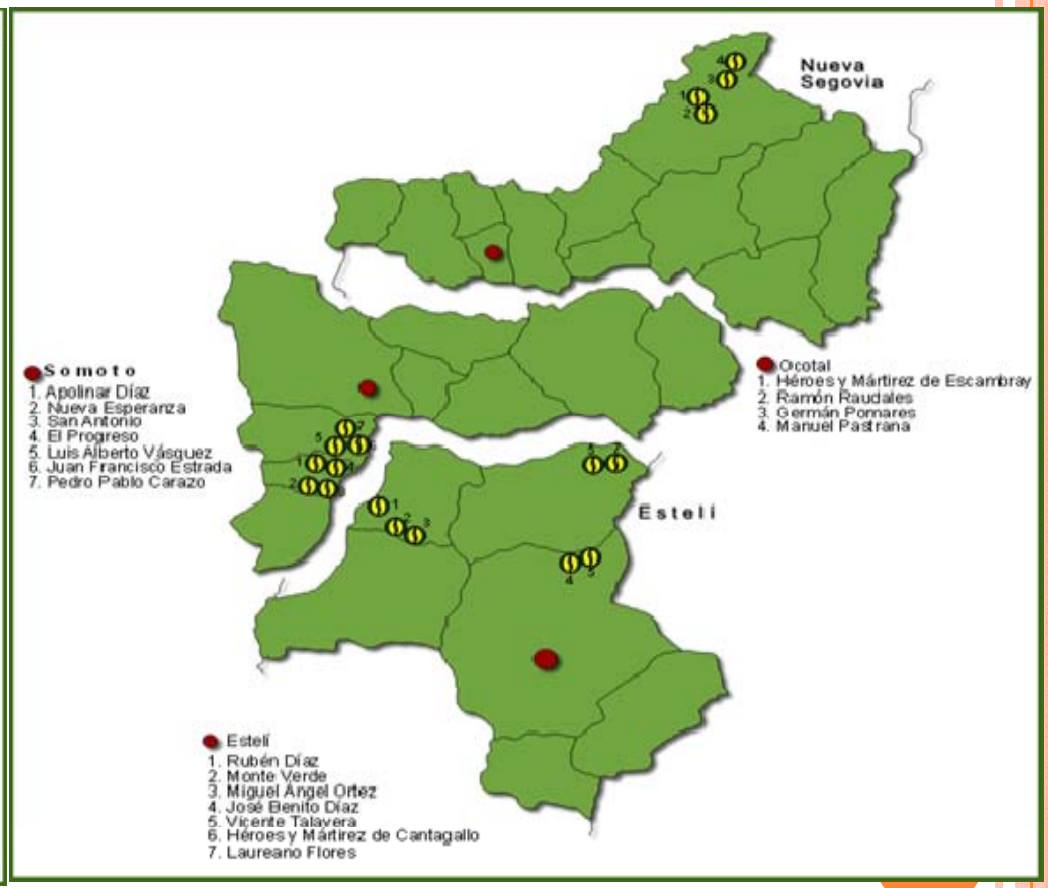
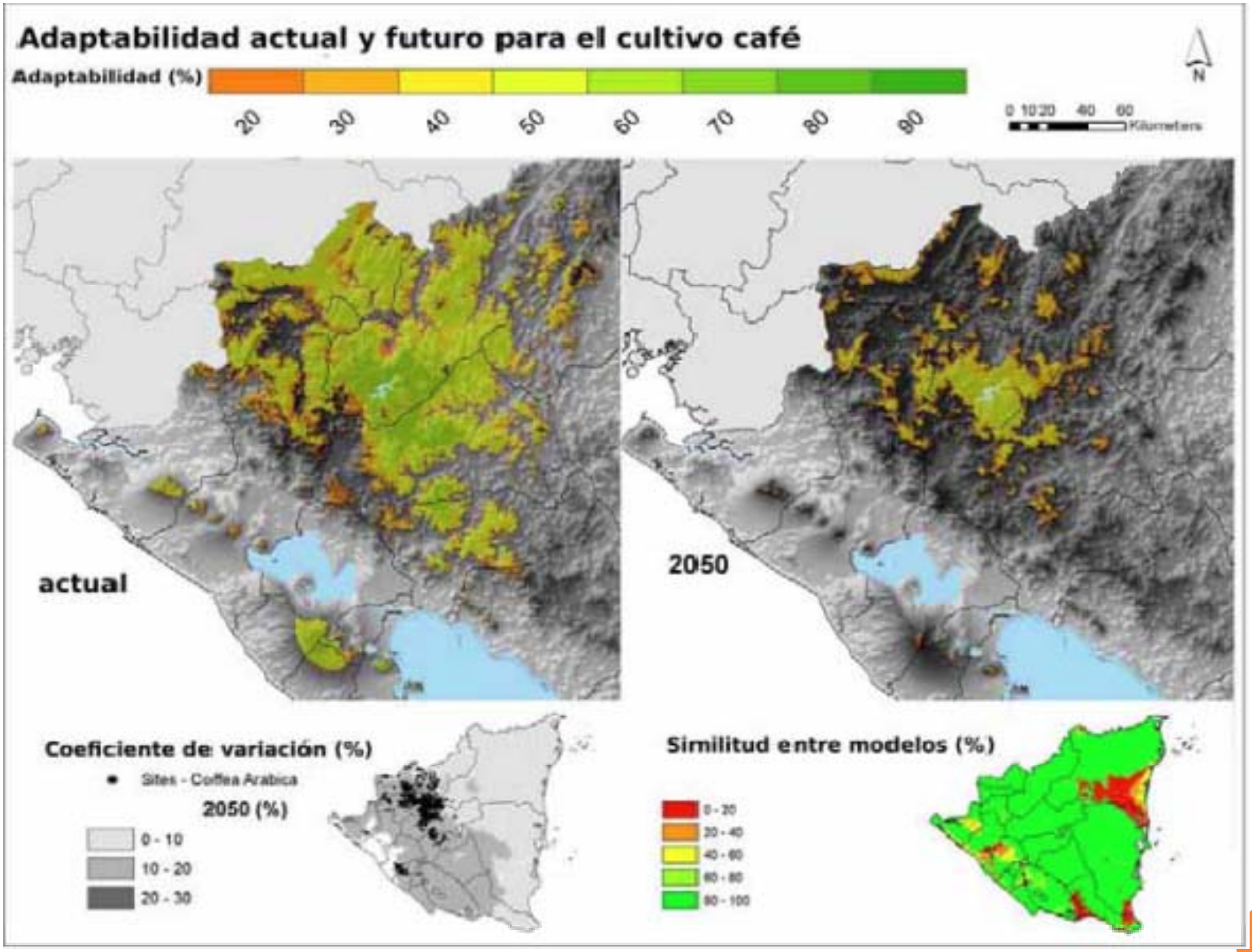
Food Sovereignty and Home Gardens in Northern Nicaragua

