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## SETTLEMENTS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION COOPERATIVES AND THEIR PLACE IN THE SETTLEMENT SYSTEM OF CUBA

In the second half of the 1970s a new, successive stage of transformations in the Cuban agrarian structure started. This new stage consisted primarily in organization of agricultural production cooperatives (*cooperativas de producción agropecuaria*, referred to further as CPAs), grouping private farmers and farmhands. The process of organization of CPAs causes important changes in the settling of rural space since it does not only involve concentration of the agriculturally used land, but also concentration within the settlement system.

One of the goals of "cooperativization" of Cuban agriculture is the liquidation of the dispersed settlement system by concentration of the cooperative members and their families in special estates equipped with basic technical and social infrastructure. The government considered construction of housing estates in the lands of agricultural production cooperatives to be one of the means for bringing about an important goal of the social policy: gradual making equal of the living standards of population living in rural and urban areas. Concentration of the settlement system could make it possible to use better the land and labour resources as well as technical production means being at the disposal of the particular cooperatives. Grouping of the members of CPAs in new estates was also meant to play an important socio-political role in terms of facilitation of establishment of new social links and shaping of the attitudes of agricultural population.

Between 1977 and 1987 the number of CPAs grew from 125 to 1418, and their membership — from 1517 to 69,604. In the late 1980s the total land area of CPAs was approximately 1 million hectares, i.e. some 12% of agricultural land in Cuba, while CPA members and their families accounted for more than ten percent of total Cuban agricultural population.

The process of concentration in the settlement system, accompanying the establishment of agricultural production cooperatives, is taking

place slower than land concentration and organization of common agricultural production. It was only in the first years of introduction of CPAs, when construction of housing estates was entirely within the responsibility of the state, that the members of agricultural production cooperatives were obtaining new houses, quite often completely equipped, and this soon after the cooperative had been created. On the other hand, since the early 1980s, the task of constructing housing estates have been placed totally in the hands of CPA members. Although they obtain bank credits and certain facilities in purchasing construction materials, due to limited supplies of construction materials, difficulties of organizational nature and many other local factors, construction of housing estates lags for many years.

With respect to their location relative to other units of the settlement system the CPAs' housing estates can be classified into three groups:

- A. settlements located within the peripheries of small towns,
- B. settlements located within the peripheries or proper areas of bigger villages,
- C. settlements established as independent localities.

Fundamental data on the settlements of several dozens of CPAs located in Western and Central Cuba, in provinces of Pinar del Rio, Matanzas and Sancti Spiritus are presented in Table 1. These data, as well as other information used in the present paper have been gathered during field studies conducted in agricultural production cooperatives in 1988 and 1989.<sup>1</sup>

When analyzing information contained in the table one can conclude that within the set of settlement groups distinguished there do not appear distinct differences as regards the number of population and equipment with social and technical infrastructure. On the other hand, differences among communities, resulting from disproportions in their development levels, from specificities of distribution of agricultural population and the uneven degree of advancement of "cooperati-

<sup>1</sup> These studies constituted the first stage of the joint Polish-Cuban program entitled "Cooperativization of Cuban agriculture: The role of agricultural production cooperatives in organization of rural communities and rural space", carried out by the Department of Latin America of the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, Warsaw University, together with Faculty of Geography of Havana University. Results of studies conducted in the years 1987—1988 in agricultural production cooperatives of the Yaguajay community (province of Sancti Spiritus) were published in 1990 in volume 9 of the journal *Actas Latinoamericanas de Varsovia*. Results of studies from the years 1988—1989, concerning the CPAs located in provinces of Pinar del Río, La Habana, Matanzas, Sancti Spiritus and Guantánamo shall be published in 1991 in one of the subsequent volumes of this journal.

vization" process, are more significant. These differences will be discussed later in this article.

