and the diminution of social gaps. In a similar manner, access to electricity shows the prior disadvantages suffered by the rural areas and the diminution in the gap between the two zones, with the difference that the process of narrowing the gap has advanced more rapidly falling from 53% to 15% (see Table 18).

Given the impossibility to service each and every house with electricity due to the high degree of dispersion in rural zones, particularly those in mountainous areas, important programs have been put in place to offer the most varied alternatives to deliver this electricity and, with it, the new applied technologies for education and other services. If prior to the crisis the fundamental access to electricity came through direct connection into the national network, nowadays the repertoire of alternatives in the rural zones include small hydro-electrical power plants, solar panels and biogas. Despite the efforts made investing in infrastructure, the disadvantageous position of rural zones is also expressed in qualitative terms. Measures such as the differentiated and regulated supply of foodstuffs and other goods in favor of urban zones, the ineluctable deterioration of services, roads, transport, communications, etc., which render rural zones in conditions of greater disadvantage in the access to opportunities.

It is interesting to note that in the case of fertility, trends are becoming more homogeneous across the territory. As alerted by some specialists (Alfonso, 2005), fertility not only decreases in Cuba, but also becomes more social and territorially homogeneous. By 1970, fertility in rural zones was 141.4 and in urban zones 124.9; but by 2004 the figures were 49.4 and 40.1, respectively. Although it continues to be higher in rural zones, the gap has narrowed from 17 to 9 points. Nevertheless it should be noted that other policies such higher educational levels (particularly among women in reproductive age (20-45 years), the incorporation into economic activity outside of the home, the work made regarding sex education together with social policies promoting women have conditioned this reproductive behavior which has rendered Cuba as the country with the lowest fertility rate in Latin America.

Final Considerations

To end this analysis of some of the inequality dimensions, we note that further analysis is limited by the impossibility to obtain current information on the evolution of important demographic variables like fertility, marriage, disease and mortality rates. This type of data could be used to analyze the impacts of social policies on living conditions and, consequently, the trajectories of different social groups. Although we do not have statistics or studies which would permit us to advance further in this analysis, the following findings can be made:

- During 1981-2002 the urbanization process in Cuban society advanced and this was also accompanied by the economic and social development of rural areas. However, we cannot establish the impact that the crisis de of the 1990s had upon the urban-rural gap.
- Rural areas have seen increasingly smaller negative growth rates and positive growth rates in the rural population between 2002 and 2004.
- The migration pattern out of rural areas becomes more heterogeneous after the 1980s with an increasing exodus to urban areas and overseas locations.
- Existence of migrations in both senses between urban and rural zones, and the process of “*recampesinización*” (increasing the number of peasants) during the last few years due to the displacement of workers to agricultural activities.
- There is a strong correlation between those provinces who have the highest rurality index and those with the lowest HDI.
- Settlements in suburban zones with precarious living conditions, with a great proportion of immigrants coming from the oriental provinces (those having the highest rurality index) have been created.
- There has been an acceleration of the process of *mestizaje* (race fusion) in rural areas.
- There has been a deceleration of the dependency ratio in rural areas.
- A narrowing in the shares of rural and urban populations according to sex, age, and living conditions who have access to running water and electricity services has taken place.
- There is a persistence of disadvantageous social conditions in rural area with respect to education and living conditions.
- There have been significant changes in the occupational structure of agriculture in rural areas due to the decrease of state workers and the increase in private workers, and the steady decrease in the number of peasants in cooperatives.
- Workers have been displaced towards the non-state agriculture sector.
- Private peasants were in a more advantageous position with respect to income between 1990 and 2002 in relation to salaried and cooperative workers.

Even though the Cuban model has fostered a visible diminution in the gap between the living conditions and characteristics of the rural and urban populations, rural areas continue to concentrate the most disadvantageous conditions in terms of their educational attainment, the dependency ratio of households, and their access to running water and electricity services. The results achieved in rural areas in regards to social equity and justice are a direct consequence of the way that inequities have been managed based on a conception of development centered on well-being. This is expressed, among other things, in the differential assignment of resources in favor of those groups in more disadvantageous conditions so as to increase their ability to seize the opportunities offered. Social equity and justice have evolved in this fashion in Cuba.

Although the evaluation of both census periods shows an unquestionable advance in the general dimensions and diminution of the gap between the two zones, we could not pinpoint the predominant tendencies precisely during those years of crisis. **Have inequalities worsened? What dimensions accrue to rural poverty? What is the relative weight of the rural origins in the more socially disadvantaged groups in urban areas? Which groups have a greater representation in the more or less advantageous conditions in rural areas?**

The deepening of inequality between urban and rural zones and the effects of the most recent set of social policies provide sufficient elements for the need to study these social processes that, despite their advanced stage, contain disarticulations and limitations that are undesirable from the humanist perspective. On the theoretical-methodological plane, efforts to re-conceptualize rurality as a particular component of equity, the forms of expression and magnitude of poverty and the deepening of the characteristics and tendencies of social mobility, through case studies and multi-disciplinary investigations that permit systemic interpretations and the perfecting of the policies become essential.

