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► **To cite this version:**

Rosario Quintero, Leila Temri, Sophie Drogue. Insertion of the theory of resources and capacities within a cooperative scheme of agricultural production. The case of the cooperative of services multiples of Siogui, R.L.. 32. RENT Conference "Sustainable entrepreneurship: a win-win strategy for the future", Nov 2018, Toledo, Spain. 1 p. [Poster], 2018. hal-02786366

HAL Id: hal-02786366

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02786366>

Submitted on 4 Jun 2020

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Insertion of the theory of resources and capacities within a cooperative scheme of agricultural production.

The case of the cooperative of Services Multiples de Sioguí, R.L.

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Introduction

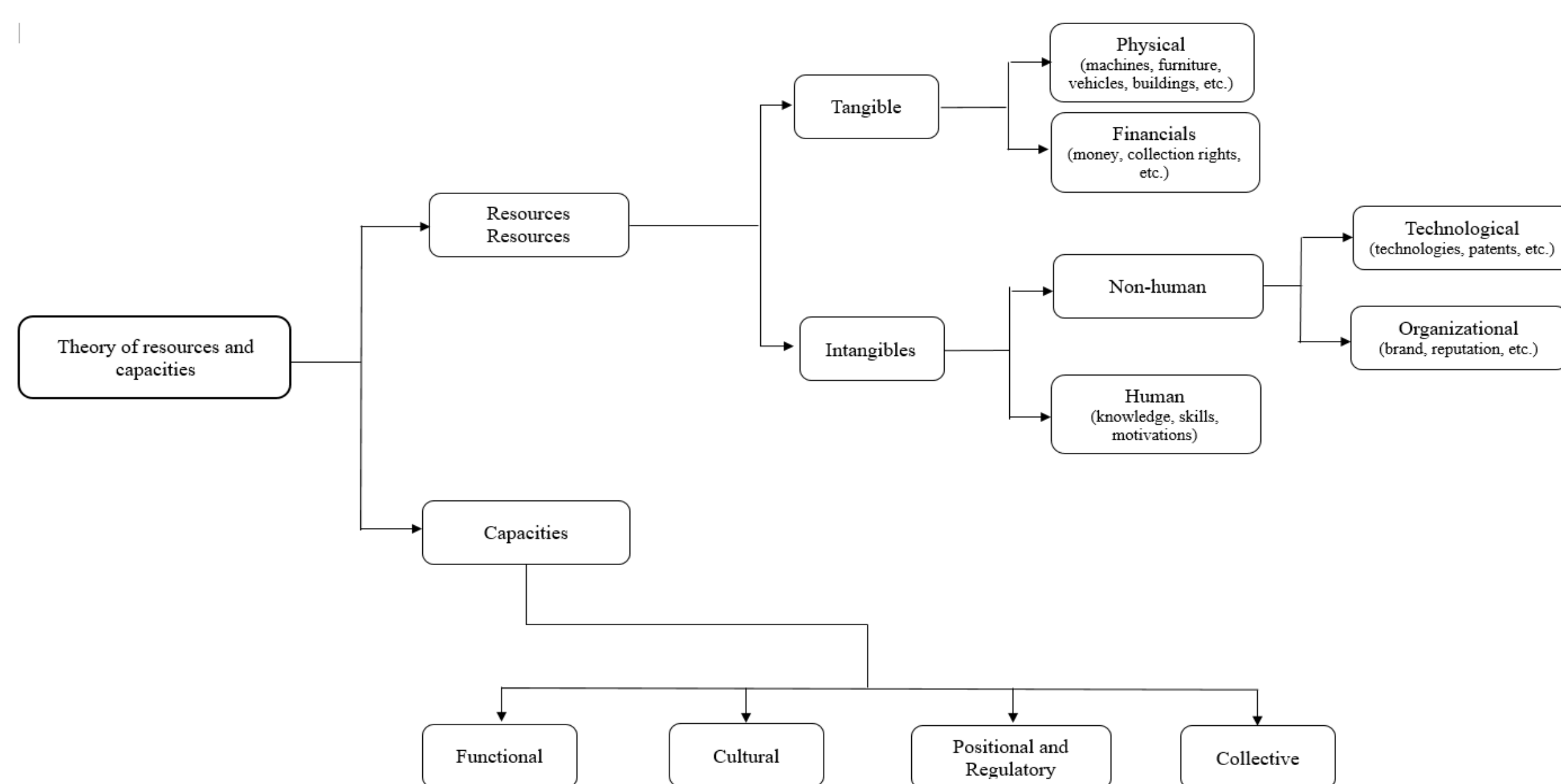
The Panamanian agricultural sector suffers a loss of competitiveness and many agri-food products are supplied through imports. This is particularly the case of cassava, which in Panama faces the competition of both cassava and potato imports. This situation weighs on cassava producers who lack the means to improve the profitability of their farms.