In communities (*municipios*) with domination of agricultural population dispersed in small villages or even in isolated farms, the housing estates of CPAs account for a much greater share of cooperative members than in *municipios* in which farmers have been living in small towns for years. A good example is provided by the communities of San Antonio de los Baños and Perico, located in the most urbanized provinces of Cuba, that is La Habana and Matanzas. In San Antonio none of the five CPAs has its own housing estate; nor do they plan construction of such an estate.<sup>2</sup> Members of these five cooperatives most often inhabit towns, primarily San Antonio de los Baños, being the administrative centre of the *municipio*. In Perico community three out of five agricultural production cooperatives have their own housing estates, grouping less than 50% of cooperative members and are deprived of service units. A majority of CPA members have lived already for a long time in towns or in larger villages in Perico and the neighbouring *municipios*. In the new estates do live, on the other hand, or want to live, only these members of cooperatives who, owing to such translocation do or may acquire better housing conditions (meaning access to electricity, roads and public transport, or their own family house).

In San Cristóbal community (Pinar del Rio province), in only three out of the existing fourteen CPAs new housing estates have already been constructed. Members of the remaining cooperatives live in the settlement units existing for already a long time, and their houses are dispersed among the houses of other inhabitants. In this case a delay in organization of cooperative housing estates results, in particular, from the fact that only at the beginning of 1989 areas for location of the estates were designated within the lands of individual cooperatives.

In the communities of Trinidad, Yaguajay and Cabaiguán (province Sancti Spíritus) construction of housing estates is much more advanced than in other areas considered. It is especially true of the *municipio* Cabaiguán, where traditions of cooperativization in agriculture are the oldest, and where housing estates of a majority of production cooperatives form independent settlement units, quite well equipped with service outlets. These settlement units group almost all members of the particular cooperatives and are among better organized villages in this community.

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<sup>2</sup> Within every production cooperative in San Antonio de los Baños there is, on the other hand, a set of production-oriented buildings, a canteen and a small cultural centre, in which various events are organized of socio-political and cultural nature.

Number of inhabitants, and technical and social infrastructure in settlements  
(*municipios*), in

Municipio	CPA name	Year of establishment	Location type <sup>1</sup>	Number of inhabitants	Percentage share of CPA members
Yaguajay	Camilo Cienfuegos	1979	A	360	100
	Agostino Neto	1979	A	293	100
	El Vaquerito	1981	A	ca 200	70
	Cent. de Baraguá	1978	A	ca 200	56
	Reinel Páez	1979	B	ca 260	84
	Felicito Rodríguez	1980	C	ca 150	55
	Dagoberto Vázquez	1979	C <sup>4</sup>	153	100
	Orlando Nieto	1979	C	ca 80	90
	Mártires de Nicaragua	1981	C		50
Cabaiguán	Juan González	1963	C	614	100
	(17 de Mayo)	1978	C <sup>5</sup>	131	100
	13 de marzo	1976	C	465	100
	Mártires de Cabaiguán	1982	A	260	100
	Mártires de Neiva	1978	C	ca 120	90
	10 de octubre	1976	C	ca 560	80
Trinidad	Victoria de Girón	1978	C	150	80
	Rafael Ramírez	1980	C	ca 150	80
	Juan González	1982	C	ca 30	36
	Felipe Iznaga	1979	B	34	10
	Pedro Lantigua	1981	B	ca 120	40
	Oliveiro Marín	1977	C	94	70
	13 de marzo	1978	C	120	55
	XXI Aniversario	1979	C <sup>4</sup>	127	100
Perico	Amistad Cubano-Checa	1979	A	103	30
	Movimiento 26 de julio	1981	A	33	13
	Alberto Delgado	1981	C <sup>2</sup>	ca 110	8
San Cristóbal	Crescencio Rodríguez	1981	B	ca 150	80
	26 de julio	1987	C <sup>4</sup>	ca 40	80
	Orlando Nodarse	1982	C	ca 15	17

<sup>1</sup> A — in peripheries of towns, B — in older rural settlement, C — independent settlement unit;

<sup>2</sup> data concern 2 new housing settlements constructed in the CPA; Tibiri and Limonar;

<sup>3</sup> electricity provided by local power station only for a few hours a day;