Karie Boone

Research site: northern highlands of Nicaragua, the Segovias





Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical, 2010

Research question

- Are home gardens an effective strategy to reach food sovereignty in the face of climate change?

- Why may farmers in participating communities of northern Nicaragua be resistant to changing their food production and consumption strategies?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Methods

- Epistemology
  - Naturalist research paradigm

- Document analysis
- Purposive Sampling
- Participant Observation
- In-depth interviews and garden site visits

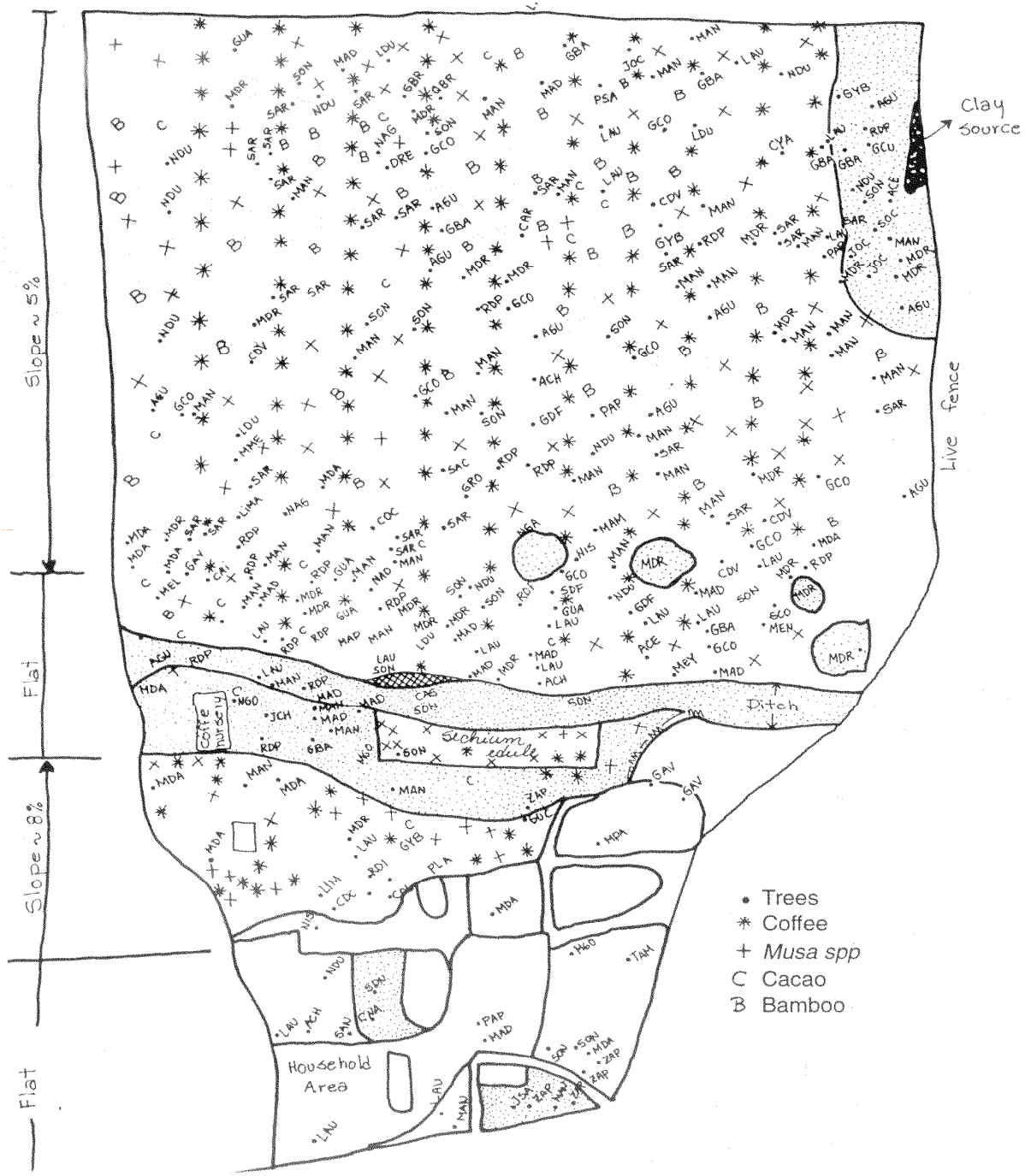
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