The rural disadvantages in Cuba are therefore tied to the impossibility of eliminating the inherited inequalities, to which must be added the deficiencies in the development planning processes. These, in turn, are associated with the lack of an integral vision in the territorial development programs and the weak presence in the design of strategies for local actors to augment their potentialities for self-transformation and self-guided development.

The transformation in Cuban agriculture during the 1990s towards a diversification of land ownership, organizational forms and means of production, types of crops and social actors have provoked, in turn, more dynamic activity in agriculture as well as a greater degree of complexity in the rural sphere. Processes of fragmentation and polarization in the social, territorial and occupational structures have taken place which reveal the existence of very successful groups of producers who have achieved a high standard of living (primarily in the western part of the country and in the production of crops with good access to the market), and of groups with clear social disadvantage (primarily in the eastern part of the country) who have been unable to adequately insert themselves into these spaces and who live under precarious living conditions. In terms of general trends, there is a strengthening of groups tied to agricultural activities, particularly in the private modality. It is also evident that both state policies and the sector's own demonstrated capacity to find alternatives and adopt new strategies do not show signs of exhaustion. This reveals, as we have indicated many times before, that the directions of change in rurality and the agricultural scene in Cuba with its socio-structural picture, preserve their condition as an alternative scheme to the exclusionary capitalist model.

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Tables

Table 1: Process of urbanization of rural areas				
Año	Population by Zones			
	Total	Urban	Rural	% Urban Population
1981	9 723 605	6 712 030	3.011.575	69.03
1989	10 576 921	7 769 839	2807082	73.50
1997	11 093 152	8 339 605	2753547	75.20
2002	11 177 743	8 479 329	2698414	75.90
2004	11 241 291	8 500 207	2.741.084	75.60

Source: Censo de Población y Viviendas 1981 and 2002; Anuario Estadístico 1989 and 2004.

Table 2: Evolución of the rural población by settlements, 1981-2002						
Año	Total rural	%	Concentration	%	Dispersion	%
1981	3 011 575	100	1184370	39.3	1 827 205	60,7
1995	2 804 568	100	1389857	49.6	1 414 711	50,4
2002	2 698 414	100	1 484 606	55.0	1 213 808	45,0

Source: Migraciones y urbanización en Cuba, Montes 2003 and Censo de población y Viviendas 2002.

Table 3: Growth Dynamic of the rural population		
	Population	Difference
1981	3 011 575	
1989	2 807 082	-204 493
2002	2 698 414	-108 668
2004	2 741 084	42 670

Source: Anuarios Estadísticos 1989 and 2004; Censos de Población y Vivienda 1981 and 2002.

Table 4. Index of ruralness			
Provincias	1989	2002	2004
Cuba	36.1	31.8	32.2
Pinar del Río	70.9	57.8	58.8
La Habana	29.3	36.2	36.4
Ciudad de la Habana	0.0	0.0	0.0
Matanzas	26.9	20.2	20.8
Villa Clara	37.5	31.4	31.8
Cienfuegos	31.8	23.3	23.5
Sancti Spíritus	46.2	42.3	43.0
Ciego de Ávila	37.2	38.7	39.3
Camaguey	33.2	30.6	31.3
Las Tunas	72.8	62.5	61.5
Holguín	77.7	56.0	56.6
Granma	76.9	69.6	70.0
Santiago de Cuba	48.1	42.6	43.2
Guantánamo	68.7	62.7	63.6
Isla de la Juventud	18.5	18.7	18.7

Source: Anuarios Estadísticos 1989 and 2004.; and Censo Nacional 2002. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas(ONE)

Table 5. Index of Territorial Human Development		
Provincias	1996	1999
Ciudad de La Habana	0,7278.	0,9331
Cienfuegos	0,7203.	0,8525.
Villa Clara	0,6856.	0,7915.
Matanzas	0,6796.	0,8352
La Habana	0,6748.	0,8365.
Sancti Spíritus	0,6492.	0,8179
Ciego de Ávila	0,6249.	0,8213
Pinar del Río	0,5382.	0,7763
Santiago de Cuba	0,5194.	0,7612.
Holguín	0,4932.	0,7867
Guantánamo	0,4661	0,7304.
Camaguey	0,4641	0,7813.
Las Tunas	0,4348.	0,7671
Granma	0,3724	0,7122

Source: Anuarios estadísticos 1989 y 2004. Censo Nacional 2002. Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE)

Table 6. Evolution of the index of masculinity

Año	Total	Urban	Rural
1981	102.2	97.5	113.6
1989	101.3	97.4	113
1997	100.3	96.3	113.4
2002	100.3	96.7	112.3
2004	100.3	96.8	112.0

Source: Mujeres y hombres en Cuba 1997-2001. ONE. 2004. Anuario Estadístico 2004. Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 y 2004.

Table 7: Structure of the population by skin color

	1981			2002		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	66.0	65.5	67.1	65.1	65.1	64.8
Black	12.0	13.6	8.5	10.1	11.3	6.2
Mulato	22.0	21.0	24	25.0	24.0	29.0
Asian	0.1	0.1	0.1			

Source: ONE. Censo de Población y Viviendas. 1981 y 2002.