<sup>4</sup> housing estate constructed before establishment of CPA;



Production cooperatives in the community of Trinidad (excepting the CPA "XXI Aniversario", located in the Escambray range and most isolated of all) have their own new housing estates, usually located in the vicinity of the village of origin of the cooperative members. These estates house from 10% to 80% of CPA members, while infrastructural equipment (with the exception of electricity) is in most of them relatively modest. In the locality of Yaguajay, new housing quarters, which concentrate 50 to 100 percent cooperative members, existed in 8 out of 10 agricultural cooperatives. Most advanced is the construction of the three biggest estates (situated in the peripheries of towns); still, none of them has as yet obtained any service outlet, other than culture centres.

Information presented here concerns only a few percent of CPAs functioning in Cuba. Nevertheless, on the basis of materials gathered and observations made during the field study in other cooperatives, an initial evaluation of the current state of the CPA settlements in which cooperative members dwell can be formulated and the place of these settlements in the whole settlement system of Cuba can be indicated.

Very few cooperatives have fully organized and developed settlements, in which all or almost all CPA members live. These are usually the oldest cooperatives, which survived since the beginning of the 1960s<sup>3</sup>, or cooperatives established on the turn of the 1980s as model units, so that they had housing estates constructed by the state. On the other hand, in a majority of cooperatives, even ten years after their establishment, housing estates are still under construction or extension works. Usually, such an estate is composed of family houses surrounded by small gardens, located along a few streets forming a square grid (Figs. 1 and 2). Simultaneously with housing, buildings are constructed necessary for agricultural economy, including repair workshops for agricultural machinery and, often a very modest, cooperative office building. Sometimes in the settlement itself or in its vicinity production-oriented structures are erected, such as drying and sorting plants for tobacco leaves or cattle foodstuff production plants. Service outlets are constructed later. This concerns a shop, a modest health care facility, pri-

<sup>3</sup> First agricultural production cooperatives were established in Cuba after the promulgation of the First Agrarian Reform Law (May 17, 1959), but in the second half of the 1960s most of them had been disintegrated. In 1975, that is when the cooperative agriculture started anew, there were only 43 "Agricultural and Livestock Societies" (*sociedades agropecuarias*), which were transformed into new cooperatives, the CPAs. A number of cooperatives having such an origin are located in the municipio of Cabaiguán (province of Sancti Spiritus); this includes also the cooperative "Juan González", founded in 1963, and considered in the study here reported.