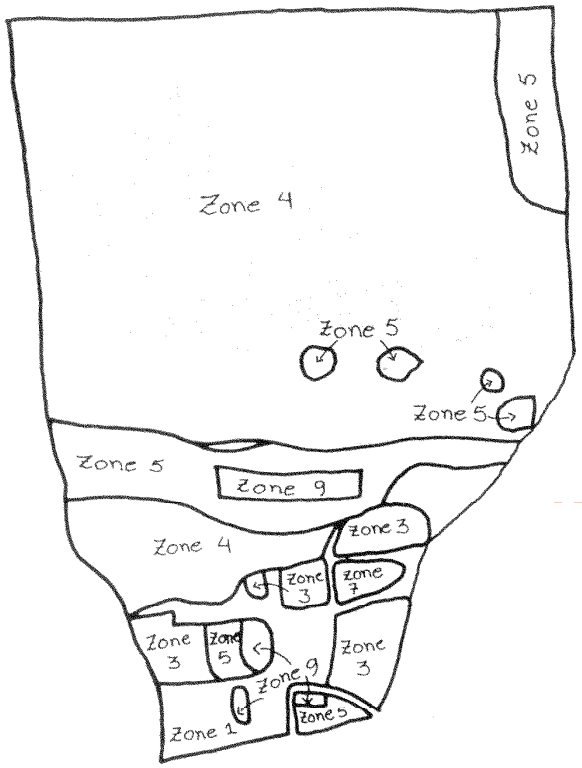
- communities' widespread loss of control over food markets, environments, land and rural cultures
  - Economic policies based on corporate-led model of agriculture
- the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems:
  - their own markets
  - production modes
  - food cultures and environments
  - alternatives to the dominant neoliberal model for agriculture and trade
- Food Security

Implications of the typical **Food Security** Agenda

- Food related policies that emphasizes maximizing food production and enhancing food access opportunities, without particular attention **to how, where and by whom food is produced**

- Promotion of agricultural trade liberalization and the concentration of food production in the hands of fewer, and larger, agri-business corporations





Total area: 4499 m^2

Zone 1: Residential
Zone 3: Ornamentals with shade trees
Zone 4: Shaded coffee
Zone 5: Multi-purpose trees
Zone 7: Ornamentals with vine-crop shade
Zone 9: Herbaceous crops

Characteristics of Home Gardens in Nicaragua

- Provide a diverse and stable supply of **socio-economic products and benefits** to the families (Ninez, 1987).

- **Agrobiodiversity** Nicaraguan home gardens found the diversity of plant species ranged from 22 to 106 with an average of 70 (Mendez et al 2001)

- Medicinals, fruit trees, ornamentals, and plants for timber and construction are consumed in the home or sold on the local market
- Promotion of home gardens in Nicaragua for **diet diversity** and control of food system

Why Food Sovereignty?

- Put the control of productive resources in the hands of those who produce food
- Land, water, seeds and natural resources
- Collaboration between governments, community-based organizations and development organizations like non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Research Results: Inhibiting factors to home garden development

- **Farmers perceive production agriculture and the market to 'work better' than subsistence home gardens**
  - Plant more coffee and use income to purchase food
  - Subsistence versus market – either/or ?
- **Altering Food Habits**
  - Nicaraguan farmers tend to maintain a relatively undiversified diet
- **Food consumption is wrapped up in history, culture, and identity**
  - Strategy brought from outside agencies with legacy of top-down development projects
- **Who says farmers WANT to be food sovereign?**
  - Dependency on outside providers for seeds

Development Discourse

- Long history of northern-based countries directing development projects
- Farmers may make decisions not to participate in a food sovereignty agenda
- Resistance to the processes of change defined by project decision makers

Development discourse
Arturo Escobar

- Discourse embodied in farmer's identity and subsequently their responses to project information gathering

- A 'development discourse' or "the hegemonic epistemological space of development –inscribed in multiple forms of knowledge, political technologies and social relations" (1992:23)

- Employment of development strategies such as home gardens rely on a discourse embedded in farmers that itself has to be dismantled if projects aimed at food sovereignty want to include farmer input in a way that does not inhibit successful outcomes

Participatory action research approach

- **Action research in schools (1)**
- **Farmer participatory research (2).**
- **Action research in organizations (3).**
- **PAR in Latin American education and community development (4)**
- **PAR for environmental justice, livable communities and public health (5)**