Table 8. Structure of the Population by Age Group

	1981			2004		
	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural
CUBA	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0-14	30.3	28.2	35.1	19.6	18.9	21.7
15-59	58.8	60.2	55.7	65.0	65.3	64.3
60 or >	10.8	11.6	9.2	15.4	15.9	14.0

Source: Censos de Población y Viviendas 1981 y 2002.

Table 9. Dependency Ratio

	CUBA	Urban	RURAL
1981	0.70	0.66	0.79
1997	0.54	0.54	0.56
2004	0.54	0.53	0.56

Source: Censo 1981 y Anuario Estadístico 2004. ONE.

Education Level	1996		
	Cuba	Urban	Rural
Total	7 089 722	5 353 104	1 736 638
None	2.3	1.3	5.4
Primary	23.7	19.5	36.5
Basic Secondary	34.0	33.1	36.8
Skilled Worker	1.1	1.1	1.2
College	18.2	20.5	11.2
Magisterio	1.2	1.2	1.1
Técnico Medio	11.2	13.2	5.6
University	8.1	10.1	2.1

Source: Encuesta de migraciones internas. CEDEM. 1996.

Table 11. Groups by Occupation

	TOTAL	Whites	Blacks	Mulatos
URBAN	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Employed	97.0	97.1	97.0	96.7
Unemployed	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.3
RURAL	100	100	100	100
Employed	97.1	97.3	97.1	96.7
Unemployed	2.9	2.7	2.9	3.3

Source: ONE. Censo de Población y Viviendas. 2002

Table 12. Share of workers in agriculture and forestry

	1981	2002
Total	3540.7	4024.1
Agricultura, Hunting, forestry and fishing	784.9	1064.6
Percentage	22.2	26.5

Source: Censos 1981 y 2002.

	1981(a)	1995	2003
Total number of workers	100.0	100.0	100.0
State enterprises	91.8	80.8	76.2
Non-state enterprises	8.2	19.2	23.8
Joint Ventures		0.4	0.7
Cooperatives	1.1	9.7	7.2
Private	7.1	9.1	15.9
Of this: Self-employment	1.6	3.8	3.7

(a) This refers to the Censo de Población.
Source: Censo 1981 and Anuario estadístico de Cuba 2003. ONE.

	1963*	1990	1992	1996	2002
State	70.0	75.0	75.2	33.0	34.7
Non-state	30.0	25.0	24.8	67.0	65.3
Farmers	30.0	25.0	24.8	25.0	26.1
Cooperative	----	11.0	10.2	11.0	9.0
Private	----	14.0	14.6	14.0	17.1
UBPC	----	----	----	42.0	39.2

*superficie total.
Source: Figueroa. 1990; Nova. 1996. Anuario estadístico 1996 y 2002. ONE.

	Number of cooperatives	Number of cooperativists	Area (Thousands of Hectares)
1990	1,305	61,963	838.9
1997	1,147	61,132	722.9
2003	1,137	58,654	696.7

Source: Anuario Estadístico de Cuba. 2003 y 2004.

	1990	1994	1998	2002
Salaries	11,928.2	11, 339.9	15, 516.3	22, 586.9
% Wages and other remunerations	78.6	68.7	54.5	49.1
% Income of cooperativists	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.0
% Income of private farmers	2.7	1.8	5.1	6.7
% Income of the non-agricultural private sector	0.7	1.2	1.3	3.5
Income of UBPC farmers		5.1	4.4	2.9
Other	16.7	21.8	33.4	36.7

Source: Anuario estadístico 2003. ONE.

	1981			2002		
	TOTAL	Number with Water	%	TOTAL	Number with Water	%
CUBA						
Housing	2.290.176	1.697.904	74.0	3.333.818	2.643.310	79.3
Population	9.678.997	7.096.644	73.0	10.826.972	8.665.306	80.0
Urban						
Housing	1.609.699	1.453.190	90.3	2.502.580	2.251.247	90.0
Population	6.673.636	6.018.507	90.2	8.244.749	7.424.467	90.1
Rural						
Housing	680.477	294.714	36.0	831.238	392.063	47.2
Population	3.005.361	1.078.137	36.0	2.582.223	1.240.839	48.1

Source: Censo Nacional de Viviendas. 1981 y 2002.

Table 18: Housing and population with electricity

	1981			2002		
	TOTAL	With electricity	%	TOTAL	With electricity	%
CUBA						
Housing	2.290.176	1897867	82.87	3.458.476	3306177	95.6
Population	9.678.997	7957101	82.21	11.117.878	10690636	96.16
Urban						
Housing	1.609.699	1587000	98.59	2.578.096	2564296	99.46
Population	6.673.636	6587362	98.71	8.431.377	8393598	99.55
Rural						
Housing	680.477	310867	45.68	880.380	741643	84.24
Population	3.005.361	1369739	45.58	2.686.501	2297038	85.5

Source: Censo Nacional de Viviendas. 2002. ONE.