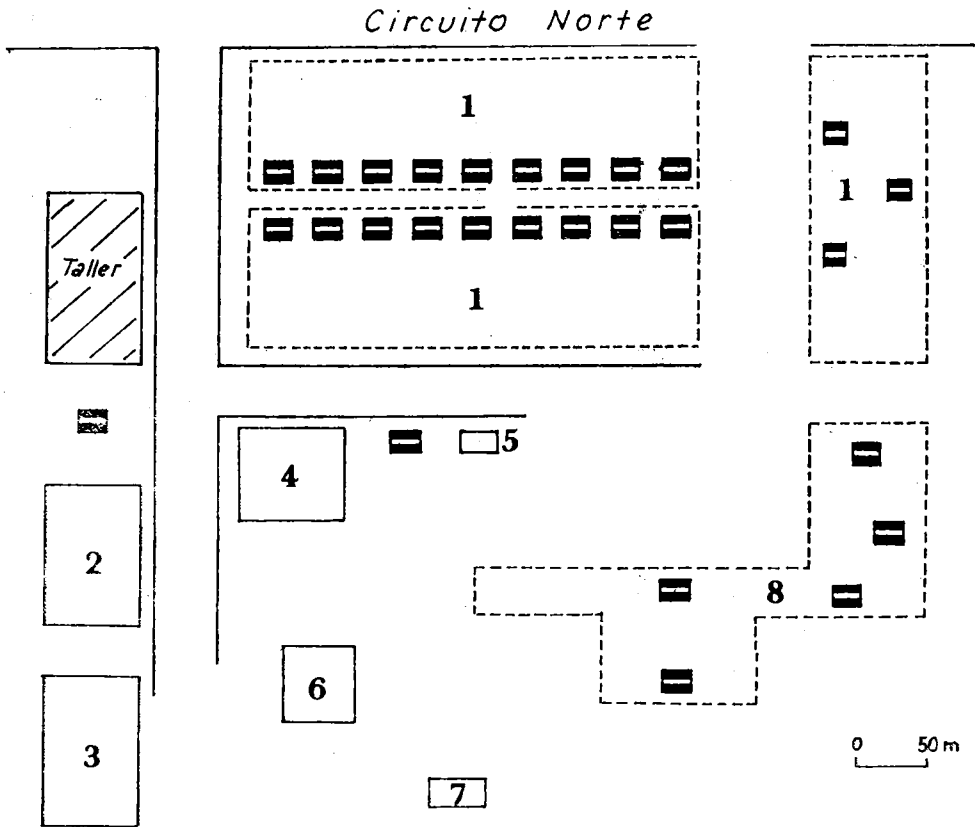


Fig. 1. Settlement of Felicitto Rodriguez cooperative, mun. Yaguajay. 1. Houses build of prefabricates, 2. Office building (under construction), 3. Carpenter workshop, 4. Canteen, 5. Office of CPA (temporal), 6. Reservoir, 7. Drying plant of tobacco leaves, 8. Old traditional houses (*bohios*).

mary school and culture centre. Until such facilities are put into operation inhabitants have to address themselves to the ones located in the neighbouring settlements existing previously. Irrespective of the distance from the CPA estate to a town or village in which the facilities in question are located, the inhabitants of CPA estates try to obtain in each of them location of all these facilities. This fact reflects on the one hand the will of gaining an easier access to service and an improvement of service quality, and on the other hand, a feeling of certain separation of members of agricultural production cooperatives from other population groups.

Housing estates of CPA constitute presently the most numerous group of new settlement units developing in rural areas. Their number,