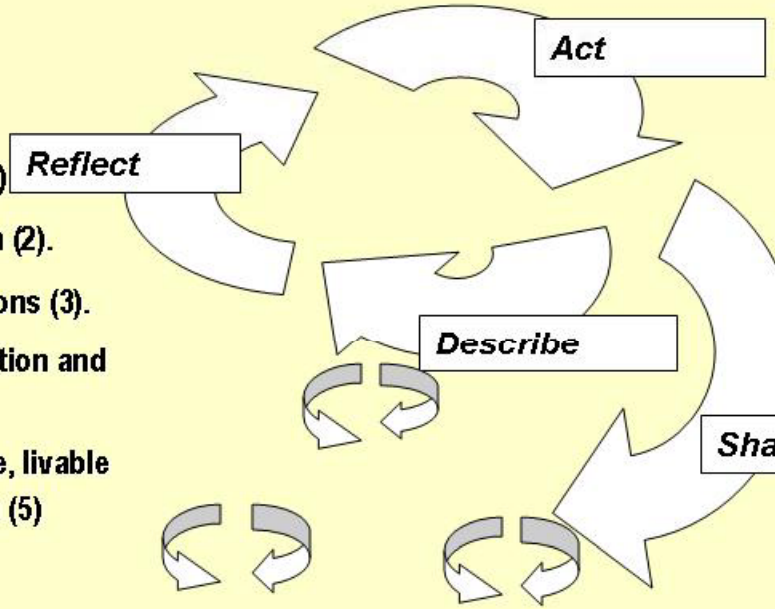
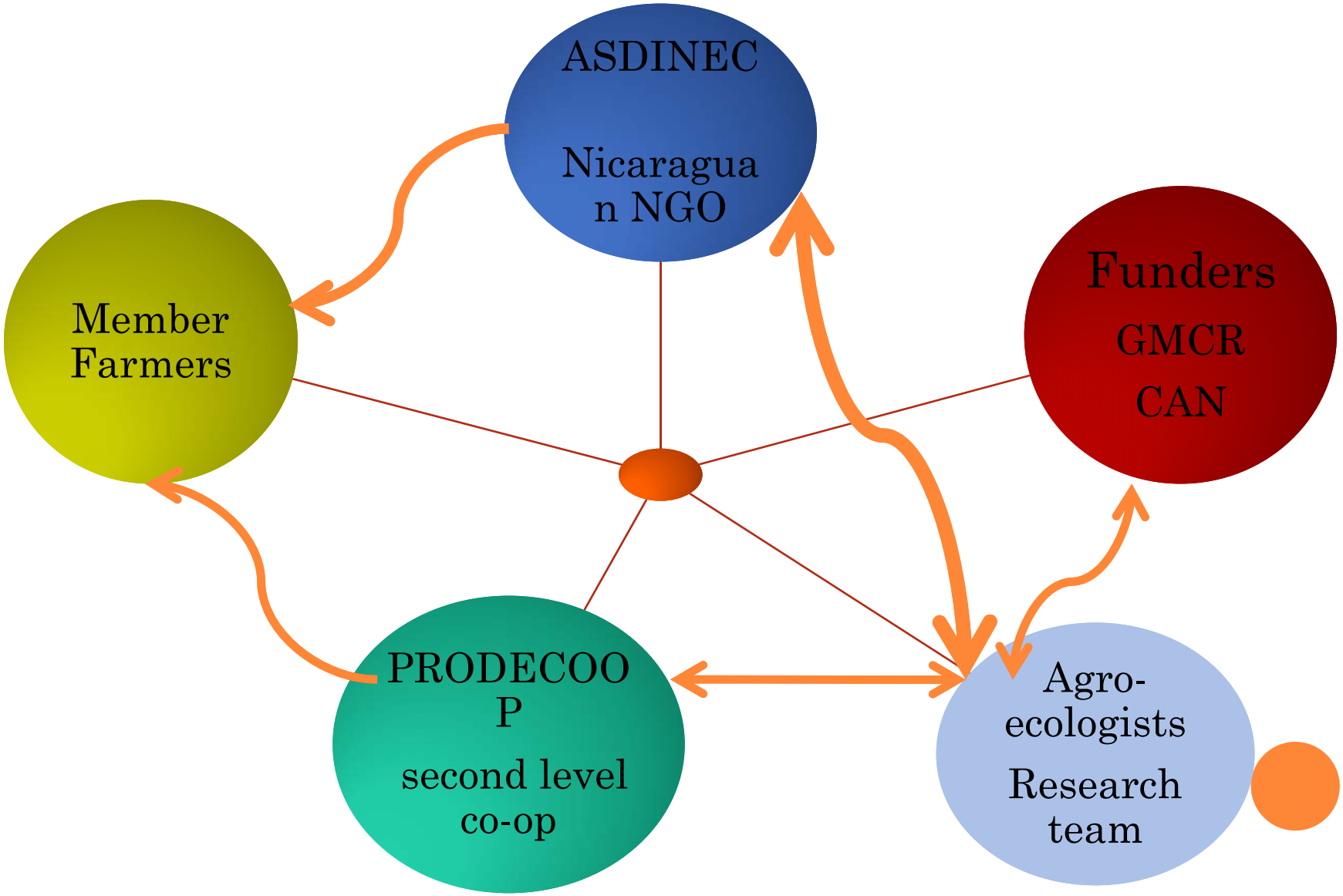


