



Sustainable Agriculture  
and Rural Development  
**MOUNTAIN POLICY PROJECT**

**CEPE** Portal Rural  
Centro Peruano De Estudios Sociales

## Organizing a process of participation and negotiation for territorial development in mountain areas: the experience of the Huancavelica Central Area (Peru)

In the Andes, and specifically in the Central Sierra of Peru, the socio-economic, institutional, and historical changes that have occurred over the last decades have **increased the pressure on natural resources, weakened the internal social organization and caused a cultural erosion in Andean society** (families and rural communities), emphasizing the constraints and reducing the capacities of the populations to overcome them.

In the past, due to its system of local control over resources and rural livelihoods, circulation and exchanges were always well organized and assured in the Andes. Nowadays, lack of access to markets, services (due to long distances between villages and town centres), inadequate systems of communications and limited mobility, creates an **unequal access to resources, information and opportunities** for the Andean populations.

To make efficient use of natural resources and value the potentials of their mountainous territory in a sustainable rural development perspective, the **Municipality Association of the Huancavelica Central Area** led a diagnostic and territorial planning process for development. The territory studied is comprised of six neighbouring districts of this department located in the central Andes of Peru: Huando, Nuevo Occoro, Laria, Palca, Cuenca, and Izcuchaca.

### **A marginalized society but a great biological and socio-cultural diversity**

Learning from the past, indigenous people organized their productive system in *layme* (i.e. collective management of land with rotation, lying partially fallow and without pastoral activity) to avoid the risks of erosion, with the construction of platforms and an ingenious system of irrigation, and ploughing the soil with a *chaquitacla*, a traditional instrument. Today the **loss of knowledge** of these cultivation practices, increasing pressure on natural resources (extension of the agricultural frontier) as a result of the increasing population, introduction of inadequate technological innovations, and intensive use of land have increased the risk of erosion.

The marginalization of Andean society is the result of a **devaluation process of its culture and organization over centuries**, difficulty or impossibility to integrate into a market economy, the **concentration of power and economy** in the capital, the **lack of participation** in decision making processes, and the **lack of specific policies for these areas and their communities**. Families in this rural territory are going **through a process of disintegration** due to the impact of armed political violence, and public aid programmes and policies.

However, the Peruvian Andes have **great biological and ecological diversity**, which is used as a basis for food diversification, sustainable productivity and natural resources conservation, creating opportunities for people to diversify their production and consumption.

The **socio-cultural diversity** has also produced differences in terms of social organization, attitudes and methods for the administration of communal goods and community resources. These specificities shape the different units of the territory, each characterized by different agro-ecological and socio-economic systems resulting from historical changes.



The interdependencies between highland and lowland areas, new relationships with markets, introduction of urban lifestyles, new forms of exchange, and the opportunities for facing the challenges appropriately and taking advantage of its potential and diversity have to be considered to attain the objectives of sustainable development.

## The PNTD approach: reinforcing dialogue and trust

The Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD) approach places a value on reinforcing **dialogue and trust between stakeholders** (local governments, sectoral and private public entities, rural communities, local organizations) and between these stakeholders and higher-level institutions.

It carries the idea of an open **diagnostic process as a vehicle for the construction of a collective territorial project** and **links local analysis with decision-making at higher levels**.

This case study has been carried out **from these stakeholders' viewpoint**: identifying problems and tendencies, causes of tension or conflicts, opportunities, and local potentials that can be utilised. The **decentralized institutions** are considered as a point of reference in order to orient the changes in a concerted way and to improve the coordination of intervention between the different levels of decision-making.

This case study suggests that **through dialogue and active participation of the local stakeholders in policy making, it is possible to open discussion on reforming public interventions in mountainous areas from the "bottom"**.

## Seven ingredients for a successful process according to the stakeholders

Through the perceptions of several agents directly or indirectly involved in the process some criteria were identified as key elements for the process to be successful.

### A shared vision on the benefits of territorial associations

There was no shared vision among the six mayors regarding the purpose or advantages of forming an association.

### Social legitimization of the promoters

To guarantee the legitimacy of the municipal association, inhabitants thought it was necessary to incorporate their representatives in the association or to form a control and management committee.

### Diversity of the stakeholders involved and their interests

Inhabitants perceived that negotiation was: "dialogue", "benefit for everyone", "obtain agreements", "exchange ideas", "learn from the others", "obtain an agreement and succeed to make a decision on an issue", "all together", "talk and expression of their own ideas in the meetings".

### Active participation of the stakeholders

Based on the mayors' evaluations, the participation and interest of the local population was **one of the most relevant changes** to have occurred due to the process.