To mitigate some of the obstacles in the production management, agricultural producers have been associated through cooperatives.

In this context we wonder which resources and capacities are necessary to a cooperative to obtain profitability, without entering into excessive additional costs and improve the productivity and capacity of its associates? We rely on the Sioguí, RL, Multiple Services Cooperative case.

Theoretical and methodological approach

We took as reference the methodologies for the resources and capabilities strategy, (Ogliastri, 2008) and (Hall, 1992), and the internal analysis for the strategic direction of the company (Guerras & Navas, 2008)



Source : from (Hall, 1993) ; (Guerras and Navas, 2016)

The interviews and surveys to the President and associates were composed as follows:

I. The first interview of the President of the Cooperative, comprises two stages:

1. A survey of closed questions, distributed in 4 variables: capacities, profitability, tangible resources and intangible resources; they were rated depending on the degree of importance or value: High (1 point), Regular (2 points) and Low (3 points).
2. An interview with open questions, with the intention of knowing the context of the cooperative (background, current situation and future perspectives).

II The survey conducted with the associates, consisted of 2 sections:

1. General data of the respondent (occupation, age, schooling, willingness to work and remuneration), as well as their technical or empirical skills or abilities.
2. using the model of methodological references of (Hall 1992), we conducted a survey with closed questions, graded from 1 of 8 points, related the associates' knowledge of the economic income of the cooperative as well as the cooperative and President's image in the eyes of its own members.

Data analysis was performed with SPSS.

Results and Analysis

President's response

- Our indicators show that participation of young people is weak.
- With regard to the level of education, there is no illiteracy and the number of associates with university degree is higher than elementary and secondary levels.
- Most of them are interested in collaborating on administrative matters.

Partners' answers

- Based on the professional or empirical knowledge of the cooperative's members, the ability of the partners to work on behalf of their cooperative was rated as "excellent".
- The efforts by the management to enforce commercial contracts, so that products can enter various national markets, such as supermarkets, schools and food centers advantage increased trust between partners and sellers or distributors.

It is worth noting in the president's and partners' responses:

- That, according to the President "most members do not attend monthly meetings, and, during general meetings criticize decisions taken in consultation with the board of directors at monthly meetings".
- Other factors mentioned by the partners are the low participation of IPACOO, which should supervise and monitor cooperatives in order to help them achieve good administrative management.

Advantages

- Existence of different technological equipment to be able to produce other products from fresh cassava.

Limits

- Inability to use the personal skills of each partner.
- Lack of motivation, generated by mistrust of the management team.

Proposals

- New vision of the cooperative, in terms of market, new products and the resulting added value.
- The President should have the figure of a professional manager with new projects and strategies.
- Reorganization of the internal structure by improving existing departments.
- Optimization of existing technological equipment.
- Training in agricultural and administrative techniques.
- Purchase of new equipment such as those needed for harvesting, product transport and post-harvest.

Conclusions

As we have noted, the Sioguí, RL, Multiple Services Cooperative has been able to stay afloat, despite continuing to provide on the national market, fresh cassava (washed and paraffined) and with only two varieties (valencia and brazilian).

Among the main results, the surveys show for instance, that the number of members of the cooperative holding a university degree is high, so it is possible to use their professional knowledge and skills to improve the management of the cooperative. We can confirm that their internal main potentials are based on administrative capacities.

Cooperatives find themselves in a changing environment in which they must innovate in order to be competitive in a society in which consumers are increasingly demanding.

Among the characteristics that distinguish the cooperative sector is the cooperation between partners through which they can develop competitive advantages to link knowledge and innovation, such as new methodologies or problem-solving practices, (Subirats & Gomà, 2003).

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