Diagram from:
Bacon, Mendez and Brown, 2005

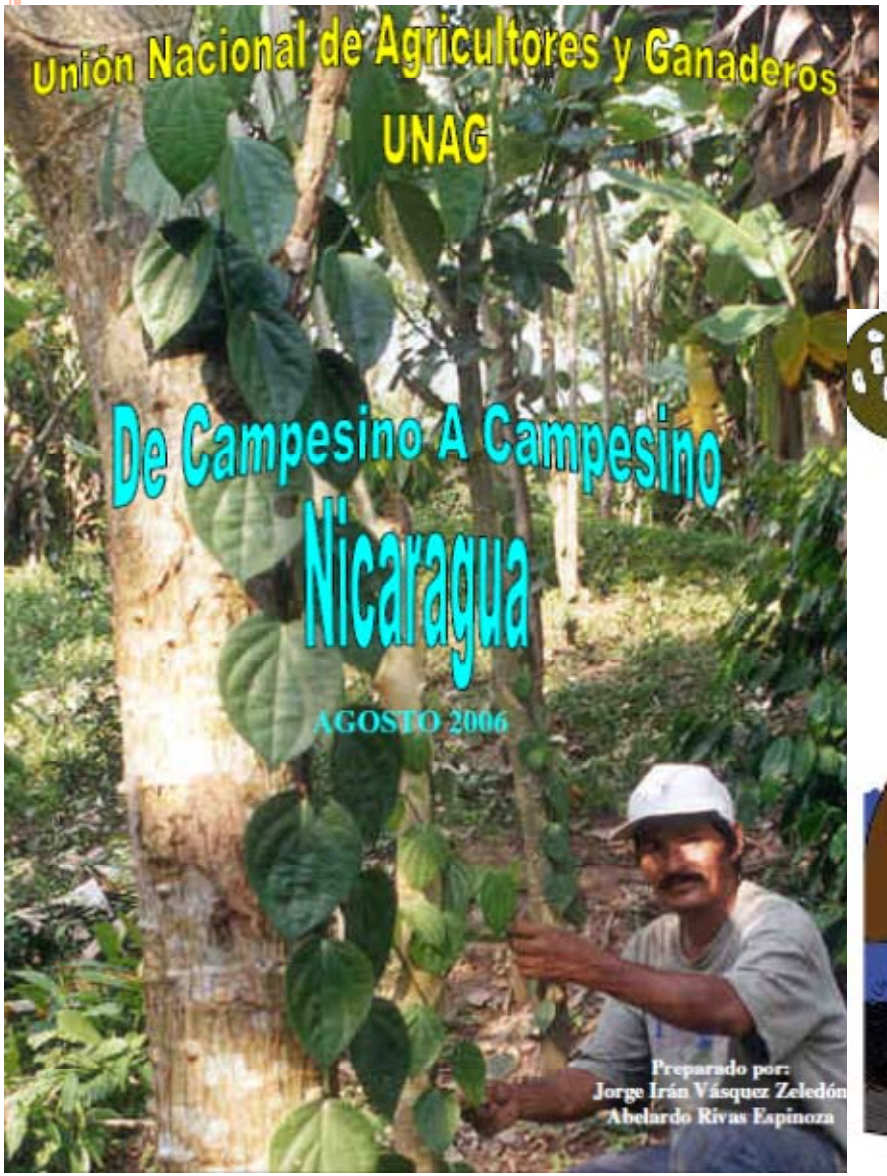
Sources—Selener, 1997

1. B.R. Buckingham (1926), H. Taba, R. McTaggart . 2. R. Chambers, S. Biggs, R. Bunch, J. Ashby, C. Lightfoot, & others. 3. K. Lewin (1946), D. Greenwood & M. Levin (1998), Reason 2001 & others 4. Freire, Fals-Borda, Gaventa, Fox, Rowlings, 5 . Minkler, Pastor, Shensul and others.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND DECISION-MAKING



Farmer to Farmer Exchange: Identifying Effective Practices



Conventional Extension

Researchers develop a technology

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They conduct field trials at an experiment station

↓

They do more trials on a farmer's field

↓

Extensionists set up demonstration plots, and host field days for farmers, and/or visit farmers to promote the technology