### Opening new spaces for dialogue on conflicts

During the workshops and interviews a constant tension and conflict loomed within communities (among the members of the community and particularly with the authorities), and among peasant communities due to land, pasture and territory demarcation, and in some cases due to discrimination among communities of the district capital and annexes or communities of the higher areas. The **shared analysis of conflicts** during the process and the reference to municipal association as a potential arena for conflict resolution demonstrated that there were positive changes in terms of dialogue among actors.

### Knowledge sharing

The interviews showed that during the process inhabitants got to know each other and share information on origins (history), resources, potential and key issues in the area.

## Capacity building

Several strategies were adopted for capacity building: training on diagnostics and strategic planning for municipal technicians, training on participatory approaches for NGO technicians, training on municipality and territory management for mayors (elaboration of action plans, formation of an association and its legal aspects), and capacity building for marginal stakeholders to strengthen and increase awareness of their rights. Several mayors, NGOs and inhabitants considered the process **relevant for strengthening and training women and youth, giving a voice to vulnerable groups** who play key roles in area development.

## Suggesting key elements for strategic policies for sustainable development in mountain areas

Creating the conditions for sustainable territorial development leads to a **re-thinking of public strategic actions**. At the national level it is necessary to rethink the development model of the country, **opening up dialogue** on reforms of rural and institutional policies depending on the context, oriented towards the **valorization of the Andean culture** to overcome the historical marginalization of mountain systems and safeguard them.

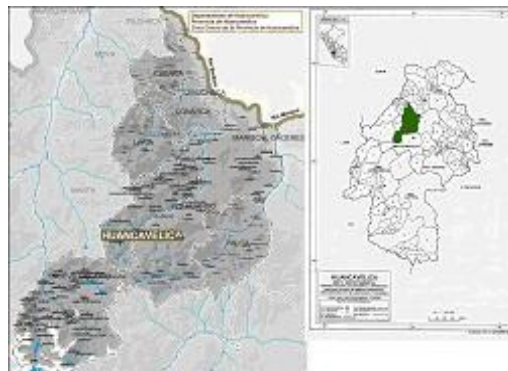
### 1. Local governance and participation

The fragile situation in terms of internal and external social, socio-environmental and cultural conflicts of the mountain range were highlighted. The **process of decentralization** has been accompanied by a lack of coordination among different levels of governments, lack of clarity in terms of differentiated instruments for management in the rural and urban environment, top-down participatory processes, little consideration of peasant communities as a principal actor for territorial and resource management, traditional forms of participation, negotiation and government. Financial and human resource weaknesses of the majority of local administrations placed other constraints.

The framework of decentralization is necessary but not indispensable for sustainable territorial development. In the meantime, **opening up dialogue between stakeholders and institutions for the development of a rural development strategy for the mountain areas** becomes essential.

### 2. Small-scale agriculture and mountain livestock for food security, diversity conservation and income generation

The comparative advantage of the small-scale Andean agriculture seems to lie in its capacity to be ecologically, culturally, and socially sustainable while taking advantage of the existing diversities. An **integrated policy oriented towards supporting local food systems and small income generating activities** for the mountain areas should valorise the capacities of the small-scale agriculture and Andean shepherds to protect social and cultural systems.



Photos F. Ravera

### 3. Integrated management of socio-territorial systems and support to social capital

The **organization of the Andean communities articulated around their communal institutions** (at least in the Central and South Andes) responds to their material and intangible necessities, risk aversion strategies, food security and socio-cultural production. These are the social systems directly dependent on their local resources and, for this reason, particularly interested in protecting, using and regenerating them.

Sustainable development will be conditioned by the way peasant communities - and not only the small farmers or households - respond to these (global and local) changes and by the way strategic approaches for public intervention and cooperation in support of grassroots organizations and their activities are designed. This means **putting peasant communities at the centre of attention**, enhancing the cohesion among its members and re-valourising the historical and ecological importance of such social capital.

At the territorial level it is a question of **considering the system of flows, exchanges, interrelations, and interdependencies** among the components and visions of the territory. In Huancavelica, for example, micro-enterprises, artisans, and tourism are likely bridges between the productive and social sector, and the rural and urban.

### 4. Scientific research and Andean culture

Policies that aim to encourage sustainable development should be **culturally sensitive** and aim at the protection and **recognition of the local Andean identity**, which could be the engine to overcome marginalisation.

To this end, it is of particular relevance to consider **qualitative policies of education at all levels** (starting from the elementary up to higher education). These policies should also include a focus on safeguarding the Andean socio-cultural-ecological systems (with courses on ethno-ecology, systems of local production, etc.). The creation of new spaces for **dialogue between "science" and "local knowledge"** is a key element.

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