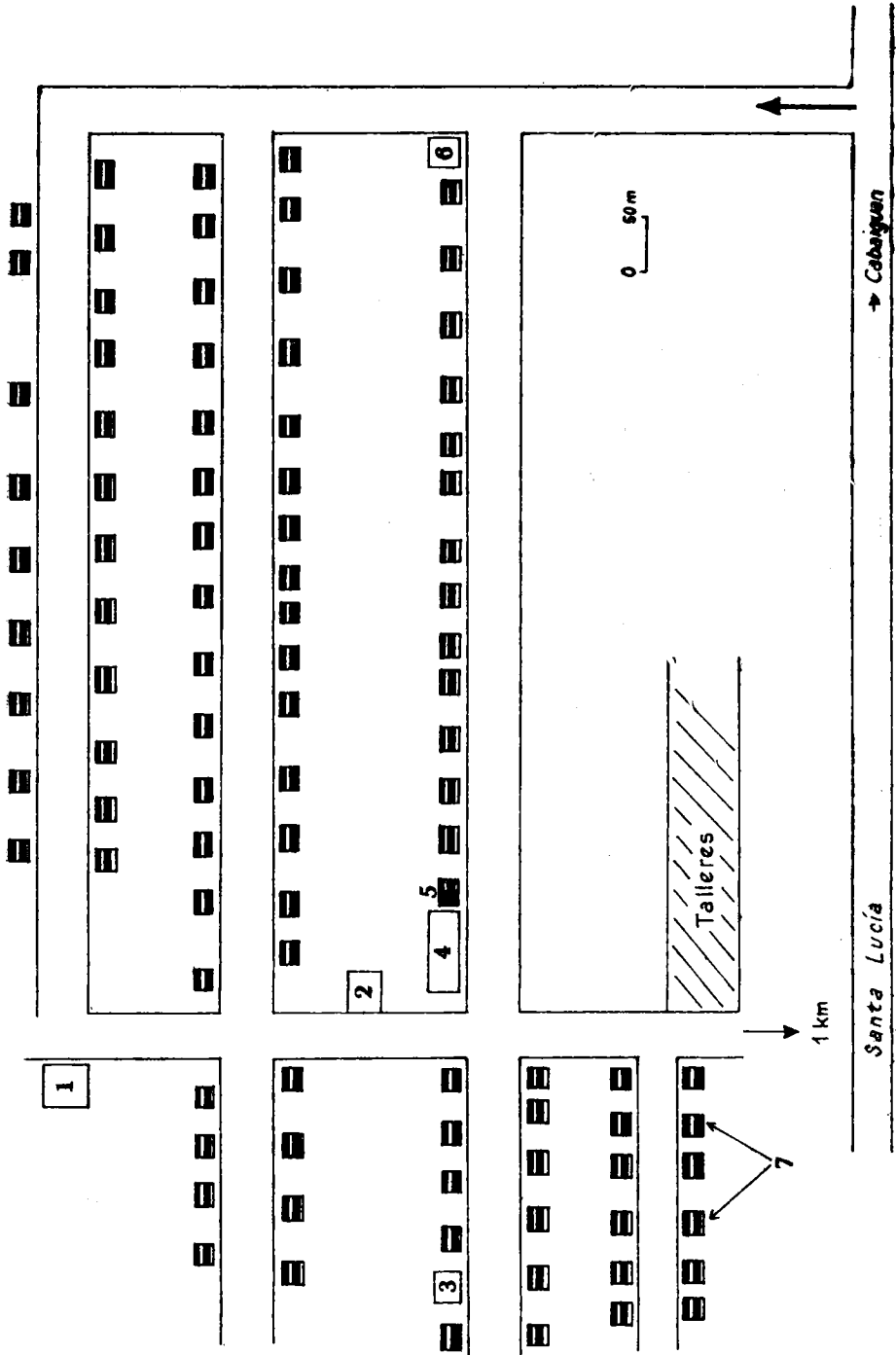


Fig. 2. Settlement of Juan Gonzalez cooperative, mun. Cabaiguan. 1. Canteen, 2. Health service plant, 3. Youth culture centre, 4. Shop, 5. Office building, 6. School, 7. Houses.



estimated at more than 1000, is three times larger than that, of the so-called "new communities" (*nuevas comunidades*) constructed primarily during the 1960s and the 1970s for workers employed on state farms.<sup>4</sup> In comparison with *nuevas comunidades*, which are usually composed of a dozen of larger housing blocks and a service centre, the CPA estates do more resemble villages as regards their architecture and outlook, and are better adapted to settlement-related tastes and traditions of Cubans. CPA settlements located in the peripheries of small towns are in a way modern "residential" quarters, whose connections with other parts of town are quite limited.<sup>5</sup> Settlements which are independent units or which constitute parts of greater villages come out as quite distinct in the landscape. This is due to a specific type of construction (unified design of family houses, most often put together with prefabricated elements), and to internal organization of space (houses situated along streets, other buildings around a square). The settlements fulfil presently mainly housing and productive functions, but if — according to the wishes of their inhabitants — they get equipped with service facilities, they shall also play the role of local service centres, also for population not directly related to the CPAs.

Housing estates of agricultural production cooperatives are already now an important link in the settlement system of Cuba, first of all in the provinces with large share of agricultural population, in which traditions of private farming have survived, that is in provinces of Pinar del Río, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus, Santiago de Cuba, Granma and Guantánamo. It seems that good housing conditions which are offered by many of these estates are one of the most important factors contributing to the decision of joining the production cooperative, especially among younger people.

<sup>4</sup> Between 1959 and 1987 as many as 334 "new communities" (*nuevas comunidades*) were built: 184 of them in the period of 1959—1969, 106 in the period of 1970—1979, and only 36 over the years 1980—1987.

<sup>5</sup> These relations are limited to the fact that CPA members make use of the service facilities located in towns and to sporadic cases of jobs undertaken by family members of cooperative participants in trade, education or culture facilities, or industrial enterprises located in towns.