↓

The peasant family adopts or rejects the technology

Campesino to Campesino

A peasant already has a solution, or innovates a solution, to a problem that is common for many peasants

↓

S/he becomes a promoter of this new or rediscovered solution

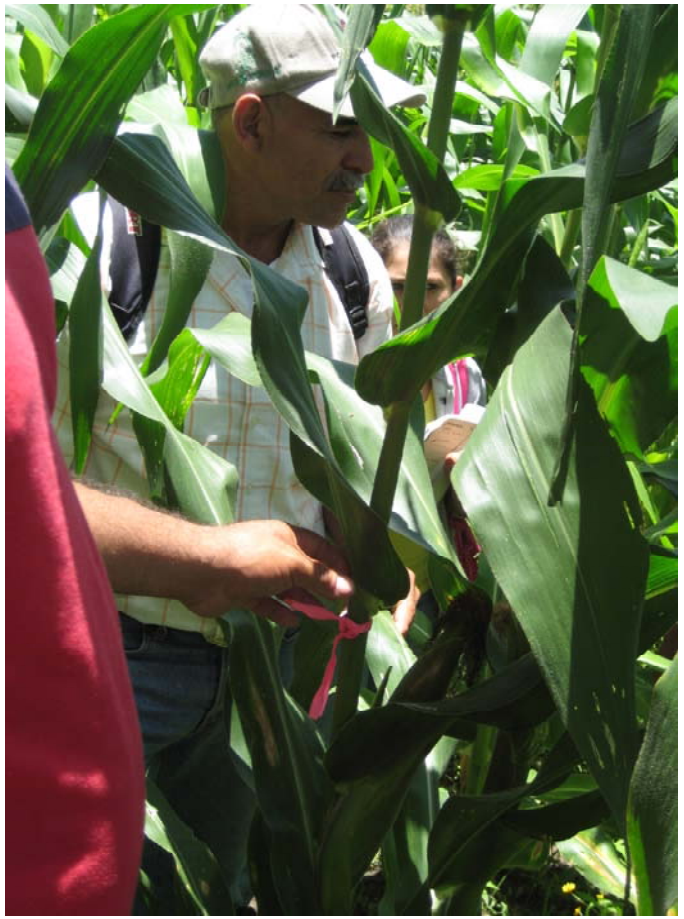
↓

Exchanges are set up, where other peasants visit his or her farm to learn, or where s/he visits the farms of other peasants to share the solution with them.

↓

Other peasants teach other peasants this as well as other solutions

Farmer to Farmer Exchange



Final Products

- In-depth interview manual en español for the NGO's internship program
- Exit presentation and report
  - Used in decision-making meetings
- Final findings report

Feedback and questions